

P12

POLISH
DELIGHT



P15

INDIA'S FUEL
DEMAND POSTS
FIRST MONTHLY
GAIN SINCE JUNE



P17

PRAGUE CAFE HITS
SWEET SPOT WITH
CORONAVIRUS-
SHAPED DESSERT



OMAN

Rare honour for
Omani engineer

MUSCAT: A young Omani engineer from Muscat has been chosen as the Ambassador for World Literacy Foundation (WLF) from a pool of 4,800 applicants to represent the Sultanate. Ali al Bahrani, 24, is the only Omani to get this honour to be part of a global initiative to advocate and raise funds for literacy in the world. **DETAILS ON P3**

First shipping line
with Iraqi port

MUSCAT: ASYAD Group has launched the first shipping line between Oman ports and Iraq's Umm Qasr Port. This move bolsters the group's efforts to expand the maritime transport network between Oman and the world; facilitate cross-regional trade; boost direct export and import and provide logistics solutions to its customers. **DETAILS ON P13**

WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT

MAX: 35°C
MIN: 25°C

SALALAH

MAX: 32°C
MIN: 24°C

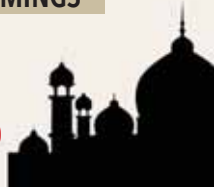
NIZWA

MAX: 38°C
MIN: 23°C

SUNRISE 06.02 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR: 04:47
DHUHR: 11:59
ASR: 15:20
MAGHRIB: 17:50
ISHA: 19:00



STERN WARNING
AGAINST VIOLATIONS

NIGHT LOCKDOWN FROM TODAY

ONA & KABEER YOUSUF

The Public Prosecution will act sternly against the violators of the decisions issued by the Supreme Committee tasked with handling the developments resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the decision issued on Friday banning movement and closing of public places, beaches and commercial stores from 8 pm to 5 am from October 11 until 24.

This was stated by Mohammed bin Said al Yahaei, Assistant Attorney General, Director-General of Public Prosecution in Muscat Governorate and Chairman of the committee tasked with investigation into public health cases.

Al Yahaei affirmed that legal action will be taken against the violators who will be referred to the Public Prosecution. They will be referred to the relevant courts and their names and photos will

be published in the media as per as the Supreme Committee's decision.

The Public Prosecution called on citizens and residents to fully comply with the Supreme Committee's decisions to serve the public interest.

ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Citizens and residents must produce valid documents while travelling to and from the airport as night lockdown begins tonight, the authorities said.

"The night lockdown from October 11 to 24 will not affect those who are commuting to the airport for a journey or returning from a destination or any emergency public service or transportation of essential supplies", a source at the Royal Oman Police (ROP) told the *Observer*, adding that there wouldn't be any room for exceptions to pass through the checkpoints between the governorates.

TURN TO P2



North Korea
unveils 'monster'
ballistic missile

SEOUL: North Korea unveiled previously unseen intercontinental ballistic missiles at an unprecedented predawn military parade on Saturday that showcased the country's long-range weapons for the first time in two years.

Analysts said the missile, which was shown on a transporter vehicle with 11 axes, would be one of the largest road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) in the world if it becomes operational.

"This missile is a monster", said Melissa Hanham, Deputy Director of the Open Nuclear Network. Also displayed were the Hwasong-15, which is the longest-range missile ever tested by North Korea, and what appeared to be a new submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM).

Ahead of the parade, which was held to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of its ruling Workers' Party, officials in South Korea and the United States said Kim Jong Un could use the event to unveil a new "strategic weapon" as promised earlier this year.

A senior US administration official called the display of the ICBM "disappointing" and called on the government to negotiate to achieve a complete denuclearisation. **DETAILS ON P7**



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Crabs are key to ecology of Oman

CRUCIAL NURSERY GROUND: Barr Al Hikman Reserve is home to about 30 species of crabs

MUSCAT/AMSTERDAM: A study conducted by researchers from the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ) and Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) found that the intertidal mudflats at the Barr Al Hikman Nature Reserve are home to almost 30 crab species.

The study, which was published in the *Journal of Hydrobiology and the Science Daily* website, concluded that Barr Al Hikman, a nature reserve in the

Wilayat of Mahout in Al Wusta Governorate, is crucial nursery grounds for numerous crab species which are vital element of the ecology, as well as the regional economy.

The study recommended that these significant functions of crab should be taken into account considering the increasing human pressure at the nature reserve.

Barr Al Hikman Nature Reserve is home to the blue swimming crabs (*Portunus segnis*) which are caught by the local fishermen, the study said,



adding that this crab uses the mudflats of Barr Al Hikman as nursery grounds.

The counts of the study show that there are millions of these

crabs in Barr Al Hikman. They are food to hundreds of thousands of birds, both migrating species, as well as birds breeding in the area, such as crab plovers.

The crabs live in holes in the ground. They forage on the seagrass beds that are still abundant in Barr Al Hikman. Apart from the high primary

production of algae in Barr Al Hikman, this reserve is also well suited for crabs because of the vastness of the area, the study said. — ONA

Hotels told to keep guests off beaches

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has asked hotels not to allow guests on the beaches from October 11 until further notice.

The ministry in a circular urged them to follow orders to avoid any legal issues.

The Supreme Committee on COVID-19 on Friday decided to prohibit the use of beaches throughout the day until further notice and to re-close some activities that were previously reopened and did not comply with the requirements set by the authorities.

The decision to reintroduce night lockdown in the Sultanate comes after coronavirus infections crossed 100,000 last week. Oman became the second country in the GCC to report 1,000 deaths after Saudi Arabia, which leads the regional table with 4,923 victims.

Expressing concern over the issue, Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, last week said that any decision taken by the Supreme Committee is based on the prevailing situation as per the epidemiological situation, and is subject to review again by the Supreme Committee.

He said that the decision on reopening schools was taken by the Supreme Committee and it will decide if it needs to be reviewed.

The minister said controlling the infection is not only the responsibility of the government, but that of each and every member of the population as social gatherings continue to take place.

Photos of COVID-19 rules violators to be published

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 10

The Supreme Committee on COVID-19 called on everyone, especially young people, to fully adhere to all preventive measures at the individual and collective levels, and stop all gatherings.

Relevant authorities will take all legal measures against the violators. The competent authorities will announce the details of the violators at a later time and publish their names and photographs in various media outlets.

The decisions were taken following reports of an increase in the number of cases and deaths due to COVID-19 among all ages.

The North Al Sharqiyah Police stopped a group of citizens in two different locations for gathering in public places in violation of the decisions of the Supreme Committee. The Dakhiliyah Governorate Police, with the support of the Nizwa Special Task Police, stopped a group of people for public gathering.

The North Al Sharqiyah Police Command also stopped a group of Asian expatriates for gathering in violation of the decisions of the Supreme Committee.



Pay for parking online from November 1

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 10

Parking meters will be removed from a number of locations in the city from November 1, said Muscat Municipality on Saturday.

Vehicle owners should instead use online or mobile services to pay parking charges.

Parking meters will be removed from the Central Business District (CBD), Ruwi Market, Al Fursan

Street, Muttrah Souq and Al Bahri Street. Motorists can book for parking by sending SMS with car number plate details to 90091.

The user will receive a text message stating the reservation confirmation and including the ticket number, car number, code and time.

If the user wants to extend the time, he only has to send another message to 90091 and follow the same steps.

Stern warning to violators

FROM PAGE 1

“Airline ticket or visa would suffice at the checkpoint to pass through. However, we strongly advise travellers to set out early to avoid any rush on the roads to reach the airport on time,” he added.

The Supreme Committee announced a two-week-long night lockdown on movement of people and closure of beaches and some shops in different sectors which didn't comply with the precautionary measures to control the spread of virus in the country.

Delivery vehicles arriving from far off places need to keep the documents indicating details of the goods to be delivered at the checkpoints.

The timings of bus services in the Muscat Governorate have been rescheduled due to night lockdown.

The authorities further urged both citizens and residents to continue to adhere to precautionary measures such as wearing face masks, using hand sanitisers and stay away from gatherings.

Relevant authorities will take all legal measures against the violators.

Bus, ferry timings rescheduled



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 10

The timings of bus services in the Muscat Governorate have been rescheduled following the Supreme Committee's decision to enforce a night lockdown from October 11.

The timings for intercity and Muscat city bus services have been rescheduled for all buses to reach their destination latest by 6 pm, details of which will be published in the official

channels of the company.

The timings of the National Ferries will be also rescheduled so that all services are concluded at the destination the latest by 6 pm.

The Supreme Committee issued decisions prohibiting the movement and closing of all public places and shops between 8 pm and 5 am from October 11 until October 24.

Mwasalat resumed city services in Muscat on October 4 as per the directives of the Supreme Committee

tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The precautionary measures to be followed for the safety of employees and passengers are the sterilisation of buses before the start of the trip and after its completion; measuring the temperature of passengers for trips between cities; no standing passengers on board, and providing hand sanitisers inside the buses.

Online psychotherapy successful: SQUH study

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

As the world observed the World Mental Health Day it was definitely different from the previous years as the world collectively has been going through challenges that have been impacting mental well-being of individuals throughout the year 2020.

Anxiety and panic have been in the forefront.

Researchers at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital have been conducting study on this subject looking at prevalence of anxiety and depression among people in Oman during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The main objective of the research

is to make estimation on the number of people who have been affected by symptoms of anxiety and depression during COVID-19 and to see if there are any possible risk factors that made certain people more likely to develop these mental health issues," explained Dr Hamad al Sinawi, Senior Consultant Psychiatrist, Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.

The study was conducted by a group of psychiatrists and psychologists and it was divided into two parts. The first part included the assessment of the level of anxiety and depression among the general public both Omanis and non-Omanis.

"The questionnaire was prepared

The people who were given psychotherapy sessions by trained psychologists online did significantly better in terms of depression and they reported that they found the intervention very helpful

DR HAMAD AL SINAWI

Senior Consultant Psychiatrist, SQUH

by the study team and through social media to the public. By the end of the study period a total of 1,580 people participated including Omanis and non-Omanis from the age group — 18 and above. Initial results showed that 30 per cent of the study sample had some level of anxiety and depression and out of this 75 per cent were women. People who have had previous mental health problems in addition to people with financial difficulties are more at risk in developing mental health problems," pointed out Dr Hamed.

The people who took part in the survey also had benefits as the second part of the study included inviting people who scored high in the previous

part while participating in clinical study — one group was invited to have therapy weekly sessions led by psychotherapists on Zoom while another group was supported by providing information on exercises to cope with anxiety and depression via email. At the end of six weeks both groups were compared for the level of anxiety and depression.

"The analysis showed that people who were given psychotherapy sessions by trained psychologists online did significantly better in terms of depression and they reported that they found the intervention very helpful," noted Dr Hamed.

Most of the participants were worried about being infected by the

virus, others were worried about their studies being interrupted, and students who were abroad studying had come back were worried about going back, uncertainty about the future.

"Some of our members of the sample group were health workers and they were worried about catching illness and carrying it home and passing it onto their kids, family members and elders. Some of them were burned out because of the long hours and the nature of the work and seeing people dying. It is an unprecedented time so this was the common theme," he said.

After the six weeks of study the researchers are writing their findings to be published in a scientific journal.

Young Omani engineer chosen to help curb illiteracy

LIJU CHERIAN
@cherianmathiker

A young Omani engineer from Muscat has been chosen as the Ambassador for World Literacy Foundation (WLF) from a pool of 4,800 applicants to represent the Sultanate.

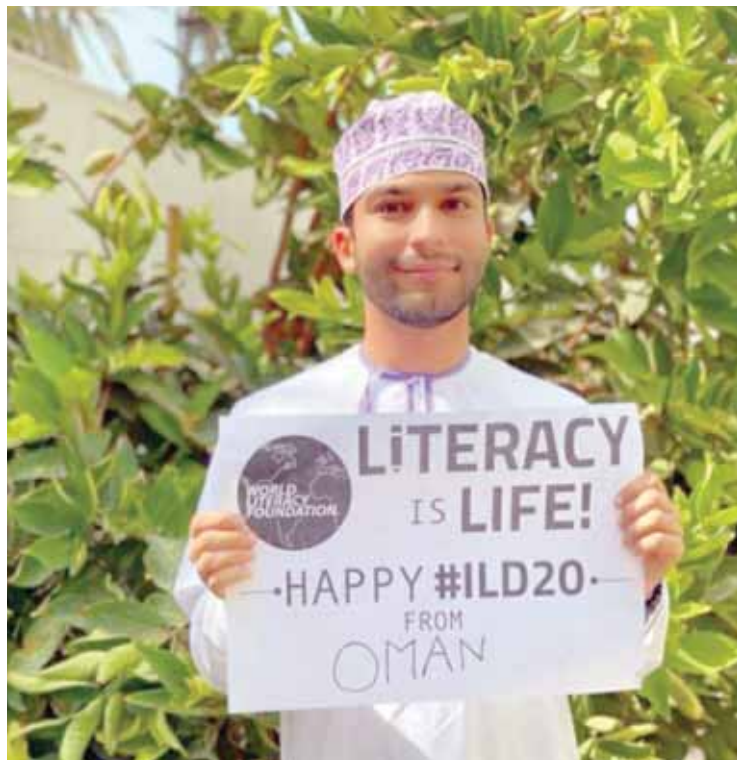
Ali al Bahrani, 24, is the only Omani to get this honour to be part of a global initiative to advocate and raise funds for literacy in the world.

Ali took part in a four-month programme where he was involved to develop his leadership and advocacy skills such as introduction to WLF and 'Aprende Leyendo', including education and literacy in the world and skills in leadership, advocacy and fundraising.

A nonprofit organisation, Aprende Leyendo founded in 2014 in Manizales, Colombia, has been delivering literacy support and learning resources to children in disadvantaged communities in Colombia who have limited or no access to education.

The end goal for the 2020 World Literacy Foundation Ambassadors is to raise funds for literacy which will go towards Aprende Leyendo.

On October 17, Ali is planning



Ali al Bahrani, Ambassador for World Literacy Foundation.

a virtual fundraising event due to COVID-19 and its unprecedented repercussions worldwide.

A Chemical Engineering Graduate from Swansea University of Wales, Ali, was introduced to the World Literacy Programme through One Young World, a UK-based not-for-profit organisation

that gathers young leaders from around the globe to develop solutions to the world's most pressing issues.

"I am so excited to join a global community of like-minded individuals who are determined to eradicate illiteracy and who are using their voices to drive dialogue,

action, and change in communities around the world, ensuring their reach is global and unrestricted," said Ali.

He has always wanted to partake in spreading and supporting literacy in general. "Being able to effectively communicate through writing and reading is a priority and the ultimate investment we can make for our future."

Education, according to Ali, is not just about learning a subject or gathering information. He says it is also about critical thinking and allowing one to question things.

"It's about learning new perspectives and different viewpoints," he adds.

His ultimate goal is to open a not-for-profit organisation that will make education accessible for all.

"I want to provide the opportunity to join the march of knowledge without the discrimination faced by those who do not have the luxury of an education. I can help make sure that no child is denied a dream, such that, one day, every child will have the ability to read and write and use these skills to gain independence and autonomy," said Ali.

أمان
AMAN

Invitation to attend the Extra Ordinary General Meeting (EGM) and Ordinary General Meeting ("OGM") of AMAN Real Estate Investment Fund ("Fund")

The Fund Management Body of the Fund are pleased to invite the unitholders to attend the Extra Ordinary General Meeting ("EGM"), followed by Ordinary General Meeting ("OGM"), which takes place on 25/10/2020, 3 PM to be held via the electronic platform to convene The General Meetings which is accessible through Muscat Clearing and Depository website (www.mcd.gov.om).

If the quorum for either of the two is not quorate, the meeting shall be re-scheduled to 1/11/2020 at 3:00 PM

First: Extra Ordinary General Meeting (EGM):

- To Amend Article 48 of the AOA as per (annex 1)

Second: Ordinary General Meeting (OGM):

- To approve the FMB proposal to distribute each dividend to unitholders registered at the date of the OGM at 3.64 baiza per unit.

