

IT’S NATURE’S TIME



The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, on Friday celebrated the World Environment Day, under the slogan “The Time has Come for Nature” which is considered the most important day for environmental action in the world since its inception in 1972. **DETAILS ON P6**

HIS MAJESTY GREETINGS TO KING OF SWEDEN

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Carl XVI Gustav of the Kingdom of Sweden, on the occasion of the National Day of his country. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings along with his best wishes of good health, happiness and long life to the King of Sweden, and progress and prosperity to the friendly Swedish people. — **ONA**

PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC DISEASES AT GREATER RISK

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: Once in hospital with COVID-19, people with chronic diseases including diabetes have worse outcomes than people without. According to Dr Feryal al Lawati, Head of Infectious Diseases Unit at the Royal Hospital, COVID-19 patients with chronic diseases are more likely to face severe symptoms from the virus. “Chronic diseases play a major role in the deaths of those with coronavirus”, Dr Feryal said during the press conference conducted by the Supreme Committee at the weekend. Studies reveal that people with either type of diabetes vary in their age, complications and how well they have been managing the disease. **TURN TO P2**

CENTRAL BANK STOPS ONLINE PAYMENTS USING DEBIT CARDS

VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has suspended the online payment gateway service (OmanNet) using direct debit cards, following reports of a security breach. There has been no update on whether the issue has been resolved at the time of writing this report. The central bank said that customers can use the option to pay with ‘credit or other cards’ if the option is available until the service is restored. Muscat Electricity Distribution Company, Omanoil and Oman Investment and Finance Company (OIFC) informed customers about the technical problem with online payment service.

“As the technical support team is working on the problem, normalcy is expected to be restored at the earliest”, the CBO said in a statement. The apex bank on Thursday said that it had detected some unauthorised attempts have been made in the past few hours to enter the portal and the issue is being investigated. “It would be dealt with according to the procedures followed by the competent authorities”, the CBO added. The Central Bank of Oman emphasised that other electronic financial services such as automated withdrawals (ATM) and payments via point of sale devices (POS) and transfer from one account to another of the same bank and between banks and mobile transfer services are working uninterrupted.



PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC DISEASES AT GREATER RISK

SAMUEL KUTTY

FROM PAGE 1

They also point out that age is also a factor as patients over 75 were more likely to die than those under 55, and conditions like obstructive sleep apnea and higher body mass index were associated with increased risk of death as well.

In Oman, deaths so far did not exceed 0.5 per cent and “if a patient dies due to another disease, unlike in other countries, here it is still declared as a death related to coronavirus infection”.

According to a new French study, three out of 10 diabetic patients treated for the novel coronavirus either required ventilation or died within a week of hospitalisation.

Health Canada says that there is an increased risk of more severe COVID-19 outcomes for people aged over 65, and those with weak immune systems and/or underlying medical conditions.

FIVE MORE DIE OF COVID-19; DEATH TOLL RISES TO 72

VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) reported five new deaths due to COVID-19 on Friday even as the lockdown of Wilayat of Muttrah in Muscat will be partially lifted.

MoH also announced 770 new positive cases of COVID-19 in the Sultanate, including 343 Omanis and 427 residents, which brought the total number of positive cases in the Sultanate to 15,086, including 72 deaths. The ministry pointed out that 3,541 cases have recovered. 4,582 of 11,438 cases and 26 of 59 deaths are from Muscat.

Dr Saif al Abri, Director-General of Disease Surveillance & Control, Ministry of Health, said, “The isolation of Muttrah began on April 1 due to the epidemiological situation, which has improved as a result of such isolation.

With the epidemiological improvement, the gradual isolation

MAWALEH MARKET CLOSED

The Central Market for Fruits and Vegetables in Mawaleh will shut its doors to all trading activities from Saturday, June 6 till June 13, as part of tackling the community spread of COVID-19, the Muscat Municipality announced on Friday.

of Wilayat of Muttrah will be lifted along with some parts of Hamriya, old Muttrah Souq area, and the adjacent areas. Public transportation and taxis will not be permitted in Wilayat of Muttrah. Change of residence is not permitted inside and outside Wilayat of Muttrah. Industrial activities are not permitted yet in the Wadi Al Kabir area. The closure of Muttrah Souq is still effective.



نهضة الدقم القابضة ش.م.ع.م.
Renaissance Duqm Holding SAOC

NOTICE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING (EGM)
&
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

The Board of Directors of Renaissance Duqm Holding SAOC (the “Company”) invites the shareholders to attend the EGM & AGM of the Company to be held on 21st June 2020 (Sunday) at 1 P.M via the online platform for general meetings, which can be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD) website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum for holding the EGM or/and the AGM is not met, a second EGM or AGM shall be held on Thursday, 25th June 2020 at 1 P.M to discuss the following agenda:

First : EGM Agenda

1. To amend Article 13 of the Company’s Articles of Association to increase the number of Board membership by one member to seven.

Second: AGM Agenda

- 1) To consider and approve the Chairman’s Report for the financial year ended 31st December 2019.
- 2) To consider and approve the Auditors Report, the Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Account for the financial year ended 31st December 2019.
- 3) To approve the sitting fees being availed by the members of the Board of Directors and the members of the Board’s sub-committees for the financial year ended 31st December 2019 and to specify the sitting fees for the next financial year.
- 4 To consider and approve of the Director’s Remuneration of Rials 23,750/- for the financial year ended 31st December 2019.
- 5) To fill a vacancy to the Board of Directors.
- 6) To approve the appointment of the Auditors for the year 2020 and fix their remuneration.

Any person wishing to nominate himself/herself to the Board of Directors may fill out the Nomination Form that can be obtained from the Company. The completed form should be delivered to the Company at least 5 working days prior to the Annual General Meeting, i.e., not later than Monday, 15th June 2020. Any Nomination Form delivered after the aforesaid deadline will not be accepted.

In accordance with the Articles of Association of the Company and the rules for convening general meetings using modern technology issued by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- a) A juristic person shall, exclusively, have the right to authorize a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on his behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD).
- b) Voting on any of the agenda items shall begin no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting. In case a shareholder’s share balance has increased or decreased after voting, his voting will be cancelled, and this shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

We request our shareholders to kindly update their Contact Details in the records of Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD).

For further information, please contact **Mr. Hatim Hilal Al Hilali** – Company Secretary, on phone No (24796636 Ext: 346) GSM Number 93220564 or email address: hatim@tawoos.com.

