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NADAL'S PARIS RECORD WILL NEVER BE BROKEN, PREDICTS MURRAY



P15

HYUNDAI BEGINS BUILDING ELECTRIC VEHICLE HUB IN SINGAPORE



P19

CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH, NIGERIAN WASTE FABRIC BECOMES ART



OMAN

Crude prices at \$41.54 a barrel

MUSCAT: Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) said that Oman oil price for December delivery reached \$41.54. The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil declined 15 cents from the price of Monday, which was \$41.69. The average price of Oman oil for November delivery has stabilised at \$41.60, thus \$2.72 per barrel lower than October delivery. Brent crude futures slipped 1 per cent to \$42.41 a barrel and US crude futures fell by the same margin to \$40.17.

WORLD

UK govt defends action on virus

LONDON: The British government on Tuesday insisted it is still “guided by science” following criticism that senior ministers had ignored the advice of experts three weeks ago for tougher restrictions to cut rising coronavirus infections. Health Secretary Matt Hancock told lawmakers the government had not acted on most elements of a September 21 shortlist of possible virus interventions because it had to consider the economic fallout alongside health impacts.

SEE ALSO P8

WITH HM’S BLESSINGS, CBO AMENDS REPAYMENT OF LOANS BY PENSIONERS

MUSCAT: With the blessings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on Tuesday launched a programme amending terms for the repayment of loans and personal finances granted to retirees from the public and private sectors.

This came in a statement issued by the Private Office reading as follows: “With the blessings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and, in implementation of Royal directives to consider the financial conditions undergone by public and private sector retirees, the Central Bank of Oman has launched the ‘Programme of Amending Terms for the Repayment of Loans and Personal Finances Granted to Public and Private Sector Retirees’. The programme is launched in



cooperation with the banking sector represented by Oman Banks Association and in coordination with the Capital Market Authority where it pertains to the insurance sector.

The programme will be applied to loans and personal and housing finances granted to retired employees according to the following terms:

The maximum loan deduction service must not exceed 30 per cent of the monthly pension if it is equal to or less than RO1,500. If it is more than RO 1,500 the maximum ceiling of deduction must be not more than 35 per cent. A retiree may agree with the bank about a greater percentage of deduction service provided the percentage must not exceed 50 per

cent and 60 per cent, respectively, of the monthly pension in case of personal and housing loans as stated in previous circulars issued with regard to deduction percentages.

Licensed banks may extend the period of repayment of loans/ finances till the retiree reaches the age of 70 years. When extending the period of repayment, the banks must take into account the maximum approved percentage/ limit for postponement provided that should not exceed two premiums per year, so that the postponement of premiums (during periods of Eids) would not lead to the extension of the period of repayment beyond the age of 70 years (for the retiree).

TURN TO P5

INSIDE



NORTH KOREANS RALLY WEARING MASKS AFTER MILITARY PARADE

P7



AS ELECTION DAY NEARS, A-LISTERS FINALLY RALLY BEHIND BIDEN

P9

WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT
MAX: 34°C
MIN: 24°C

SALALAH
MAX: 32°C
MIN: 24°C

NIZWA
MAX: 36°C
MIN: 22°C

SUNRISE 06.04 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

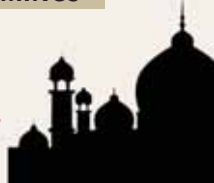
FAJR: 04:48

DHUHR: 11:58

ASR: 15:18

MAGHRIB: 17:47

ISHA: 18:57



A NIGHT VIEW



A general view of Muscat as the lockdown begins on Tuesday. PHOTO BY MOHAMED MAHJOUB

Early action vital to stymie climate disasters

GENEVA: With extreme weather and natural disasters surging, experts called on Tuesday for more efforts to forecast looming disasters and early action to mitigate their impact. Ask not “what the weather will be but what the weather will do”: that is the message in a fresh report by more than a dozen UN agencies and financing institutions published on the international day marking the importance of disaster risk reduction.

Because what the weather can do has proven increasingly

devastating.

Over the past 50 years, the world has seen more than 11,000 weather-related disasters that have caused some two million deaths and cost the world economy around \$3.6 trillion in losses. And in recent decades especially, climate change has driven up the frequency, intensity and severity of such disasters, said the report, coordinated by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

It pointed out that in 2018,



Climate activist Greta Thunberg during a “Fridays for Future” protest in Stockholm. – AFP

storms, floods, droughts and wildfires pushed 108 million people to seek help from the international humanitarian system.

By 2030, it estimated that this number could increase by almost 50 per cent.

Early warning systems have proven vital to reducing risks from such disasters, highlighting how such systems have helped dramatically drive down disaster-related deaths in places like Bangladesh.

— AFP

Basic food items and medicines exempted from VAT law

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

With Value-Added Tax (VAT) to be introduced in six months, Oman has announced one of the keenly-awaited economic step to boost economy.

“Businesses which have not yet started their VAT implementation process has a short time of six months to get compliant with VAT law,” said Crowe Oman, an auditing and accounting firm based in Muscat. “Key areas to be effected will be sales and procurement, accounts and finance, legal and IT department for any organisation,” it added.

For an average customer, it will be more of adjustments, as VAT will be charged by businesses on taxable goods and services. To start with, the standard rate of tax will be 5 per cent on goods and services.

While VAT will be levied on some food items, it may be noted that basic food commodities, medicines and healthcare services have been exempted from taxation.

School fee, sale of vacant land, certain financial services (life insurance policy) have been also exempted.

Speaking to the Observer, Joice Mathew, head of research, United Securities, said: “As basic items - food, medicine, education expenses - exempted from VAT, the impact on cost of living will depend on one’s lifestyle. Still, I think one can control the impact to a great extend because the VAT applied is only 5 per cent.”

TURN TO P5





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Oman takes part in WB, IMF meets

MUSCAT: The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Finance, is taking part in the joint annual meetings of the World Bank Group (WBG) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), currently being held via videoconferencing and run till October 18.

The Sultanate is represented in the meetings by Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance.

The meetings discuss a report of the World Bank and IMF on the latest developments about the global financial and economic status and the mechanism to respond to COVID-19 outbreak, as well as the initiatives proposed to improve the global economy.

The meetings also address prospects of development in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Bilateral meetings are held to discuss issues of common concern.

On the sidelines of the annual meetings, the annual meeting of the Arab Finance Ministers is held with President of the World Bank.

— ONA

SILENCE HELPS PERPETRATOR

Reporting abuse first step of treatment

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnasseri](#)

Family's silence about sexual harassment destroys child's personality and helps the perpetrator, warns Dr Muna al Shukaili, Podiatric and Adolescent Consultant Psychiatrist at Al Masarra Hospital

She said that it is the duty of parents to educate their children about the issue of harassment and its signs, and make them feel safe so that they can talk about it comfortably and thus help resolve the problem before it deepens.

She also noted that parents must take the issue seriously and not neglect it. "There are many things that parents should do to detect the problem as a first step towards a solution. One of the things that must be undertaken by a parent is to convince him/her that it is possible to handle the situation. The parent must report the incident to child protection

authorities by calling 1100. Finally, a specialist consultation is advisable because it is not for the child to forget about the painful events at an early age. On the contrary, this may lead to other psychological problems as she or he gets older."

The doctor made these comments as part of a campaign against sexual harassment of children launched by the Gulf Health Council entitled "Not ignorable."

According to the council, 90 per cent of cases of paedophilia cases occur within the child's immediate circle. Dr Muna mentioned that harassment has many forms and does not require physical contact between the culprit and the child. It may be indecent gestures or words, inappropriate touches or online a harassment.

"As a conservative society there are challenges on reporting child abuse cases if the culprit is from within the

When he or she feels there are people who can help overcome this problem, he or she will be able to deal with this traumatic event and its psychological effects

DR MUNA AL SHUKAILI
Psychiatrist



Yes, the family of the child victim can ask the court for a closed trial. Not reporting the case is not desirable if whatever because the interest of the child must be above all other interest," she said.

"As a doctor, I believe that reporting sexual abuse is the first step of treatment. When he or she feels there are people who can help overcome this problem, he or she will be able to deal with this traumatic event and its psychological effects."

In the Sultanate, child sexual abuse cases are rising with 193 cases in 2018 compared to 95 cases in 2017.

Article 56 of the Omani Child Law prohibits the rape, indecent assault, or sexual harassment of children. Article 72 says the punishment of those who commit these crimes by imprisonment is for a period of not less than 5 years and not more than 15 years. The fine is not less than RO 5,000 and not more than RO 10,000.

family circles. The family in this case suffers from extreme confusion. Do they report or stay silent? The second question that will haunt this family: would the investigations and other procedures be conducted in secret?

ANNOUNCEMENT

**RECALL CAMPAIGN
2019 - 2020 (DT) RAM PICKUP**

Starting Date of Campaign: **14.10.2020**
Recall Segment: **Body**
Recall Type: **Safety**
Recall Code: **W63**

Product Description:

MODEL AND MODEL YEAR	CHASSIS RANGE	NUMBER OF UNITS AFFECTED
2019 - 2020 (DT) Ram Pickup	From	1C6SRFFT1LN101162
	To	1C6SRFLTXLN141826
		89

Note: This recall only applies to the above vehicles.

Description of Recall:
Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, through its endeavor to deliver continuous quality improvement, are recalling a batch of 89 vehicles sold in Oman. The raised feature on the driver side all-weather floor mat may, in certain circumstances, inhibit the accelerator pedal from promptly repositioning to a lesser depressed position after the driver releases pressure on the accelerator pedal. If the accelerator pedal interferes with the mat, the vehicle may not decelerate as expected when the driver releases the accelerator pedal. This can cause a vehicle to crash without prior warning. However, with continued braking, the driver can activate brake-throttle override to close the throttle and bring the vehicle to a safe stop.

Rectification Procedure:
Inspect and/or modify driver side floor mat.

Parts Number	Description
See Recall	Driver Side Floor Mat

Service Procedure:
Should your vehicle fall in the range mentioned above, please contact our Customer Centre at Dhofar Automotive on 24584530 to make an appointment for your vehicle to be repaired if required.

Contact Details:
Telephone No: +968 2458 4530

E-Mail:
info@da-oman.com

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C.R.No. 1011003

Postal services to be more tech driven

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

Keeping pace with the changing times, Oman Post is to incorporate more technology into its services to its 220 destinations around the world.

Speaking to the *Observer* on the World Post Day, Khalid al Abri, Finance GM, Oman Post, said that the role of the national postal service is very clear with regard to the future of logistics and postal services, as the world has been witnessing the continuous growth of e-commerce.

"Technology is a catalyst for the development of the various business sectors, increased commercial opportunities and economic diversification. In addition to e-commerce, postal and logistical services facilitate trade and the development of small and medium enterprises. Our keen focus will be tech-oriented services that will make us stand out," Al Abri said.

"Ensuring continuity of our



postal and logistical services without any interruption is the focal point during the pandemic times. We have implemented a detailed plan to ensure the continuity of our business in full accordance with the directives issued by the Supreme Committee on COVID-19, always putting the health and safety of our employees, customers and society at the forefront of our business."

World Post Day is celebrated each year on 9 October, the anniversary of the establishment of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in 1874.

Oman Post has recently launched a campaign under the slogan "Oman Post for All of Oman and the World" with the main aim of reaching customers around the Sultanate. Anyone from any city or village in Oman can send items, whether within the Sultanate or to all their destinations around the world.

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Oman Broadband hereby announces following tender:

Sr. No.	Tender No	Description	Tender Fee (R.O) Non-refundable	Last Date for Collection	Bids Submission Date
1	T/011/2020	Asset and General Insurance	400/-	20/October/2020	03/November/2020 (2:00 pm)

The Tender documents can be obtained by email from the date of publication of this announcement. (Office Hours: 8:30 am to 3:30 pm, Sunday to Thursday).

Eligibility Criteria and Brief Scope of Work can be obtained from our website www.omanbroadband.om or by sending email to tenders@Omanbroadband.om.

oman BROADBAND
العمانية للشبكات العريضة

تمكين الفرص
Unlocking the Potential

MAFWR, CEFAS sign cooperation agreement



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) signed a cooperation agreement with the British Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) on Tuesday.

The agreement aims at establishing a health management system for cultured organisms and ensuring the sustainability of fish farming projects in the Sultanate.

The agreement was signed by

Yaqoub bin Khalfan al Busaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Fisheries; and Dr Tim Green, CEO of the Center.

The programme includes training of researchers in technical skills to meet the needs of the aquaculture sector, including aquaculture health, risk analysis and management, in addition to managing aquaculture data and link it to international standards for pisciculture and fisheries. — ONA

Pact to set up food inspection unit signed

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) and Al Madina Logistics Services (AMLS) on Monday signed an agreement to establish, manage and operate an inspection unit for the export/ import containers and trucks of fish and its products, as well as agricultural and animal products in the Governorate of North Al Batinah and Al Buraimi.

The agreement was signed by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources; and Hassan Ihsan al Naseeb, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al Madina Logistics Services.

The project consists of multi-door closed, refrigerated and non-refrigerated inspection platforms according to international specifications and standards for the

simultaneous inspection of containers and trucks, in addition to cold stores for the rejected consignments until a final decision taken about them, as well as refrigerated, frozen and dry warehouses for storing samples and warehouses for goods that do not need refrigeration.

The project aims to encourage the private sector to invest in basic services that support fish, agricultural and animal sectors. It also aims to develop and raise logistical capabilities of such sectors, and to regulate the procedures for imports and exports of fish, its products, as well as agricultural and animal products. It also aims to ensure their consumption and quality, to provide services to employees in the agricultural, fish and animal sectors, and to simplify procedures and speed of completion of imports and exports at border outlets.

Non-stop caring all life

THE OBSERVER CAUGHT UP WITH ZUBAIDA JAWAD JAAFER AL KABOURI, WHO RECOUNTED HER JOURNEY FROM 1944 TO 2020, AS PART OF OMANI WOMEN'S DAY ON OCT 17

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

In her 80s, Zubaida Jawad Jaafer al Kabouri, is enjoying her days of retirement with beautiful memories of a career which began in 1972 at Al Saidiya School in Muscat and is only sad that she cannot donate blood anymore as she is o+ --- a universal donor.

When she left Muscat for education in 1944 she was six year old.

"I remember one thing I had never entered the fish market at that time. Women did not go into the souqs just like that. My maternal grandparents lived in Sur Lawatiya, but we were living outside the place. I remember the small narrow lanes. We children especially girls used to play on the beach – it was just sand then not the Muttrah Beach Front it is today. We used to make traps so that people walking would trip into the small ditch – we were naughty children. In the morning we used to go to community schools," she recollected.