In accordance with the Fund's articles of association and the regulations for holding General Meetings, using modern technology issued by the authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- A Juristic person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person, to attend the assembly meeting and vote on his behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in the MCDC.
- Voting on any of the items on the agenda begins no more than three days before the date of the Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting, and if the shareholder's balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and he must re-vote again on the day of the meeting;
- In case of any inquiries about the above agenda items, please contact Shaima Al Balushi at Phone Number 94701247 or send an email to s.albalushi@tharaglobal.com

Annex (1):

Amend Article 48 of the AOA as follows:

Article 48 currently states the following:

"A minimum of ninety percent (90%) of the Fund's annual net profit must be distributed to the Unitholders. Dividends shall be paid to the Unitholders whose names are recorded in the register held by Muscat Clearing and Depository SAOC at the time of the holding the Annual General Meeting which resolved to declare the dividends."

Article 48 amended to state the following:

"A minimum of ninety percent (90%) of the Fund's annual net profit must be distributed to the Unitholders semi-annually, to be determined by the Fund Management Body in the Ordinary General Meeting/Annual General Meeting.

Dividends shall be paid to the Unitholders whose names are recorded in the register held by Muscat Clearing and Depository SAOC at the time of holding the Ordinary General Meeting/Annual General Meeting."



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The World Mental Health Day that was celebrated on Saturday had special significance this year, with the world passing through unprecedented health and economic crisis due to COVID-19. Even before the pandemic around 450 million people worldwide have been living with some form of mental disorder, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). With people confined to homes, psychiatrists and therapists have been attending to patients online on the steps needed to ensure personal wellbeing and on how to help those with mental illnesses and in around them. According to Dr Hassan Mirza, an expert in Behaviour Medicine at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH), “The behaviour changes that cannot be ignored are mood changes, aggression towards others, weight gain/loss, social

isolation, answering difficulties self-harming behaviour, changes in school performance. If left untreated it can affect children’s performance both in school and within the community.” He says anxiety, behavioural, attention, depression and sleep and eating are often not identified or reported in time for the person or those affected to get treatment in time. According to WHO, depression is one of the leading causes of disability. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds. People with severe mental health conditions die prematurely — as much as two decades early — due to preventable physical conditions. “Even with a job in hand, extended ‘stayhome’ can lead to frustration and over-thinking that can bring unwanted thoughts. Spending 24/7 with the same group of people can lead to problems because it is not always possible to be diplomatic”, says a senior executive in the finance sector. According to experts, it is also important to take a break from on-

Offer support to oneself and others, work hard and be virtuous. We need to put our differences aside and help the most vulnerable amongst us. Maybe the good we do will have a ripple effect and will spread happiness and positive change

MASSRAT SHEIKH
Muscat-based educational psychologist

screen activities while working from home. While video games can be a way to relax, it can be tempting to spend much more time on them than usual when at home for long periods. Be sure to keep the right balance with off-line activities in your daily routine. Use social media accounts to promote positive and hopeful stories. Correct misinformation wherever you see it. Parents should help children find positive ways to express feelings such as fear and sadness, help children stay in contact with friends and family members through telephone and online channels. They should make sure that your children have time away from screens everyday and spend time doing off-line activities together. Creative activities such as drawing, writing, baking and singing should be encouraged. Keep in regular contact with loved ones, for example by telephone, e-mail, social media or video conference, keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible for eating, sleeping, and

activities you enjoy, learn simple daily physical exercises to do at home when in quarantine so you can maintain mobility. “My request here to everyone is to look inward, exercise the power you have and be the best person you can be. Offer support to oneself and others, work hard and be virtuous. We need to put our differences aside and help the most vulnerable amongst us. Maybe the good we do will have a ripple effect and will spread happiness and positive change. As a mental health practitioner, this is the support I ask from our community members today”, advises Massrat Sheikh, Muscat-based educational psychologist. As Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) said: “As a community, in regards to mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling, we are all one whole body, when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches because of sleeplessness and fever”. We feel the pain of everyone, we stand together in this, and we are one body.”



Anti-riot police officers walk next to activists demonstrating in Berlin. – AFP

Silent march in Berlin against virus rules

BERLIN: Thousands of people trudged silently through Berlin on Saturday, police said, part of a protest against what they say is a government-backed “campaign of fear” about the coronavirus that is infringing on individual rights.

Organisers had registered 20,000 attendees for the “Silent March against Racism and for our Human Rights.” Participants wore facial coverings and kept medically advised distances from one another as they marched.

They had been urged not to shout political slogans or carry placards, an attempt to drive home the silent nature of the protest, which was organised under the slogan “Wir muessen reden” (We need to talk).

“We are a diverse mix of different people who — irrespective of our political stance, ethnicity or income status — are no longer in agreement with the politicisation of the coronavirus and the restrictions on our human rights that stem from it,”

read a statement from the organisers.

Their website also calls for an end to the pandemic, but without a vaccine, and an end to the government’s “campaign of fear.”

Germans opposed to health guidelines designed to stop the spread of the coronavirus have become increasingly vocal as the pandemic lingers on. Many advocate for personal freedoms and oppose guidelines, such as mandatory mask-wearing. Others seem opposed to any kind of vaccine, even though no widely available one yet exists for the coronavirus.

After some demonstrations got out of control in Berlin, authorities have responded by allowing such protests, but limiting their numbers and requiring participants to wear masks and socially distance. During a protest in March, anti-government protesters mixed in with the anti-coronavirus protesters briefly attempted to storm the national legislature in Berlin.

— dpa

Italian teenager and computer whizz-kid beatified in Assisi

ROME: Carlo Acutis, a deceased Italian teenager, has been beatified by the Catholic Church.

The beatification was finalised with a Mass in Assisi, where the teenager’s parents were present. A letter from Pope Francis was readout, confirming that Acutis is now beatified.

Acutis, who died from leukaemia aged 15 in 2006, was a deeply religious computer whizz-kid from Milan, who saw the Internet as away to spread the Catholic faith.

Acutis, dubbed “the cyberapostle of the Eucharist”, was born in London to Italian parents, and moved to Milan with them as a young boy.

“He was considered a computer genius... But what did he do? He didn’t use these media to chat, have fun,” his mother Antonia Salzano said in an interview with Vatican News.

Instead, “his zeal for the Lord” drove him to make a website on miracles, she said.

The millennial, whose body lies in state in Assisi, dressed in a tracksuit and trainers, also warned his contemporaries that the Internet could be a curse as well as a blessing.

Pope Francis referred to him last year, in a warning to youngsters that social networks could foment hate.



Pope Francis says Carlo Acutis knew how to use technology to “communicate values and beauty”.

“(Acutis) saw that many young people, wanting to be different, really end up being like everyone else, running after whatever the powerful set before them with the mechanisms of consumerism and distraction,” Francis said.

“As a result, Carlo said, ‘everyone is born as an original, but many people end up dying as photocopies’. Don’t let that happen to you!” he said.

Acutis was religious from a young age, despite his mother saying his family had rarely attended church.

When he wasn’t writing computer programmes or playing football, Acutis was known in his neighbourhood for his kindness to those living on society’s margins.

“With his savings, he bought

sleeping bags for homeless people and in the evening he brought them hot drinks,” his mother said this week.

“He said it was better to have one less pair of shoes if it meant being able to do one more good work,” she said.

He also volunteered at a soup kitchen in Milan. Assisi bishop Domenico Sorrentino said this month that a soup kitchen for the poor would be opened in Acutis’s honour.

“When he died, at the funeral, the church was full of poor people. Everyone else wondered what they were doing there. Well, Carlo used to help them in secret,” said Nicola Gori, who represented Acutis’s beatification case.

— dpa/AFP

Trump addresses supporters before Florida rally

WASHINGTON: Nine days after testing positive for COVID-19, US President Donald Trump delivers a White House address on Saturday to hundreds of partisans, in hopes of relaunching his struggling campaign less than four weeks from Election Day.

Trump has declared he is feeling “really good” — but doubts linger over his health, with the president’s doctor appearing more concerned about pleasing his star patient than communicating transparently with the public.

“Right now I’m medication-free, I’m not taking any medications as of, you know, probably eight hours ago,” Trump told Fox News on Friday night, the first on-camera interview since his diagnosis and three-night hospitalisation.

For months, taking their cue from a president who mostly shunned,



White House Director of Strategic Communications Alyssa Farah gives a television interview about US President Donald Trump’s coronavirus illness outside the White House in Washington. – Reuters

and at times mocked, the wearing of masks, White House advisors were rarely seen masked inside the West Wing.

Since Trump and his wife Melania tested positive, the mood has shifted.

A source with knowledge of planning for Saturday’s outdoor event said all guests will be required to wear a mask to listen to Trump give his address from a White House balcony.

A similar gathering two weeks

ago, to announce the nomination of conservative judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, has been singled out as a likely source of many of the dozens of positive cases since linked to the White House.

Anthony Fauci, the respected director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, has referred to it as a “superspreader event.”

Many questions remain unanswered about the White House outbreak, with more than a dozen cases recorded in the president’s inner circle, including his spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany.

“When was the president’s last negative COVID test?” asked Pete Buttigieg, a former contender for the Democratic presidential nomination, now tipped for a prominent role in a Joe Biden administration should he defeat Trump on November 3. — AFP

■ RAINY SEASON IN CAMBODIA



Rescue workers carry a table holding children and a cage with birds over flood waters in a village in Cambodia’s western Pailin province on Saturday, following heavy rains in the region. – AFP

Swiss woman hostage killed in Mali

GENEVA: A Swiss woman thought to have been killed in Mali was a missionary abducted in 2016, the Swiss foreign ministry said on Saturday. Beatrice Stoeckli from Basel who was working in Timbuktu when she was taken four years ago — having already been abducted by militants once before, in 2012, Swiss news agency Keystone-ATS reported.

The Swiss authorities said in a statement released late on Friday that for the past four years they had been working with the Malian authorities and other partners for her release. It said it was trying to find out more about the circumstances of the killing and the whereabouts of her remains.

The foreign ministry said the French authorities had informed them of Stoeckli’s fate based on what French hostage Sophie Petronin, who was released earlier this week, had told them.

Petronin, who had been the last French hostage still being held, arrived back in France on Friday after four years in the hands of militants.

Petronin was released by her captors along with a prominent Malian politician, Soumaila Cisse, and two Italian hostages.

— AFP



Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of Ministry of Social Development hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtaining of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)
9/2020	Provision cleaning services For the main building of ministry of social development and it's other building in muscat	Excellent & One	Thursday 29-10-2020 02:00 PM	Thursday 19-11-2020 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

• Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>), On Sunday 11/10/2020.

• Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.

• The original (1%) bank warranty to be submitted at same day of submitting at tender box located in Directorate of Finance & Administration at MOSD HQ.

• For Inquiry , please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402222 or 24166670)

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry ”



Masks made compulsory in Iran as virus toll rises

TEHRAN: Iran is to start imposing fines for breaches of health regulations in the capital, President Hassan Rouhani announced on Saturday, after daily coronavirus infections hit a record high this week.

Iran has previously held back from using fines to enforce mask wearing in public and other health protocols, but they will now be imposed in the capital Tehran, Rouhani said in a televised meeting of the country's coronavirus taskforce.

The police, the Basij paramilitary force and health inspectors will have powers to impose the fines, and offenders will have two weeks to make payment into a health ministry account, Rouhani said in a televised speech during the weekly coronavirus taskforce meeting.

Breaches punishable by a fine include refusal to quarantine while sick and failure to wear a mask in a public space or require a customer to do so. Fines range from 500,000 rials (\$1.60) for not wearing a mask to a maximum of 10 million (\$32.80) for businesses not observing health protocols.

The fines represent a not insignificant sum for Iranians who have endured a deep recession since Washington reimposed crippling



Iranians wearing face masks walk on a street after Iranian authorities made it mandatory for all to wear face masks in public following the outbreak of the coronavirus disease in Tehran. — Reuters

economic sanctions in 2018.

The minimum monthly wage stands at around 18 million rials, worth less than \$60 following a sharp fall in the value of the currency.

Iran's daily death toll from the novel coronavirus hit a record high of 239 on Wednesday.

Daily infections reached a new high of 4,392 the following day.

The virus has now killed more than 28,000 people and infected more than 496,000 in Iran, according to health ministry figures. Tehran authorities shut most

public spaces and cancelled public events for a week last Saturday in a bid to contain the spread of the virus. Those restrictions have been extended until Wednesday, governor

The police and health inspectors will have powers to impose the fines, and offenders will have two weeks to make payment

Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey told state television.

On Saturday, the Health Ministry reported 195 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking the total toll to 28,293.

There were 3,875 new cases, ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari told state TV. Masks have been compulsory in indoor public spaces since July, although no penalties were imposed. Now they are mandatory in public both indoors and outdoors in the capital Tehran.

Rouhani said that anyone caught without a mask would be fined and those infected with the coronavirus who do not self-quarantine or inform friends and colleagues of their illness would be fined 2 million rials.

The Iranian rial fell to a new low against the US dollar on Saturday as the country reels from the coronavirus pandemic and US sanctions.

— AFP/Reuters

SCHOOLS OPEN PARTIALLY IN GAZA AMID PANDEMIC



Students, wearing protective face masks, sit in class in Gaza City after the partial reopening of schools, amid the coronavirus pandemic, in the Palestinian enclave. — AFP

Two dead as forest fires burn in Syria, Lebanon

DAMASCUS: Forest fires in Syria and neighbouring Lebanon have killed two people and burned swathes of land since Thursday, state media and officials said.

Syrian state television on Saturday morning broadcast scenes from the affected areas, where firefighters were working to extinguish the blazes.

It said hundreds of hectares had burned in the countryside of Syria's coastal Latakia and Tartus provinces, and in the central Homs province.

The health ministry said two people died in Latakia province on Friday as a result of the fires, and that 70 people in the area were taken to hospital suffering breathing difficulties.

Dozens of fires were burning, including "45 in Latakia and 33 in Tartus", Syria's Agriculture Minister Mohammed Hassan Qatana told a radio station on Friday.

The Latakia fire brigade said they were "facing the largest series of fires seen in Latakia province in years".

Official news agency SANA said fire burned homes in Baniyas, in Tartus province. In neighbouring Lebanon, there have been more than 100 fires across the country since Thursday, according to George Abu Musa, head of operations for the country's civil defence.

"The situation is crazy, there are fires everywhere," Abu Musa said.

"We have mobilised 80 per cent of our personnel and almost all our centres in Lebanon," he said.

He said most of the blazes had been extinguished but some were still burning in the mountainous Chouf region in the south, and in Akkar in the north. Military helicopters were assisting firefighters in "hard-to-reach" areas, he added.

Abu Musa was unable to identify the cause of the blazes, but said wind and high temperatures were helping them spread.

On Friday, authorities reported several fires across northern and central Israel and the occupied West Bank as temperatures soared, forcing thousands to evacuate.

Dozens of fires hit Lebanon in mid-October last year, amid unusually high temperatures and strong winds.

The government faced heavy criticism and accusations of ill-preparedness over its response to the 2019 blazes.

Days after Lebanon's 2019 fires, mass protests broke out, triggered by proposed tax hikes but quickly transforming into months-long demonstrations against the ruling class, deemed by protesters as inept and corrupt. — AFP

In Yemen, children begin classes in the ruins of war

TAEZ: With its walls pounded by artillery, roofs torn open and concrete beams in shreds, Al Wehdah school lies in ruins as students return for the first day of Yemen's school year.

At the school near Taz, the third-biggest city in a country shattered by years of war between the government and Ansar Allah fighters, there are no doors or windows, let alone desks.

Instead the students use old exercise books to jot down their lessons, as they sit in makeshift classrooms with a handful of teachers brave enough to join them under crumbling ceilings.

Yet in a country where nearly a third of children don't go to school at

all, these are the lucky ones.

Al Wehdah school was hit in a 2016 air strike.

Ali Sultan, a parent of one of the students, points out to a warning sign in red letters written on a perimeter wall.

"Beware of Mines," it reads.

The school is located in the middle of a minefield, that was partially cleared to allow the students to return.