TWO CHARTER FLIGHTS TO TAKE OFF FOR INDIA TODAY

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: Indians living in the Sultanate will have two charter flights arranged to facilitate their journey back home from the Muscat International Airport today (Saturday).

The first charter flight by SalamAir for KMCC, an overseas wing of Indian National Muslim League, will take off from Muscat Airport with 180 passengers on board to Kozhikode at 8 am.

“The flight is the culmination of a sincere desire to support the community, “ said Rayees Ahmed, President of KMCC Oman.

The second flight, by Indigo, will carry 180 Indians to Kozhikode from Muscat International Airport at 10am today. Nearly 48 people who lost their jobs, 50 visitors who were stranded after their visa got over, 42 patients who require urgent medical care, and 11 pregnant women comprise the first batch which was selected

from the priority list with the Indian Embassy, according to Mohammed Raziq, General Secretary, Indian Cultural Federation.

“This is the first of the charter flights being planned by various NGO’s in the country and as many as 15 per cent of the passengers are travelling free while 50 per cent of the passengers are given discounts between 10 to 50 per cent”, Mohammed added. There have been a lot of cries from the stranded passengers to make more flights available so that they can get home. Reports suggest that the intervention of Kerala Muslim Jama’ath and AP Aboobacker Musliar, who was the guest of Oman at the Global Conference on Water in Sharia held in Muscat last year, have fetched the results after elaborate discussions with both the governments of India and Kerala.

OMANI YOUTHS AT THE FOREFRONT IN HELPING NEEDY

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: Thousands of food packets were distributed among the needy in the wilayats like Muttrah, Ruwi, and Hamriya every day during the holy month of Ramadhan, thanks to the meticulous work of the Ministry of Social Development and the youth volunteers who were all committed throughout the holy month to the noble mission of feeding the needy.

The meal programme, part of the 1.4 Million Meals Across the GCC Plan of Sadia, a well-known name in poultry sector, which chose Oman as a partner for the programme as part of strengthening COVID-19 relief efforts, saw hundreds of citizens and residents in various villages get benefitted from the food programme.

"We distributed



various packets of foods among the families of Muttrah, Ruwi and Hamriya every evening knowing that the people can't venture out of Muttrah during the lockdown period", Ammar al Balushi, a member of one of the teams that distributed foods told the Observer.

The food distribution programme was dedicated towards fortifying food security in collaboration with regional government entities and charitable associations where each government

entity and charity received a portion of the food supplies to strengthen their ongoing humanitarian activities.

The meals were prepared by Socat, a leading catering company (Sodexo Oman) and offloaded them to two distribution centres from where the volunteers then collected them and distributed them among the people in need in the wilayats.

"We collaborated with the Oman Ministry of Social Development to provide meals to those in need across the country who are affected by the ongoing pandemic", said Didier Gabriel, Commercial Manager, BRF, one of the largest food companies in the world, in Oman, adding that it is committed to serving the local community in the best way possible at a time like a pandemic.

EXPATRIATES ASSURED OF FREE COVID-19 CARE

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: Expatriates living in the country have been assured of the public health services and free COVID-19 test and treatment.

Addressing the media after the Supreme Committee meeting on Thursday, Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, said no resident of the Sultanate was asked to pay for the cost of treatment.

"We did not require any patient residing in the Sultanate to pay the cost of his treatment and those who can't afford the treatment costs, the government's support will continue to be on them," the minister said.

The cost of treatment of an expatriate in the country, whether he or she is holding a resident or a visit visa, will be borne by either the insurance company or the sponsor.

"In case, either of the two are not able to support the sick, the public health system will assure all possible medical treatment is given to the patient", the minister added.

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BOOKS

Sharpen your English language skills at home

The world has changed and so have the ways in which we communicate and connect with each other. The current need of social distancing is propelling the transformation of the traditional classroom into virtual/digital learning.

As we adapt to a new normal and stay safe at home practising social distancing, it's time to capitalise on the opportunity of availability of time to better ourselves as an individual with the most powerful language that unites people across geographies — English.

Oxford University Press, in its endeavour to promote excellence in education and research by publishing worldwide, recommends the following titles as part of its vertical "English Language Teaching for Adult Learners" to master the language that you require in all that you do.

Whether it's preparing for competitive exams, or minimising common day-to-day errors, or just further sharpening your grammar, this list caters to all.

■ The Elevate Series by Shafali Ray, Samathmika Balaji and Simran Luthra

■ Spoken English for My World by Sabina Pillai

■ Common Errors in Everyday English by Saumya Sharma

■ Be Grammar Ready by John Eastwood

■ The Definitive Guide to IELTS General Training: Preparation and Practice by Audrone Raskauskiene, Irena Ragaisiene, Ramute, Zemaitiene and Santanu Sinha Chaudhuri. — **IAN S**

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

Pío Baroja – the well-known Spanish writer (1872-1956) – described his book The Tree of Knowledge as “the most accomplished and completed of all my books”. And while reading it I couldn't agree more.

The story takes place between 1887 and 1898 and focuses on one main character: Andrés Hurtado. The book is divided into seven chapters, each chapter focuses on a different stage of Hurtado's life starting from being a medical student in a university in Madrid; through his work experience in a fictional farming town called Alcolea in Castilla-de-Mancha; to moving back again to Madrid to work in the slums as a hygiene doctor and ending with his marriage to his old friend Lulu.

The fourth chapter is the densest as it's a philosophical dialogue between Hurtado and his uncle Iturrioz — a medical doctor too — where they discuss society, science and the ideas of Kant and Schopenhauer. Even the title of the book is mentioned in this discussion.

The tree of knowledge was in Eden and its bitter fruit: “Ends up destroying humanity”, according to Iturrioz. Baroja's gives a vivid description of life in Spain during a turning point in its history: Losing the last colonies in Cuba, Guam and the Philippines. He also paints a clear picture of society at that time and



RASHA AL RAISI

the vast gap between the Bourgeoise class in Madrid and the peasants in rural areas. Through his friend Lulu, Hurtado witnesses the life of the Spanish working class in a particular Madrilenian neighbourhood and hear their different stories.

Women maltreatment is also evident in many chapters of the book, from domestic abuse to his own medical experience: Training at the female ward in a mental hospital and later working as a hygiene doctor in brothels, feeling helpless facing the horrors of human trafficking.

Being a physician is a hard job as Hurtado seems to be struggling with two different sides: His colleagues (the corrupted ones and the ones who are too comfortable with the ancient practises) and with his ignorant patients who can't relate to him being a man of science and philosophy and not of God.