During summer she remembers that people used to go to Darsait.

"There were no houses, just land and they would make houses out of palm trees and this was before 1944. I remember once we were going to Darsait and my father was walking and my sister Bulquis and I were riding on the donkeys because we were small. That was the case then women and children would ride the donkeys and the men walked.

"I remember there was only one car owned by Gul Mohammed and at times he used to rent it as a taxi. Another reason why people wouldn't take a car was the area was mountainous.

Her father was also a school master who commuted between Muttrah and Muscat. In July of 1944 they took the ship to a distant land – a land that spoke different languages and spoke another language. Young Zubaida found delight in all the new sights and sound, the breeze on the board of the ship.

Years passed with time spent in education and higher education until the modern renaissance began in the Sultanate under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. On July 9 she reached Karachi in a steamer and after a month her father came back to take the family to Bombay.

Soon they witnessed the partition of India and Pakistan and in the



midst of commotion they boarded the train to Karachi. And it is here she completed her studies (1947-1972) including Masters. In May 1972 she returned with her father to Muttrah where she was born and had spent her childhood days.

"What I saw was almost the same. The shore I had left was just like how I had left," she reflected. "I came back to my beloved peaceful country. At Al Saidiya School it was all boys and male teachers. Luckily I got the job at Asma School. Then I was sent to Egypt to learn Arabic which I successfully completed and returned."

Being the head section of Girls school took her to other parts of Oman visiting schools.

"I travelled to the interior, Batinah, Dhofar and so on. I had some of the best experiences then. I pray to the Almighty to give late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos all the blessings and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik al Said all the blessings and guidance. It is important to note that His Majesty Sultan gave education and the health sector all the importance. Look at the women in Oman today they are in the police and army. I have seen women before 1944 and now," she pointed out.

Soon my career took me to the Ministry of Heritage and Culture. Her Masters was in Philosophy and



The strength of a woman is that she can carry her child for nine months, minimum two kilos in her body, looks after the child even through sleepless nights, feeds the child, and never stops caring for the child even when the son or daughter is 40, whether the mother is a widow or divorced. She can manage her husband's money.

ZUBAIDA JAWAD JAAFER AL KABOURI

Psychology with Literature and her new job meant archiving old documents of Oman. So it was very interesting. I did not know French but there were 30 to 40 volumes of French literature but we would search for Muscat. In 1980 September I went to London to attend the Archive Congress and from there I went to Dublin. She went on to attend more Congress and attended courses in Manchester on National Heritage Archives. She continued till 1990 and chose to retire for health reasons.

She is the mother of Majid al Khabouri and she is grandmother to Al Miqdad, Ali and Ahmed.

Ask her what is the strength of a woman and she says, "The strength of a woman is that she can carry her child for nine months, minimum two kilos in her body, looks after the child even through sleepless nights, feeds the child, and never stops caring for the child even when the son or daughter is 40, whether the mother is a widow or divorced. She can manage her husband's money. She is the strength of a nation as she is the first teacher of her child.

A woman looks after her parents even after her marriage. Many people think women are weak, that is a wrong concept. Women are strong but they are also blessed with lots of patience."



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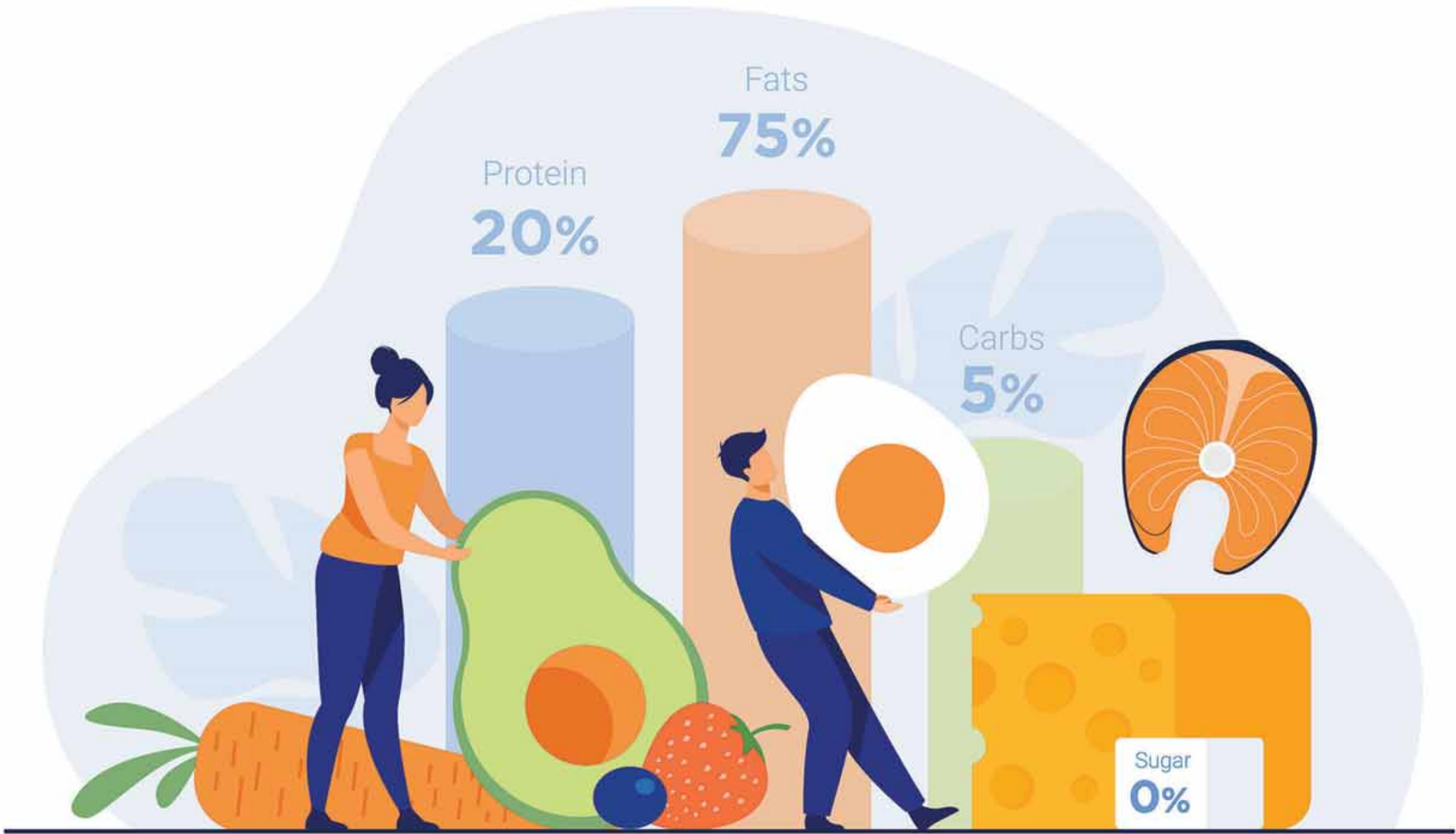
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IS KETO FOR YOU?

Commonly eaten Keto diet includes fish, eggs, milk, meat, butter, nuts and low carb vegetables which helps in maintaining satiety without overdoing it on carbs. Unlike other low-carb diets, which focus on protein, a keto plan centers on fat, which supplies as much as 90 per cent of daily calories. And it's not the type of diet to try as an experiment

LIJU CHERIAN
@cherianmathiker

Ketogenic diet is in the news again. The recent death of a South Indian actress due to renal failure has left many wonder how this hardest diet cannot be taken lightly. Many are inquiring about the diet not necessarily for a long-term solution but to jumpstart their weight loss journey. Keto is primarily a diet with very low carbohydrates, moderate protein and high fat. Unlike other low-carb diets, which focus on protein, a keto plan centers on fat, which supplies as much as 90 per cent of daily calories. And it's not the type of diet to try as an experiment. Keto diet is so named because when one reduces the intake of carbohydrates the body uses fat to produce energy and leads to a metabolic state called 'ketosis'. Liver produces ketones from fat which is used up by the body for energy. Jishy Seby, diet consultant, explains that Ketogenic diet was

initially used as a part of nutrition therapy to treat epilepsy in children. When it was found that it led to weight loss it was used as a means for weight reduction. It has many benefits including shedding weight and sugar. "The present keto diet widely spread through the internet includes high fat, especially saturated fat and very low carbohydrates with moderate protein and can affect the kidney and liver functions of an individual," says Jisha. Nadeesha Basheer, clinical nutritionist and dietician, says "Due to ketosis, the switch to burning stored fat creates a diuretic effect, losing water weight quickly compared to other methods of dieting. This can make progress feel quick at first." However, she warns the diet also has some potentially serious drawbacks. "Being in a ketosis state can be dangerous for people with kidney and heart disease, diabetes, especially Type 1 diabetes. I would not recommend it for individuals with an unhealthy

Dieticians caution that while ultra-low-carb nature might be able to help shed weight quickly, it is not a universal solution for everyone, and any new diet should be undertaken after consultation with experts

relationship with food as restrictive diets can worsen this relationship." Jisha cites the case of a 38-year-old Omani man who weighed 180 kg. He followed a systematic diet plan with low carbohydrates, high protein, and low fat and lost around 100 kg in 18-months-time. "We started with a very low carbohydrate diet with exercise and modified the diet as the patient started losing weight. Exercise and regular check-up are needed while following such diets. Good results are achieved by most of the patients who follow a diet plan with exercise," Jisha explains. Dr Fariha Shahbaz of the Ministry of Health (MoH) says many patients ask if the ketogenic diet was safe or not. "Breaking down of stored fat usually happens over two to four days of after eating fewer than 20 to 50 grams of carbohydrates per day. Keep in mind that this is a highly individualised process, and some people need a more restricted diet to start producing enough ketones," warns Dr Fariha.

This also brings up with the question: Is keto good for you. Nadeesha mentions that if your goal is weight loss, you do not need to be on a keto diet to achieve this. One can cut weight by making different dietary changes and eating patterns and physical activity. "The average person considers a balanced, heart-healthy diet consisting of lean protein, fruits, vegetables, healthy fats, and high-fibre and whole-grain carbohydrates," she says. All of them noted that patients follow the diet available on the internet for weight loss. They cautioned that while ultra-low-carb nature might be able to help shed weight quickly, it is not a universal solution for everyone, and any new diet should be undertaken with a thorough guidance from a dietician. "One can definitely get an accurate answer from a qualified practicing nutritionist and dietitian who can advise after a consultation," Nadeesha says.

Oman ELT conference starts today

A MAJOR MILESTONE AS IT WILL MARK 20 YEARS OF THE CONFERENCE



Jonathan Hadley



Dr Saleh Salim al Busaidi



Dr Joy S Zabala



Dr Chris Biyk

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 13

Oman International ELT conference was founded in 2001 at Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat. It serves as a professional forum for English language teachers and educators from around the world. The theme of this year's conference, "Twenty years of Oman ELT Conference: Building Upon the Past, Envisioning the Future," is being held online on October 14 and 15 due to the ongoing global pandemic.

Although there has been a change in the mode of delivery, the event remains a major milestone as it will mark 20 years of the conference's success to date. The prominent speakers at this year's conference include Dr Saleh Salim al Busaidi, Dr Joy Smiley Zabala, Dr Chris Boyle, Jonathan Hadley and Nathan Waller.

Dr Al Busaidi is an associate

professor of English in the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University and was also the previous director of the Language Centre at SQU. His presentation will address the ongoing issue of humanisation of English Language Teaching. He will focus on the growth of individualized learning that has been facilitated through the use of technology as well as what the implications of this are for teachers, curriculum developers, and testers.

Dr Zabala has been a world leader over the last three decades in helping improve the lives and educational pursuits of people with disabilities. Her talk will introduce the Student, Environments, Tasks and Tools (SETT) Framework, which is highly useful for families and educators in overcoming barriers on the way to achieving goals. Participants will gain insight into the effective use of Assistive Technologies (AT), how

to decide on AT use, and how to determine whether the AT is helping or if further changes are required.

Dr Boyle is an Associate Professor in Inclusive Education and Psychology at the University of Exeter who has published widely in the fields of psychology and education. Dr. Boyle will give two talks. The first talk will discuss the arguments around the definitions of inclusive education, how it might be measured, and what the current state of inclusive education is around the world. The second will focus on use of labels in inclusive and special education, delving into the full complexity of the issue.

Hadley is a consultant for Macmillan Education and has and worked in English Language Teaching for 25 years. He currently specialises in far-ranging educational reform programmes in the Middle East. His talk will

be a personal reflection on the last 20 years of English Language Teaching and he will be highlighting important developments and issues in the English language classroom. He will also be looking ahead to what may be appearing on the ELT horizon in the not too distant future.

Waller is the teacher trainer for Macmillan Education in the MENA region whose background is in Child Development and Social and Cultural Anthropology. In his session, he will discuss Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) education and how to build inclusive learning environments given the current state of world affairs.

He will look at where we were previously, where we are now, and how we might openly discuss, collaborate, and design practical solutions moving forward for both SEN education and beyond.

Trade cooperation between Oman and Lebanon discussed

MUSCAT: Redha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), held a video-conferencing with Mohammed Choucair, Chairman of Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Beirut and Mount Lebanon (CCIA-BML).

They discussed several issues related to the development of private sector's establishments between the two countries. They also discussed means of developing commercial and economic relations between the Sultanate and Lebanon.

Al Saleh praised the continuous cooperation between the two chambers through which successful economic relations can be achieved, indicating that there is a desire among Omani businessmen to cooperate and establish partnerships with their Lebanese counterparts in various trade fields.

The OCCI Chairman reviewed the Oman Vision 2040 and its sectors, which provide national development that would raise the economic and trade levels.

Mohammed Choucair, CCIA-BML Chairman, affirmed the success of the cooperation



OCCI chief

between the Sultanate and Lebanon, in addition to promising economic opportunities in various economic sectors. He explained the Lebanese side's intention to organise a business delegation to visit the Sultanate in order to closely view the Omani economic environment.

They agreed to pay major attention to the sectors supporting Oman Vision 2040 in general, and the health and education sectors in particular, to promote cooperation between the commercial arbitration centers in both countries, and to prepare for signing a cooperation protocol between the two countries by holding virtual meetings.— ONA

■ FROM PAGE 1

CBO amends repayment of bank loans for pensioners

In case the licensed banks would not be able to get a repayment of the due balance of the loan/personal finance before the retiree reaches the age of 70 years, the banks may deduct a down payment (free of early payment fees) of not more than 25 per cent of the sum of end of service gratuity if the monthly pension is equal to or less than RO 1,500 or 35 per cent of the sum of end of service gratuity if the monthly pension is more than RO 1,500. The banks may deduct more than 25 per cent or 35 per cent (respectively), if this is the wish of the retiree provided he/she submits an application to this effect.