"We were faced with a difficult choice, either leave them at home or face the risk of bringing them here to study in this rubble," Sultan said.

Children first returned to the school the year after the strike.



Yemeni pupils attend class on the first day of the new academic year, in a makeshift classroom in their school compound which was heavily damaged two years ago in an air strike in Taz. — AFP

"We have been through very difficult times," Sultan said, referring to the fighting in the southwest city, which is held by government forces but besieged by Ansar Allah fighters.

In Taz city alone, 47 schools were "totally destroyed in the fighting," said Abdel Wassae Chaddad, provincial director of education.

"As far as destruction is concerned, we got the lion's share," he said.

Chaddad said he was forced to close those schools and tell students to go to any other that could accommodate them — even if they were also in poor shape.

Some children have to walk long

distances to get there.

In Jamila al Wafi's classroom, instead of a blackboard, she writes out the day's lessons in pencil on a supporting beam.

The students, seated on the floor, follow her attentively. They make notes carefully in their exercise books.

Once the lesson is over, they slide down a collapsed roof that serves as a staircase from the classroom down to the ground floor.

"We have 500 students," said Wafi, dressed in black and with her face covered, pointing to the neatly presented boys and girls, who study in separate classrooms. — AFP

TUNIS

Tunisian unemployment soars amid economic crisis

Tens of thousands of Tunisians have lost their jobs in a worsening economic crisis exacerbated by efforts to stem rising cases of novel coronavirus, a key employers' federation has warned.

"The first wave of the epidemic (March to June) resulted in the loss of 165,000 jobs," Bechir Boujdaj, a member of the board of the employers' federation UTICA, said.

A decade on from a revolution that toppled the old regime, leaders are struggling to meet the expectations of the people, who complain they have seen little increase in liv-



ing standards. Unemployment rose three points to 18 per cent, with predictions it could be over 20 per cent by the end of the year, according to a joint study by the government and the United Nations.

JERUSALEM

Top Palestinian contracts coronavirus

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said he was suffering "difficult" symptoms after contracting coronavirus, but that things were "under control". Erekat, 65, a lawmaker from Jericho in the occupied West Bank, said on Twitter that he was in isolation and receiving medical treatment at home one day after he confirmed that he had caught the virus.

He has cancelled all meetings and appointments. There is heightened concern over his vulnerability because he underwent a lung transplant in the US in 2017. In tweets on Friday, Erekat said he was experiencing "difficult symptoms resulting from my lack of immunity as a result of lung transplantation". But he thanked well-wishers and said "things are under control, thank God".

Erekat is secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organization and is one of the youngest members of the PLO's most senior bodies, the Executive Committee. A member of Fatah, the most powerful faction within the PLO, he has been one of the most high-profile faces of the Palestinian leadership for decades, especially to international audiences.

BEIRUT

4 dead, many hurt in Beirut fuel tank explosion

Four people were killed and several more were wounded when a fuel tank exploded in a Beirut building on Friday, the Lebanese Red Cross said.

The explosion caused a large fire to break out in the building in the Tariq al Jadida neighbourhood, a security source said. One person was critically wounded, while several others were treated for smoke inhalation, the Red Cross and a hospital source said.

A Beirut television station said more than 30 people were hurt in the conflagration, with a medical source



adding that three children were hospitalised with burns.

Firefighters using mobile ladders evacuated people from buildings in the bustling district of Tariq al Jadida.

In brief

■ HONG KONG

**HK POLICE ARREST 9 FOR AIDING FLEEING PROTESTERS**

Hong Kong police arrested nine people on Saturday suspected of assisting 12 protesters and activists who were arrested at sea as they attempted to flee to Taiwan in August.

The four men and five women arrested, aged 27 to 72, include a music teacher, a chef, and a former aide to a Legislative Councillor, Senior Superintendent of Police Ho Chun-tung said at a press briefing outside police headquarters in Wan Chai. Some had previously been arrested during last year's anti-extradition protests against a bill that would have allowed criminal suspects in Hong Kong to face trial in China.

■ JAKARTA

INDONESIAN TEAM PROBING PAPUA SHOOTINGS ATTACKED

Two members of an investigative team sent to Indonesia's easternmost region of Papua were shot and wounded during a fact-finding mission related to recent shootings in the area, the government said on Saturday.

The team was sent to Papua's Intan Jaya district to investigate a number of shootings last month that killed at least four military officers and civilians, including a Christian pastor.

Two members of the team, a researcher from an Indonesian university and a soldier, were shot on Friday and have been evacuated to the capital Jakarta to receive treatment, Indonesia's security coordinating ministry said in a statement.

■ MANILA

**PHILIPPINES RECORDS 2,249 NEW CORONAVIRUS CASES**

The Philippines' health ministry on Saturday recorded 2,249 new coronavirus infections and 87 additional deaths. In a bulletin, the ministry said total confirmed cases in the Philippines have increased to 336,926, the highest in Southeast Asia, while deaths have reached 6,238.

Meanwhile, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte called a special session of parliament for October 13-16 to finalise a 4.5 trillion peso budget for next year to help the battered economy recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

It would be the penultimate budget under the single, six-year term of the firebrand leader, whose allies dominate both chambers of congress.

N Korea unveils new missile at parade

SEOUL: North Korea leader Kim Jong Un presided over a giant military parade in Pyongyang on Saturday, with the nuclear-armed country expected to showcase its latest and most advanced weapons as thousands of maskless troops defied the coronavirus threat.

State broadcaster KCTV showed company after company of armed soldiers marching through Kim Il Sung square in a night-time display, with Kim smiling and joking with his generals as he watched them.

Armoured vehicles were lined up in the streets of Pyongyang ready to follow them, and none of the participants or the audience lined up in the stands were wearing masks.

Kim — whose summit counterpart Donald Trump was recently hospitalised with the illness — wished “good health to all the people around the world who are fighting the ills of the evil virus”, although he did not name the US president or his country directly.

The pandemic has swept the world since first emerging in neighbouring China, with more than 36 million cases, but Kim closed the North's borders in January to try to prevent contamination said it had not seen a single infection.

Women in the crowd wiped tears from their eyes as he spoke, footage broadcast on state media showed. North



A man watches a television news broadcasting a file footage of a military parade showing North Korean soldiers and weapons, at a railway station in Seoul. — AFP

Korean military parades normally climax with whatever missiles Pyongyang wants to highlight and are keenly watched by observers for clues to its weapons development.

According to Seoul's joint chiefs of staff, the display actually took place in the early hours of Saturday, when they said in a statement that “signs of a military parade — involving equipment and people on a large scale — were detected at Kim Il Sung Square”.

South Korean and US

intelligence agencies were “closely tracking the event”, they added. The North is widely believed to have pressed on with the development of its arsenal — which it says it needs to protect itself from a US invasion — throughout nuclear negotiations with Washington, deadlocked since the collapse of a summit in Hanoi early last year.

And Kim — wearing a grey suit — told the crowd Pyongyang “will continue to strengthen our military for

The widely anticipated display was part of commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the North's ruling Workers' Party

self-defence and deterrence”.

“If you don't have the strength, you'll have to wipe away the tears and blood that

flow with your two clenched fists”, he added.

The widely anticipated display was part of commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the North's ruling Workers' Party.

Analysts expected a new submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) or an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capable of reaching the US mainland to appear — maybe even one with multiple re-entry vehicle capabilities that could allow it

to evade US defence systems.

The party anniversary meant North Korea “has a political and strategic need to do something bigger”, said Sung-yoon Lee, a Korean studies professor at Tufts University in the United States.

Showcasing its most advanced weapons “will signal a big step forward in Pyongyang's credible threat capabilities”, he said.

But unlike on many previous occasions, no international media were allowed in to watch the parade.

And the few foreigners remaining in Pyongyang were not welcome at the commemorations, according to the Russian Embassy, which posted a message from the authorities on its Facebook page urging diplomats and other international representatives not to “approach or take photos” of the venues.

At the end of December, Kim threatened to demonstrate a “new strategic weapon”, but analysts say Pyongyang will still tread carefully to avoid jeopardising its chances with Washington ahead of next month's presidential election.

Showing off its strategic weapons in a military parade “would be consistent with what Kim Jong Un promised”, said former US government North Korea analyst Rachel Lee, while “not provoking the United States as much as a test-launch of a strategic weapon”. — AFP

■ PASSING OUT PARADE FOR SOLIDERS



Newly recruited Indian army soldiers from the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry (JAKLI) take part in a passing-out parade at JAKLI army headquarter in Srinagar. — AFP

Rain and squalls from typhoon hit parts of Japan

TOKYO: Typhoon Chan-hom covered parts of Japan with heavy rain and squalls on Saturday, according to media reports.

Meanwhile, the typhoon continued to draw closer to the country.

The Izu Islands south of Tokyo face an extremely high risk of landslides, the daily Mainichi Shimbun reported, citing the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA).

The agency has forecast that the cyclone should weaken in the course of the day and continue to move out to sea. Nevertheless, the agency called on people along the Pacific coast to continue to beware of heavy rain and swelling rivers.

The agency's chief forecaster Satoshi Sugimoto has urged residents to continue to stay alert to heavy rains. The agency also warned of mudslides, flooding, swollen rivers and high waves in broad swathes of the country.

There were no immediate reports of flooding or people injured. Just a year ago, Typhoon Hagibis ripped through central and north-eastern Japan, triggering flooding and landslides and



People surf off Katase-kaigan beach in windy and rain falling as Typhoon Chan-hom approaches Japan, in Fujisawa, south of Tokyo. — Reuters

The Izu Islands south of Tokyo face an extremely high risk of landslides

leaving about 100 people dead.

Meanwhile, elderly residents and small children clung to inflatable tyres as soldiers and police used rope lines to get them to safety from rising floodwater on Saturday in Cambodia's western province of Battambang.

Hundreds of families in three Cambodian provinces — Pursat, Battambang and Pailin — have been forced to evacuate amid extreme rainfall ahead of the arrival of a tropical depression across the Mekong region.

“A two-year-old child and 57-year-old man have drowned in the flood”, Seak Vichet, a spokesman for the Cambodian national committee for disaster management said on Saturday. — Agencies

Sri Lanka, China to restart talks on FTA

COLOMBO: China and Sri Lanka plan to restart discussions on a free trade agreement, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said on Friday, following a high-level meeting between the two countries.

Seen as close to Beijing, Rajapaksa has appointed several members of his family to top cabinet positions since his party won a commanding majority in August's parliamentary elections — including his brother Mahinda, who previously also served as president. Negotiations on a free trade agreement were last held in 2017.

China has been making increasing inroads into South Asia with its Belt and Road Initiative, aimed at financing critical infrastructure in dozens of countries across the world.

In 2017, Sri Lanka signed over control of a Chinese-financed port and land around it to Beijing after incurring heavy losses, to the alarm of the United States and regional power India.

On Friday, Rajapaksa rejected accusations that China wanted to trap Sri Lanka into mounting debt with the

port deal. “Many geo-political analysis interprets this project as a ‘debt trap’ set up by China to gain control over Sri Lankan affairs”, Rajapaksa told the Chinese delegation, led by Yang Jiechi, China's top diplomat.

“I want to prove that it is not the case and that this large-scale project will help improve the living standards of the people”, he added. The countries also agreed to deepen ties in the agriculture, education, tourism, water supply and healthcare sectors, according to a summary of the meeting released by Rajapaksa's office.

The Chinese visit comes as Sri Lanka faces mounting worries over the state of its finances, with rating agencies warning that a coronavirus-induced shock will significantly weaken its “already fragile funding and external positions”.

Rajapaksa said on Friday that the country's trade deficit with China is too high and called on Beijing to increase the volume of goods purchased from Sri Lanka to bring it down.

— Reuters



Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and Director of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission Office Yang Jiechi before a meeting in Colombo. — AFP



Coronavirus cases surge in Europe, Latin America

PARIS: Germany and Poland enforced new restrictions to fight the coronavirus on Saturday as the number of cases surged in Europe, and breached 10 million in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Restaurants are to close at 11 pm in Berlin until October 31 in a partial curfew, a measure already imposed — but starting an hour earlier — in the financial capital Frankfurt.

The shutdown in the German capital — with more than 400 new cases daily — also covers all shops except pharmacies and petrol stations, although they will be banned from selling alcohol.

“This is not the time to party,” said Berlin’s social democratic mayor Michael Muller. “We can and we want to prevent another more severe confinement.”

Chancellor Angela Merkel had already warned on Friday that high-infection areas would be given 10 days to bring down cases or face tougher action, calling big cities the “arena” to keep the pandemic under control.

In neighbouring Poland, the authorities told people to wear face masks in all public spaces after coronavirus cases hit a new record daily high of 4,280.

To the south, the Czech Republic faced the prospect of a new lockdown as the growth in COVID-19 cases set a fourth straight daily record. The number of 8,618 was the fastest spike in Europe.

Governments on several continents are struggling to keep up with a sharp rise in infections as the pandemic’s second wave arrives ahead of the northern hemisphere’s influenza season.

Since it emerged in China late last year, the virus has killed more than one million worldwide, infected more than 36 million and forced millions more out of work as the pandemic batters the global economy.

Latin America and the Caribbean marked 10 million cases on Saturday and with more than 360,000 deaths,



Demonstrators clash with Irish police officers as they attempt to disrupt a protest against the Irish government imposed restrictions put in place to help stem the rise in the number of novel coronavirus cases in Dublin. — AFP

Governments on several continents are struggling to keep up with a sharp rise in infections

the region is the worst hit in terms of fatalities, according to official figures.

EU Commissioner Mariya Gabriel was the latest high-profile figure to test positive for COVID-19. She announced the news on Saturday, the first top Brussels official known to have caught the coronavirus.

Gabriel, the EU commissioner for research and innovation, had already announced on Monday she would self-isolate after a member of her team tested positive to the novel virus.

British cyclist Simon Yates pulled out of the Giro d’Italia after he tested positive.

And British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who himself spent time in hospital for the virus, is to outline a new three-tier lockdown system on

Monday. On Friday, the Spanish government declared a state of emergency and a new partial lockdown for Madrid, as it faced increasing public resistance to anti-virus measures.

People were barred from leaving the city except for work, school or medical reasons, measures denounced by the city’s rightwing authorities.

The resistance in Madrid echoes problems the French government faced last month when it shut bars and restaurants in Marseille, provoking the fury of local officials.

Partial shutdowns have since been extended to Paris and other major urban areas, and another four French cities were placed on maximum coronavirus alert on Thursday, with bars ordered closed and public gatherings limited.

Overall, the coronavirus continued its progression around the world this week, with 315,000 new cases on average per day — six per cent more than the previous week, according to a tally on Friday. — AFP

■ NORDIC RECORD FOR PUMPKIN



Last year’s winner Jens Peder Skoenager from Ribe poses as he once again took the victory and set a new Nordic record with his pumpkin of 970,4 kilos during the Danish Championships in giant pumpkins held in Copenhagen. — AFP

Kyrgyzstan’s parliament names new premier

BISHKEK: Kyrgyz President Sooronbai Jeenbekov strengthened his grip on power on Saturday, reshuffling senior security officials and having his principal opponent, ex-president Almazbek Atambayev, detained again just days after he left prison.

The president’s allies in parliament elected a new prime minister, taking a step towards emerging from what close ally Russia has described as a state of political chaos. Kyrgyzstan, which hosts a Russian military airbase and serves as a hub for trade with neighbouring China, has been gripped by unrest since October 4, the date of a contested election that was subsequently annulled. Lawmakers voted in the only candidate for premier, 51-year-old Sadyr Zhaparov, who some opposition factions accused of being in league with Jeenbekov.



Kyrgyz acting prime minister Sadyr Japarov holds a press conference at the Ala-Archa state residence in Bishkek. — AFP

Jeenbekov on Friday ordered troops to deploy and re-establish order amid flare-ups of violence, and military checkpoints were put up overnight around the capital Bishkek while personnel carriers were spotted

in the city. He fired top security council officials who had either supported his opponents or failed to intervene when the opposition said on Tuesday it was seizing power in the Central Asian nation. — Reuters

Louisiana residents assess damage from latest hurricane

LAKE CHARLES: Weary Louisiana residents emerged to sunny skies on Saturday as they began to assess the damage wrought by the second devastating storm to roar through in two months, Hurricane Delta, now a tropical storm.