Baroja takes the readers in an emotional ride as they accompany Hurtado at different stages of his life: From being the young rebel who condemns his society to the mature man whose ideals clash with the harshness of reality.

Hurtado's pessimism

and sense of futility of life increases at every chapter. His compassion with his patients takes a toll on him and he finally decides to react. One of the things that I enjoyed most while reading the book is the description of different scenes and side characters.

Interesting to know, the novel is based on Baroja's experience as a medical student. He practised medicine for a short time — and managed the family bakery — before becoming a writer. Baroja is considered one of generation '98 — the time of the Spanish-American war — important writers along with other famous names such as Azorín and Unamuno.

He's known for his nine trilogies including: The Basque (1900-1909) and The Struggle for Life (1922-1924). Shortly before his death in October 1956, Hemingway — who considered Baroja a great influence — paid him a visit and said: “Allow me to pay this small tribute to you who taught so much to those of us who wanted to be writers when we were young. I deplore the fact that you have not yet received a Nobel Prize, especially when it was given to so many who deserved it less — like me — who am only an adventurer”. The Tree of Knowledge is a gripping masterpiece till the last page.

The author is a certified skills trainer and the author of: The World According to Bahja. rashabooks@yahoo.com

Teaching children to be grateful

“Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education.” — MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Gratitude is appreciating what we have been given and is one of the core values that is a strength of the heart. Gratitude also facilitates self-control that can play a significant role in learning and achievement for children. Helping children appreciate what they have now will forge a stronger bond with their future selves.

When we feel gratitude, we feel a sense of abundance. When we express gratitude, especially when it is heartfelt, we strengthen our relationships with others. Grateful people are happier and more fulfilled. It makes us more



MASSRAT
SHAIKH

cooperative, patient and trusting. The studies done in psychology on gratitude shows that it works miracles. When we show our appreciation to someone, both the sender and the receiver feel wonderful afterwards.

How do we get our children to express gratitude?
The most important aspect is modelling. When

we as adults are more grateful and show it in our behaviour children will soon follow. Hence an excellent place to start with gratitude is to practice it ourselves.

Encourage children to say thank you to others more often.

Invite children to do something nice for others, to show their appreciation.

Help them list people and things in their life that they are lucky to have.

Make them feel a sense of thankfulness.

Writing and delivering a gratitude letter to someone we have never properly thanked.

As adults, we can talk about the good things that happen to us and highlight those to our children.

Reframe difficulties by highlighting positive aspects.

At dinner, make it a habit to begin by sharing one good thing that happened that day.

Establish a birthday ritual to write notes of appreciation.

Show appreciation and thanks to those who help us like our maids. When we thank them and are grateful for their service, our children are closely watching and will do the same.

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them”
— JOHN F KENNEDY

After a decades-long boom, countless yoga classes around the world are now one of two things: cancelled or online.

While you might initially think this means a more comfortable and discrete environment at home, in practice yoga studios are admitting that you're losing things like a group dynamic, expert advice on your moves and even something as simple as shared soundtrack.

Some studios are highlighting that online lessons afford participants a new privacy. “When you arrive in class, your camera and your microphone will be turned off,” Toronto’s Yogaspace tells people taking part in its yoga lessons on Zoom.

“You may choose to turn them on when invited by the teacher. Or just leave



them off and practice in privacy.”

However not being in the studio comes with the disadvantage that the instructor won't be able to give you advice on your moves, and teachers say they need to ensure people are aligning their bodies correctly and keeping the proper posture so as to avoid injuries.

“I cannot have full access to my students. Because from the camera, we only see one angle,” says Lun Piseth, whose

Nataraj Yoga studio Phnom Penh is among those forced to close in Cambodia.

He had started by limiting the number of people in a class to five, keeping yoga mats farther apart and cleaning everything with an alcohol solution, but that was before authorities ordered studios to close in April.

— dpa

‘WE DON’T HAVE THE SAME ENERGY’: THE TROUBLE WITH ONLINE YOGA LESSONS

Super International SAOC
Call for Ordinary Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The Board of Directors of Super International S.A.O.C. inviting Its Shareholders to attend the AGM Meeting at the given date time and venue.

The Agenda and terms of the meeting are attached to the Shareholder reports. The shareholder has the right to appoint any other person on his behalf to attend the meeting and vote on his behalf on the decisions taken by the Board.

You are requested to be at least half an hour ahead of time in the meeting.

Any enquiry on the agenda can be answered by Mr. Younis Al Namani GSM # 92949673

Meeting Date:
Time:
Venue:

17th June 2020.
12:00 Noon.
Super Plaza – 2nd Floor.
Way No. 4805 – Al Azaaba
Muscat – Sultanate of Oman

ENVIRONMENT

‘Love Earth’: Home-made video campaign marks Environment Day

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: A video campaign bringing together people from more than 80 countries to send out a positive message across at a time people are driven inside of their homes, an idea of a Muscat resident, marked the World Environment Day on June 5 in the Sultanate.

The video message, underlining the necessity of both nature and human beings to merge into one to protect one another without the barriers of language, religion or national boundaries has been well received, according to Rekha Premraj, an expatriate living in Muscat.

‘Love Earth’, the video created by Rekha and her friends, is a symbolic way of being together during these pandemic times and a clarion call to live in harmony with the environment.

People from over 80



countries who have planted trees to raise awareness for the need of protecting and nurturing the environment for universal well-being came together on a video made in Malayalam.

The song, originally written in Malayalam, was sung in thirteen languages including all classical languages of the world and Indian classical languages such as Tamil, Sanskrit, Odia, Telugu, Kannada and

others.

“The World Environment Day has been a major campaign for environmental issues ranging from marine pollution, human overgrowth and raising awareness about global warming, sustainable consumption, and wildlife crime and we did what little we could do to be a part of environment protection”, Rekha told the Observer.

Asokan Ilavalli, a resident in Oman is the lyricist while Sharafudheen Hamilt composed it and Reha Rajesh sang it in 13 languages. Habin K Hari is the video editor. Sound Editing is done by Aji K Krishnan. Suresh Kumar Pillai and Premraj supported the video coordination.

The video, which ends with the planting of trees by the future generations, ends with the thought that the nature we have inherited belongs to our future generation and that it is safe in their hands.

May 2020 was warmest on record

Temperatures soared 10 degrees Celsius above average last month in Siberia, home to much of Earth's permafrost, as the world experienced its warmest May on record, the European Union's climate monitoring network said on Friday.