Therefore, to help alleviate financial burdens of retirees, the banks must not make an increase over the agreed interest or profit rate. Also, for the sake of transparency, the retiree must be notified beforehand about the terms and conditions and supplied with a copy of the agreed schedule of premiums."

The Central Bank of Oman is honoured to express thanks and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for his Royal directives to consider the financial conditions of public and private sector retirees. The CBO also values the valuable efforts of all banks in

the Sultanate and Oman Banks Association for their continuous cooperation in serving the public interest. The CBO also values the positive role of the Capital Market Authority and the insurance sector for their prompt response and willingness to provide suitable insurance products for such initiatives.

May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan, guard him as a source of inspiration for this dear nation and eternalise on the bounty of prosperity on Oman and all those who live on its land under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan. — ONA

Food, medicines exempted from VAT

He added: "We are already living in low inflationary times, the prices of essential items are controlled by the government. A price increase of 5 per cent on non-essential items might lead to a nudge in inflation in the initial months, but that may not be long-lasting."

Visitors, tourists and diplomats will still be charged VAT on taxable purchases, however, they will be able to obtain a refund based on certain conditions (depending on the type

of items eligible for a refund, the minimum value for a refund to be considered). The refund scheme will only apply to people travelling to and from Oman from outside the GCC.

VAT is expected to provide additional resources to the state's public finances in the coming years.

Meanwhile, Oman's total revenue fell 12.4 per cent to RO 4.83 billion in June due to a fall in oil prices, while the net oil revenue fell 16.3 per

cent to RO 2.57 billion in June 2020 compared to RO 3.07 billion for the same period the previous year.

According to Oman Tax Authority, "VAT will provide an additional source of income for the country that will ensure the continued quality of public services. It will also help Oman achieve its goal of decreasing the country's reliance on oil and other hydrocarbon products as its main sources of revenue."

■ RAFO CONDUCTS MEDICAL EVACUATION IN KHASAB



A Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo) helicopter on Tuesday conducted medical evacuation for an Omani child who was in a critical condition from the Wilayat of Khasab in Musandam Governorate to Suhar Hospital in North Al Batinah Governorate to receive medical care. On its way back, the helicopter transferred medical supplies to Khasab Hospital from Suhar Hospital. The operation is part of the humanitarian services provided to citizens and expats by the Sultan's Armed Forces and the other departments of the Ministry of Defence alongside other state departments. — ONA

Electronic Tender (s)



Majan Electricity Co. (SAOC) Announces the Following E-Tenders

Tender NO	Description	Grade	Last date for buying	Submission date	Tender price R.O.
81/2020	PROVISION OF ELECTRICAL MAINTENANCE SERVICES FOR (33, 11 & 0.415) KV NETWORKS AT BURAIMI GOVERNORATE	B	19/10/2020	27/10/2020	477/=
82/2020	PROVISION OF ELECTRICAL MAINTENANCE SERVICES FOR (33, 11 & 0.415) KV NETWORKS AT DHAHIRAH GOVERNORATE	B	19/10/2020	27/10/2020	967/=
83/2020	PROVISION OF ELECTRICAL MAINTENANCE SERVICES FOR (33, 11 & 0.415) KV NETWORKS AT NORTH BATINAH GOVERNORATE	B	19/10/2020	27/10/2020	1,286/=
84/2020	Supply & Implementation IP Surveillance Systems, Cameras and Related Accessories for All MJEC Offices	Specialized	26/10/2020	3/11/2020	25/=

Interested Firm having relevant experience in the similar nature of services and registered with Tender Board and Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) for electrical work, may register and obtain the tender documents from **E-Tendering Site** <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against online payment of non-refundable fees mentioned above for each tender.

The Tenderers should enclose a copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any registered bank in the Sultanate of Oman for a value of (1%) of the submitted bid value valid for a period of (90) days from the date of Submission, and addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee. The original Bid Bond to be delivered in sealed envelope, and the tender number and title of project only are to be mentioned on the envelopes. The place of submission the original bond would be at MJEC Contracts & tenders office at MJEC building in AL Sawari Center in Sohar or at MJEC Contracts & tenders office at Muscat in Al Mubailah- opposite to the industrial Area beside to Bank Suhar ,before 10 A.M. according to the assigned date of submission of the tender. Any Submission of original tender bond after the time and date mentioned in the advertisement will not be accepted and tenderer offer will be rejected.

The Completed signed and sealed commercial and technical offer with all tender documents should be submitted and uploaded online into the above mentioned E-Tendering website. The Hard copies of the tender document are not accepted.

For more information please contact Tel no.: 24051501- 26944266

For any technical assistance please contact

Helpdesk: +968-24166670

E-mail: etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products & and have a High level percentage of Omanization.

The Company is not bound to consent the lowest Bid or any other Tenders.

"WITH ELECTRICITY WE PROGRESS PLEASE AVOID EXTRAVAGANCE IN CONSUMPTION"



Majan Electricity Company S.A.O.C

P.O Box 286, Sohar

PC 311, Sultanate of Oman

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Libyans urged to prioritise national interest in Nov talks

CARTHAGE, Tunisia: The UN’s Libya envoy on Monday urged rival parties to place the national interest before political ambitions when they meet for talks next month aimed at ending a decade of bloodshed.

The North African country is dominated by armed groups, riven by local conflicts and divided between two bitterly opposed administrations: a United Nations-recognised unity government based in Tripoli and its eastern-based rival backed by strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Neighbouring Tunisia is set to host talks in early November including representatives of civil society, tribesmen, political leaders, and members of bodies representing both administrations.

“What we want to see in terms of participation is people who are not there for their own political aspirations, but for their country,” said UN envoy Stephanie Williams on Monday, after meeting Tunisian President Kais Saied.

Asked whether Haftar or unity government chief Fayez al Sarraj would be present, she said participants would be able to take part on the condition “that they remove themselves from consideration in high government positions”.

This included membership of the



Military engineers of the UN-recognised Libyan Government of National Accord detonate an explosive device in the Libyan capital Tripoli. — AFP

key Presidential Council, the prime minister’s job and ministerial posts, she said.

The talks are intended to prepare for national elections, she added.

Tunisia’s Foreign Minister Othman Jerandi called for “a dialogue between

Libyans that could lead to a political solution to the crisis”.

Saied spoke on Monday with his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune, who saluted the renewed dialogue and said that Algeria, another neighbour of Libya, was “always at

Tunisia’s side”.

Tebboune also spoke of a visit to Tunisia after the November 1 referendum on constitutional reform in Algeria.

The Algerian president’s office confirmed that the two men had spoken via telephone.

“The President of the Republic, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, received a telephone call on the part of his counterpart Kais Saied, and they reviewed bilateral relations and his planned visit to Tunisia,” it said in a statement.

Tebboune “welcomed Tunisia’s organisation of inter-Libyan dialogue under the auspices of the UN,” the statement said.

A previous agreement between rival Libyan sides, signed in Morocco in 2015, created a unity government that was never recognised by Haftar.

In April 2019 he launched an offensive to seize Tripoli, but was pushed back after over a year of fighting.

Since his forces were driven from western Libya, the rival sides have resumed talks on specific themes: institutions, military and political affairs. The Tunis talks will begin on October 26 by video conference, before continuing face-to-face in early November. — AFP



Firefighters try to put out a fire in Safita, Syria. — Reuters

Assad declares Syria wildfires national catastrophe

DAMASCUS: Syrian President Bashar al Assad declared a national catastrophe on Tuesday after inspecting crops destroyed by wildfires that have ravaged his country’s Mediterranean coastal belt.

As many as 25,000 people have been forced to flee their homes, the United Nations said, in a new blow for a region which is a mainstay of support for Assad’s government.

The fires, which broke out in tinder-dry conditions on Friday, have destroyed more than 9,000 hectares of farmland and forest in the coastal provinces of Latakia and Tartus, as well as Homs inland.

In the hardest hit province of Latakia, three people died

and at least 70 were admitted to hospitals, the UN humanitarian affairs office said.

Assad pledged support for residents of affected areas, especially farmers who have lost their crops.

“This is a national catastrophe... humanitarian, economic and environmental,” Assad said.

“The state will bear the largest burden in offering this support,” he said.

Wildfires are a regular occurrence in Syria in late summer, as they are in neighbouring Israel, Lebanon and Cyprus.

But this week’s fires have been on a larger scale than usual, residents say. — AFP

Jordan’s new Cabinet sworn in

AMMAN: Jordan’s newly designated Prime Minister Bisher al Khasawneh and his Cabinet members were sworn in on Monday, amid increasing public discontent over economic woes heightened by coronavirus restrictions. King Abdullah tasked Al Khasawneh last week with forming a new government following the resignation of his predecessor Omar Razzaz. Al Khasawneh, 51, is a diplomat and

most recently acted as a policy adviser to the king. The prime minister in Jordan is also in charge of the defence portfolio.

The outgoing cabinet’s resignation was expected ahead of the November 10 legislative elections, as per the constitution. The new cabinet brings many fresh faces, including Minister of Health Nathir Obeidat, who was the spokesman of the committee for

epidemics. New ministers of labour, trade and tourism were also appointed.

The finance, foreign and energy ministers have retained their positions. The appointments come as Jordan has been struggling with increasing numbers of coronavirus cases since August, after managing to control the spread of the virus earlier in the year. — dpa

SELFIE AT SUNSET IN GAZA



Palestinian women takes a selfie at sunset in Gaza city amid strict restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. — AFP

Iraqi fighters say they have halted anti-US attacks

BAGHDAD: An array of fighter groups have suspended rocket attacks on US forces on condition that Iraq’s government present a timetable for the withdrawal of American troops, one of the groups said on Sunday.

A spokesman, one of the most powerful fighter groups in Iraq, said the groups were presenting no set deadline, but that if US troops “insisted on staying” they would unleash much more violent attacks.

Washington, which is slowly reducing its 5,000 troops in Iraq, threatened last month to shut its embassy unless the Iraqi government reins in fighters that have attacked US interests with rockets and roadside bombs.

The US warning caused alarm in Iraq, where it was seen as a step towards air strikes, potentially turning Iraq into a battleground in a proxy war. A broad array of politicians called on the fighters to stop provoking the Americans.

“The factions have presented a conditional ceasefire,” Hizbullah spokesman Mohammed Mohi said. “It includes all factions of the (anti-US) resistance, including those who have been targeting US forces.”



Medical equipment are pictured abandoned in the compound of the destroyed Mosul general Hospital in northern Iraq. Iraq in December will mark the third anniversary since declaring victory in the three-year war against the IS group, which had left the country’s former second city and the capital in ruin. — AFP

On Saturday, fighter groups calling themselves the “Iraqi Resistance Coordination Commission” published a statement suggesting they would suspend attacks in return for a clear plan for US troops to leave.

Mohi did not specify which groups had drafted the statement. He said the Iraqi government must implement a parliamentary resolution in January calling for foreign troops to withdraw.

Iraq is one of the few countries

with close ties to both the US and Iran, both of which provided military support to help defeat IS fighters, who were beaten back in a three-year war after seizing a third of Iraq in 2014. Iraqis have long feared their country could become a proxy battleground, especially since Washington killed military mastermind Qassem Soleimani in a drone strike at Baghdad airport in January.

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

RAMALLAH

Palestinian hunger-striker close to death

A Palestinian man on hunger strike for nearly 80 days since his arrest by Israel in late July is “on the verge of death”, Israeli rights group B’Tselem said on Monday.

Maher al Akhras, 49, was arrested near Nablus and placed in administrative detention, a policy that Israel uses to hold suspected militants without charge.

The married father of six launched his strike to protest the policy. He has been arrested several times previously by Israel, which accuses him of having ties to the fighter group.

On Monday, some 40 people held



a rally in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah to support him.

“Our people will not let Maher al Akhras down,” said Khader Adnan, one of those taking part in the rally, and who has himself carried out a several hunger strikes in Israeli captivity.

TUNIS

Migrant boat sinks off Tunisia, 13 drowned

More bodies were recovered on Monday the night after a migrant boat sank off Tunisia, taking the total drowned to 13 with nine still missing, a court official said.

Seven people were rescued after the boat sank on Sunday in the Mediterranean off the coast of Sfax in central Tunisia.

The boat was carrying 29 people, including two Tunisians and people from various sub-Saharan African countries, Sfax court spokesman Mourad Turki said, quoting survivors.

Their nationalities and exact point of departure were not

immediately known, and the coast guard and navy were continuing their search.

Those drowned included three children, including a baby less than six months old.

The body of one of the two Tunisians, a man from Sfax, was also recovered.

The number of would-be migrants trying to cross to Europe from Tunisia has been on the rise since 2017, largely driven by economic woes in the North African country, almost a decade after a revolution that many had hoped would bring change.

BEIRUT

Hariri to meet parties over French plan

Lebanon’s Saad Hariri, a former prime minister seeking a new term, said on Monday he would meet all key parties to survey their commitment to a French rescue plan.

The country is bankrupt, but the ruling elite has so far failed to respond to calls by French President Emmanuel Macron for the rapid formation of an independent government.

Hariri, himself one of Lebanon’s hereditary political barons, stepped down from the position of prime minister a year ago under pressure from a massive protest movement calling for an end to sectarian-based



politics.

“I will send a delegation to talk with all the main political blocs, to ensure that they are still fully committed” to Macron’s initiative, Hariri said, after meeting President Michel Aoun. — AFP

In brief

■ KABUL



AFGHAN POLICE ORDERED TO SHOOT CRIMINALS

Afghan authorities have for the first time instructed Kabul's police force to fatally shoot armed criminals on sight, a sharp escalation in tactics aimed at stemming a surge in kidnappings, murders and other violent crimes.

Already stretched to breaking point after years of Taliban and fighter attacks, the capital's police are now grappling with a crime wave that is only expected to worsen as US and foreign forces pull out of Afghanistan.

Officers had until now only been allowed to fire their weapons when in a direct clash with criminals, but Interior Minister Massoud Andarabi late on Sunday shifted to a shoot-to-kill order in a bid to control the escalation, his spokesman

■ KUALAM LUMPUR



MALAYSIA'S ANWAR MEETS KING IN BID TO TOPPLE GOVT

Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim had a long-awaited meeting with the king on Tuesday, seeking to prove he has support to take power and fulfil a decades-old ambition of becoming premier.