There were no immediate reports of victims from the storm, now greatly weakened as it churns northeast toward neighbouring Mississippi.

While Delta left hundreds of thousands of people without power in both Louisiana and Texas, damage generally appeared moderate.

In Lake Charles, a city of 75,000 still recovering from the August 20 passage of Hurricane Laura, Delta dumped 40 centimetres of rain, flooding many

homes and leaving knee-high water in some areas.

“We’re picking up the pieces, but we have quite a road ahead of us,” Mayor Nic Hunter said on Saturday.

He said Delta’s passage so soon after Laura felt like “a double whammy... It’s adding insult to injury.”

The blue plastic tarpaulins that had been lashed over roofs damaged by Laura were ripped away overnight by Delta’s powerful winds in the latest test of residents’ nerves and preparations.

Delta was packing 160 kilometres per hour winds when it rumbled ashore on Friday — classifying it as a Category 2 storm on a scale of five — but by Saturday its sustained winds had weakened to 40 mph, the Miami-



Pam Armstrong feels the wind coming in from the Gulf of Mexico with her grandchildren as the outer bands of Hurricane Delta make landfall in Galveston, Texas. — AFP

based National Hurricane Center (NHC) said. Storm surges of eight feet or more hit Louisiana shores in some areas. Delta was the 10th significant storm of the year to make landfall in the United States, which forecasters said was a record.

Nearly 600,000 people were without electricity on Saturday in Louisiana, according to specialised website PowerOutage, along with 100,000 in neighbouring Texas, whose eastern coast was hit hard by Delta.

Dozens of electricians who had come from nearby states to help restore power after Laura’s passage were still in Louisiana and were going to work on Saturday to repair Delta’s damage.

Laura, a Category 4 hurricane

when it hit Louisiana, ripped roofs off houses and uprooted trees, littering streets with debris. Earlier, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards announced that 2,400 National Guard personnel had been mobilised to aid locals, saying on Thursday that the storm was targeting “the area of our state that is least prepared to take it.”

Late in the week, Shannon Fuselier had helped a friend in Lake Charles install plywood sheets to protect windows on a home that had been struck by a falling tree during Laura.

“The branches and leaves don’t do that much damage,” said Fuselier, 56. “It’s pieces of metal, steel, frames of other people’s windows, signs from people’s stores, nails.” — AFP

ABIDJAN

Ivory Coast oppn rallies against President

Thousands of opposition supporters rallied in the Ivory Coast’s commercial capital on Saturday to protest against President Alassane Ouattara’s plan to seek a third term in the October 31 presidential election.

By early afternoon around 20,000 people had packed a 35,000 capacity stadium in Abidjan, chanting and dancing. Some held banners saying “The people say no to an illegal third term.”

Ouattara announced in August that he will seek another term following the sudden death of his handpicked successor. The constitu-



tional council has cleared him and three other candidates to run, but the opposition says Ouattara is violating the constitution by seeking another term and has called for a civil disobedience campaign. — Reuters

PESTER, SERBIA

Serbia tests drones, jets at major exercise

Russian-made jet fighters, helicopter gunships and tanks fired at ground targets while Chinese combat drones flew overhead on Saturday at the desolate Pester training ground in Serbia’s westernmost region in a show of revamped military power. The training drill, dubbed Cooperation 2020 and attended by President Aleksandar Vucic and other dignitaries, underlined Serbia’s close military ties with Beijing and Moscow.

In recent years, Belgrade has accelerated defence spending as it seeks dominance in the Western Balkans. Its military budget rose to around \$1.14 billion in 2020 and 2019 — 43 per cent more than in 2018.

This year’s military spending represented about 2.4 per cent of gross domestic product. “We are strengthening our army to deter any aggressor, we have no intention to wage any... conflicts,” Vucic told reporters after the exercise.

For the first time, Serbia demonstrated the use of CH-92A combat drones, the first such deployment of Chinese unmanned aerial vehicles in Europe. — Reuters

LONDON

Britain recalls ambassador to Belarus

Britain recalled its ambassador to Belarus on Saturday, as international pressure mounts on the authoritarian president of the former Soviet republic, Alexander Lukashenko, following disputed elections two months ago.

The move to recall Jacqueline Perkins comes after Poland and Lithuania, two countries which have taken in opposition figures fleeing Belarus, removed their own envoys and other officials under pressure from the leadership in Minsk. British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said Britain “condemns Belarus’ decision to expel



Polish and Lithuanian diplomats.” “In solidarity, we are temporarily recalling our ambassador for consultations on the situation in Belarus,” he wrote on Twitter. Several other EU countries have already recalled their own ambassadors. — dpa

Let’s talk online, techie, and the olden days this week?

The Internet, new technologies and all that stuff can be quite bewildering, polarising and just occasionally, downright new, for all its good points can't it? I'm from a generation that used to write, post letters, and receive mail. Why, we even had a postman on a bike, who delivered letters every day to every house in the town. The local 'postie' knew who wasn't paying their bills, where prodigal sons had gone off travelling, and where daughters who had to leave town quickly had gone. They were the font of all knowledge.

As strange as it may seem, the local telephone exchange operators were also pretty well informed as, in my day, all the phones were on 'party' lines which would have a number of households on the same line but with different rings. For example, ours was two short rings. And to ring out, one first had to check that there wasn't someone already on the line. Of course, there were spats between neighbours as some would talk half the day. But the toll operators, although officially only able to listen to confirm a line was in use, would often linger longer, and pick up some salacious gossip.

Something extremely rare in those days, were tape recorders. If they were around, they were as big as a suitcase,



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I'M FROM A GENERATION THAT USED TO WRITE, POST LETTERS, AND RECEIVE MAIL

not at all convenient. For transcription of meeting notes a form of notetaking called 'shorthand' was taught in schools, and it was a series of dots, dashes, squiggles, and symbols, otherwise known as stenography. It was a compulsory school subject for girls, and was measured, as I recall, by words-per-minute, with some girls able to record astounding accuracy and rates of dictation, around 70-100 words per minute. The system at that time was devised by Sir Isaac Pitman and standard throughout the entire English-speaking world.

Typewriters were something of a nightmare. Typing was a taught skill at school as well and was also subject to words-per-minute testing. In fact, typing at schools was taught as 'touch-typing', and pupil's hands were covered so they couldn't see the keyboard, but had to 'feel' their way with allocated keys to each finger. They would achieve typical speeds of 60-80 words per minute. Typing errors were remarkably unforgiving, as while 'tipex' could sometimes be used to cover errors, it did not leave a good 'look'. Copies too were a challenge, as the blue 'carbon' paper between sheets of paper tended to be messy and tended to leave typists with stubborn blue shading on their thumbs and forefingers.

One was useless at it! One became, and has continued as a typically

obstinate male, with two digits typing (and the occasional thumb or little finger), now firmly established in one's repertoire of skills. Nobody had mobiles in those days either, and to get a message to another required often that a verbal message was passed from one to another, to another, to another, in the manner of 'Chinese whispers' with much miscommunication and confusion. Maybe like this one... passed by word of mouth:

CEO to Manager: "At 2 pm there will be an eclipse. Make sure the staff are all in the carpark to see it. I will explain how it happens." Manager to Departments: "At 2 pm all staff should meet in the carpark for an eclipse which the CEO will explain."

Departments to Supervisors: "The CEO will make the Sun disappear after a short speech at 2 pm today in the carpark. All staff to be present!" Supervisors to Team leaders: "The CEO will disappear today at 2 pm in the carpark with all staff to be present"

Team Leaders to staff: "The CEO will be in the carpark at 2 pm to give the staff presents before he disappears."

Oh... I've run out of space to talk techie. In the inimitable words of Battery Sergeant Major Williams, played by Windsor Davies, in the hugely popular, 'It Ain't Half Hot Mum.' "Oh dear.. What a shame... Never mind!"

RISE AND FALL

Virus shatters Latin America’s middle class dreams

ADAM JOURDAN

When the coronavirus hit Chile and abruptly cost Lorena Rodriguez her job, the 47-year-old nanny took a painful decision to pawn her jewellery — gifts from decades earlier — for cash.

Like more than half of Latin Americans, she worked in the informal sector, looking after two children in an upmarket area of the coastal city of Valparaiso but living comfortably on joint income with her husband of 700,000 pesos (\$905) a month. Then suddenly, worried about infection risks from Rodriguez' bus journey to work, the family cut her job in March.

Without a contract, she could not receive benefits like unemployment pay or social support, despite living in one of the region's wealthiest nations. A 100,000-peso (\$126) emergency payment from the government soon ran out, forcing her to the pawnbroker.

"It was a last resort," said Rodriguez, who swapped her rings and bracelets for a 340,000-peso loan to support herself and her husband, a retired member of the Armed Forces. "I had

a stable job. We lived pretty well — at least without too many worries. It's hard to see now where all this will end."

Millions in Latin America's middle classes are similarly being dragged back into poverty as COVID-19 has exposed the fragility of welfare nets and governments' lack of financial firepower. The

“This crisis should serve as a wake-up call for us to mobilise against the disparities and gaps that have resulted in an increasingly fragile world

FELIPE SOLA
Argentina's Foreign Minister

region's labour market has been hit harder than anywhere else in the world.

After economic stagnation and crises in the 1980s, Latin America had seen its middle class thrive thanks to a commodity boom that drove growth in the 2000s and helped pull 60 million people out of hardship.

Now, the region of 650 million people will see its economy contract more than 9 per cent this year, according to UN estimates, the worst in the developing world.

Poverty is set to surge back to 2005 levels. Many economists say the crisis has exposed Latin America's neglect of long-standing weaknesses: reliance on low-productivity sectors such as mining and agriculture, failure to bring more workers into formal jobs, and lack of effective tax systems to redistribute wealth concentrated among a small elite.

"This crisis should serve as a wake-up call for us to mobilise against the disparities and gaps that have resulted in an increasingly fragile world," Argentina's Foreign Minister Felipe Sola told a recent meeting of the G20.

According to Asier Hernando, regional director of the charity Oxfam, the pandemic could push 52 million more people into poverty and leave an additional 40 million jobless. Women and indigenous groups will be hit particularly hard. "There is no cushion. If you fall, you fall a lot," he said. "This could break the social contract of the region and could lead to years of enormous social conflict."

After protests in several South American countries last year, the pandemic has cast a further spotlight on hunger, inequality and lack of state support. — Reuters

MENTAL IMPACT

Nurses suffer burn-out, psychological distress in COVID fight

CECILE MANTOVANI

Many nurses caring for COVID-19 patients are suffering burn-out or psychological distress, and many have faced abuse or discrimination outside of work, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) said.

Supplies of personal protective equipment for nurses and other health workers in some care homes remain insufficient, it said, marking World Mental Health Day on Saturday.

"We are extremely concerned about the mental health impact on nurses," Howard Catton, a British nurse who is the ICN's chief executive, said at the association's headquarters in Geneva. "Our most recent survey of national nurses' associations shows that more than 70 per cent of them (the associations) were saying that nurses have been subject to violence or discrimination and as a result of that they are very concerned about extreme cases of psychological distress and mental health pressure," he said.

The figure was based on responses from roughly a quarter of its national nurses' associations in more than 130 countries. Nurses face a broad spectrum of issues that affect their mental health, including physical and verbal abuse, Catton said.

"There are nurses who have been subject to discrimination, where their landlord has not renewed their lease



Nurses protest during the strike demanding better working conditions outside La Paz hospital during a partial lockdown in Madrid, Spain. — Reuters

MORE THAN 70 PER CENT SAY THAT NURSES HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO VIOLENCE OR DISCRIMINATION

for their apartment, or they can't get child care for their children," he said, without giving specifics of physical or verbal abuse. ICN has lobbied for better protection and working conditions for nurses on the front lines of the pandemic.

"We still continue to see problems with the supplies personal protective equipment. There have been improvements, particularly in hospitals," Catton said. But some care

homes and long-term care facilities in Europe, and in North and South America still lack supplies, he said, citing its members' survey. The World Health Organization said last Monday that services for mentally ill and substance abuse patients have been disrupted worldwide during the pandemic, and COVID-19 is expected to cause further distress for many.

— Reuters



Los Angeles Lakers’ Anthony Davis (3) shoots the ball against Miami Heat’s Jimmy Butler (22) and Andre Iguodala (28) during the fourth quarter in game five of the 2020 NBA Finals at AdventHealth Arena. — USA Today Sports

Heat edge Lakers in thriller

BUTLER’S TRIPLE-DOUBLE KEEPS MIAMI TITLE DREAM ALIVE

ORLANDO: Jimmy Butler’s triple-double propelled Miami to a 111-108 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Friday that kept the Heat alive in the NBA Finals.

Butler scored 35 points with 12 rebounds and 11 assists and the Heat withstood a 40-point performance from Lakers superstar LeBron James to deny Los Angeles a title-clinching win in the NBA’s quarantine bubble at Orlando.

The Lakers still lead the best-of-seven series three games to two and can secure the title with a game-six victory on Sunday.

Game seven, if needed, will be on Tuesday.

“We’ve got two more to get”, said Butler, who played more than 47 minutes and delivered a stunning display of will and skill.

“We just played hard, and just stayed with it”, said Butler, who has insisted the Heat can become just the second NBA team to rally from a 3-1 deficit to win the championship series.

The only other team to do it was the James-led Cleveland Cavaliers against Golden State in 2016.

“We got where we wanted to on offence, shared the ball like we always do”, Butler said.

“This is a game of runs — I think we withstood theirs.”

Butler drained two free throws with 16.8 seconds left to put Miami up by one.

James, stymied under the basket, found Danny Green for a wide-open three-pointer with 7.1 seconds remaining but Green missed and Tyler Herro added two more free throws to seal it.

“We got a hell of a look to win the game, to win the series”, James said. “Didn’t go down.”

On a night that saw the Heat lead much of the way, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope’s three-pointer with 6:18 remaining put the Lakers up 97-96 — their first lead since the first quarter.

But the Heat dug in, Duncan Robinson’s three-pointer putting Miami back up, 101-99 with 3:16 remaining, and it was a heavyweight slugfest the rest of the way, the lead changing hands seven more times.

“It was all about getting stops,

getting what we wanted on offence”, Butler said. “I still don’t think we rebounded the ball the way we were supposed to close out the game.”

“This one, it was a little bit of luck that Danny Green missed that one at the top of the key.”

Duncan Robinson added 26 points for Miami.

Kendrick Nunn had 14, Bam Adebayo 13, Herro 12 and Jae Crowder 11.

James added 13 rebounds and seven assists for the Lakers.

Anthony Davis added 28 points and Caldwell-Pope scored 16.

The frantic finish was foreshadowed by a first quarter that saw eight lead changes.

The tension was palpable when Los Angeles centre Dwight Howard tangled with Butler and the two had to be separated less than five minutes into the contest, each receiving a technical foul.

The Lakers got an early injury scare when Davis, battling Andre Iguodala for a rebound late in the first quarter, took an awkward hop and limped off the court.

LAKERS ‘GOT TO BE BETTER’

The Lakers, trailing 25-24 through one quarter, said Davis had aggravated a right heel contusion. He stayed on the sideline, testing the injury as the game continued and returning in the second quarter.

The Heat twice pushed their lead to 11 points in the second period, Nunn’s putback layup making it 50-39 with 3:41 left in the first half.

Butler poured in 22 points in the first half on seven-of-10 shooting on the way to his second triple-double of the series.

He’s just the sixth player in NBA Finals history to have multiple triple-doubles in the title series, and just the second, along with James, to have multiple 30-point triple-doubles in the same Finals.

James made sure the Lakers kept it close with 21 first-half points while Davis had 13 before the break.

But the Lakers’ bid for a record-equalling 17th NBA title — their first since 2010 — was at least temporarily denied.