The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said May 2020 was 0.63 degrees C warmer than the average May from 1981 to 2010, with above average temperatures across parts of Alaska, Europe, North America, South America, swathes of Africa and Antarctica.

Western Siberia in particular has been unusually warm for several months running, C3S senior scientist Freja Vamborg said.

“The really large anomalies started during January, and since then this signal has been quite persistent”, she said by email.

Globally, the average temperature



for the twelve months to May 2020 is close to 1.3 degrees C above preindustrial levels, the benchmark by which global warming is often measured.

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, nearly 200 countries have pledged to cap the rise in Earth average surface temperature to “well below” 2 degrees C, and to 1.5 degrees C if possible.

The heatwave across parts of

Siberia and Alaska will cause particular alarm in regions that were engulfed by huge forest fires last year fuelled by record heat, and where Copernicus has warned that “zombie” blazes smouldering underground may be reigniting.

The monitoring network said that there were “highly anomalous” temperatures over Siberia throughout the March to May period. — **AFP**

‘CARE FOR NATURE’ TO KEEP PEOPLE SAFE AND WELL, LEADERS URGE

BARCELONA: The COVID-19 crisis has exposed how the health of people and nature is intertwined and protecting the planet, its climate and ecosystems will be crucial to preventing further pandemics, the UN chief and political leaders said on Friday.

In a video statement for World Environment Day, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said humans had been harming the natural world “to our own detriment”.

“Habitat degradation and biodiversity loss are accelerating. Climate disruption is getting worse”, he said, noting more frequent and damaging fires, floods, droughts and super-storms.

Oceans are heating and acidifying, harming coral reefs, while the new coronavirus is “raging”, undermining health and livelihoods, he said.

“To care for humanity, we must care for nature”, he added, urging more sustainable consumer habits and decision-making centred around safeguarding the natural world.

The presidents of Colombia, Costa Rica and Switzerland, joined by ministers from a dozen other countries, on Friday launched a “High Ambition



Coalition for Nature and People”, aimed at persuading governments to agree on a global goal to preserve at least 30 per cent of the planet’s lands and oceans by 2030.

This, together with retaining wildernesses and conserving biodiversity, is “a crucial step to help prevent future pandemics and public health emergencies, and lay the foundations for a sustainable global economy”, they said in a statement.

The World Health Organization has said the novel coronavirus probably has its “ecological reservoir” in bats, while scientists say 60 per cent of the infectious human diseases that emerged from 1990 to 2004 came from animals.

The new nature coalition noted that illegal and non-regulated wildlife trade, deforestation and ecosystem destruction can increase the risk of disease transmission from wildlife to people, and urged tighter control.

“This pandemic provides unprecedented and powerful proof that nature

and people share the same fate and are far more closely linked than most of us realised”, they said in a statement.

Johan Rockström, Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, told a coalition event that protecting nature was “about security and health”. The COVID-19 crisis was a predictable manifestation of what scientists branded a “planetary emergency” several months before the pandemic began, he added. — **Reuters**

PROTESTS IN OCCUPIED WEST BANK AGAINST ISRAELI ANNEXATION PLAN

TULKAREM: Palestinians in the West Bank on Friday rallied to mark 53 years of Israeli occupation and protest against the Jewish state’s plans to annex part of the territory. In Tulkarem, in the northern West Bank, dozens of demonstrators waved Palestinian flags and chanted slogans against Israeli settlements and the plans, which could move ahead as soon as next month.

An AFP reporter at the scene said that Israeli troops fired stun grenades and tear gas to repel protesters approaching a military checkpoint.

“This march shows our rejection of any plan of settlement or annexation”, said Iyad Jarada, Secretary of Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas’s Fatah party in the city.

“This is our land and we will defend it with all our power and energy”.

Near Tubas, also in the northern West Bank, a protester was wounded in the head by a rubber bullet fired by Israeli forces, the Palestinian Red Crescent said. Further protests were taking place in the West Bank cities of Ramallah, Nablus, Jericho and the Jordan Valley, which could be annexed as part of the Israeli plan.

In the southern West Bank city of Hebron hundreds gathered, chanting

against Israel’s occupation.

Palestinians are vocal in their opposition to US President Donald Trump’s Middle East plan, which gives Israel the green light to annex Jewish settlements and other strategic territory in the West Bank.

Such annexations would violate international law and likely inflame tensions in the volatile region.

After more than a year of political deadlock and two inconclusive elections, veteran Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his nearest rival Benny Gantz in April joined in a coalition government. — **AFP**

WORLD

IN BRIEF

Shocker! Japan firms' electrifying fabric zaps bacteria

TOKYO: It's a shocking idea: A fabric that can produce small amounts of electricity powered by movement, allowing your clothing to zap microbes and bacteria as you go about your day. A pair of Japanese firms say that's exactly what their new product can do, and are touting it for everything from curbing body odour to offering the ideal material for protective gear like face masks. The fabric jointly developed by electronics company Murata Manufacturing and Teijin Frontier, dubbed PIECLEX, generates power from the expansion and contraction of the material itself, including when worn by someone moving around.

Thailand to tout "trusted" tourism in coronavirus era

BANGKOK: Thailand is positioning itself as a trusted destination for international tourists after travel restrictions ease, capitalising on its relative success in containing the coronavirus outbreak, industry officials say. The Southeast Asian country, the first to report a virus case outside of China, wants to build on its reputation and remake its popular image as a destination for big tour groups. "After COVID eases, we plan to refresh the country's image to a trusted destination where tourists will have peace of mind", Tanes Petsuwan, the Tourism Authority of Thailand's (TAT) Deputy Governor for marketing and communications, said.

COVID-19 pandemic 'under control' in France

PARIS: The COVID-19 pandemic is now "under control" in France, the head of the government's scientific advisory council said on Friday, as the country cautiously lifts a lockdown imposed in March. "We can reasonably say the virus is currently under control", Jean-Francois Delfraissy told France Inter radio.

— Agencies



Scientists around the world are racing to develop and test a coronavirus vaccine and the UN said it must be available to everyone. — AFP

GLOBAL VACCINES PROGRAMME GETS \$8.8 BILLION SHOT IN THE ARM

LONDON: Governments around the world on Thursday pledged \$8.8 billion for global vaccines alliance Gavi to help immunisation programmes disrupted by coronavirus, prompting calls for global cooperation to ensure a potential COVID-19 vaccine is available to all.

The online meeting beat a target to raise \$7.4 billion to provide vaccines at a much reduced cost to 300 million children worldwide over the next five years.