The Southeast Asian nation has been in turmoil since a reformist government headed by Mahathir Mohamad — which included Anwar — collapsed in February amid bitter infighting.

Muhyiddin Yassin became premier without an election, but his coalition's support is shaky and critics accuse it of lacking legitimacy. — **AFP**

■ TOKYO



JAPAN PM TO MAKE FIRST TRIP TO VIETNAM, INDONESIA

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is scheduled to visit Vietnam and Indonesia next week as his first overseas trip since taking office last month, his ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) said on Tuesday.

"The Association of South-East Asian Nations is located in the Indo-Pacific region and it is the linchpin to the realisation of a free and open Indo-Pacific. I would like to express that intention at home and abroad," Suga told a meeting with LDP lawmakers.

— **dpa**

North Koreans rally wearing masks after military parade

SEOUL: Thousands of North Koreans have packed into Pyongyang's Kim Il Sung square to pledge their support for the government — all of them wearing masks, unlike at a military parade only two days earlier.

Authorities held the rally on Monday at the start of an "80-Day Campaign", a mass mobilisation drive to boost the economy ahead of a ruling party congress in January. Such efforts, often dubbed "battles", feature extra-long work hours and additional duties and are commonplace in North Korea in the lead-up to major events.

Troops, workers and students, all of them wearing face masks, packed into the square, holding slogans including "Let's keep pace with the steps of our dear leader, Comrade Kim Jong Un".

It was a change from the military parade the North held at the weekend as part of the commemorations for the ruling party's 75th anniversary, when neither Kim nor any other participants had their faces covered.

Pyongyang closed its borders in January to try to prevent infection by the coronavirus that first emerged in neighbouring China, and at the parade — when the North showed off its latest missiles — Kim insisted there had not been a single case in the country, thanking citizens for staying healthy.

Kim — along with other officials — was also pictured unmasked watching a "Mass Games" propaganda display on Sunday, while spectators were seen wearing face coverings.

The ruling party anniversary comes during a difficult year for North Korea with the coronavirus pandemic and recent storms adding pressure to the country, which is subject to



Participants wearing face masks attend a rally marking the start of an '80-Day Campaign' in support of the upcoming 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) to be held in January 2021, in Pyongyang. — **AFP**

international sanctions over its banned nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

State Affairs Commission vice-chairman Pak Pong Ju told the rally the next 80 days were "a very important and significant time period for our revolutionary advance", the official *Rodong Sinmun* newspaper reported.

"If we miss out on this lifetime opportunity and delay our advance at all, we could end up facing terrible and multiple challenges on our way forward."

Meanwhile, in view of a downward trend in new infections with the coronavirus, South Korea has relaxed

The rally was held at the start of an '80-Day Campaign', a mass mobilisation drive to boost the economy ahead of a ruling party congress in January

the rules put in place to reduce the amount of social contact between people.

From Monday, facilities classified as high-risk such as nightclubs, karaoke bars, buffet restaurants and fitness studios have been able to reopen,

provided masks are worn and guest lists are kept. People can also visit churches again for services or stadiums for games in the professional soccer and baseball leagues, as long as an upper limit of 30 per cent of capacity is maintained. The authorities also reported a slight increase in the daily number of recorded coronavirus cases to almost 100.

In view of the relaxed distancing rules, the authorities warned citizens not to be negligent. "We have to find a balance between our daily routine and the quarantine measures," said Yoon Tae Ho from the Ministry of Health.

— **Agencies**

India records lowest number of daily COVID-19 cases

NEW DELHI: India reported 55,342 new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, the lowest daily rise since mid-August.

For weeks now India has been reporting the biggest daily surge of infections in the world, with 1 million cases recorded in less than a fortnight. The country's caseload currently stands at 7.18 million, second only to the US which is approaching the 8-million mark.

A total of 109,856 people have died from COVID-19 in India, with 706 deaths reported since Monday, according to the Health Ministry.

The virus has spread rapidly in the country of 1.3 billion people since the gradual easing of a strict lockdown from end-May. Experts have warned the numbers could rise again with the peak festive season in October-November and as more economic activity, travel and tourism resume.

The government is hopeful of having a vaccine ready soon. "We're expecting that early next year we should have the vaccine in the country from may be more than one source," Health Minister Harsh Vardhan was quoted as saying by *DNA* newspaper. — **dpa**



A health worker collects a swab sample from a boy to test for the coronavirus at a sample collection centre in Hyderabad. — **AFP**

■ LATE THAI KING REMEMBERED



Officials carry floral wreaths to lay in front of a portrait of the late Thai king Bhumibol Adulyadej, during official ceremony marking the fourth anniversary of his death, in front of the Grand Palace in Bangkok. — **AFP**

Elephant to leave Pakistan in Nov for Cambodia

ISLAMABAD: Kaavan, the lonely elephant whose poor living conditions in Pakistan triggered a global outcry, will be relocated to a Cambodian sanctuary in November, animal protection organisation Four Paws announced on Monday.

Kaavan is to be shifted to the Cambodian sanctuary by the end of November.

Travel arrangements that include organising a suitable aircraft are being made, whereas a transport box which weighs over 5 tonnes and is 3 metres high, is currently being built, said Four Paws, which is commissioned with the transfer.

Vets from Four Paws, a Vienna-based body, had evaluated Kaavan's physical and emotional health to see if he was fit for air travel and stable enough for a new life with other elephants.

Kaavan had been examined by veterinarians Amir Khalil and Frank

Goeritz, among others, in September to determine his fitness for travel.

Khalil had been training the elephant for travel.

In July, Pakistani authorities had announced that the elephant would be shifted to a sanctuary.

Kaavan had been living in poor conditions, often in chains, in a small enclosure at Marghazar Zoo in Islamabad for more than three decades.

The Asian elephant was 1 year old when he arrived from Sri Lanka in 1985.

His mate, Saheli, died in 2012. His plight gained international attention, most notably from US singer and animal rights activist Cher. An online petition for the elephant's release garnered more than 200,000 signatures in 2016.

The Cambodian sanctuary was chosen as it already houses over 80 elephants and is equipped with experts and other related facilities. — **dpa**

Myanmar taxi driver's pilgrimage to a sacred pagoda

YANGON: Defying the threat of contracting coronavirus and a citywide lockdown, Myanmar taxi driver Ko Naing, 50, still travels each day to pray outside the sacred Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, the country's holiest Buddhist site.

"I'm not scared of the virus because I feel protected by my religion and regular praying at the pagoda," he said, kneeling at the front gate of the pagoda.

The number of COVID-19 infections in Myanmar, which has one of the world's weakest health systems, has surged from a few hundred in mid-August to more than 27,000 cases and 646 deaths as of Monday.

The country of 53 million people

has locked down its biggest city, Yangon, and imposed a broad stay-at-home order across the whole city to stop the virus from spreading.

The glittering Shwedagon pagoda, which has cast its golden light over the city for centuries, shut its doors in April for an extended period for the first time in recent history, disrupting a long tradition of regular pilgrimages by devotees.

Yet while many are making do with broadcasts by the pagoda's monks on Facebook, Ko Naing rises at dawn each morning to stand outside its locked gates, lighting incense sticks and risking penalties for breaching the COVID lockdown.

"Other people get in trouble but I



Taxi driver Ko Naing poses in front of Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar.

— **Reuters**

don't. Why? Because I believe in my religion and Buddha," he said.

The Southeast Asian nation is housing more than 45,000 people, including COVID-19 patients as well as those yet to be tested, their close contacts and returning migrant workers, in buildings from schools and monasteries to government offices and tower blocks, mostly run by volunteers.

The country's leader Aung San Suu Kyi has called on the public to help combat the virus.

Suu Kyi has also said Myanmar's general election, due on November 8, must go ahead and is "more important than COVID".

— **Reuters**



■ PROTEST IN FAVOUR OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE



A Molotov cocktail explodes in front of riot police during a protest in the framework of the Day of the Race, in downtown Santiago, Chile. — AFP

Trump back on campaign trail

SANFORD: Immune to COVID! Stronger than Joe Biden! Superman? Not quite, but Donald Trump wants America to know he's back.

"Here we are!" he cried with a triumphant roar — made slightly hoarse by his bout with COVID-19 — at the opening of a rally in Sanford, Florida, on Monday.

Just a week after getting out of hospital with the coronavirus, Trump strode onto the stage, tossing out face masks, like a rock star handing out autographs. But he wasn't wearing a mask himself.

And neither was anyone else, barring a small minority, in the crowd of several thousand, who were jammed cheek by jowl to witness the Republican's return to the campaign trail. Which was the whole point.

Trump wanted to show he can defy the pandemic and his seemingly plummeting chances of beating Democratic candidate Biden alike.

Loud, coarse at times, diving into his well-worn jokes, and freely



US President Donald Trump throws masks to supporters as he arrives to hold a Make America Great Again rally as he campaigns at Orlando Sanford International Airport in Florida. — AFP

insulting opponents and journalists, Trump didn't sound like a clinically obese man of 74 who only a few days ago was being administered oxygen by doctors.

"They say I'm immune," he boasted. "I feel so powerful."

From ditching his mask to parking the iconic Air Force One jumbo right behind the podium, this was a rally stage-managed to push Trump's image as a freak of nature unbound by the laws governing ordinary folks.

Maybe he wasn't wearing a

Superman shirt under his suit, as The New York Times reported he considered doing on being discharged from hospital October 5, but the crowd wouldn't have been fazed had he done so.

"We love you, we love you," they cheered.

That defiance was on show even before Trump left Washington.

Waiting for Trump's motorcade to come snaking across the rain-soaked concrete at Joint Base Andrews, staff could be seen mopping and wiping down surfaces in the press cabin of Air Force One.

Unlike on past trips — even throughout the COVID period — staff, Secret Service agents and Air Force personnel all wore masks.

There'd been real tension around the trip: the White House has become a COVID-19 hotspot in the last 10 days, becoming a living symbol of Trump's hands-off approach to a pandemic that has killed more than 210,000 Americans. — AFP

Belarus threatens to fire on anti-Lukashenko protesters

MINSK: Belarus on Monday threatened to fire on protesters to break up demonstrations against President Alexander Lukashenko, as EU foreign ministers agreed to impose sanctions personally targeting the strongman leader.

The use of live firearms would mark a major escalation in the two-month standoff between Lukashenko and protesters, who have staged peaceful rallies against his disputed re-election in August and against the abuse and torture of detainees.

The warning came after security forces cracked down harshly on anti-Lukashenko protests on Sunday, prompting EU foreign ministers to agree it was time to sanction Lukashenko himself.

Later on Monday, officers used tear gas and stun grenades against a group of pensioners holding a regular protest march, prompting outrage from the opposition.

The protests broke out when Lukashenko claimed victory in August 9 elections over a popular opposition candidate, Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, who claims to be the true winner.

Belarus's first deputy interior minister Gennady Kazakevich said in a video statement that "we will not

leave the streets and law enforcement officers and internal troops if necessary will use riot control equipment and lethal weapons".

Police have so far only acknowledged using water cannon, rubber bullets and stun grenades to disperse the protesters.

Kazakevich claimed that protests had become "extremely radical", saying stones and bottles had been thrown at police on Sunday by protesters armed with knives, who built barricades and set fire to tyres.

"This has nothing in common with civil protest," the deputy minister said, claiming that "groups of fighters, radicals, anarchists and football fans" were taking part.

Belarus was facing attempts to revive the "chaos of the 1990s" and foment the "colour revolutions" that have toppled pro-Kremlin leaders in other ex-Soviet states, he said.

His statement came as police have used some of the harshest tactics yet against protesters.

On Monday, burly men with black balaclavas and batons confronted a crowd of mainly middle-aged and older women carrying placards with slogans such as "the grandmothers are with the people", video footage by Tut.by independent news site showed. — AFP



Belarusian pensioners argue with a law enforcement officer during a rally to demand the resignation of authoritarian leader and new fair election in Minsk. — AFP

UK ministers under fire for ignoring scientists' virus advice

LONDON: The British government faced renewed pressure on Tuesday after indications it had ignored scientific advice three weeks ago for tougher restrictions to cut rising coronavirus infections.

The main opposition Labour party said the government's failure to act was alarming and raised questions about the credibility of its latest plan to curb the virus' spread.

England's chief medical officer Chris Whitty said he was "not confident" the latest measures announced by Prime Minister Boris Johnson could reverse the upward trend.

Johnson had earlier unveiled a three-tiered system categorising areas

of England by rates of infection, to try to simplify a complex web of local restrictions.

The northwest city of Liverpool — the only place put into the highest category — will see a ban on household mixing and pubs closures from Wednesday for at least four weeks.

But Whitty, flanking Johnson at a Downing Street news conference on Monday evening, urged local leaders in the most-affected areas to go further.

"I am not confident, and nor is anybody confident, that the tier three proposals for the highest rates... if we did the absolute base case, and nothing more, would be enough to get on top of it," Whitty said.



Armed police patrol at the scene of a security alert at St Thomas' Hospital in central London. — AFP

"There's a lot of flexibility in the tier three level for local authorities... so that they can do significantly more than the absolute base because the base will not be sufficient."

Public health officials had said swathes of northern England should also have been placed at "very high" risk. It then emerged that scientific experts had recommended stronger action as long ago as last month, including a so-called circuit-breaker lockdown to cut transmission.

The government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) presented ministers with a shortlist of virus interventions on September 21 "for immediate

introduction".

They included closing bars, restaurants, cafes, gyms and personal services like hairdressers, banning different households from mixing in homes and switching all university and college tuition online.

But Johnson adopted only one of the five recommendations — urging people to work from home.

Johnson has been heavily criticised, not least for being too slow to move to a national lockdown in its early stages.

Britain's death toll of more than 43,000 is the worst in Europe. Nearly 14,000 new cases were reported across Britain on Monday, with 50 further deaths. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

WARSAW

Poland's premier has no symptoms of illness

Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki has not been diagnosed with COVID-19, nor does he exhibit any symptoms of the illness, Piotr Mueller, the spokesperson of the Polish government, wrote in an on-line statement published on Tuesday.

"The prime minister has not been diagnosed with COVID-19 to date. Neither does he have symptoms of the disease," Mueller wrote.

Earlier reports said Morawiecki will go into mandatory quarantine after having contact with a person who tested positive for the coronavirus, Morawiecki said in a video message published on social media



on Tuesday.