“We’ve just got to be better in game six and close the series”, James said. — AFP

Ambiguity on Omantel League matches on Oct 23 over lockdown

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

The recent decisions issued by the Supreme Committee on COVID-19 on Friday including the prevention of people’s movement and closing all public places and shops between 8 pm and 5 am from October 11 until 24 may impact on the schedules of Omantel league which is supposed to start on October 23.

Seven matches on October 23 are scheduled to kick off at 7 pm which means it will finish during the lockdown. Moreover, if the lockdown is extended it could impact the next round scheduled to start on October 28.

According to Shabib al Hosni, Assistant General Secretary of Oman Football Association (OFA), the Omantel League Union will meet on Sunday to discuss and review the current status of the three remaining rounds of the league.

“We are not yet clear whether sporting activities are among the activities to be stopped. We have to wait to receive the clarification from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in this regard. Sunday’s meeting will clear many things and accordingly will announce the updates”, he said.

In September, the OFA had announced the schedules of the remaining matches of 2019-2020 season and the dates for the new 2020-21 season which is expected to begin in December. Accordingly, the domestic teams had began the technical preparations after completion of the COVID-19 test and the foreign players



had arrived in the Sultanate to join the teams.

Based on the new decision of the Supreme Committee on COVID-19, it also decided to close some activities that were previously reopened and did not comply with the requirements set by the authorities. Some of the social media accounts stated that the sporting activities may be included in the list which is not yet published by the concerned government authorities.

The medical team of OFA has taken high efforts during the past few weeks on implementation the approved OFA medical protocol and precautionary measures that will prevent spreading of the COVID-19 virus. All the training sessions and preparatory matches for the domestic team were done under full implementation of the protocol. OFA also had circulated a memo to all the media panels at the clubs to reduce the attendance of the photographers to one in each team. All this steps are inline to the precautionary approaches to stop spreading the pandemic.



SHORT TAKES

LONDON

Lowry, Fitzpatrick share halfway lead

British Open Champion Shane Lowry and England’s Matthew Fitzpatrick shared the lead at the halfway stage of the PGA Championship after they scored matching 65s at Wentworth on Friday. The two golfers set a testing clubhouse target of 12 under par after taking advantage of favourable early scoring conditions.

Overnight co-leader Tyrrell Hatton was able to get within one shot of the leading pair as the weather changed in the afternoon but they remained the men to catch heading into the weekend. Lowry notched seven birdies in a spotless second round, while Fitzpatrick hit a double bogey on his final hole. — AFP



NEW YORK

Kim grabs lead on birdie binge

South Korea’s Kim Sei-Young, seeking her first major title, birdied five of her last six holes to seize a one-stroke lead after Friday’s second round of the Women’s PGA Championship.

The 27-year-old from Seoul fired a five-under par 65, including an event record-tying 29 for the front nine, to stand on four-under 136 after 36 holes at Aronimink in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. “Just strategizing to attack the greens. I’d try to land it a little short so I can have some release, but it really helped me out”, Kim said. “I was in a good momentum so I just wanted to ride on that.” — AFP



LAS VEGAS

Laird closes with eagle to share lead

An eagle on his final hole secured former champion Martin Laird of Scotland a share of the four-way lead with Americans Patrick Cantlay, Austin Cook and Brian Harman after the second round of the Shriners Hospitals for Children Open in Las Vegas on Friday.

Laird, who started on the back nine, had six birdies before a closing eagle for an eight-under-par 63 that brought him to 14 under on the week at TPC Summerlin and level with Cantlay (65), and with Cook (65) and Harman (63), who caught up in later action. Overnight leader Bryson DeChambeau finished the day one stroke back off lead. — Reuters





Quartararo captures pole in French MotoGP

Home favourite Fabio Quartararo edged out Pramac Ducati's Jack Miller to claim his third MotoGP pole position of the season at the French Grand Prix in Le Mans on Saturday. Championship leader Quartararo powered through the final sector at the Bugatti Circuit to produce a near-faultless lap of one minute 31.315 seconds.



Goetze wanted to join Leverkusen, says coach Bosz

Mario Goetze was interested in joining Bayer Leverkusen but there was no place for the 2014 World Cup hero on the Bundesliga team because of a teenager, coach Peter Bosz has said. "He wanted to come to Leverkusen but we have Florian Wirtz, among others, on that position," Bosz told Saturday's edition of *De Telegraaf* paper.



KOLKATA HOLD NERVES TO EDGE PUNJAB

ABU DHABI: Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) held their nerve for the second time in a row and pulled off a thrilling two-run win, beating Kings XI Punjab (KXIP) in Match 24 of Dream11 Indian Premier League (IPL) 2020 at the Shaikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Saturday.

After electing to bat, KKR lost Rahul Tripathi early as Mohammad Shami disturbed the timber in the third over. KXIP picked their second wicket in the next over following a mix-up between Nitish Rana and Shubman Gill.

KKR needed some stability at that stage and Eoin Morgan and Gill did just that even as KXIP managed to keep things extremely tight. The KKR duo added 49 runs together before Morgan was holed out for 24 at long-on off Ravi Bishnoi's bowling in the 11th over.

With KKR requiring to change gears, skipper Dinesh Karthik joined Gill in the middle. Karthik did not for too long as he creamed a six on the final ball of the 14th over to take KKR past 90.

In the next over, Gill brought up his

second fifty of the IPL season as KKR moved past hundred.

Karthik then started to up the ante as he took on Arshdeep Singh, hitting the left-arm medium-pacer for three fours in the 16th over. The DK show continued as he went after Chris Jordan in the next over, hitting the England pacer for two fours and a six over long-off as KKR crossed 130-run mark, with Karthik moving to 43 off 19 balls.

While KXIP managed to end Gill's innings in the 18th over, DK continued his merry ways, bringing up his first fifty of IPL 2020 in 22 balls.

KKR added 18 runs in the last two over to post 164/6 on the board in their quota of 20 overs.

In the chase, KL Rahul got an early life as Russell could not hold onto a running catch and injured himself

while saving a boundary.

Mayank Agarwal then creamed two fours and a six in the fourth over off Prasidh Krishna. KXIP brought up their fifty in the seventh over.

While there were a few overs where KKR did not concede many, Mayank

hit two crisp fours in the 11th over KXIP moved closer to hundred.

Two over later, KL Rahul, who hit two successive fours, and Mayank notched up their fifties as KXIP continued their march in the chase.

KKR managed to break the Mayank-Rahul partnership in the 15th over as he dismissed Mayank for 59. Nicholas Pooran and Rahul then scored 19 off the 16th over, with Pooran hitting a four and a six and Rahul adding one more four to his account.

KKR had pulled back a game at

With 20 needed from two overs, Prasidh Krishna gave away only 6 runs and picked two wickets, including that of KL Rahul

the death against CSK and they once started to pull things back against KXIP when Sunil Narine, conceding just two runs, dismissed Pooran in the 18th over.

With 20 needed from two overs, Prasidh Krishna gave away only 6 runs and picked two wickets, including that of KL Rahul.

KXIP needed 14 off the last over and Narine was handed over the responsibility to bowl that over. While KXIP could only score 2 off the first two balls, Glenn Maxwell hit a four off the third to bring down the target to 8 from 3 balls. KKR then gave away just a run and scalped a wicket of Mandeep Singh over the next two balls, leaving KXIP to score 6 off the last ball to push the game into the Super Over.

While Maxwell went big, the ball landed just before the boundary rope for four as KKR won the game by 2 runs to add two points to their account. — BCCI

BRIEF SCORES: Kolkata Knight Riders 164/6 (Dinesh Karthik 58, Shubman Gill 57; Arshdeep Singh 1/25) beat Kings XI Punjab 162/5 (KL Rahul 74, Mayank Agarwal 59; Prasidh Krishna 3/29) by two runs

ASHWIN OUTWITS BUTTLER AS DELHI SEE OFF RAJASTHAN

SHARJAH: Ravichandran Ashwin won his latest battle with England's Jos Buttler a season after their ugly 'Mankading' showdown as Delhi Capitals inflicted a fourth straight Indian Premier League defeat on Rajasthan Royals to go back top of the table.

Last year's game between the two was dominated by the sportsmanship row that erupted after Ashwin took off the bails at the bowler's end when Buttler strayed too far out of his crease looking for a run.

There was no repeat in the new clash but Ashwin did claim Buttler's wicket as his side took a 46-run victory in the sweltering Sharjah heat.

This time Buttler could not complain. He was one of a host of Rajasthan batsmen to give their wickets away cheaply in the latest disappointment for captain Steve Smith. Buttler took no chances backing up during Ashwin's bowling. When facing the Indian all-rounder, Buttler looked for a big hit but sent the ball to Shikhar Dhawan who made a diving catch at square leg.

Ashwin gave a huge leap of celebration. "Getting that Jos wicket was important," he said after the game. Despite the sportsmanship controversy caused by his manoeuvre last year, Ashwin had given a "final" warning before the game that he would do it again.

Both sides were probably relieved that Ashwin, who was named Man of the Match, never got the chance. But according to Ashwin, Delhi coach Ricky Ponting has approached the

SCOREBOARD

DELHI CAPITALS	
P Shaw c&b J Archer	19
S Dhawan c Y Jaiswal b J Archer	5
Shreyas Iyer run out (Y Jaiswal)	22
Rishabh Pant run out	5
M Stoinis c S Smith b R Tewatia	39
S Hetmyer c R Tewatia b K Tyagi	45
H Patel c R Tewatia b Archer	16
Axar c J Buttler b A Iye	17
Kagiso Rabada not out	2
R Ashwin not out	0
Extras (4b 3lb 2nb Open 5w)	14
Total (20 overs)	184-8
Fall of wickets: 1-12, 2-42, 3-50, 4-79, 5-109, 6-149, 7-181, 8-183	
Bowling: Varun Aaron 2-0-25-0, Jofra Archer 4-0-24-3, Kartik Tyagi 4-0-35-1, Andrew Tye 4-0-50-1, Shreyas Gopal 2-0-23-0, Rahul Tewatia 4-0-20-1	
RAJASTHAN ROYALS	
Y Jaiswal b M Stoinis	34
J Buttler c S Dhawan b Ashwin	13
S Smith c S Hetmyer b A Nortje	24
Sanju c S Hetmyer b Stoinis	5
M Lomror c Axar b Ashwin	1
R Tewatia b Rabada	38
A Iye c Rabada b Axar	6
J Archer c Shreyas b Rabada	2
Shreyas c Hetmyer b Harshal	2
Kartik Tyagi not out	2
V Aaron c Pant b Rabada	1
Extras (0b 2lb 1nb Open 7w)	10
Total (19.4 overs)	138 all out
Fall of wickets: 1-15, 2-56, 3-72, 4-76, 5-82, 6-90, 7-100, 8-121, 9-136	
Bowling: Kagiso Rabada 3-4-0-35-3, Anrich Nortje 4-0-25-1, R Ashwin 4-0-22-2, Harshal Patel 4-0-29-1, Axar Patel 2-0-8-1, Marcus Stoinis 2-0-17-2	

International Cricket Council over changing the rules for Mankading so that a batsman can be punished without being out. With Buttler gone, Rajasthan gave away wickets easily and never looked capable of matching Delhi's 184 for eight off 20 overs.

They were all out for 138 in 19.4 overs. — AFP



Ravichandran Ashwin of Delhi Capitals celebrates the wicket of Jos Buttler of Rajasthan Royals at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. — BCCI



Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas poses as he celebrates after qualifying in pole position at the Nuerburgring, Germany. — Reuters

Bottas beats Hamilton to Eifel GP pole

NUERBURGRING, Germany: Valtteri Bottas seized pole position with a last lap blast at the Eifel Grand Prix on Saturday as Mercedes team-mate and Formula One championship leader Lewis Hamilton joined him on the front row at the Nuerburgring.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen, who had been on provisional pole after the first flying laps of the final session at the German circuit, qualified in third place with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc fourth.

Bottas' pole was his third of 2020 and an 11th in 11 races this season for Mercedes but it looked in the balance right to the end, when the Finn pulled out a big effort to beat Hamilton by 0.256. "It's such a nice feeling when you get it on the last lap, with the last chance," said Bottas after celebrating his 14th career pole. "The last lap in

qualifying three was spot on, just what I needed. It was nice to get it together."

The Finn is 44 points behind six times world champion Hamilton, who will still fancy his chances of equalling Michael Schumacher's all-time record 91 career wins on Sunday at a track that last hosted an F1 race in 2013. Both drivers will start on the soft tyres.

"He's two tenths ahead, he did a great job so congrats to him," said the Briton, who like everyone else had only one practice session to set up the car after Friday's track action was wiped out by bad weather.

"Going around behind the safety car in these conditions is going to be tough," said Hamilton of the low temperatures and the problems of getting heat into the tyres. "There's a lot to play for tomorrow so I need to get

It's such a nice feeling when you get it on the last lap, with the last chance. The last lap in qualifying three was spot on, just what I needed. It was nice to get it together

VALTTERI BOTTAS
Mercedes driver

my head down."

Verstappen said his car had started understeering just at the key moment.

"When it's so cold, when you're understeering you're graining the front tyres so basically eating up the rubber which cost me a bit of lap time," said the Dutch 23-year-old.

Red Bull's Alexander Albon qualified fifth, with Renault team-mates Daniel Ricciardo and Esteban Ocon sixth and seventh respectively. Britain's Lando Norris will line up eighth for McLaren, with team-mate Carlos Sainz 10th and Sergio Perez in between for Racing Point. German super-sub Nico Hulkenberg, called in as a late replacement for the unwell Lance Stroll at Racing Point, will line up last on the grid. One place ahead of him, in 19th, will be Alfa Romeo's Kimi Raikkonen, making a record 323rd start — one more than retired Brazilian Rubens Barrichello. — Reuters

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French Open

Champions

Women's singles

2020 - Iga Swiatek (POL)

2019 - A. Barty (AUS)

2018 - S. Halep (ROM)

2017 - J. Ostapenko (LAT)

2016 - G. Muguruza (ESP)

2015 - S. Williams (USA)

2014 - M. Sharapova (RUS)

2013 - S. Williams

2012 - M. Sharapova

2011 - Li Na (CHN)



POLISH DELIGHT

SWIATEK BECOMES POLAND'S FIRST GRAND SLAM SINGLES CHAMPION

PARIS: Polish teenager Iga Swiatek won her country's first ever Grand Slam singles title on Saturday as she defeated American fourth seed Sofia Kenin 6-4, 6-1 to become the youngest women's French Open champion since 1992.

The 19-year-old Swiatek, at 54 the lowest-ranked woman to capture the Roland Garros title in the modern era, is the ninth first-time major champion in the past 14 Grand Slams.

"Maybe it just had to be like that, another underdog had to win a Grand Slam. In women's tennis right now it's crazy," said Swiatek, who will rise to 17th in the world after her victory.

"I don't know what's going on. It's overwhelming for me, it's crazy."

"Two years ago I won a junior

Grand Slam (at Wimbledon) and now I'm here," she added. "It feels like such a short time."

Swiatek is the youngest women's French Open winner since Monica Seles 28 years ago.

She eclipsed the run of compatriot Jadwiga Jedrzejowska — the most outstanding Polish player of the interwar period — who finished runner-up at Roland Garros in 1939.

Swiatek was only the second Polish woman to reach a Grand Slam final in the Open era after Agnieszka Radwanska at Wimbledon in 2012. She had never previously been beyond the last 16. Australian Open champion Kenin, 21, was attempting to become the first woman to capture two Slams in the same year since Angelique



Poland's Iga Swiatek celebrates with the Suzanne Lenglen trophy during the podium ceremony after winning the French Open 2020 women's final against Sofia Kenin of the US at the Philippe Chatrier court, Roland Garros, in Paris. — AFP

Kerber in 2016. Swiatek, whose only previous tour-level final came at Lugano last year, dispelled any initial fear of nerves as she won 12 of the first 15 points to surge 3-0 ahead.

However, Kenin has made a habit of fighting through tough situations in Paris and broke back when Swiatek served an untimely double fault allowing the American to level at 3-all.