More than 50 countries took part as well as individuals such as billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates, whose foundation pledged \$1.6 billion.

Gavi also launched a new initiative to purchase potential COVID-19 vaccines, scale-up production and support delivery to developing nations, which raised

\$567 million in seed money.

"Together, we rise to fulfil the greatest shared endeavour of our lifetimes -- the triumph of humanity over disease", said British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who hosted the summit.

"Today we make the choice to unite, to forge a path of global cooperation".

Scientists around the world are racing to develop and test a coronavirus vaccine and United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said it must be available to everyone.

"A vaccine must be seen as a global public good -- a people's vaccine, which a growing number of world leaders are calling for", he said in a video message.

There needs to be "global solidarity to ensure that every person, everywhere, has access".

The pandemic has exposed new ruptures in international cooperation, notably with US President Donald Trump's decision to pull out of the World Health Organization (WHO).

But Gavi Chief Executive Seth Berkley insisted there must be a "global perspective".

"At the end of the day, if you have large outbreaks of COVID anywhere in the world, it threatens the world", he said.

The United States pledged \$1.16 billion to Gavi's fundraising drive, and Trump sent a recorded message to the conference.

"As the coronavirus has shown, there are no borders. It doesn't discriminate", he said.

"It's mean, it's nasty. But we can all take care of it together... we will work hard. We will work strong". — AFP



Does drug touted by Trump work on COVID-19?

KATE KELLAND AND ALISTAIR SMOUT

Scientists are resuming COVID-19 trials of the now world-famous drug hydroxychloroquine, as confusion continues to reign about the anti-malarial hailed by US President Donald Trump as a potential “game-changer” in fighting the pandemic.

The renewed research push follows widespread criticism of the quality of data in a study that on Thursday was retracted. The article, originally published in influential medical journal The Lancet, had found high risks associated with the treatment.

The World Health Organization, which last week paused trials when The Lancet study showed the drug was tied to an increased risk of death in hospitalised patients, said on Wednesday it was ready to resume trials.

The WHO’s change of mind is “a wise decision”, according to Martin Landray, co-lead scientist on the Recovery trial, the world’s largest research project into existing drugs that might be repurposed to treat COVID-19 patients.

“What all this episode really reflects is that without randomised trials, there is huge uncertainty,” said Landray, a professor of medicine and epidemiology at Oxford university.

Randomised studies are the gold standard in research, randomly assigning a treatment to one group of people and a dummy to another group so that the two can be compared. The Lancet study was a “retrospective observational” study, using a data set from an analytics firm, to see what effects the drug had had on some COVID-19 patients, compared to those who did not get it. — Reuters

Who owns the virus? Pandemic sparks debate on data sharing

RINA CHANDRAN

The coronavirus pandemic has rekindled a long-standing debate on whether viruses are a nation’s property, and if countries are obliged to share biological samples and scientific data that are key to developing life-saving treatments and vaccines.

More than 6.5 million people are reported to have been infected globally, according to a Reuters tally.

China, where the novel coronavirus emerged late last year, shared the viral genetic sequence data (GSD) with the World Health Organization (WHO) in early January.

That enabled laboratories around the world to start developing test kits, medications and vaccines. Since then, however, a war of words has erupted around who gets access to vaccines and treatments first, with outrage over reports the US administration tried to gain access to a potential vaccine being developed by a German firm.

“It is morally wrong to think that someone has a stronger claim to a vaccine because they happen to live in a rich country,” said Mark Eccleston-Turner, co-author of a recent paper on the issue of viral sovereignty.

The international legal system encourages countries to look at viruses as their “sovereign resources that can be bargained and bartered away in exchange for future health goods such as vaccines,” he said.

“We need to move away from this model to one where viruses, and the health goods which are developed are seen as public goods, which everyone in the world has equal claim and access to,” said Eccleston-Turner, a lecturer at Britain’s Keele University.

Countries have fought before over sharing virus samples and data, and access to vaccines, notably during the Aids crisis and the Ebola outbreak. In 2007 Indonesia stopped sharing virus samples of the H5N1 avian flu virus, on concerns that wealthy countries were developing vaccines based on those strains, which they would then sell at high prices.

Indonesia resumed sharing of virus samples after the WHO vowed to help boost vaccine production in poorer countries, but the face-off reiterated the persistent challenge of sharing scientific data and biological samples.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation

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BUSINESS



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Oman vows to support any Opec+ extension of output cuts

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Ahead of Saturday's crunch talks by Opec members and its allies on a further extension of global production curbs, the Sultanate of Oman has announced that it will back any decision that will help shore up international oil prices.

Non-Opec member Oman has already slashed around 200,000 barrels per day (bpd) of its crude output for May and June 2020 as part of an historic pact reached in April by Opec and its allies (together known as Opec+) to slash global production and end a damaging supply glut.

On Friday, a top official of Oman's Ministry of Oil and Gas said the Sultanates will lend its weight to any move by global producers that will help reduce inventories and thereby boost oil prices.

"We are always supportive of any decision adopted by Opec and Opec+," said Ali Abdullah al Riyami, Director General of Oil & Gas Marketing, who will be in attendance, along with Dr Mohammed bin Hamed al Rumhy, Minister of Oil and Gas, at the virtual meeting scheduled at 6pm (Oman time) on Saturday.

Speaking to the Observer, Al Riyami said the Opec+ meeting will primarily focus on a key issue: a further extension of the 9.7 million bpd output cut agreed by producers in April.

"The main subject on the agenda is the extension of the production cut, as well as the conformity of Opec+ producers (to agreed cuts)



Dr Mohammed al Rumhy



Ali Abdullah al Riyami

KEY TALKS: Production conformity figures for the Sultanate stand at an impressive 102 per cent for May 2020



for the month of May. There are some countries pushing for an extension of one month (covering July), while

there are others who think an extension for two months would be better. So the main issue is whether to agree to

an extension of one month or two months or none at all."

Last April, Opec's 13 members joined hands with 10 non-member producers including Russia, to cut output by 9.7 million bpd during May – June 2020. The cuts will be further eased to 7.7 million bpd between July and December 2020, and then to 5.8 million bpd between January 2021 and April 2022.

Oman, for its part, agreed to shoulder a cut of 200,000 bpd for May and June 2020, followed by a reduction of 161,000 bpd from July to December 2020. This will be further pared to 121,000 bpd for the remainder of the accord from January 2021 to April 2022.

Significantly, conformity figures for Oman stand at an impressive 102 per cent for May, according to the official.