The premier had contact with the infected person on Friday. The government continues to operate normally and the upcoming government sitting will be conducted via video conference, a common practice in recent months, Morawiecki said.

MOSCOW

Russia daily COVID cases hit new record

Russia reported on Tuesday its highest-ever number of daily deaths and cases of people infected with COVID-19, fuelling concerns that a second wave of the pandemic is hitting the country.

There were 13,868 new infections and 244 virus deaths, the government's coronavirus crisis centre said, with both figures surpassing previous records set since the start of the outbreak.

With the fourth-highest infection tally in the world, Russia has recorded just under 23,000 fatalities since the start of the pandemic — a much lower figure compared to

other badly-hit countries.

Officials have earlier said they are only counting deaths directly caused by the virus leading critics to accuse Russia of under-reporting COVID mortality to downplay the scale of the situation.

Speaking to journalists on Monday, President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said "more advanced treatment protocols" are leading to a lower death rate. Although virus cases in Russia have been on the rise for several weeks, authorities are reluctant to again introduce strict lockdown measures.

PRAGUE

Czech bans gatherings of more than 6 people

The Czech Republic has banned gatherings of more than six people and ordered bars, restaurants and clubs to close until further notice, as coronavirus infection rates rise to the highest in the European Union.

The new regulations, announced by Health Minister Roman Prymula on Monday evening, will come into effect on Wednesday.

Public consumption will also be banned and schools must close for almost three weeks, until the beginning of November, and switch to distance learning. Mask-wearing will be obligatory not just indoors but also at public transport stops.



Businesses will, however, remain open.

"We only have one try, which has to be successful, to get this pandemic under control as a nation," Prime Minister Andrej Babis said.

South Korea sees hope and threat in mixed message from Kim

HYONHEE SHIN

South Korean officials have seized on conciliatory comments by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un last weekend as a sign that tension could be easing but also worry the huge number of rockets he showcased is evidence that peace may be elusive.

Kim sent mixed signals as he addressed an unprecedented night-time military parade early on Saturday, wishing the neighbouring Koreas would “hold hands” again after the novel coronavirus pandemic is over. While much of the world was captivated by the appearance of a new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), officials in South Korea were far more concerned by the display of new multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) and fast, manoeuvrable short-range missiles that would be ideal for striking targets in the South.

“The parade revealed not only an advanced ICBM but also MLRS that pose a direct threat to South Korea,” said South Korean opposition leader Kim Chong-in.

“They’ve not changed, their threats have grown even bigger.”

South Korean ruling party leader and former prime minister Lee Nak-yeon said he took hope from Kim’s

KIM SENT MIXED SIGNALS AS HE ADDRESSED AN UNPRECEDENTED NIGHT-TIME MILITARY PARADE EARLY ON SATURDAY

overture to the South as a “positive sign” but worried about what the display of new weapons said about North Korea’s intentions.

“North Korea showed advanced weapons including a new ICBM, which indicated it has not abandoned its resolve to develop weapons of mass destruction, and those weapons can threaten peace on the Korean peninsula,” Lee told a party meeting.

November’s US election is compounding the uncertainty especially as the tone of ties between the two Koreas is often set by the state of North Korea’s relations with its old enemy the United States. When a landmark summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump in 2018 brought an unprecedented easing of tension between those two countries, North Korea’s dealings with South Korea also saw a remarkable thaw. But relations on the peninsula have been tense since a second summit between Kim and Trump collapsed last year, and they took another blow last month when North Korean troops shot dead a South Korean fisheries official detained at sea.

Shin Beom-chul, a senior fellow at the Korea Research Institute for National Strategy in Seoul, said despite Kim’s conciliatory comments towards South Korea, his main message on

Saturday was aimed at the United States.

“By showing a new ICBM, the North suggested they can test it any time if things don’t go well after the election. Inter-Korean ties don’t count to them,” Shin said. The South Korean government said Kim’s speech would foster better ties but it urged North Korea to stick to agreements preventing armed clashes and accept a request for a joint investigation into the shooting of the fisheries official.

South Korean opposition leader Kim derided a teary display by Kim as he spoke of the sacrifices made by North Korea’s armed forces.

“It was appalling to see him shed crocodile tears after shooting our citizen to death,” he said.

Former South Korean nuclear negotiator Chun Yung-woo, pointing to North Korea’s extensive testing of MLRS and short-range missiles over the past year, while sticking to a moratorium on ICBM testing, said South Korea must not get carried away by hope for peace.

“All the media attention is on North Korea’s new strategic weapons but the most serious threat to our security is solid-fuel, short-range tactical missiles and MLRS that they’ve been madly testing over the past year,” Chun said. — Reuters

RISK OF INFECTION

Catching coronavirus outside is rare but not impossible

IVAN COURONNE

Almost all documented coronavirus transmissions have occurred indoors, but experts say that wearing a mask outside is justified because there is still a risk of infection.

The likelihood of catching the virus increases at events where people stand near each other and talk for long periods of time, such as parties or election campaign rallies.

Since the start of the pandemic, studies have described cases of infection in restaurants, houses, factories, offices, conferences, trains and planes.

One study published in April identified a single case of transmission outdoors, between two Chinese villagers, out of more than 7,000 studies.

In an analysis of 25,000 cases, which has not yet been independently reviewed, six per cent of cases were linked to environments with an outdoor element, such as sporting events or concerts.

These were enclosed areas where social distancing was not observed, or where people

stayed for a while, moving around and talking loudly or singing.

“There were virtually no cases that we could identify that took place in sort of everyday life outdoors,” study author Mike Weed, a professor and researcher at Canterbury Christ Church University, said.

The data indicates that

“There were virtually no cases that we could identify that took place in sort of everyday life outdoors”

MIKE WEED
A professor

“outdoors is far safer than indoors, for the same activity and distance,” according to a group of scientists and engineers, including professors from American, British and German universities.

“The risk of transmission is much lower outside than inside because viruses that are released into the air can rapidly become diluted through the atmosphere,” the group explained, comparing the virus-carrying “aerosols” to cigarette smoke.

Since February, multiple studies and health authorities have pointed to the airborne path of transmission, by invisible clouds of microscopic droplets (aerosols) that we release by breathing, talking and singing.

This is in addition to the relatively larger droplets that we expel by coughing or sneezing, which can land directly on someone else’s face within a perimeter of one or two meters (up to six feet).

The smallest droplets float in the air for minutes or hours, depending on an area’s ventilation. In a poorly ventilated room, but also outside between two buildings with no air circulation, the droplets can accumulate and get inhaled by a passerby.

The dose of viral particles needed to cause an infection is unknown, but the larger the dose, “the greater the probability of infection,” Steve Elledge, a Harvard University geneticist and expert in viruses, said. The time spent near a contagious person will be a key factor: a second on the sidewalk doesn’t seem to be enough to catch COVID-19. It probably takes at least several minutes.

“While it is not impossible, there is no evidence that COVID-19 has been transmitted when people walk past each other outdoors,” the group of scientists concluded. — AFP

HEALING PROCESS

As Election Day nears, A-listers finally rally behind Biden

AUGUST BROWN

Unlike a lot of her peers in the music-industry, Diane Warren was a Joe Biden supporter from day one of the 2020 primaries. “He was always my guy,” said the songwriting legend, who first connected with the former vice president after he introduced the song she wrote with Lady Gaga, “Til It Happens to You,” at the 2016 Academy Awards, where it was nominated for original song in the campus documentary “The Hunting Ground.”

“There was something about Joe that was so empathetic, and the total opposite of the other thing that’s in the White House right now,” she said. “He looked in my eyes when I met him and said ‘You don’t know what that song means to me,’ and he had tears in his eyes. I did too.”

It’s no surprise that Warren, like the majority of the music business (save for erratic spoiler-candidate Kanye West and MAGA stalwarts Ted Nugent and Kid Rock) was going to support Biden in 2020.

But compared with this time in 2016, when superstars like Beyonce, Jay Z, Bon Jovi and Bruce Springsteen threw mega-concerts for Hillary Clinton, activism in the music world was lower-key.

COVID-19 wiped out any hopes of playing inspiring live events; the daily assault of the Trump news cycle made it harder to break through with a different message. But in the home



Democratic Presidential candidate and former Vice-President Joe Biden at a voter mobilisation event in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Monday. — AFP

ARTISTS ARE TOUTING THEIR REASONS NOT JUST TO GET TRUMP OUT, BUT TO GET BIDEN IN

stretch of the campaign, A-list artists like Cardi B, Billie Eilish, Madonna, Bad Bunny and Taylor Swift have come around to full-throated endorsements of Biden. In an editorial for V magazine, Swift wrote: “I will proudly vote for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris in this year’s presidential election. Under their leadership, I believe America has a chance to start the healing process it so desperately needs.”

“The change we need most is to elect a president who recognises that people of colour deserve to feel safe and represented, that women deserve the right to choose what happens to their bodies,” she continued.

An industry that quickly figured out pandemic-era live streaming is now rushing to reach potential voters in their fan bases using many of those same tactics. — dpa



Explosive De Villiers helps Bangalore thrash Kolkata in IPL



DUBAI: AB de Villiers hit a power-packed 73 to help Royal Challengers Bangalore outplay Kolkata Knight Riders by 82 runs in the Indian Premier League on Monday.

The South African great smashed six sixes in his 33-ball blitz and put on an unbeaten century partnership with skipper Virat Kohli, who scored 33, as Bangalore posted 194 for two in Sharjah.

Proteas quick Chris Morris and spinner Washington Sundar claimed two wickets each to keep down Kolkata to 112 for nine in 20 overs.

But the evening belonged to the 36-year-old De Villiers who scored his third IPL half-century of the season to go past 3000 runs in the Twenty20 tournament.

“Genius. Find me another word for @ABdeVilliers17 . This one will do for now! Genius,” veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle wrote on Twitter.

He took the attack to the opposition bowlers with Kohli playing second fiddle at the other end as the duo scored 83 runs from the final 30 deliveries of the innings.

“I am very happy with my performance. That’s all I can say,” De Villiers said after being named of the match.

“I got a duck last game, that is a terrible feeling. I am very happy that I contributed. I surprised myself today to be honest.”

Opener Aaron Finch, who made 47, and Devdutt Padikkal, who hit 32, set the platform for Bangalore’s total with a 67-run stand.

Kolkata’s bowling looked dismal in the absence of spinner Sunil Narine who was dropped from the XI after being under warning for a suspect bowling action.

Kolkata skipper Dinesh Karthik said it was just “hard to stop” a “world-class player” like AB.

“He was the difference between the two teams. We tried everything. The only ball was the perfect inswinging yorker. Anything else was going,” said Karthik. — AFP

Kohli hails ‘super-human’ De Villiers after Bangalore’s massive win

DUBAI: Skipper Virat Kohli on Monday praised AB de Villiers’ “super-human” effort on a sluggish pitch after the South African great hit a match-winning 73 for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Indian Premier League.

Bangalore thrashed Kolkata Knight Riders by 82 runs in Sharjah as De Villiers stood tall with his 33-ball blitz and an unbeaten century stand with Kohli, who made 33.

Bangalore posted 194 for two, a total their bowlers defended by keeping down Kolkata to 112 for nine in 20 overs.

De Villiers, 36, brought the house down with two of his six sixes going out of the stadium and one hitting a moving car on the road as he went past 3000 runs in the Twenty20 tournament.

“Barring one super-human, everyone struggled on that pitch,” Kohli said of his star player who hit his third half-century of the season on a slow Sharjah pitch.

“It was unbelievable. I thought I

had a few balls under my belt, and I might start striking. He just came in and struck the third ball, and said he felt good.

“I said you might see a lot of people do what is done in other games, but only AB can did what he did. It was a fabulous knock. We were looking at 160-165, and it was only thanks to his genius we got to 195.”

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end as the duo scored 83 runs from the final 30 deliveries of the innings.

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SHORT TAKES

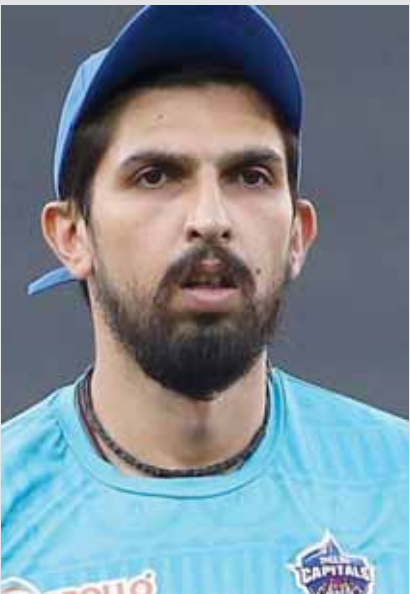
DUBAI
Ishant Sharma’s IPL season over due to muscle tear

India paceman Ishant Sharma has been ruled out for the remainder of the Indian Premier League season after tearing a muscle during a training session, his franchise Delhi Capitals said on Monday.

Sharma, 32, has played just one game for Delhi, who are level on 10 points with table-toppers Mumbai Indians in the ongoing season of the Twenty20 tournament in the United Arab Emirates.

“Delhi Capitals fast bowler Ishant Sharma experienced an acute episode of left rib cage pain while bowling at a team training session on 7 October 2020 in Dubai,” said a Delhi statement.

— AFP



LOS ANGELES
LeBron improves case against Jordan

As the first player to lead three different teams to NBA titles, LeBron James has revived the question of whether he or Michael Jordan is the league’s greatest-ever superstar.

“I don’t know,” James said. “I’m going to let you guys talk about it.”

James captured his fourth NBA title in his 10th finals appearance when the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Miami Heat 106-93 on Sunday to close out the series 4-2.

James captured his fourth NBA title in his 10th finals appearance when the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Miami Heat 106-93 on Sunday to close out the series 4-2.



PARIS
ATP champion Tsitsipas out of Saint Petersburg Open

ATP finals champion Stefanos Tsitsipas has pulled out of the Saint Petersburg Open because he is still suffering from an injury aggravated during his plucky semi-final loss to Novak Djokovic at Roland Garros.

The 22-year-old took Djokovic to five sets and says that effort aggravated a leg injury, but that he hopes to be back in action at Vienna from October 26.

“I hope to play in Vienna, Paris and London (I just found out that I have qualified and I am so pumped to have the opportunity to defend my title),” said the 2019 Masters champion. — AFP





Poland's Lewandowski may play

WARSAW: Poland striker Robert Lewandowski, who suffered a minor injury during Sunday's Nations League clash with Italy, will likely play on Wednesday against Bosnia.