Swiatek, who bludgeoned her way through to the championship match, conceding just 23 games in six rounds, secured a precious hold before Kenin lost her serve for the second time.

Serving for the first set at 5-3, Swiatek dumped a tame backhand into the net on set point and Kenin immediately broke back, ripping a blistering backhand return.

Kenin's resilience has been a staple of her success but she cracked again to present Swiatek with two more set points at 4-5, promptly dragging a backhand wide to hand the Pole the opening set. The sixth-ranked Kenin, trying to become the first woman to capture two Slams in the same season since Angelique Kerber in 2016, broke to begin the second set. But an undeterred Swiatek responded the following game, smacking a backhand down the line to break once more before holding with ease to go 2-1 up.

Kenin subsequently called for a medical timeout to receive treatment on her taped left thigh, but she could not slow the momentum of her opponent as Swiatek broke for a fifth time. — AFP

Firmino hits brace as Brazil hammer Bolivia



Brazil's Roberto Firmino (R) and Bolivia's Jose Maria Carrasco vie for the ball during their 2022 Fifa World Cup South American qualifier match at the Neo Química Arena, also known as Itaquerão, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP

SAO PAULO: Liverpool striker Roberto Firmino scored a brace as Brazil romped to a 5-0 victory over Bolivia in their opening 2022 World Cup qualifier on Friday.

Barcelona playmaker Philippe Coutinho and Paris Saint-Germain defender Marquinhos also got on the scoresheet while star forward Neymar set up two goals in a totally one-sided encounter that sent Brazil top of the South American qualifying table.

In a Corinthians Arena deserted due to COVID-19 restrictions, Bolivia showed almost no ambition as Brazil dominated throughout, with PSG's Neymar starting after overcoming a back problem.

Inside the first minute, winger Everton volleyed wide from inside the six-yard box and three minutes later his cross was headed off-target by

At times it looked like a handball game with Brazil camped on the edge of Bolivia's box, and the visitors keeping 10 men behind the ball

Marquinhos from a similar position.

Bolivia couldn't get out of their half, or on the ball, as Coutinho and Everton created a slew of chances down Brazil's left.

The pressure told on 16 minutes as Marquinhos headed home from an identical position to his earlier chance as full-back Danilo swung over a cross from the right following a short corner.

Even a first half downpour couldn't

dampen Brazil's thrust as Coutinho forced a diving one-handed save from goalkeeper Carlos Lampe with a deflected shot.

At times it looked like a handball game with Brazil camped on the edge of Bolivia's box, and the visitors keeping 10 men behind the ball at all times.

But on the half hour, left-back Renan Lodi got in behind the defence and his cross from the left was turned home from barely a yard out by Firmino.

Lampe made a fine one-handed save from a Casemiro free-kick and then smothered a close range finish by Neymar.

In the night's other match, Atalanta pair Duvan Zapata and Luis Muriel fired Colombia to a 3-0 win over Venezuela. — AFP



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LOGISTICS HUB

New shipping line to link Omani ports with Iraq



The service affirms Oman’s well-established position as a logistics hub and seeks to shore up direct export and import of goods from their countries of origin

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 10

Asyad Group has announced the launch of the first shipping line between Oman ports and Iraq’s Umm Qasr Port. This notable move bolsters the Group’s efforts to expand the maritime transport network between Oman and the world, facilitate cross-regional trade, boost direct export and import and provide logistics solutions to its customers.

This direct line will start operating a weekly trip connecting Oman ports (Salalah, Duqm and Suhar) with Iraq’s Umm Qasr Port. The service affirms Oman’s well-established position as a logistics hub and seeks to shore up direct export and import of goods from their countries of origin.

The newly introduced direct line not only will increase the volume of intra-regional trade, but it will also open up new investment prospects between Oman

and Iraq.

In addition to enhancing both countries’ re-export capabilities, the new direct operations between Oman ports and Umm Qasr Port will provide various options to businessmen, exporters, importers, and shipping agents for exporting Omani products and importing Iraqi commodities.

Asyad’s Group’s Container Line service was recently ranked 55th globally by the international database platform, Alphaliner.

Asyad’s Group’s Container Line service was recently ranked 55th globally by the international database platform, Alphaliner. The platform’s index ranks the top 100 container line services based on capacity and reliability of service. Furthermore, Omani ports, directly linked to 86 commercial ports in more than 40 countries, have 200 direct weekly trips for export and import.

Major strategy to fuel growth of fintech industry in Oman

BURGEONING SECTOR: A Fintech Regulatory Sandbox Framework will enable applicants – both from licenced and non-licenced institutions – “to test their proposed fintech solutions live under CBO’s oversight.

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) is formulating a robust and comprehensive strategy to support the growth and adoption of financial technology (fintech) services in the Sultanate — a move designed to launch Oman into a burgeoning global industry projected to hit a market value of \$300 billion by 2025.

Oman’s fintech strategy, according to the Central Bank’s Executive President, has the potential to fuel, among other things, the roll-out of innovative banking and financial products, promote venture capitalism, drive entrepreneurship and employment generation, and spur economic development in general.

“Recognising the significance of technological relevance and its necessity in the arena of banking, the CBO has been playing a proactive catalytic role in providing and creating an enabling environment to facilitate the growth of fintech in the Sultanate”, Tahir bin Salim al Amri said.

Auguring well for the growth of this sector, he noted, is a “young, tech savvy population” with high telecom and internet penetration rates averaging 131 per cent for mobile phone use, 104 per cent per for mobile broadband access per inhabitant, and 75 per cent fixed broadband access per household.

Speaking at the 5th New Age Banking Summit 2020 held in Muscat last week, Al Amri said the apex bank’s roadmap for fintech development will unlock significant benefits for the banking and financial services sector and the Omani economy as a whole.

“The fintech strategy of CBO is aimed at establishing a comprehensive fintech ecosystem in



The fintech strategy of CBO is aimed at establishing a comprehensive fintech ecosystem in Oman to foster and nurture fintech start-ups, SMEs and technology firms besides facilitating the existing players to innovate, develop and offer digital solutions

TAHIR BIN SALIM AL AMRI
CBO Executive President

Oman to foster and nurture fintech start-ups, SMEs and technology firms besides facilitating the existing players to innovate, develop and offer digital solutions. Thus, apart from being in the lead in

current times, the strategy will also serve as an impetus to our country’s economic growth, open new job opportunities and hopefully attract venture capitalists.”

Supporting the formulation of the strategy is an in-house fintech committee comprising of “young and energetic minds” tasked with developing a robust fintech sector in the Sultanate within the mandate of the Central Bank, said the Executive President.

Already, a Fintech Regulatory Sandbox Framework set in place by the CBO in the second quarter of this year will enable applicants — both from licensed and non-licensed institutions — “to test their proposed fintech solutions live under CBO’s oversight”, said Al Amri.

He further stated: “I’m glad to share that the official rollout will happen shortly, which will pave the way for entities to launch and test their products in the sandbox. Further the regulatory departments and the Fintech Committee are in the process of finalising draft cloud computing guidelines, which will shortly go through a round of consultations with all stakeholders. Once finalised, it will provide the framework for availing cloud services by licenced institutions to foster the growth of local cloud

providers.”

Al Amri noted in particular the role of technology in enabling the delivery of safe banking and financial services to the general population amid the COVID-19 pandemic. “In the present challenging times of social distancing, technology has played a vital role in ensuring seamless and uninterrupted financial transactions which are so critical for the smooth functioning of the economy.

We at CBO have effectively leveraged technological infrastructure and the tools at our disposal to provide the much needed relief to the affected sectors of the economy and ensured no disruption in the efficient functioning of the financial system.”

Among the measures implemented by the apex bank to facilitate the provision of banking services while supporting adherence to pandemic safety precautions were: Waivers or reduced charges for digital transactions, doubling the limit for contactless and mobile payments, permitting temporary use of expired debit or credit cards, and authorising digital onboarding of customers for opening savings bank accounts, he added.

BRIEF BITES INSIDE

BANKING

SUMMIT CALLS FOR ACCELERATION IN DIGITAL BANKING



The fifth edition of New Age Banking Summit Oman, supported by Oman Banks Association, drew a good response from the banking industry and fintech sectors. Tahir bin Salim al Amri, CBO Executive President, was the Chief Guest at the event held at Hotel Sheraton Oman last week. < Page 14

WALL STREET

US CORPORATE EARNINGS IMPROVEMENT EXPECTED, BUT STILL A WEAK QUARTER



While good business news has been in short supply, investors may take slight comfort in coming weeks from US corporate earnings that are likely to be bad, but not as bad as they have been. Analysts expect Q3 S&P 500 earnings to have fallen 21 per cent compared with the year-ago quarter. < Page 15

ENERGY

INDIA’S FUEL DEMAND POSTS FIRST MONTHLY GAIN SINCE JUNE



India’s fuel demand in September rose for the first time since June as easing coronavirus restrictions supported economic activity and travel, but consumption remained weaker than a year earlier, government data showed. Consumption of refined fuels rose 7.2 per cent in September. < Page 15

Summit calls for acceleration in digital banking

Al Amri emphasised on CBO's role in facilitating the growth of fintech, and encourage electronic payments, risk management controls and customer protection

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 10

The fifth edition of New Age Banking Summit Oman, supported by Oman Banks Association, drew a good response from the banking industry and fintech sectors. Tahir bin Salim al Amri, Executive President, Central Bank of Oman, was the chief guest at the event held last week.

In his keynote address, Al Amri emphasised on CBO's role in facilitating the growth of fintech, and encourage electronic payments, risk management controls and customer protection. Talking about the new



initiatives in payments, he said, "The wholesale payment system, namely, the Real Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS), is in an advanced stage of upgrade and will be up and running 24x7 by the first half of 2021.

"This will make Oman the first

country in the Arab Gulf region to operate the RTGS 24x7.

"It will help businesses to make high-value payments round the clock, which will greatly help the payment system participants manage their funds efficiently."

In a separate presentation, Ali

Hassan Moosa, CEO of Oman Banks Association, reflected on the need for the banks to gear up for the changes at an accelerated pace with the growing popularity of open banking, instant P2P payments, cashless multicurrency exchanges, behaviour-based

personalised offers, super e-wallet that works across borders and blockchain-based contracts, and so on.

The Summit also hosted a panel discussion titled 'The Age of Collaboration to Drive Innovation and Transformation'.

The panel, comprising the well-known industry leaders from banking, finance, investment, insurance and technology sectors, debated on various aspects related to the great reset for the financial services sector due to COVID-19 related challenges and how banks are adapting to the changing technology landscape.

The panelists included Khalid al Kayed CEO of Bank Nizwa; Sanjay Kawatra, Group President - Regional Business and COO of OMINVEST Group; Eng Maqbool al Wahaibi, CEO of Oman Data Park; Eddy Abboud, CEO of GBM Oman; and Sunil Kohli, CEO of Dhofar Insurance. The panel discussion was moderated by Ali Hassan Moosa.

Oman Banking and Finance Awards 2020 was also co-located with the New Age Banking Summit.

The best performing banking, leasing, insurance and fintech companies were felicitated in the Awards.

MSM WEEKLY REVIEW

MSM ends marginally lower

The MSM30 Index ended the week marginally lower by 0.29 per cent. Financial Index was down 0.58 per cent while Industrial Index was higher by 2.41 per cent. Services Index remained unchanged. Traded values were also higher than last week as the earlier week had less trading days.

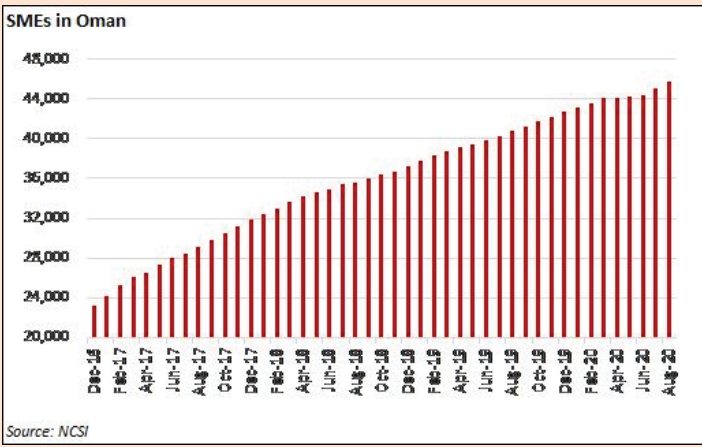
Muscat Gases EGM decides to sell United Industrial Gases to Mohsin Darwish Investment for RO 2.05 million. As of 2Q-2020, the value of investment in United Industrial Gases of Muscat Gas stands at RO 1.757 million, hence the transaction to result in a profit of RO 0.293 million i.e. a per share gain of 10 baisa. The proceeds could also be utilised to reduce the debt of the company which currently stands at RO 1.32 million, resulting in lowering of financial charges.

ACWA Power through its legal advisor attended the primary court hearing on September 28, 2020. The company understands that the primary court has dismissed the case and is awaiting written judgement for understanding the basis of dismissal and to plan next course of action.

The total number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) at the end of August 2020 was 45,706, which is an increase by 12.1 per cent compared to the same month of 2019.

Among the governorates, Muscat topped the list with 33 per cent SMEs registered till August 2020, followed by North Al Batinah with 16 per cent, Al Dakhiliyah with 13 per cent, Dhofar with 8 per cent, and the rest of governorates with 30 per cent.

The Governorate of Muscat had 15,321 SMEs registered at the end of August 2020, followed by North Al Batinah with 7,229, Al Dakhiliyah



The total number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) at the end of August 2020 was 45,706, which is an increase by 12.1 per cent compared to the same month of 2019.

with 5,797, Dhofar with 3,825, South Al Batinah with 3,390, and North Al Sharqiyah with 3,096 SMEs registered. This was followed by Al Dhahirah with 2,689 SMEs, South Al Sharqiyah with 2,660 and Al Buraimi with 974.

Oman's real estate activity dropped as the value of real estate exchange by the end of August 2020 stood at RO 1.52 billion, compared to RO 1.64 billion in similar period last year, according to statistics released by the National Centre of Statistics and Information.

The data shows that fees collected from all legal transactions dropped 25.4 per cent YoY and the exchanged value of 32,460 sale contracts declined by 17.2 per cent YoY to RO 510 million by August 2020.

The value of mortgage contracts also dropped by 5.0 per cent YoY to RO 965 million during 8M-2020.

The total revenues of Omani hotels in the three-to-five-star category declined by 56.6 per cent to RO 61.3 million in 8M-2020 compared to RO 141.3 million in 8M-2019.

Hotel occupancy rates fell by 24.4pps to reach 27.5 per cent in 2020 against 51.9 per cent in similar period of 2019,

according to National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The total number of guests in Omani hotels showed a significant decline of 56.6 per cent in 8M-2020, reaching 490.8k compared to 1.131 million in 8M-2019.

The GCC bloc recorded net foreign flows at \$2.85 billion in 9M-2020. Saudi Arabia and Dubai recorded positive flows during 9M-2020 while the rest recorded outflows. Saudi net foreign flows YTD stood at \$3.97 billion whereas that of Dubai stood at \$23.5 million.

Foreign flows in September alone stood at \$173 million compared to \$866 million in August. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Dubai recorded positive flows in September while the rest recorded net foreign outflows.

Qatar will allow foreign companies and individuals to own real estate in more areas in the country, liberalising rules to attract overseas funds in the sector as part of moves to diversify the economy. Non-Qatari individuals could own properties in nine areas, up from three before, while the number of areas where foreigners may use real estate has also been increased to 16, a government statement said.

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

BUSINESS RELATIONS

Madayn virtual seminar targets Indian investment

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 10

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), in cooperation with the Asian-Arab Chamber of Commerce in India, organised a virtual seminar entitled 'Investment Incentives in Madayn'. More than 80 investors and businessmen took part in the seminar which comes in line with the efforts made by Madayn to attract more foreign investments to the Sultanate and strengthen partnerships with the private sector, particularly in the industrial sector.