Asked about the beneficial impacts of even a brief extension in the production curbs, Al Riyami added: "Although the proposed extension is for one or two months, the broader objective is to reduce the overhang in crude volumes produced in the past that are currently in storage. The idea is to reduce these volumes in storage, which will automatically improve oil prices. This is basically the goal."

Meanwhile, the price of DME Oman—the Sultanate's crude benchmark—jumped \$1.53 per barrel to settle at \$41.49 per barrel on the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) on Friday as major international benchmarks notched gains ahead of Saturday's key talks.

Oil markets rebalance, China leads the demand recovery

The coronavirus pandemic saw oil demand tumble to multi-decade lows in the second quarter of 2020 as around 90 per cent of the world's population came under some form of lockdown or social distancing.

Oil prices collapsed to 20-year lows in April but a combination of record production cuts led by the OPEC+ cuts and an upswing in demand has underpinned the strong recovery during May.

Historically the market would look towards the North Sea Brent price as the lead indicator for any price recovery, but benchmarks in Asia have been the clear market leaders during the price rebound – fueled by China's recovery to near-normal demand levels.

Asia price recovery

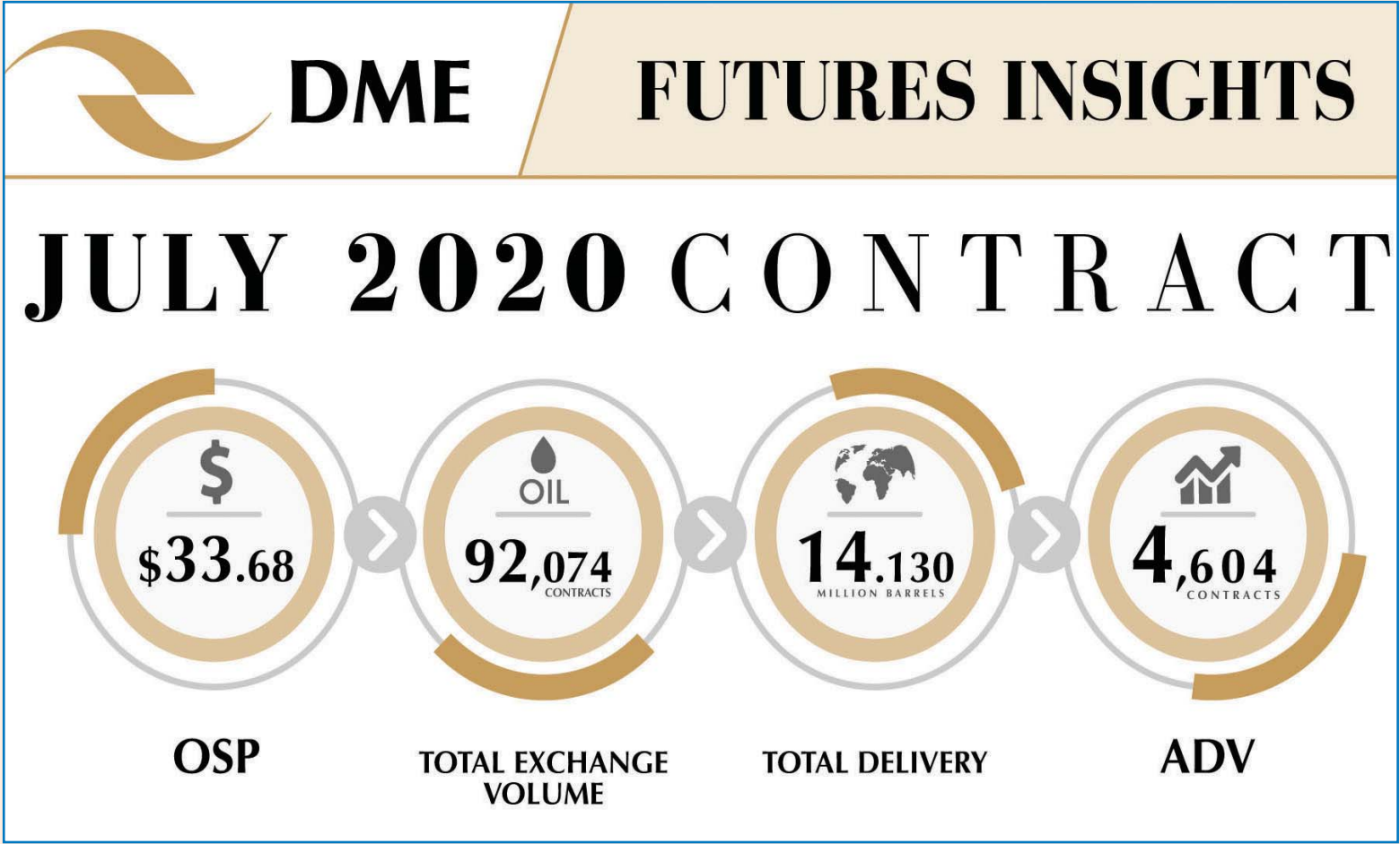
During the first half of May both Brent and DME Oman futures for July delivery were hovering in the low \$30s per barrel, reflecting the rebound from the sub \$20/b levels seen during April.

But several Middle East crude oil grades, including Oman, can be delivered against China's INE sour crude contract. This means that crude loading in the Middle East during July could be delivered against the August INE contract, when factoring in shipping times to China.

August INE has been trading close to the \$40/b mark since the start of May, opening up arbitrage opportunities for Middle East barrels into China. In addition to Oman, other deliverable Middle East sour crudes include Iraq's Basrah Light, Abu Dhabi's Upper Zakum and Qatar Marine.

Until now physical deliveries into INE have been very low, with most contracts closed out before expiry. However, the expansion of storage facilities available for INE deliver has increased the likelihood of more contracts settled physically, according to traders.

According to figures published by INE, Basrah Light accounts for the largest share in INE bonded tanks, but Oman, Upper Zakum and Qatar Marine are also in-tank. Reuters noted that INE-warranted capacity has increased to 57 million barrels



in Q2, including adding tanks from Sinopec, PetroChina and private refiner Shandong Hongrun Group.

Basrah Light crude for June loading traded at a record premium of \$4.70/b above the Official Selling Price (OSP), in part reflecting arbitrage possibilities into China.

China leads demand recovery

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic the world was consuming just above 100 million barrels per day (mbd) of oil, a figure that includes NGLs (natural gas liquids) and condensate. Reports put demand destruction at the peak as high 30 million bpd, and second-quarter 2020 lost demand is expected to average at around 14 million bpd.

