

1976

The formerly Spanish territory of **Western Sahara**, under the auspices of the Polisario Front declares independence as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

1988

Sumgait pogrom: The Armenian community in Sumgait, Azerbaijan is targeted in a violent pogrom.

1991

Gulf War: U.S. President **George H. W. Bush** announces that "Kuwait is liberated".



2002

Ryanair Flight 296 catches fire at London Stansted Airport. Subsequent investigations criticize Ryanair's handling of the evacuation.



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General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Special Envoy of the late Sultan Qaboos. He also headed the main committee of the Oman Vision 2040, where he gained insight into the country's past, present and future, as well as a thorough understanding of its citizens' needs and the importance of national capacity-building and international dialogue.

Sultan Haitham has always supported the principles that governed Oman's international relations under his predecessor, such as non-interference in other countries' affairs, being a good neighbour, peaceful conflict resolution and promoting security and stability around the world.

On February 23, Sultan Haitham addressed the nation and reassured us of his and his

team's commitment to carrying on the vision of the late Sultan Qaboos. Omanis across the country felt a deep sense of pride as our new leader outlined his priorities for the coming months and years that are poised to usher in a new era of prosperity for our nation.

He stressed the importance of reviewing public finances and using them for the benefit of all Omanis. He expressed his intention to reduce public debt, which rose by almost a staggering 60 percent last year, compared to 15 per cent in 2015.

Furthermore, Sultan Haitham announced his plans to restructure government-owned companies and public sector entities with the aim of maximising their ability to serve the people of Oman and drive socio-economic growth.

He promised to tackle the challenges related to youth unemployment, and noted that the education, research and development sectors will be among the focus areas of the government's improvement efforts.

We are confident that Sultan Haitham will succeed in leading Oman's sustainable development journey that builds on our illustrious history. We convey to him our best wishes and high hopes as he assumes his strategic role to steer Oman and the wider Arab region towards a prosperous future.

Next step in reviving ecosystems



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than previously estimated.

That is why countries such as the UAE have been taking the lead and there are partners ready to support its own efforts.

Globally, however, we need to do more. We have already fallen behind in our globally set targets to halt the decline of plant and animal species and to help ecosystems recover.

As Razan Al Mubarak, managing director of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, warned this month, "business cannot carry on as usual. We all need to act. This includes politicians, scientists, environmentalists, everyone must make a difference in our day-to-day lives".

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ments.

Luckily, a change is likely to come at the both the local level and on a more bilateral basis. Cities, for example, are taking on more of a leadership role in the absence of faster action from national governments.

On an individual level, too, there is more commitment than ever before. It is hard to imagine who would actually want landmark deals such as the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit global warming to fail. Perhaps it is those people who believe that shorter-term developments are worth more of our time, such as those related to migration or economy. They should know that these problems are all connected in some way to the world around us and the consequences of how the planet is changing as a result of climate change, including food shortages and extreme weather.

While I may not fully grasp the mechanics of how climate change can have such an immediate impact on my day-to-day life, I am willing to take the short leap of faith that it does, and respond in the right way. This is much like how I do not quite understand how electricity actually works but am still willing to switch on the lights when I enter a dark room.

At local, national and global levels, there will continue to be those great people who take the necessary and collaborative action needed, no matter what doubts they may have, about the proximity of the threat we face. They deserve our support.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



Consignment (15 tonnes) of Indian medical relief for #COVID19 lands in Wuhan. Strong expression of our solidarity with the Chinese people at this difficult time. Thank you @IAF_MCC and @EOIBeijing for your efforts.

@DrSJaishankar

02



Hats off to the hard-working and talented Chinese nation: your commitment to exterminate even the reasons of #CoronavirusOutbreak are unparalleled and efforts you've made are unfounded in the history. God helps those who help themselves. You are born to succeed in every bitterness

@asimnyazee

03



If a coronavirus outbreak occurs, it'll first hit poor, hard working Americans in big cities who use subways, buses, and other crowded public transportation networks to go to work. We're all in this together, which is why universal healthcare is so important. #CoronavirusOutbreak

@eugenegu

04



U.S. intelligence officials are concerned that their latest findings about Russian election interference are being distorted and weaponized for political gain by both sides, current and former officials told NBC News.

@NBCNightlyNews

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

The Covid-19 saga



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The appearance of Coronavirus (Covid-19) in various Middle East countries including the GCC countries indicate that no country can be immune to the disease and that it is only through co-operation that the virus can be contained. Governments need to be transparent and intensify awareness campaigns regarding the methods of prevention and the precautions required that people should take.

Lately, people returning from Iran rather than China have become the centres of interest when it comes to screening arrivals in the GCC countries, after several passengers proved positive for the virus among those coming from the secretive state.

Two professionals are working round the clock, who are receiving public attention. First, the health officials are devising ways of prevention, disseminate awareness campaigns and treat patients at clinics and hospitals. Second, the economist, sitting behind their computers are calculate the economic repercussions of the spread of the disease and devise ways of mitigating the effects.

However, politician are spoiling the good works of the two professionals by deliberating denying the existence of the virus in their respective countries and thus delaying the response to such a pandemic. What is required at this critical time is to formulate policy of transparency, inform the public of the reality on the ground, and take the necessary measures to contain the virus.

Rogue politicians consider the existence of the virus in their respective countries as a political embarrassment, while it is a public health issue, which must be confronted head on, inform the public and request assistance from the international organizations for expert advice and material support. Because at the end of the day, the disease is going to affect virtually all countries in the world and no one is safe.

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Opacity rather than transparency is one of the reasons for the spread of the virus in Iran. The Iranian regime under reported the morbidity and mortality rates due to the coronavirus. The international community's attention was fixed on the city of Wuhan in China, the epicenter of the virus but equally important is the city of Qom in Iran, which has witnessed an exponential increase of people infected with the virus.

Iran is accused of underreporting cases. Last week, an Iranian MP, Ahmad Amirabadi Farhani has come forward and claimed that the coronavirus has killed at

least 50 people in the city of Qom and 250 patients quarantined. If these figures are correct, Iran has the highest proportion of deaths to confirmed cases. It would be 10 times than China where the disease was first reported. (Arab News, Feb 25, 2020). However, Iran seems to have denied or deliberately hidden the figures. This opaque policy aggravates the spread of the disease.

Containment of the virus and treatment of patients requires advanced equipment and excellent health services. Countries with poor health service delivery systems need international support. In Iran where the country is under economic sanctions, enough budget may not be available to diagnose and treat patients. The government need to be transparent in dealing with the virus and openly request international assistance.

For the GCC countries, Iran's epidemiological status of the virus is important. Above all, we have people who travel to Iran for religious purposes who can be both the victims and the vectors of the virus when they come back home.

Bahrain is mobilizing all its efforts to contain the spread of the virus. The setting up of a quarantine (isolation quarters), the extensive and intensive awareness campaigns it is promoting, announcing the number of patients tested positive, all conform to international standards, which deserves appreciation.

The main segment in the campaign to contain the virus, which plays key role, is the public. All the pieces of advice given by the health ministry, strictly followed and suspected family members that show early signs of the disease should be reported to the Health ministry's call centres as soon as possible. Travellers and businesspeople should limit or postponing travels to countries considered new epicentres of the virus including Iran, Italy and South Korea.