Speaking during the seminar, Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, Chief Executive Officer of Madayn, emphasised on the strong bilateral trade relations between



the Sultanate and India. Al Hasani said that the seminar presents an opportunity to introduce the incentives and facilities offered by Madayn to the participating investors and businessmen. Al Hasani added that Madayn aims at enhancing the Sultanate's position as a leading regional centre of manufacturing, ICT, innovation

and entrepreneurship excellence. To achieve this, Madayn is making significant efforts to attract industrial investments and provide continued support through regionally and globally competitive strategies, good infrastructure, value adding services and easy governmental processes.

SHORT TAKES

MUSCAT

OMRAN GROUP ANNOUNCES PARTICIPATION OF MURIYA HOTELS IN 'WITHIN OMAN'



Omran Group, the executive arm of the Sultanate for tourism development, announced that four more hotels and resorts that are under Muriya have joined its nationwide promotional campaign #WithinOman.

A total of 17 hotels and resorts are now participating in the campaign. This will contribute in achieving the campaign's objectives of stimulating domestic tourism, through a wide array of special packages and experiences at these hospitality assets across the Sultanate.

Through this collaboration, Omran Group aims to boost the development and growth of Oman's tourism sector by working hand in hand with its key partners. Muriya represents the successful partnership between Omran Group and Orascom Development Holding (ODH). The company is currently managing the developments of Jabal Sifah in Muscat and the Hawana Salalah in Dhofar, which are considered two of the largest integrated tourism complexes in the Sultanate.

MUSCAT

SUHAIL BAHWAN AUTOMOBILES LAUNCHES GENERAL TIRES IN OMAN



Suhail Bahwan Automobiles unveiled the General Tire range in Oman. General Tire, with a reputation for producing some of the world's best off-road and on-road tires, and a history stretching back over 100 years, has now arrived on Oman's motoring scene. Renowned for its 'Anywhere is possible' slogan, the brand has been introduced to the Sultanate in partnership with Suhail Bahwan Automobiles LLC and offers a totally new range of safe, reliable and high value tires for car owners in Oman.

Founded in 1915, and now owned by premium tire and automotive technology company Continental, General Tire operates worldwide and manufactures a wide range of tires for passenger cars, trucks and industrial applications. With its rich American heritage, the brand is best known for its robust and durable high-performance SUV and 4x4 tires.

Karel Kucera, Managing Director, Continental Middle East, said: "General Tire has been waiting for the right moment to introduce the brand to Oman, and this partnership with Suhail Bahwan Automobiles represents exactly such an opportunity."

AIRBUS RAMPS UP DELIVERIES IN SEPTEMBER

Airbus reached the highest number of monthly deliveries of passenger planes so far this year in September, but logged no new sales as crisis-hit airlines continue to bleed cash. The planemaker delivered 57 jets in September, up from 39 in August, bringing nine-month deliveries to 341. [> Reuters](#)



IRAN’S RIAL HITS NEW LOW AGAINST DOLLAR



The Iranian rial fell to a new low against the US dollar on Saturday as the economy reels under pressure from the COVID-19 pandemic and US sanctions. The dollar was selling for as much as 304,300 rials on the unofficial market, up from 295,940 on Friday, according to the foreign exchange site Bonbast.com. [> Reuters](#)

From zero to hero selling online (Part 1)

Keto diet was just starting to be popularised when I decided to embark on a weight loss exercise, which in turn made me a healthier and more active person. It also helped me to lose 19 kg, down to my lowest number on the weight scale since I was in my mid-20s.

But jumping on a completely new diet wasn't easy for a true blue Italian like me, used to consume loads of pasta and pizza.

Therefore I activated the creative side of my brain, bought some shredded mozzarella cheese and baked it in the oven. I tried 15 minutes, then 20, alas

I found the sweet spot at 18 minutes sharp.

The roundly shaped crispy chip that came out was incredibly good. I became so obsessed with such snacks that every day I would bring a bunch of them to work.

I bought a nice round container to hold the 8 mozzarella chips that my oven could bake in one go. Soon after at the office, the team started asking me what snack I was crunchin on, and I shared my chips with the team.

They totally loved them. So more and more frequently they asked me to produce more and encouraged me to sell them... an idea that at the beginning was good for a laugh, but after



Stefano Virgilli stefano@virgilli.com

SO WHATEVER BUSINESS YOU ARE PLANNING TO LAUNCH ONLINE, MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE ENOUGH SUPPLY AND CAPACITY TO MAKE YOUR CLIENTS HAPPY.

a couple of weeks became a serious opportunity at the back of my mind. I quickly made some calculations: 8 round chips maximised the space available in my oven, that was a physical limitation.

So I weighed the mozzarella and found out that each chip was made out of 7.5 to 8 grammes of cheese. I then calculated how much it cost me to buy the mozzarella from the supermarket half a kg at the time.

Then I went to source containers that could hold 8 chips stacked on top of each other made of solid material to protect the integrity and the fragrance.

Furthermore I found some

plastic envelopes that were approved for postal shipment and checked out the price to ship out a box of chips within Singapore.

Lastly I rounded my electric bill if I were to use the oven for 3 to 4 hours a day. I quickly calculated the total cost and added a 50 per cent profit on top of that. I was in business.

This is how my journey started in creating an online shop in 2019, that however came to an abrupt end just 22 days later.

In the next few articles I will share what went wrong and what lessons I have learned while succeeding at launching and then failing at maintaining an online business.

As for this first part of the article I would say that the main lesson I have learned — and which I frankly managed to do quite well — was the importance of calculating the cost of production down to the cents.

However, what I failed to understand was that my oven was too small and sooner than I expected it could not handle the amount of incoming orders.

So whatever business you are planning to launch online, make sure that you have enough supply and capacity to make your clients happy. Nothing disappoints clients more than the inability to deliver what they have bought.

(The author is a member of the International Press Association)

Contractors in aviation axed jobs as US delayed aid



Swissport airport workers walk across the tarmac at an airport in Chicago. — Reuters

CHICAGO: US aviation contractors laid off thousands of workers due to delays in payroll aid from the US Treasury that was meant to protect jobs, an investigation by a US House of Representatives subcommittee found.

Under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act companies in the aviation sector were granted funds to cover six months of their payroll as the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a precipitous decline in air travel.

The legislation banned any job cuts through September, and requires the US Department of the Treasury to begin distributing funds to eligible companies within 10 days of the law's approval on March 27.

But an investigation by the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis found that top contractors did not receive the money until months later, resulting in more than 16,500 layoffs and furloughs at 15 companies, more than 15 per cent of the aviation contractor workforce.

“Had Treasury met the deadline set by Congress, many of these jobs would have been preserved,” the report said.

Among the top seven contractors, Swissport waited 99 days before its payroll support agreement with Treasury was finalised, Gate Gourmet 78 days and Flying Food Fare 74 days, leading to nearly 12,000 layoffs and furloughs at those three companies alone.

The companies still received the full amount of federal aid based on their pre-pandemic workforce, even though they had laid off many of those workers, it said. — Reuters

India’s fuel demand posts first monthly gain since June

NEW DELHI: India’s fuel demand in September rose for the first time since June as easing coronavirus restrictions supported economic activity and travel, but consumption remained weaker than a year earlier, government data showed.

Consumption of refined fuels, a proxy for oil demand, rose 7.2 per cent in September from the prior month to 15.47 million tonnes, the first monthly increase since June when demand rose to 16.09 million tonnes.

However, demand fell 4.4 per cent from the same period a year earlier, posting its seventh consecutive year-on-year slide, data from the Petroleum Planning



A worker checks a 500 Indian rupee note as a man fills diesel in containers at a fuel station in Kolkata, India. — Reuters

and Analysis Cell (PPAC) of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas showed.

India’s daily number of coronavirus infections has slowed since hitting a single-day high of

97,894 new cases on September 17, a sign that infections were peaking for now. The country’s factory activity also expanded at its fastest pace in more than eight years in September, even as layoffs continued.

Demand in August was the weakest since April, hurt by a throttling of economic activity and transport due to restrictions.

Diesel consumption, a key parameter linked to economic growth and which accounts for about 40 per cent of overall refined fuel sales in India, rose 13.2 per cent to 5.49 million tonnes last month from 4.85 million tonnes in August.

However, on an annual basis,

demand for diesel declined about 6 per cent.

Sales of gasoline, or petrol, rose by 3.3 per cent from a year earlier to 2.45 million tonnes, and by 2.9 per cent from 2.38 million tonnes in August.

Cooking gas or liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) sales increased by 4.8 per cent to 2.27 million tonnes from a year earlier, while naphtha sales rose 2.9 per cent to 1.14 million tonnes and by 5.7 per cent from August.

Sales of bitumen, used for making roads, rose 38.3 per cent from last year, and fuel oil decreased by 7.4 per cent and by about 4.1 per cent month-on-month. — Reuters

WALL STREET

US corporate earnings improvement expected, but still a weak quarter



The ‘Fearless Girl’ stands in front of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) is seen in New York City. — Reuters

NEW YORK: While good business news has been in short supply, investors may take slight comfort in coming weeks from US corporate earnings that are likely to be bad, but not as bad as they have been.

Analysts expect third-quarter S&P 500 earnings to have fallen 21 per cent compared with the year-ago quarter, a big improvement from second-quarter’s 30.6 per cent drop that was most likely the low point for earnings this year because of coronavirus-fuelled

lockdowns, according to IBES data from Refinitiv.

Earnings reporting will get rolling next week with results from some of the big US banks, likely impacted by near record low interest rates and the pandemic-induced recession.

JPMorgan & Co and Citigroup both release results on Tuesday.

Overall, S&P 500 quarterly results tend to beat analysts’ cautious expectations, and they could do that even more than usual this reporting season,

Analysts expect third-quarter S&P 500 earnings to have fallen 21 per cent compared with the year-ago quarter, a big improvement from second-quarter’s 30.6 per cent drop

strategists said. In a break from the typical trend, guidance from US companies has been more positive than negative and estimates have been improving in recent weeks to reflect more upbeat guidance.

Whether that will be enough to support stocks in the weeks ahead is up for debate.

“Very rarely in the last 10 years have we seen earnings estimates moving higher after a quarterly reporting season,” said Art Hogan, chief market strategist at National Securities in New York.

“That’s a very good sign. It’s a sign there’s a strong possibility this quarterly earnings season

is now going to be better than expected,” he said. “The only problem is, now that we’ve entered the fourth quarter, a lot of the economic indicators are plateauing.”

That could weigh on fourth-quarter guidance and overshadow some of the better-than-expected results, he said.

Data this past Thursday on US jobless claims was among the latest to underscore the view the labour market recovery was struggling to gain momentum, with coronavirus cases continuing to rise.

Earnings season comes as the nation also prepares for the November 3 US presidential vote, which lands in the middle of one of the heaviest weeks of profit reporting. That, along with focus on prospects for additional fiscal stimulus from Washington, could overshadow earnings news. Companies that have reported so far on the quarter have not seen much cheer from investors, despite their much stronger-than-expected results, some strategists have noted. — Reuters

Egypt’s inflation of 3.7 per cent could trigger IMF consultation

CAIRO: Egypt’s headline inflation came in at under 4 per cent in September, potentially triggering consultations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that could lead to lower interest rates.

Under a one-year, \$5.2 billion loan agreement signed in June, Egypt committed to consult an IMF technical team if year-on-year inflation fell below 6 per cent by the end of September and the IMF board itself if it fell below 4 per cent.

In September, annual urban consumer price inflation edged up to 3.7 per cent from 3.4 per cent in August. The low inflation rate sharpens a dilemma for the central bank: whether to keep interest rates high to sell treasury bills and protect the currency, or lower them to encourage growth in an economy battered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Economists said that if inflation remains low, the IMF could argue the central bank’s monetary committee should consider lowering interest rates when it next meets on November 12. — Reuters

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- English Speaking with good communication skills.
- Traveling to multiple sites, Holding Oman Driving license.

Interested candidates, please forward your CV to: info@aris.com.om

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COLD store in Al Seeb for lease or sale. Contact: 94272979, 96252664.

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Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

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WE are urgently for AC & Auto electrician (car electrician) who can join immediately. Contact: 99677756.

Required Accountant (Male)

With minimum 7 years' experience, Having valid GCC Driving License, With good attitude, honesty and integrity.

- The applicant should be well versed with Omani Labor law and able to handle Accounts upto finalization.

Interested candidates may send CV to hroman007@gmail.com.

URGENTLY REQUIRED

A Muscat Based company specialized in ICT services has an exciting opportunity for:

- IT Engineer (Bachelor degree in Network & Server support, preference will be given for individuals with extensive knowledge in multi-vendor network equipment)
- UPS Senior Service Technician
- HVAC Senior Service Technician

Above positions are well suited to individuals that are looking to advance their career and gain hands-on experience in a thriving and supportive workplace.

Requirements:

- 5 years Minimum experience.
- English Speaking with good communication skills.
- Traveling to multiple sites, Holding Oman Driving license

Interested candidates, please forward your CV to: info@ip.com.om

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SIT. WANTED

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A LEGAL translation office needs **Marketeers**. Contact E-mail: oman4n@gmail.com

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2. Fridge, washing machine and dish washer repairing.
3. Painting and cleaning services.
4. Electrical, plumbing and carpentry work 97014234, 99447257, 24290686.

ORIENT Trading llc, Shampooing, sofa, carpet, floor polishing. Old house repairing. 99834373.

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

MECHANICAL engineer. 21, Indian male currently in Oman looking to work at any engineering field. Contact 96511338. Email: rkhdhanush11@gmail.com

LIGHT driver, Pakistani male, 39, with good knowledge of Oman roads and areas, speaks English, Arabic, Urdu and Hindi. Looking for suitable placement. Contact 79250786.

CIVIL engineer/QS engineer, 11 years in UAE, freelance & Oman driving licence available, looking for full-time or part-time job 97299165.

SALES/Marketing/ retail executive BMS in Marketing. 6 years experience. Contact 93920174. Rehankadri91@hotmail.com

MALE, Indian Civil Engineer, 30 yrs in Oman with Ministry & Consultants seeks suitable position. Work visa upto Sept 2021. Contact. 99315714.

FINANCE Manager/ CFO. Indian Chartered Accountant and Cost Accountant with 25 years of experience in Trade Finance, MIS, Budget, Planning, Strategy, PROJECTS, Procurement, Admin, seeks suitable placement. Contact. 99884291 / 99741875 Email vipul70@gmail.com

LADY Indian English teacher with over 25 year experience, currently seeks full time position in colleges or training institutions. Responsibilities in English language teaching or soft skills trainer with preference for aviation sector. Possess valid Omani driving license. Contact GSM 92541510

I NEED a driver job, urgent, with NOC paper. My name: Masum Billah. 968 94991705.

INDIAN female Accountant cum Inventory Controller with 15 years of experience, capable to handle from quotation till finalisation. Preference Muscat area. Contact 96414771.

INVESTMENT

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcement of Capital Reduction

In accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company **Rban Alz Fran LTTWYR LLC**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **1281033**, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from Omani Rials **250,000.000** to **25,000.000**. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof



Prague cafe hits sweet spot with coronavirus-shaped dessert

A restaurant in Prague's historic centre has invented a dessert shaped like the novel coronavirus, an attempt to arrest a

The dessert is slightly smaller than a tennis ball, with a chocolate crust and dusted with cocoa butter spray. The virus' "spikes" are made of white chocolate and dried raspberries.



slump in business that is already proving a hit with customers. The Black Madonna would normally be bustling with tourists admiring its cubist interior, but it has suffered as travel to the Czech Republic slumped amid the pandemic and the country battles one of the highest rates of coronavirus infections in Europe. The dessert's creator, Olga

Budnik, said she got the idea during lockdown in the spring. "I found a photo of the virus on the Internet and I figured out in detail how to make the dessert — how to make the spikes, what the colour would be like, and I prepared it all," she said. The dessert is slightly smaller than a tennis ball, with a chocolate crust and dusted with cocoa butter spray. The virus' "spikes" are made of

white chocolate and dried raspberries. Inside there is a pistachio filling with raspberry puree and raspberries in the centre. The delicacy has been a big success, with sales of more than 100 each day and rising. "The coronavirus crisis has meant a huge drop for us, in tens of per cent, like for other gastro enterprises," the cafe's marketing manager Vojtech

Hermanek said. "But at the same time it was a chance to bring out the coronavirus cake which is a symbol... showing that not everything is lost." Budnik, a Ukrainian living in Prague for the past six years, already has sights on the next product — a COVID-19 vaccination-themed sweet which should taste of citrus and liqueur.