But the low prices have led to a huge buying spree from China, hence prices in China leading the price recovery - and in turn underpinning prices across the Middle East. Record cuts from the OPEC+ producer group have also had a major impact on reestablishing the supply/demand equilibrium.

Bloomberg counted some 117 crude oil tankers en route to ports in China during late May, which the report noted could add up to more than 200 million barrels of cargo.

OilX, which provides oil data analytics counted Chinese imports at near record levels over 11 million b/d, or a monthly increase of more than 1 mil b/d. In its monthly China Crude Import Tracker, OilX noted the following key takeaways.

Key takeaways:

- May crude imports rebounded in

May to 11.11 mb/d, close to record highs, after a monthly increase of over 1.2 mb/d

- Although we do observe a steady recovery in throughout in Chinese refineries, the increase in imports was partially driven by Shanghai INE crude futures trading at a premium over other deliverable grades
- Furthermore, independent refineries have remained active in crude oil procurement most likely due to lower crude oil prices

The majority of Oman crude oil is refined in China, which helped prices rebound faster than its North Sea benchmark counterpart. Brent has played catch-up with Oman during the latter part of May but in early June Oman was still trading at around \$2/b over Brent, with European demand recovery more sluggish than Asia.

The strong price recovery in the second half of May has led to a more positive outlook for oil in 2020, with a number of analysts raising price forecasts for the rest of the year.

Morgan Stanley expects crude prices to recover to \$40/b later in the year, forecasting a sharp rebound in demand. The investment bank expects global demand back at 97 million mbd, leading to an undersupply of 4 to 6 million bpd.

But what is clear from recent trends, the global oil market will increasingly look to Asia and the Middle East for price direction, and Europe will become the follower.

[Courtesy: Dubai Mercantile Exchange]

BUSINESS

OPEC+ to meet on extending cuts, pushing for compliance

MOSCOW/DUBAI: OPEC and its allies led by Russia will meet on Saturday (today) to discuss extending record oil production cuts and to approve a new approach that aims to force laggards such as Iraq and Nigeria to comply better with the existing curbs.

The producers known as OPEC+ previously agreed to cut supply by 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) during May and June to prop up prices which collapsed due to the coronavirus crisis. Cuts have been due to taper to 7.7 million bpd from July to December.

Two OPEC+ sources said Saudi Arabia and Russia had agreed to extend the deeper cuts until the end of July but said Riyadh was also pushing to extend them until the end of August.

Benchmark Brent crude, which slumped below \$20 a barrel in April, was up about 3% on Friday to trade at a three-month high above \$41. Prices had slipped from recent highs earlier in the week on uncertainty about when OPEC+ would meet.

Saturday's video conferences would start with talks between members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries at 1200 GMT and would be followed by a gathering of the OPEC+ group at 1400 GMT, two OPEC+ sources said.

Three OPEC sources said an extension to cuts was contingent on high



A man fixes the logo of OPEC at the company's headquarters in Vienna. — Reuters

compliance. They said countries that produced above quota in May and June must promise to adhere to targets and agree to compensate for any earlier overproduction by cutting more in July, August and September.

The energy minister of the United Arab Emirates, Suhail al Mazrouei, called for improved compliance in a

letter sent to OPEC+ and seen by Reuters.

"As a representative of the UAE, I find it disappointing and unacceptable that some of the largest producers with capacity like (Saudi Arabia) and Russia comply 100% or more while other major producers do less than 50%," he wrote. — Reuters

Global airlines add flights; US carriers target the great outdoors

CHICAGO: Airlines from America to Australia are ramping up flights in June and July, boosting hopes for a pickup in tourist traffic even as bigger-spending business and global travel remains sluggish during the ongoing pandemic.

American Airlines and United Airlines each announced more flights to key US business and leisure destinations where national parks and outdoor recreational spaces are reopening after months of lockdowns and travel curbs, sending their shares sharply higher.

Chicago-based United is



United Airlines passenger jets are seen at Newark Liberty International Airport, New Jersey. — Reuters

adding more non-stop flights as well as servicing markets like Aspen,

Colorado and Jackson Hole, Wyoming where it said "social distancing is a natu-

ral feature" in the scenic landscapes.

"Leisure travel has been the most missed activity during lockdown across age and income demographics, even more so than things like restaurants," said Jason Guggenheim of Boston Consulting Group, which has surveyed consumers in the United States and Europe.

"But it's going to take business travel longer to come back," he said, noting work-from-home models will remain in place for some time.

— Reuters

BUSINESS

ECB boosts pandemic stimulus to \$1.52 trillion



The euro area economy is experiencing an unprecedented contraction. There has been an abrupt drop in economic activity as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the measures taken to contain it.



CHRISTINE LAGARDE,
ECB PRESIDENT

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank approved a bigger-than-expected expansion of its stimulus package on Thursday to prop up an economy plunged by the coronavirus pandemic into its worst recession since World War Two.

Just months after a first raft of crisis measures, the ECB said it would raise bond purchases by 600 billion euros (\$674 billion) to 1.35 trillion euros and that purchases would run at least until end-June 2021, six months longer than first planned.

It also said it would reinvest proceeds from maturing bonds in its pandemic emergency purchase scheme at least until the end of 2022. ECB President Christine Lagarde (pictured) scotched speculation that the bank could follow the U.S. Federal Reserve in buying sub-investment grade bonds, however, saying that option was not even discussed by policymakers.

The announcement, which comes just weeks after Germany's Constitutional Court ruled that the ECB had already been exceeding its mandate with a long-standing asset purchase programme, prompted a rally in the euro and bond markets.

"Today's easing measures were another illustration that the ECB means business and stands ready to do whatever is necessary to help the euro area survive the corona crisis in one piece. The ECB will do its part, and it hopes the governments will do their part," Nordea analysts said in a note. The bank dramatically revised downward its baseline scenario for euro zone output this year to a contraction of 8.7% from the modest 0.8% rise it had forecast only in March.

It predicted a partial rebound with growth of 5.2% next year and 3.3% in 2022 but Lagarde told a news conference that signs of any recovery so far were "tepid" and that risks to its baseline projection were on the downside. — Reuters

SPORTS

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: Talented Omani bowling star Musab al Adawi is regarded as the future of bowling in the Sultanate after his exploits in the game.

The Bahla lad made his debut three years ago but Al Adawi has impressed all to become one of the main members of the senior national team.