Stade de France to host 10 matches

PARIS: The Stade de France will host 10 matches at the 2023 Rugby World Cup, the tournament's organising committee announced on Monday.



Wenger warns smaller clubs

LONDON: Former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has warned that "smaller clubs will die" without urgent action to safeguard the future of the lower leagues.



Germany coach Loew struggles to fend off criticism before Swiss test

BERLIN: Germany host Switzerland on Tuesday amid sharp criticism of the national team's head coach Joachim Loew, who is still struggling to shake off the aftermath of their 2018 World Cup debacle.

By their own high standards, Germany has made a low-key start in the Nations League with two draws, against Spain and Switzerland, and a narrow win over Ukraine before facing the Swiss in Cologne.

A full-strength side scrapped a 2-1 win against Ukraine in Kiev on Saturday following three straight draws when the Germans leaked second-half goals on all three occasions.

On Tuesday, Toni Kroos is set to make his 100th appearance for Germany, but Julian Draxler, Marcel Halstenberg and Lukas Klostermann are all carrying

knocks and are doubtful starters.

Injuries aside, Loew feels little need to "change much" in the starting line-up despite worrying signs in Kiev.

Only a fortunate Leon Goretzka header — after a rare mistake by Ukraine goalkeeper Heorhiy Bushchan — made the difference as the Germans often gave possession away cheaply.

"I see the big picture on the way to the European Championships," Loew insisted with the Euro 2020 finals eight months away.

"We have a clear plan. We know what we are doing."

- Falling figures - Loew has a contract until 2022, but his popularity — which peaked when Germany won the 2014 World Cup — crashed after the 2018 finals in Russia, where the Germans failed to get out of their group.

Despite Loew's promises

to rebuild the side, Germany are still susceptible to lapses of concentration, as proven when they conceded three equalisers against Turkey.

German fans seem to agree with Loew's critics amid disappointing recent television viewer figures for international matches in football-mad Germany.

Around 7.5 million tuned in to watch the win over Ukraine.

It was a slight improvement on the 6.77 million who saw last Wednesday's 3-3 friendly draw against Turkey - 21.5 per cent of the market, the lowest viewing figure in the 14 years since Loew took charge.

TV pundit Bastian Schweinsteiger, a key part of Loew's 2014 World Cup team, told broadcaster ARD he feels "the public can no longer identify 100 per cent" with the national team.

"It's a pity. I hope things can be turned around soon," he said.

After the draw with Turkey, Lothar Matthaeus, who captained West Germany to their 1990 World Cup win, slammed Loew for fielding players like Nico Schulz, who struggles to get a game for Dortmund.

"That is precisely why nobody turns on the television to watch Germany any more," Matthaeus wrote in a column for German daily Bild.

Loew brushed off such criticism.

"I have been experiencing different opinions for 16 years," he said having first joined Germany's coaching team back in 2004.

"You have to see where we have come from. After the World Cup in 2018, we were at the very bottom."

But his critics can argue that there is little sign of development in the two years since. — AFP

OTTA decides on postponement of National TT championship, discuss 2021 budget and the plan



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

The board of directors of Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) decided on the postponement of the National Table Tennis Championship (General Teams Category) until further notice due to the current situation of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and in concurrence with the latest decisions issued by the Supreme Committee on COVID-19 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.

The decision came during the remote meeting through "Zoom" platform on Monday in presence of OTTA Chairman and the members.

The domestic team's preparation plan was also impacted at the sports complex due to the closing timing at 6:00 pm. Accordingly, the OTTA took the decision of holding the event until further notice. The postponement decision featured also the pre-qualification stages which was supposed to be started in Salalah during 16 and 17 October at Al Saada Sports Complex and 23 and 24 October at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

During the meeting, the board of directors reviewed all the clubs' request for membership at OTTA including request letters of Salalah, Al Bashayer, Oman, Khasab, Saham and Qurayat. The

chairman instructed the OTTA officials to communicate with clubs to provide the missing documents according to the rules and regulations of the sports bodies.

The board members approved the agenda of the activities for the forthcoming year. The 2021 plan featured series of a domestic tournaments, participation at international table tennis events, external camps, seminars for national coaches and referees and other related table tennis events. The board agreed on organising the seminars at other governorates including Musandam governorate.

The chairman explained the financial budget for 2021 which cover all the aspects of the 2021 plan. The board reviewed also the internal policies of the referees and competitions beside the strategic and development plan for 2021-2024.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, issued a ministerial resolution No 146/2020 on July 26 to set up the OTTA and the second article of the decision referred to the adoption of the statutes of the association. The board of OTTA is headed by Abdullah bin Mohammed BaMukhalef as chairman while Sajjad al Lawati as Vice Chairman. Adil Al Balushi is the Secretary General while Mohammed al Oufi is the board treasurer. The board members are Mohammed al Jassasi, Masoud al Shaqsi and Maryam al Alawi.



sport

NADAL'S PARIS RECORD WILL NEVER BE BROKEN, PREDICTS MURRAY



Cologne, Germany: Andy Murray predicts Rafael Nadal's record of 13 French Open titles will never be beaten as the British former world number one looks to bounce back in Cologne this week from his own Roland Garros disappointment.

Murray, 33, the reigning Olympic champion, crashed out of last month's French Open in straight sets with a lop-sided first round defeat to Stan Wawrinka as he works his way back from hip surgery. On Sunday, the Scot watched in awe as Nadal, 34, demolished Novak Djokovic 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 in the final at Roland Garros to win his 13th French Open title.

The Spaniard has also equalled the all-time record of 20 Grand Slam titles held by Roger Federer, who hailed Nadal's victory as "one of sport's greatest achievements".

Murray echoed the Swiss legend and doubts anyone will even get close to Nadal's record in Paris. "It's an amazing achievement. I don't think that what he has done at Roland Garros will ever be topped."

I just don't see it being topped," Murray said in Cologne. "He is one short of winning the same amount of Grand Slams as (Pete) Sampras did just at one tournament. It's incredible."

"I don't think it'll be repeated and I don't think anyone will be close."

Murray reached the second round of the US Open in his first round since hip resurfacing surgery and Roland Garros was his third tournament this year after rehab.

Having needed wildcards to play in Paris and Cologne, Murray hopes the back-to-back ATP indoor tournaments on the Rhine can help improve his current ranking of 97th.

"It will be good to get a few matches in over these next few weeks — I hope to perform better than I did in Paris," said the Scot.

"I want to win tournaments and move up the rankings."

"Physically, my body tends to feel better the more I play."

"Hopefully, I will play a lot over the next two weeks, perform well and see how it goes after that."

On Tuesday, Murray predicts a "tough" start against Spain's Fernando Verdasco for the chance to play world number seven Alexander Zverev in the second round.

"Whoever gets through will face Sascha (Zverev) and he is obviously one of the top players in the world," said Murray.

The Scot says he has had to adapt after hip surgery.

"It has gone well at times and sometimes been a struggle," he admitted.

"I was told it would be an 18-month process for my body to get used to it."

"It changes the way your pelvis moves and your body needs to adjust."

"Hopefully with a few matches this autumn and some good training, next year will be a good one."

— AFP

business

MUSCAT
STOCK
MARKET

3,594.65

CRUDE
OIL PRICE

Oman Crude \$41.54
Brent Crude \$42.56
Light Crude \$40.31

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Oil prices remain steady amid return of supply



Employees work at a gas station in New Delhi, India. — Reuters

MELBOURNE: Oil prices were steady in early trade on Tuesday, sitting on losses of nearly 3 per cent from the previous session after supplies began to resume in Norway and the US Gulf of Mexico and Libya resumed production at its largest oilfield.

The return of supply comes as resurgent COVID-19 infections in the US Midwest and Europe raise worries about fuel demand growth, posing a challenge for the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, together called Opec+.

Opec+ has curbed supply to help shore up oil prices amid coronavirus pandemic, with cuts of 7.7 million barrels per day due to hold through December. The producers' market monitoring panel is due to meet next Monday.

"It won't be a huge surprise if finally the alliance decides to address the worsening situation and amend its action," Rystad Energy's head of oil markets, Bjornar Tonhaugen, said in a note.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures inched up 1 cent to \$39.44 a barrel at 0117 GMT, while Brent crude futures rose 2 cents to \$41.74 a barrel.

With workers returning to Gulf of Mexico in the United States platforms after Hurricane Delta and Norwegian workers returning to rigs after ending a strike, all eyes were on Libya, a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec), which on Sunday lifted force majeure at the Sharara oilfield.

— Reuters

Zero-VAT rate, exemptions to ease burden on 'common man'

KEY BENEFITS: Basic foodstuff, healthcare, medicines, education and local passenger transportation are among an array of goods and services either zero-rated for VAT or made entirely exempt from the application of the new tax

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Oman's decision to exempt a number of basic goods and services from the purview of Value Added Tax (VAT), slated to come into force with effect from April 2021, has been hailed as a reflection of the government's commitment to minimising the financial impact of the new levy on the general population of the Sultanate.

Basic foodstuff, healthcare, medicines, education and local passenger transportation are among an array of goods and services either zero-rated for VAT or made entirely exempt from the application of the new tax.

They are among 16 different categories of goods, services and activities that will not attract the new five per cent levy announced vide Royal Decree 121/2020 promulgated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on Monday.

"VAT implementation in the Sultanate has been carefully conceived to mitigate any cost burden on the common man," said Alkesh Joshi (pictured), Partner, Oman Tax Leader, MENA Energy Tax Leader at EY.

"As much of any household's expenditure revolves primarily around food, healthcare and education, the impact of VAT will likely be marginal for a common man



— which is a welcome gesture from the government."

In comments to the *Observer*, the tax expert underlined the significance of the new VAT levy for Oman's fiscal situation, which like other member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), has been impacted by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, as well as low oil prices.

"VAT has proven to be an important and effective fiscal tool deployed by the governments in the GCC to balance their beleaguered budgets. Attesting to this fact is Saudi Arabia's recent decision to ramp up the rate of VAT from 5 per cent to 15 per cent with effect from July 1, 2020,"

said Joshi.

He further added: "With governments, including Oman, facing mounting budget deficits, the only choice they have is to aggressively diversify their economies or create new revenue streams — options that will take some time before they produce results. On the flipside, there is the risk of attracting negative ratings from international ratings agencies if governments are seen to be not doing enough to plug their deficits."

Monday's landmark announcement by the Omani government is a "step in the right direction", said Joshi. "Tax reform of this magnitude can send a strong message to the international community that the government is expanding its revenue base — a move that will send a positive signal to ratings agencies, which will be encouraged to review their current ratings for Oman."

For the first time, authorities have also provided greater clarity on the range of goods and services that will be either zero-rated for VAT or exempt altogether, said the expert. The following categories are zero-

rated for VAT: Supply of food items determined by a decision of the Chairman; Supply of medicines and medical equipment determined by a decision of the Chairman; Supply of investment grade gold, silver and platinum; Supply of international and interconnection transport of goods or passengers, and the supply of related goods and services; Supply of means of transport by sea, air and land, adapted for the transport of goods and passengers for commercial purposes and the supply of related goods and services; Supply of rescue aircraft and ships; Supply of oil and gas derivatives; and Export of goods and services outside the GCC region including those that would be exempt if supplied domestically.

Exempt from VAT are: Certain financial services; Healthcare services and related goods and services; Education services and related goods and services; Supply of undeveloped land (bare land); Resale of residential real estate; Local passenger transport; Rental of real estate for residential purposes; and Certain supplies made by charitable organisations.

German investor confidence plummets in Oct

FRANKFURT: Investor confidence in Germany fell sharply in October amid a resurgence in coronavirus cases in Europe's largest economy and renewed Brexit tensions, a key survey showed on Tuesday.

The ZEW institute's monthly barometer measuring economic sentiment dropped to 56.1 points, based on a survey of 171 analysts, from a 20-year high of 77.4 points in September.

The reading, the lowest since May, fell well below expectations of 74 points this month, according to a survey by FactSet.

"The recent sharp rise in the number of COVID-19 cases has increased uncertainty about future economic development, as has the prospect of the UK leaving the EU without a trade deal," ZEW president Achim Wambach said.

The US election, which was thrown into disarray earlier this month after President Donald Trump's virus diagnosis, also played into investors' uncertainty, he warned.

In March, the survey by Mannheim-based ZEW crashed to its lowest rating since the 2008-9 financial crisis as coronavirus lockdowns started to batter the economy.

But confidence improved from April onwards after the country emerged from the restrictions and the German government rolled out large fiscal stimulus, including short-time work schemes, to cushion the economic blow. However, after today's figures "the great euphoria witnessed in August and September seems to have evaporated", he added. — AFP

Raysut Cement acquires majority stake in Maldives plant

GROWING FOOTPRINT: 75 per cent takeover of cement terminal at Thilafushi Island to increase market presence in the Indian Ocean country

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 13

Oman's largest cement manufacturer, Raysut Cement Company (RCC), said it has closed the deal of acquiring 75 per cent of LafargeHolcim's cement terminal at Thilafushi Island in Maldives, following which it has established a new joint venture —

Raysut Maldives Cement Pvt Ltd.

The new entity with State Trading Organization (STO) of Maldives owning 25 per cent has plans to expand the terminal's capacity, currently 75,000 tonnes per annum, by more than 100 per cent in future to over 200,000 tonnes per annum.

This acquisition opens a corridor of trade between Oman and Maldives not only in the cement industry with Raysut Cement, but also in other areas which will benefit both economies.

"The Maldives acquisition will boost Raysut's profitability and production to full capacity, particularly of its plant in the Wilayat of Salalah in the Sultanate of Oman. Raysut Cement Company this year faced economic conditions, including the economic conditions



that resulted from the global spread of the COVID-19 virus," said Shaikh Ahmed Yousef Alawi al Ibrahim, Chairman of RCC Group.

The terminal will be owned and operated by the RCC-STO joint

venture entity.

The takeover of the terminal in the Indian Ocean country marks a new phase for the Muscat Stock Market (MSM) listed Raysut Cement since it will be adding a new geography to its

strategic global investment plan.

"Our foray into the Maldives will help drive self-sufficiency of cement in Maldives, which currently is predominantly an import market. Raysut is looking at adding local value in Maldives by installing production facilities to ensure there is at least 40 per cent local content. This will also make the market more competitive from a price point which will have its positive impact on infrastructure development in the island nation," said RCC GCEO Joey Ghose.