— Reuters

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS

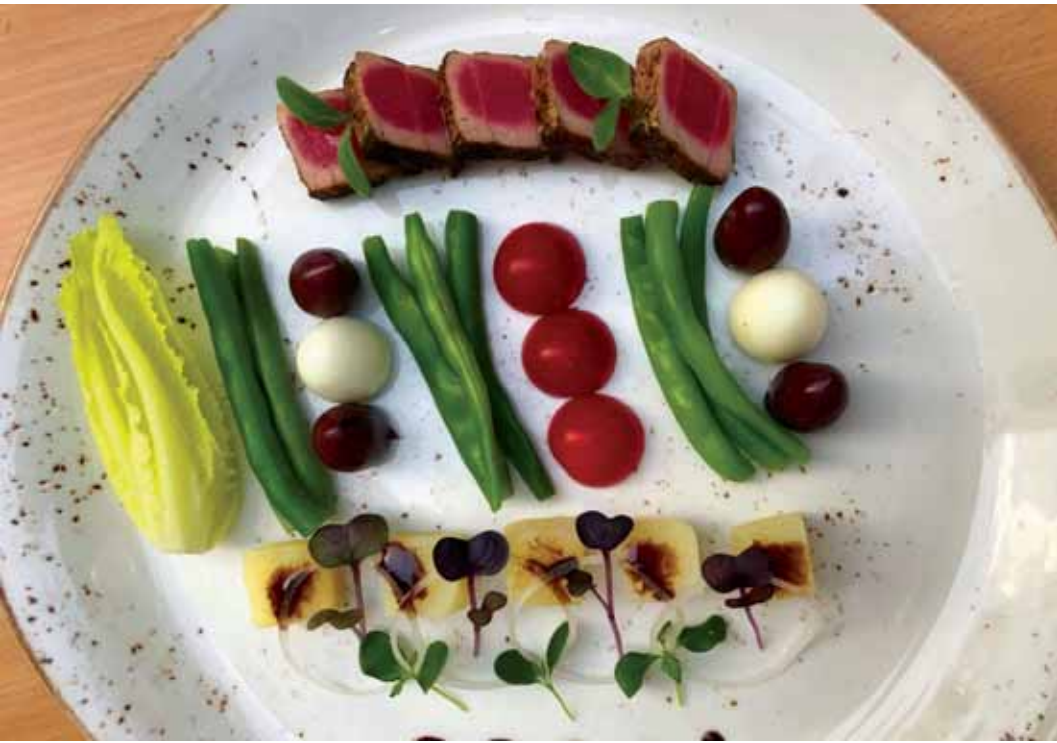


We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

COOK LIKE A CHEF

Get full stories online at www.omanobserver.om

Healthy Niçoise salad revisited



ULTIMATE JOY

Chef Thierry Quintric is convinced that food should bring the ultimate joy to consumers, and he believes that the creative approach to cooking creates a viable excuse to get-together at the table. As executive chef of Hormuz Grand Hotel, he made it his mission to give Oman diversified and inspiring dishes that are now served at restaurants like Omny, Straits and even the Indian-cuisine themed restaurant Qureshi. In the next two weeks, Chef Thierry will be sharing four of his best recipes so you can have something to surprise your family with at least twice each week.

PREPARATION AND COOKING INSTRUCTIONS:

- Season the tuna steak with salt, ground pepper and olive oil.
- Sear the tuna in medium heat pan each side 10 sec and slice the steak.
- Boil the quail egg about 3 to 4 minutes and peel the shells.
- Blanch the green bean in 2 minutes keep in ice water.
- Cut the potato and boil well. Now marinade all the ingredients with the margination or dressings
- Arrange the all ingredients in plate to serve.



INGREDIENTS:

80 gm Tuna steak Saku
2 pcs Quail egg
4 pcs Kalamata olive
1 pcs New potato
50 gm Green beans
30gm Baby gem lettuce
2 pcs Cherry tomato

FOR DRESSING
1/2 cup of Vegetable oil
2 tbspoon of Dijon mustard
Salt as required
Ground pepper as required
1/4 cup White vinegar

ABOUT THE CHEF

CHEF THIERRY QUINTRIC

Executive Chef
Hormuz Grand, A Radisson Collection Hotel

CHEF THIERRY QUINTRIC is currently the Executive Chef of Hormuz Grand Muscat, A Radisson Collection Hotel. Born in Brest, France, he joined a culinary school at the age of 17, formally beginning his apprenticeship/career four years later. His professional career began in Europe where he worked for several restaurants and hotels, including Michelin-starred properties. Thierry's travels have taken him to London and Caribbean Islands, where he worked at Cap Juluca Hotel-Resort, Anguilla. His rich career has seen him work with brands such as Le Méridien, Moevenpick, Kempinski and more recently, Radisson Group, in Africa and the Middle East.

The chef has specialized in dietetics and healthy food, having spent the summer of 2004 in a specialized hotel – Thalasso-Spa Restaurant in France. Chef Thierry is known to be a follower of the new cooking method that incorporates in-value freshness and bio products; he is a big fan of Mediterranean food, which offers a large range of fresh food, herbs and spices to discover. He also likes to use local products in his sophisticated culinary creations to sublimate his dishes.

He also believes in using fresh Omani local produce that enhances his creation for guest's discovery & satisfaction and in return contributes to our local economy.



HEALTH & WELLNESS



'Be one with the fish': Aquarium yoga among Hong Kong Ocean Park's new offerings

HONG KONG: Against the vivid backdrop of a giant aquarium filled with sharks, manta rays and other aquatic life, a yoga group on Thursday performed side planks, chair poses and lunges, their arms outstretched to the ceiling.

Hong Kong's cash-strapped Ocean Park has begun offering fitness activities such as yoga, meditation and dance classes to keep its flagging business afloat and offset deep losses due to coronavirus restrictions that have battered tourism in the Asian financial hub.

Yoga instructor Jessica Lee said the fish in the aquarium were a calming presence during her class. "It's really nice to be almost at one with them", she said. "I feel as if I am in the water, moving as fluidly as they are."

The 43-year-old theme park and Walt Disney Co's Hong Kong Disneyland have been shuttered for most of the year, only reopening in September. Both parks are mandated to operate at a maximum of half-capacity and face masks remain compulsory.

At over HK\$6 billion in debt according to its latest annual report, Ocean Park secured a HK\$5.4 billion (\$696 million) government bailout in May which it said would help it stay operational for another year.

Anti-government protests last year and the rise of competing amusement parks in the region such as Chimelong Ocean Kingdom on China's Hengqin island, have exacerbated pressure on both Ocean Park and Hong Kong Disneyland.

Ocean Park also said it would for the first time open hiking trails underneath its cable car ride which overlooks the South China Sea. Air-conditioned tents will be available for those who want to camp and barbecue, it said.

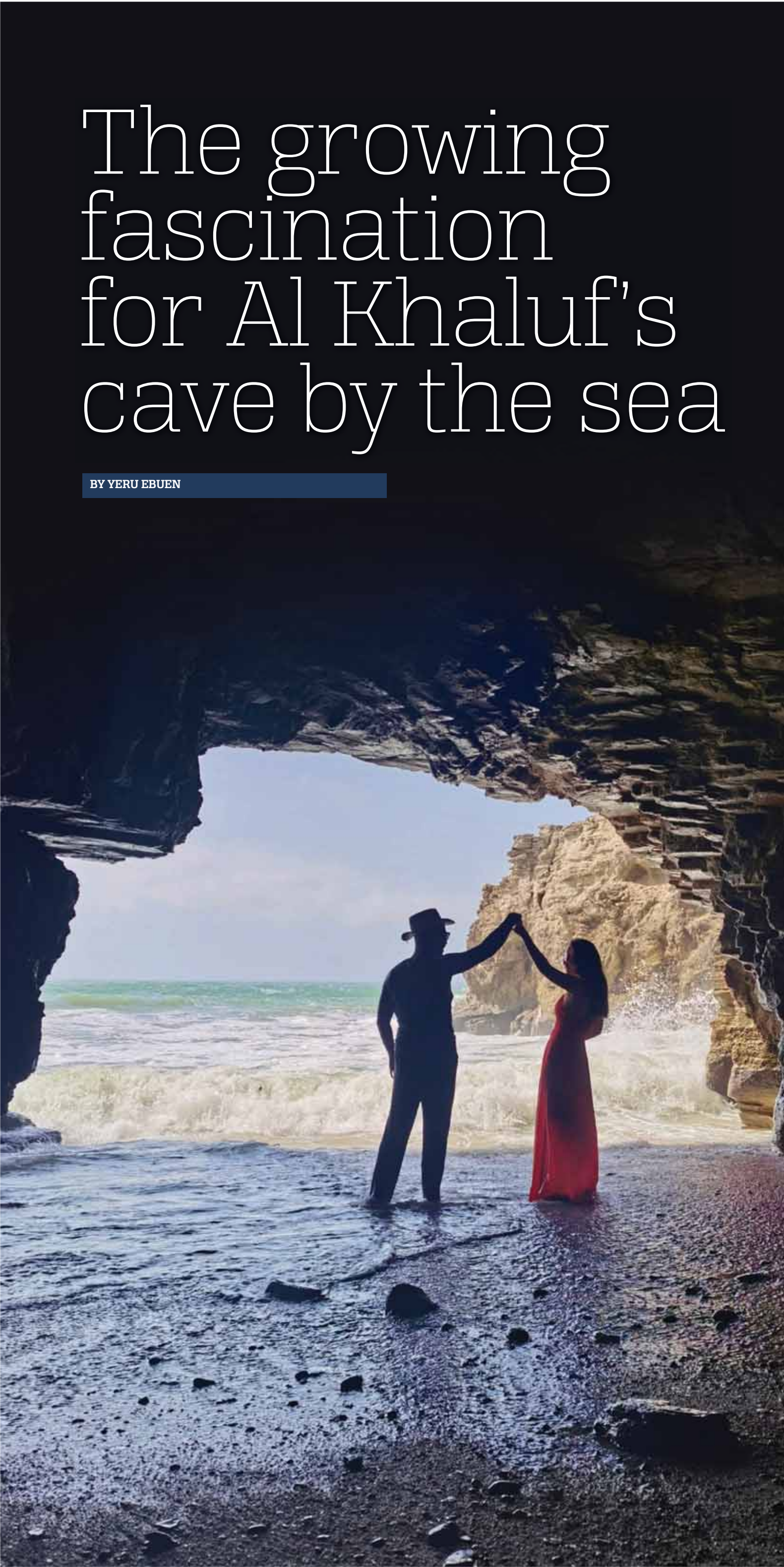
However, 26-year-old resident Sze who was visiting Ocean Park on Thursday, said paying an additional cost for yoga and hiking seemed unnecessary when she was only interested in the rides.

"We need to pay extra money to join the hiking activities while hiking is supposed to be free", said Sze, who did not want to give her full name. "Doing yoga is also free if you go into the wild." — **Reuters**



The growing fascination for Al Khaluf's cave by the sea

BY YERU EBUEEN



Every weekend, dozens of cars breeze through the sandy beaches of Al Khaluf towards the pristine shores of the Sugar Dunes – nicknamed as such because of its white, powdery dunes that are as white as sugar. Nearly six hours from Muscat, it's quite a long drive but even that seems not to matter for many of these weekend warriors who are always on the prowl for remote escapes and new adventures. While Muscat is seething with heat especially between June and September, the coastal area in Mahout and Al Khaluf are often relatively cooler thanks to the sea breeze that provides Salalah and Masirah their friendlier temperature.

understand people's fascination with the cave. While the waters were too rough to swim during our visit, the view is quite phenomenal. From the mouth of the cave, one will see other great land formation which was amazing on photos. Sitting inside the cave, one will hear the symphony of the crashing waves and the cooling breeze. "Families go here for a picnic. It's a nice setup where you have a good view of the ocean. I saw it several times on social media and thought it was a cool setup. I love the idea that you have to pass through this narrow passage and it opens up into this nice view," Al Jabri said. As a photographer, that was enough to convince Al Jabri to find it. It wasn't surprising that the cave only got popular in

The cave was about 60 to 80 square metres wide with a mouth that opens into the ocean at about 10 feet wide... Surrounding the cave are more pocket beaches some more inviting than the others. The visitors kept coming even as we drove away.

We left Muscat at noon on Thursday and arrived on the shores of Al Khaluf just before sundown. Even though it was not officially weekend yet, nearly all of the pocket beaches had campers on them which resulted to us driving farther deep into an area that can only be reached by four-wheel drives. Organised by Oman Outdoor Adventure founder Ahmed al Jabri, our target location was a cave that has grown in popularity on social media. While the cave remains nameless, it has several nice features that we thought made it worth the visit. Camping for the evening, we settled on a cliff where we have access to the beach that on its own was already an attraction because of its pale pink sand thanks to the very tiny pink shells that littered the area. We headed to the cave very early the next morning and surprisingly, a group of young Omanis already beat us to the cave. We passed through a tiny passageway where at one point we have to duck to get inside. The young Omanis had set up a picnic mat and had laid out a hefty breakfast on the ground. Barely a metre away, strong waves ebb and flow into the mouth of the cave, the chamber kept cool by the often strong breeze. The cave was about 60 to 80 square metres wide with a mouth that opens into the ocean at about 10 feet wide. Seeing it for my eyes, I

Muscat recently. The place has been known to locals for quite some time. We've proven its popularity when about an hour after we arrived, five other cars parked near where we parked our car. In the same manner, these visitors not only explored the cave but some hiked the hill where it was located while others swam in calmer beach several meters away. Surrounding the cave are more pocket beaches some more inviting than the others. The visitors kept coming even as we drove away. While the cave of Al Khaluf is definitely a must-see, there was one thing that was quite alarming. Despite the cave's remote location including its surrounding beaches, plastic trash is becoming a real eyesore and danger. Walking for about an hour in the long stretch of sandy and rocky beaches, tonnes of plastic are scattered everywhere. From shopping bags to water bottles, they either float in the water or littered what would have been pristine beaches. Because of its remote location, nobody has come to pick them up and with the number of campers that visit weekly, this trash will just grow in number until they become a real menace not only to the people visiting, but also to the wildlife that depends on these beaches. If you're going for a visit, make sure to look after your own trash and leave the beaches cleaner than when you found them.

features

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The growing fascination in Al Khaluf's cave by the sea

Al Khaluf and Mahoot had been known for long stretch of white sandy beaches, tall dunes and crystal clear waters. Covering an area that is perhaps bigger than Muscat, new attractions are starting to be discovered including a cave that opens into the ocean...**P19**



DAILY PICKS

CULTURE



PRAGUE CAFE HITS SWEET SPOT WITH CORONAVIRUS-SHAPED DESSERT

A restaurant in Prague's historic centre has invented a dessert shaped like the novel coronavirus, an attempt to arrest a slump in business that is already proving a hit with customers... Story on **Page 17**

COOK LIKE A CHEF



HEALTHY NICOISE SALAD REVISITED

Chef Thierry Quintric is convinced that food should bring the ultimate joy to consumers. In the next two weeks, Chef Thierry will be sharing four of his best recipes so you can have something to surprise your family with... Story on **Page 18**

READ



VIOLET BENT BACKWARDS OVER THE GRASS

A collection of poems by the singer and songwriter.

HEALTH & WELLNESS



'BE ONE WITH THE FISH': AQUARIUM YOGA AMONG HONG KONG OCEAN PARK'S NEW OFFERINGS

Against the vivid backdrop of a giant aquarium filled with sharks, manta rays and other aquatic life, a yoga group on Thursday performed side planks, chair poses and lunges, their arms outstretched to the ceiling... Story on **Page 18**

CELEBRATE



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

On December 19, 2011, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 66/170 to declare October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child to recognise girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world.