“Earlier, I was not much interested in bowling at all. However, I had leisure time during summer and in 2017 I decided to take part in a three-month summer bowling camp. After completion of the camp, I continued my journey with bowling as I spent my weekends at bowling centres with friends. In December every year, Oman Bowling Committee (OBC) organises a pre-qualification tournament to select the top players in the national team. I got selected to the national team from my initial participation in the qualification tournament”, he told Oman Daily Observer.

Al Adawi, who is awaiting the results of the third secondary school on June 15, explained that he balanced his school education and bowling.

“Time management is an important factor which I depend on to organise my daily programme striking a balance between my studies and playing my favourite sport”, he added.

MEDAL HUNT

He had begun the medal hunt for Oman in 2018 as he won the silver medal (team category) in the Arab Championship in Egypt. In the next edition, he claimed the silver medal as well (doubles category). At Bahrain



Open bowling championship, Musaab clinched the top honours in 2020 while he grabbed the silver medal at Dubai Open bowling tournament.

The 18-year-old bowler is now the top Omani player by winning several local titles. He won the monthly local bowling trophy for four consecutive years while he finished second and third for seven times. The youngster dominated the domestic club competitions as he won the team titles in 2018 and 2019. Musab won the bronze and silver medals at Ramdhan bowling contest in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

“Bowling in the Sultanate needs more media coverage and we should bring top ranking players in the world to play in the Sultanate Open tournaments. My aim is to claim Asian medal and then to raise the Sultanate flag at world bowling high class events”, he signed off.

OMAN’S STAR BOWLER HOPES TO MAKE HIS MARK

ENGLAND'S BURNS WARY OF WINDIES

LONDON: England batsman Rory Burns believes the West Indies will give the hosts a “stiff test” come next month’s eagerly anticipated series. The three matches, still subject to final clearance from the British government, are set to mark the return of Test match cricket as the sport emerges from months of lockdown caused by the global coronavirus pandemic. Surrey opener Burns will be looking to regain his place at the top of the order after being sidelined since January with ankle ligament damage suffered during a warm-up game of football in Cape Town. The 29-year-old left-hander knows better than most not to underestimate the West Indies, having been a Test fledgling when England lost 2-1 in the Caribbean in 2018.

“The last time we played them they won, they’re certainly no slouches,” Burns told Sky’s Cricket Show. “Their bowling attack caused us a lot of problems — they’re very skilful and have got some pace,” added Burns, who averaged a modest 24.16 as the West Indies regained the Wisden Trophy. “There’s a lot of good cricketers there and think it’s going to be a stiff test no matter what.” The West Indies are due to arrive in England via a charter flight on Tuesday, with a 25-man squad comprising 14 front-line players and 11 designated reserves. Of those originally selected, only batsmen Darren Bravo and Shimron Hetmyer, together with fast-bowling all-rounder Keemo Paul, have decided not to travel because of COVID-19.



‘MINDS AT EASE’ But Burns said he and his team-mates had been reassured by the England and Wales Cricket Board’s plan to create a ‘bio-secure’ bubble at both the Ageas Bowl,

which stages the series opener from July 8, and Emirates Old Trafford, the venue for the second and third Tests. “People’s minds can run away with themselves,” Burns said. — **AFP**

Surrey hail fans after India ‘rollover’

LONDON: Surrey have praised the “passion and loyalty” of British cricket fans after revealing 85 per cent of seat-holders for what should have been this week’s first Test between England and the West Indies at their Kia Oval headquarters have decided to roll over their tickets to next year’s England-India Test at the south London ground. The West Indies opener, the first of a three-match series, has been delayed a month by the coronavirus and will take place behind closed doors at Hampshire’s Ageas Bowl, a ground with an on-site hotel that is considered to be a more bio-secure venue than the Oval. Ticket-holders were offered the opportunity to either claim a full refund or move their tickets to next year’s match, retaining the same seats for the same day’s play. Surrey said that, as of Thursday,



only 15 per cent fans had opted to get their money back. Crowds for Tests in England have held up well compared to elsewhere

in the world, with India matches in the UK often well-supported thanks to the Asian community in Britain. “The interest in next year’s India Test match is a real testament to the passion and loyalty of cricket fans in this country,” said Oval managing director Charlie Hodgson. “Whilst it’s incredibly disappointing for everyone that the Test match summer is not beginning at the Kia Oval, there are currently bigger things we all need to work together to achieve.” The Oval staged the first Test match in England, against Australia in 1880 and Emily Clark, Surrey’s head of sales and marketing, said: “Next year’s Test match — which will be the final Test in a hugely exciting series between England and India — is sure to be another in the long history of great Test matches played at the ground.” — **AFP**

SPORTS



LIVERPOOL POISED TO WIN PREMIER LEAGUE AT ANFIELD

LONDON: Premier League leaders Liverpool could claim a first title for 30 years at Anfield after the initial batch of fixtures of the restart was announced on Friday.

Jurgen Klopp's men, with a commanding 25-point lead at the top of the table, were just two wins away from clinching the title before coronavirus forced the suspension of football in March. Liverpool's first match back is against Everton on June 21. The Merseyside derby is due to take place at Goodison Park, less than a mile from Anfield, but a venue has not been confirmed by the Premier League.

Crystal Palace will then visit Anfield three days later.

Wins in both of those matches would guarantee Liverpool's first English top-flight title since 1990.

But if Manchester City lose at

home to Arsenal on June 17, the Reds would be champions if they beat Everton. Liverpool City Council's safety advisory group will meet next week to make a decision on whether the game can go ahead at Goodison or should be moved to a neutral venue.

All remaining 92 Premier League games this season will be played behind closed doors, but there are fears that hosting the game in Liverpool could encourage supporters to congregate around stadiums. Palace's trip to Anfield will kick off at 2015 local time (1915 GMT). The only other match that could be moved to a neutral venue from the first three rounds of fixtures is Liverpool's visit to City on July 2. The mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson, voiced fears that "there would be many thousands of people

who would turn up outside Anfield" on the day Liverpool's long wait for a league title was ended.

That has been disputed by the club, who said they have engaged with supporters' groups to make sure social-distancing guidelines are followed. Aston Villa will host Sheffield United in the first match of "Project Restart", followed by Arsenal's trip to City on June 17.

Manchester United's visit to Tottenham will spearhead the first full round of matches spread over four days from June 19 to 22.

Premier League chief executive Richard Masters said: "We know it won't be the same without our loyal supporters in stadiums but, together with our broadcast partners, we are able to ensure fans can watch or listen to each match live from home." — AFP