"This is a milestone investment for Raysut since the cement major will be pitching into a market supplied currently by other players from South Asia. It is also a significant move reinforcing its strategy to diversify from only being a South Oman

based player to grow into a global player in the cement industry, RCC in Maldives will be competing with cement players from India, Indonesia and Malaysia," added Acting Deputy Group CEO Salim Ahmed Alawi al Ibrahim.

"The acquisition followed by the formation of the new JV will cement Raysut's position further as an emerging global cement player with significant overseas presence in markets of Middle East and East Africa," stated Joey Ghose.

He said the move to invest in Maldives is in line with the corporate strategy of Raysut to expand its footprint into global markets and be a partner in developing countries where it will invest with established local partners.

BRIEF BITES INSIDE

CONTRACTS

KCA DEUTAG SECURES \$150M OF LAND DRILLING CONTRACTS IN OMAN



Global drilling, engineering and technology provider KCA Deutag has been awarded contracts worth more than \$150 million in Oman, from the country's leading exploration and production companies. It covers the provision of expert manpower for customer-owned rigs, hoists and workshops. < Page 14

TRADE

CHINA'S IMPORTS, EXPORTS SURGE AS GLOBAL ECONOMY REOPENS



China's imports grew at their fastest pace this year in September, while exports extended strong gains as more trading partners lifted coronavirus restrictions in a further boost to the world's second-biggest economy. Exports in September rose 9.9 per cent from a year earlier. < Page 15

ENERGY

\$5 TRILLION INVESTOR GROUP SETS TOUGHER PORTFOLIO CARBON TARGETS



Thirty of the world's largest investors managing a combined \$5 trillion said on Tuesday they plan to set targets to lower their portfolio carbon emissions by as much as 29 per cent over the next five years. All members of the Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance are aiming to align their portfolios with the Paris Agreement on climate change. < Page 15



Manufacturing recovery continues despite fears

At a time when the UK is having to make job cuts and redundancies, it is some relief to see that the manufacturing sector continued its strong recovery – from COVID-19 slump – in September, although it dropped off the record pace set in August. The IHS Markit/Cips manufacturing purchasing managers (PMI) index stood at 54.1 in September, with any score above the 50-mark indicating growth.

Looking back to earlier in the year, the sector had grown at its fastest rate in 10 months back in February, but signs soon emerged that coronavirus had started to disrupt the industry. The IHS Markit/Cips manufacturing purchasing managers index had hit 51.7 in February, up from 50 the previous month.

However, the coronavirus

outbreak led to “sizeable raw material delivery delays, rising input costs and increased pressure on stocks of purchases” which resulted in the sector beginning to struggle at the time before gradually making progress.

In August, the index recorded a score of 55.2, its highest reading in two and a half years. September’s reading was slightly lower than a flash reading of 54.3. The reading means that the PMI has remained above its no-change mark of 50 for four successive months, its longest sequence in expansion territory since early 2019.

IHS Markit said that September saw higher production due to more firms reopening and staff returning to work. A further increase in new orders, including for exports, also helped push production volumes higher. Director at IHS Markit, Rob Dobson said: “September saw UK



ANDY JALIL
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SEPTEMBER SAW HIGHER PRODUCTION DUE TO MORE FIRMS REOPENING AND STAFF RETURNING TO WORK

manufacturing continue its recovery from the steep COVID-19 induced downturn.

“Although rates of expansion in output and new orders lost some of the bounce experienced in August, they remained solid and above the survey’s long-run averages.” He added: “Business sentiment remained positive as a result, with three-fifths of UK manufacturers forecasting a rise in output over the coming year.”

EY Item Club chief economist Howard Archer said: “The purchasing managers survey pointed to manufacturing expansion losing a little momentum in September after reaching a 30-month high in August. Nevertheless, the sector achieved a fourth month of growth and at a still decent rate.”

He added: “Employment in the manufacturing sector fell for an eighth month running, but the

rate of decline did at least slow to the weakest since February. Nevertheless, the further decline in jobs provides the context for the Chancellor (Rishi Sunak’s) further support for the labour market with the recently announced Jobs Support Scheme.”

However, Samuel Tombs, chief UK economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said that he expected production to fall over the next half year.

“We expect production to trend down over the next six months, as demand from companies for investment goods declines”, he said. Adding: “Surveys of corporate investment intentions remain extremely weak, consistent with capital goods production falling back once again.”

Deloitte’s UK partner Duncan Johnston pointed out that even though the sector’s recovery may

continue, it is at a slowing pace. “There are some worrying signs such as rising input prices and further job losses last month”, he said, singling out two sectors that are particularly important to the UK economy: commercial aerospace and automotive.

Therefore, “manufacturing leaders are eagerly awaiting the government’s revamped industrial strategy to provide much-needed impetus for recovery, especially in areas outside the South-East”, Johnston added.

Across the Eurozone as a whole, manufacturing hit 53.7 in September, an increase on August’s 51.7 reading. The growth across the region was led by especially strong manufacturing in industrial powerhouse Germany, where the PMI hit its highest level in 26 months.

(The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.)

KCA Deutag secures \$150m of land drilling contracts in Oman



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 13

Global drilling, engineering and technology provider KCA Deutag (KCAD) has been awarded contracts worth more than \$150 million in Oman, from the country’s leading exploration and production companies.

The first award covers the provision of expert manpower for customer-owned rigs, hoists and workshops. In total, KCAD will provide approximately 420 people in delivering this

contract.

This is a 5-year extension to a contract originally awarded in 2015. One-year contract extensions have also been awarded for 8 KCAD rigs working in Oman.

Commenting on the awards, Simon Drew, President of Land said: “These awards demonstrate that despite challenging markets, KCA Deutag’s operational strengths and capability at — and beyond — the rig site, continue to be recognised by our customers.”

STRATEGIC DEAL: MoU to enable access to real-time intelligence on commodity inventories, flows, and freight

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 13

Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME), the premier international energy futures and commodities exchange in the Middle East, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Kpler, the leading provider of data-driven transparency solutions in commodity markets.

The strategic partnership will provide access to data from hundreds of sources including AIS signals, satellite images, logistics and commercial reports, and governmental and shipping databases. Kpler’s proprietary technologies systematically aggregate and process this information to



deliver real-time intelligence across more than 20 commodity markets. The company’s data is trusted by more than 450 organisations globally, including trading houses, IOCs, NOCs, shipping companies, banks, and hedge funds.

Commenting on the signing of the MoU, Raid al Salami (pictured), Managing Director, DME, said: “We are pleased to partner with Kpler to enrich the trading experience for our customers by providing access to real-time intelligence on commodity inventories, flows, and freight. By enabling traders to observe emerging market trends in great detail, we are assisting them to manage risk and

By enabling traders to observe emerging market trends in great detail, we are assisting them to manage risk and develop more successful strategies

RAID AL SALAMI
DME, Managing Director

develop more successful strategies.

Kpler has emerged as the uncontested leader of their field in terms of coverage and data quality and we look forward to working closely with them. The integration of their market intelligence will further cement DME’s position as a pioneering regional exchange.”

François Cazor, Co-founder and CEO of Kpler, said: “We are thrilled

to partner with DME, one of the most important entities in the Middle East and East Asian crude markets through its Oman Crude Oil Futures Contract. Kpler and DME share a common vision of Dubai as a pivotal trading hub for our industry, linking the supply hub of the Middle East with demand centres across the world.

Through this partnership, we signal our commitment to these interlinked markets and further solidify our position as the leading provider of market intelligence for commodities trade. We look forward to helping DME integrate Kpler data and to reaching new heights in the region together.”

DME is a joint venture between Dubai Holding, Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and CME Group. Global financial institutions and energy trading firms including Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan, Morgan Stanley, Shell, Vitol and Concord Energy also hold equity stakes in the DME.

OPAZ organises training for One-Stop-Shop staff



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 13

In line with efforts to enhance the delivery of services to investors and customers of the special economic zones and free zones, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) launched a training programme on Tuesday aimed at developing the capabilities of employees of the One-Stop Shop in Freezone Sohar.

The programme is focused on the systems related to registering companies, issuing all types of licenses and approvals of usufruct contracts and work permits.

The training programme aims to

The programme is focused on the systems related to registering companies, issuing all types of licenses and approvals of usufruct contracts and work permits

boost the performance of the special economic zones and free zones in order to localise local investments, attract foreign investments, and mark these zones as leading investment

destinations at the local and global levels.

The programme reflects the efforts of OPAZ to accelerate inflows of investment in free zone in line with the objectives of Royal Decree 105/2020), which stipulated the implementation of the one-stop system in all special economic zones and free zones and granted OPAZ the powers to issue all types of licenses, approvals and certificates related to exercising economic activities in these zones.

The training programme will also benefit employees of the one-stop shops at Al Mazunah Free Zone and Salalah Free Zone.

US small business confidence rises at highest since February

WASHINGTON: US small business confidence rose last month to its highest since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic earlier this year with more firms experiencing an uptick in foot traffic and sales, according to a monthly survey released on Tuesday.

The National Federation of Independent Business Optimism Index rose 3.8 points to a reading of 104 in September, the highest level since February. After crashing to a seven-year low in April, the index has rebounded sharply as restrictions imposed on businesses and consumers to contain the spread of COVID-19 have continued easing.

Nine of the index’s 10 components showed an improvement, led by a 13 point improvement in business owners’ assessment of earnings trends. A larger net percentage of firms expect the economy to improve as well, and a growing percentage expect to increase employment in the next three months.

“As parts of the country continue to open, small businesses are seeing some improvements in foot traffic and sales,” NFIB Chief Economist Bill Dunkelberg said in a statement. “However, some small businesses are still struggling financially to operate at full capacity while navigating state and local regulations and are uncertain about what will happen in the future.”

The NFIB Uncertainty Index rose 2 points to 92, matching its level from March. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

MUSCAT

SUCCESS AT AL MOUJ MUSCAT AS FIRST AND SECOND PHASE OF NEW HOMES RELEASE SELLS OUT WITHIN 48-HOURS



The first and second phase of residential properties at Murooj Lanes, a new neighbourhood launched at Al Mouj Muscat, sold out within 48 hours of their release, demonstrating the appeal of this well-established oceanfront community.

Al Mouj Muscat is Oman’s leading Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) and a public-private venture between the UAE-based Majid Al Futtaim Properties, Omran and Tannia, now home to over 6,000 residents from 85 different nationalities.

Its latest release of apartments and townhouses are located within the much sought-after Ghadeer District which is set at the heart of Al Mouj Muscat, close to and

supported by a comprehensive mix of leisure, retail and community facilities.

The successful launch of Murooj Lanes reflects attractive pricing options particularly suited to first-time investors and home owners, with studio apartments starting from RO 53,000 and a three-bed townhouse costing from just RO 155,000.

The Ghadeer District sits close to the marina and championship golf course, within easy strolling distance of The Walk with its varied mix of cafes and restaurants. In addition, there are first-class community facilities including a school, nursery, mosque, beach and parks, swimming pools, gyms, cycle and jogging paths.

Hyundai begins building electric vehicle hub in Singapore



SINGAPORE: South Korea's Hyundai Motor Co started construction on a research and development centre in Singapore on Tuesday that will house a small-scale electric vehicle production facility.

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said the facility may produce up to 30,000 electric vehicles (EVs) annually by 2025 and represents an investment of \$5400 million (\$295 million).

Singapore is one of the world's most expensive places to buy a car and does not currently have any auto manufacturing capacity. But the wealthy city-state has set out ambitious plans to phase out petrol vehicles by 2040.

"Automotive activities are becoming viable in Singapore once again. EVs have a different supply chain, fewer mechanical parts and more electronics, which plays to Singapore's strengths," PM Lee said.

A Hyundai spokeswoman confirmed the 30,000 unit target but said that the exact capacity was yet to be determined. The facility is due for completion by end 2022, the firm said in a statement.

The announcement comes after vacuum cleaner company Dyson scrapped plans to build an electric car in Singapore, saying it was not commercially viable. — **Reuters**

China's imports, exports surge as global economy reopens

The strong trade performance suggests Chinese exporters are making a brisk recovery from the pandemic's hit to overseas orders

BEIJING: China's imports grew at their fastest pace this year in September, while exports extended strong gains as more trading partners lifted coronavirus restrictions in a further boost to the world's second-biggest economy.

Exports in September rose 9.9 per cent from a year earlier, customs data showed on Tuesday, broadly in line with analysts' expectations and up from a solid 9.5 per cent increase in August.

The strong trade performance suggests Chinese exporters are making a brisk recovery from the pandemic's hit to overseas orders. As the global economy restarts, Chinese firms are rushing to grab market share as their rivals grapple with reduced manufacturing capacity.

"The big picture is that outbound shipments remain strong, with easing demand for COVID-19 related goods such as face masks being mostly offset by a recovery in broader demand for Chinese-made consumer goods," Capital Economics Senior China Economist Julian Evans-Pritchard said.

"A jump in imports suggests that domestic investment spending



Containers and trucks are seen at a terminal of the Qingdao port in Shandong province, China. — **Reuters**

remains strong."

China's factory activity has also picked up as international trading gradually resumes.

But some analysts warn exports could peak soon as the demand for Chinese-made protective gear recedes and the base effect of this year's massive declines wears off.

Imports surged 13.2 per cent in September, returning to growth from a fall of 2.1 per cent in August and much stronger than expectations for a 0.3 per cent increase.

Wang Jun, chief economist at Zhongyuan Bank, said the data showed government support for the economy has kicked in as the epidemic comes under control.

"This has boosted domestic demand, especially investment-led demand, which buoyed imports," Wang said, adding that the yuan's recent appreciation was positive for imports and people's spending power.

The Chinese yuan rose to a 17-month high against the dollar on Friday. The rise in imports pushed the trade surplus for September down to \$37 billion, compared with \$58.93 billion in August and lower than an expected \$58.00 billion.

Across products, China bought more soybeans, grains, semiconductors, copper and steel products in September, customs data showed. Analysts expect imports to stay on an

improving trend, underpinned by strengthening domestic demand.

Zhang Jun, chief economist at Morgan Stanley Huaxin Securities, said higher purchases of US agricultural and energy products as China implemented the Phase 1 US-China trade deal, and the resumption of logistics services in the United States and Europe contributed to China's import strength.

Top US and Chinese trade officials reaffirmed their commitment to a Phase 1 trade deal in a phone call in August.

China's trade surplus with the United States narrowed to \$30.75 billion in September from \$34.24 billion in August. — **Reuters**

Portugal sees sharper economic contraction

LISBON: Portugal now expects its economy to shrink a record 8.5 per cent this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, worse than its previous estimate of 6.9 per cent, according to the government's latest spending plans.

"Gross domestic product will see its biggest fall since the war," the finance ministry said in a statement late on Monday.

However, the economy should bounce back strongly in 2021 with growth of 5.4 per cent, up from the previous estimate of 4.3 per cent.

Portugal also expects to do better on the public finances, with a budget deficit — the shortfall between spending and revenue — equal to 4.3 per cent



A tourist rests at Comercio square in Lisbon. — **Reuters**

of GDP in 2021 compared with 7.3 per cent this year.

Unemployment should fall from 8.7 per cent this year to 8.2 per cent next, according to the government's plans.

The jobless rate stood at 6.5 per cent in 2019 when the government managed to eke out a historic budget surplus of 0.1 per cent of GDP. — **AFP**

Indonesia central bank holds rates, stresses QE for economic support

JAKARTA: Indonesia's central bank kept interest rates steady on Tuesday, holding fire for a third straight meeting to avoid adding pressure to a falling rupiah but reiterated its pledge to use quantitative easing measures to support the economy.

Bank Indonesia (BI) kept the 7-day reverse repurchase rate at 4.00 per cent, as expected in a poll, after delivering 100 basis points of rate cuts so far this year.

Southeast Asia's largest economy is headed for its first recession in over two decades with the coronavirus outbreak still raging in the country with the largest COVID-19 death toll in the region.

"We see that (quantitative easing measures) are more effective to support the national economy," Governor Perry Warjiyo said in a streamed news briefing, underlining

Bank Indonesia (BI) kept the 7-day reverse repurchase rate at 4.00 per cent, as expected in a poll, after delivering 100 basis points of rate cuts so far this year

that BI has injected \$45.45 billion of fresh liquidity to fight the pandemic's impact.

BI has also cut interest rates four times this year, cut required reserves and loosened lending rules to fight the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

It has made direct purchases of government bonds to fund President Joko Widodo's relief programmes

and is expected to remain a standby buyer in the local-currency sovereign bond market in 2021.

Governor Perry Warjiyo said during the briefing an increase in government spending, including for infrastructure projects, and improvement in exports should prop up the economy, even when private consumption remained weak.

The rupiah barely changed after the decision, while the main stock index rose slightly. The rupiah has fallen 5.4 per cent this year, making it the worst performing emerging currency in Asia so far in 2020.

Analysts have said they are monitoring BI's debt monetisation operations closely particularly as parliamentary debates on amending the central bank act has raised concerns about Bank Indonesia's independence. — **Reuters**

In brief

■ TUNIS

TUNISIA'S TRADE DEFICIT FALLS TO \$3.7BN IN FIRST NINE MONTHS

Tunisia's trade deficit fell to \$3.7 billion in the first nine months of this year and both imports and exports declined, official figures showed on Tuesday.

The trade deficit was 10.2 billion dinars (\$3.71 billion) compared with 14.8 billion in the same period last year.

The deficit has been one of the main problems facing Tunisia as it grapples with an economic crisis.

Imports fell by 21.3 per cent to 37.7 billion dinars and exports fell by 16.6 per cent to 27.5 billion dinars in first three months this year. — **Reuters**

■ PARIS

FRANCE TO REIN IN EXPORT GUARANTEES FOR OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY



An oil pump is seen at outside Vaudoy-en-Brie, near Paris. — **AFP**

The French government will stop providing export guarantees to projects involving dirty forms of oil from next year, all oil in from 2025 and gas in from 2035, the finance ministry said on Monday.

France stopped giving export guarantees this year to projects where fracking and flaring were involved and also stopped support for coal projects.

In a second step, guarantees would be halted next year for projects involving heavy oil, shale oil and bitumen oil sands, affecting the creation of up to 700 new jobs, the ministry said in its proposal to parliament.

From 2025, public export guarantees would no longer be provided for the exploration and development of new oilfields, potentially at a cost of 1,800 jobs, followed by new gas fields from 2035, which could affect 3,000 jobs.

The ministry said the later date for gas was because that could help some countries with the transition to cleaner forms of energy.

It also proposed scrapping export guarantees for thermal power stations with emissions higher than the national median of the benefiting country from 2021.

The proposals will be submitted to parliament in the 2021 budget bill being considered by lawmakers. — **Reuters**

■ ENERGY GOALS

\$5 trillion investor group sets tougher portfolio carbon targets

LONDON: Thirty of the world's largest investors managing a combined \$5 trillion said on Tuesday they plan to set targets to lower their portfolio carbon emissions by as much as 29 per cent over the next five years.

All members of the Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance, a group which includes the biggest US pension scheme CalPERS and German insurer Allianz, are aiming to align their portfolios with the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.

The move is the most ambitious yet by the influential group, whose members own sizeable stakes in many of the world's top companies, and



The sun is seen behind the chimney of Laziska Power Station, a thermal power plant, in Laziska Gorne, Poland. — **Reuters**

comes as pressure builds for asset owners to use their financial muscle to push for quicker change.

While an increasing number of investors, companies and governments are committing to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, some have been criticised for not setting the clear nearer-term targets needed to ensure the goal is met.

With policymakers gearing up for the next round of global climate talks in Scotland next year, the group's move is likely to act as a challenge for other leading investors to step up their own efforts.

The group said its members would implement cuts in greenhouse gas

emissions from their portfolios of between 16 per cent and 29 per cent, with each confirming their own particular target in the first quarter of 2021.

The plan, called the 2025 Target Setting Protocol, should help increase investment in those companies contributing to the transition to a low-carbon economy and influence both markets and government policies, the group said in a statement.

Specifically, the group said it would send a message to the thousands of companies owned by the investors that "deep emissions cuts are required", and that the group would

work with boards willing to adjust their business models.

The Protocol has been made available for comment by the public, academics, government and business until Nov 13.

"Reaching net-zero is not simply reducing emissions and carrying on with the business models of today," said Günther Thallinger, Alliance Chair and Member of the Board of Management, Allianz SE.

"There are profound changes and opportunities that will come from the net-zero economy, we see new business opportunities and strong wins for those who are ready to lead," he added. — **Reuters**

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcement of Capital Reduction

In accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company **Dhawahi Al Bandar Al Jadeded for Commerce LLC**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **4121805**, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from **RO 73,000.000 to 15,000.000**. 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.

Announcement of Capital Reduction

In accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company **Alashreah Al Sareeah for Commerce and Contracting LLC**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **1038004**, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from **RO 50,000.000 to 20,000.000**. 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.

Announcement of Capital Reduction

In accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company **Al Hikma Pharmace Euticals (LLC)**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **1334802**, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from **RO 25,000.000 to 100,000.000**. 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.



Ancient statues emerge from the shadows in blockbuster Rome show

After decades locked away in a basement, some of the finest sculptures from antiquity have been pulled from the gloom and returned to public view in Rome.

Busts of Roman emperors, intricate sarcophagi and an ancient Greek relief carved 2,500 years ago are just some of the 92 pieces on display in the city's Palazzo Caffarelli.

The marbles belong to the aristocratic Torlonia family and represent a fraction of their 620 sculptures, believed to be the largest such private collection in the world.

"We could do seven, eight, 15 more exhibitions," said art historian Salvatore Settis, who was picked by the family to help curate the show and had the difficult task of deciding which works should see the light of day.

Like many leading Rome families, the Torlonias initially put their huge collection on display in a museum. But after 101 years, they locked its doors in 1976, looking to convert the building into private apartments.

"The reappearance of such a legendary collection is a very important event," said Settis. "When I saw them for the first time it was very emotional because I knew most of those pieces from books, but I had never seen them."

The Torlonias, who built their wealth off the back of papal contracts, snapped up established collections, some



dating back to the 15th century, and built up a collection of collections.

Among the pieces on view is a fountain basin carved in ancient Greece that was believed to have stood in the garden of Julius Caesar when it was already considered antiquity.

Many of the works have undergone substantial restoration over the years, including a statue of a goat whose body dates to the first century AD but whose head is believed to have been created by the famed 17th-century Italian sculptor Bernini.

Anna Maria Carruba helped prepare the statues for the exhibition.

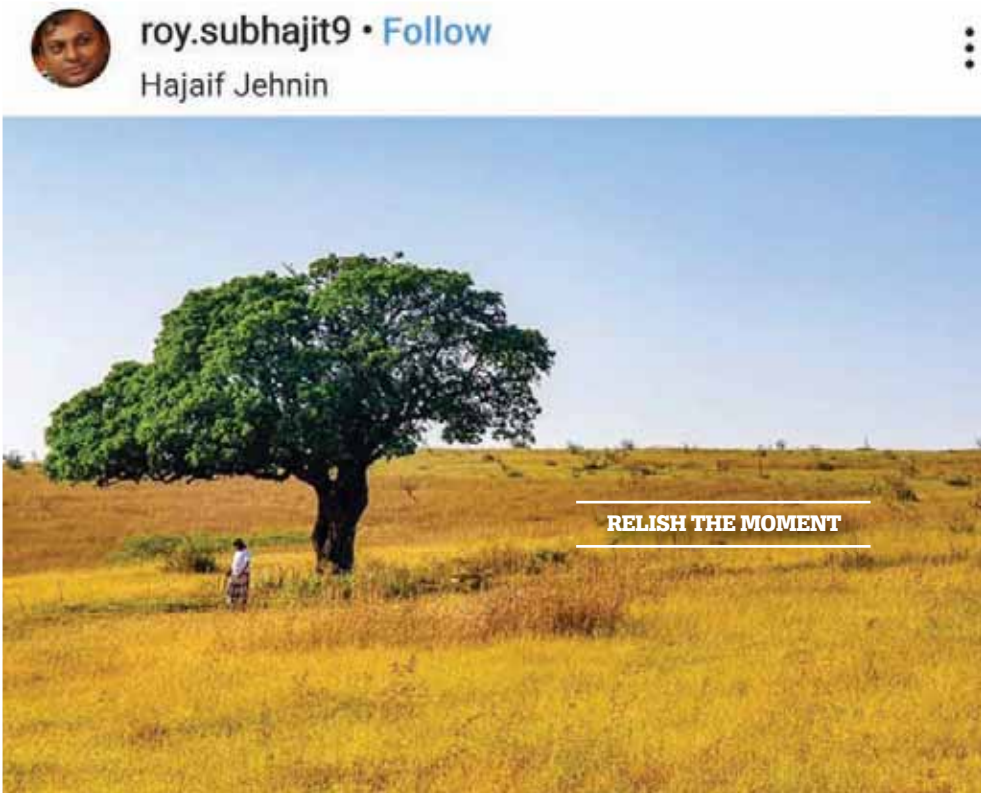
Busts of Roman emperors, intricate sarcophagi and an ancient Greek relief carved 2,500 years ago are just some of the 92 pieces on display in the city's Palazzo Caffarelli

"Many of these pieces were already restored from 1600 onwards. We didn't need to work on the structure of the statues but only on the surfaces, cleaning them, removing the dust that had accumulated over the years and materials used in previous restorations," she said.

The "Torlonia Marbles" show had been due to open in April, but was pushed back because of the coronavirus. It runs in Rome until June 2021 and is expected to move on to at least one other European country and the United States before returning to Italy where it will be given a permanent home. — **Reuters**



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



COOK LIKE A CHEF

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Loin of spring lamb & masala sauce



BRINGING OUT THE CHEF IN YOU

For his third recipe, Chef Thierry Quintric is sharing this recipe that may include a lot of steps but something he said will truly bring out the chef in you. He also encourages for you to enjoy the process.

MASALA SAUCE

- 10 gm Shallot chopped
- 1 tsp Tomato paste
- 90 ml Lamb jus
- 1 tsp Curry powder
- 1 Sprig rosemary
- Salt as required
- Black pepper as required
- 5 gm Butter
- 1 gm Paprika

Heat the pan which will be used for lamb cooking in low heat, add the chopped shallots. Sautee until translucent and light golden brown colour; then add curry powder, paprika and tomato paste and finally cook until the raw flavour goes away. Add lamb jus and fresh rosemary, keep the heat and let it simmer to reduce the sauce. Wait until it thickens. Once the sauce consistency is right, add the seasoning. Check the taste and finish with butter to make the sauce smoother.

BUTTERY SPINACH

- 100 gm Spinach
- 1 clove Garlic
- 10 gm Butter
- Salt as required
- Black pepper corn as required

Take the spinach and wash it gently to remove the steam and drain the water. Heat the pan in medium heat. Add butter and once melted, add the crushed garlic and spinach. Sprinkle with salt and crushed black pepper. Stir constantly until the salt merges with the concoction properly. Cover the pan with a lid for 3 minutes until the spinach is tenderly cooked. Don't overcook beyond the suggested time otherwise, it will lose the colour and texture.

PUMPKIN MASH

- 75 gm Red pumpkin
- 1 clove Garlic
- 10 gm Red onion
- 10 ml Olive oil
- 15 gm Butter
- 200 ml Vegetable stock
- Salt as required
- Black pepper corn as required
- 1 Sprig Thyme

Clean the pumpkin skin. Cut into thin slices, chop the onion, and crush the garlic. Put the pan on medium heat. Grease it with olive oil and butter and add the garlic and onion. Sautee gently until cooked. Add pumpkin, salt, crushed black pepper and thyme. Cook for 2 minutes and add the vegetable stock. Cover the pan with a lid until the pumpkin becomes soft. Once pumpkin gets softly cooked, keep aside and let it cool down. Smoothly blend with mixture blender.

EGGPLANT CAVIAR ROULADE

- 2 medium size Eggplants
- 2 tbsp Olive oil
- Salt as required
- 15 gm Shallots
- 1 clove Garlic
- 1 leave Basil
- 1 leave Mint
- Ground black pepper as required

Take a medium-sized eggplant and poke tiny holes all over it using a fork. Roast the eggplant at a 200-degree preheated oven for 30 to 35 minutes. Once roasted well, scoop the flesh with a spoon. Chop the flesh roughly. Set another pan in medium heat. Add some olive oil, shallot and garlic. Cook until the golden brown then add the chopped eggplant. Add chopped basil, mint and seasoning. Get another eggplant and peel the skin. Slice thinly and with mandolin, sprinkle with salt and grounded pepper. Sear in a pan in slow heat and leave for about 10 seconds for each side. On a cling wrap, arrange the eggplant over one over another until you achieved a 10 cm thickness length-wise. Fill the centre with caviar. Roll the eggplant tightly until you make a clean wrap. Once it sticks into place, remove the cling foil.

CONFIT POTATO AND CARROT

- 1 Nos Potato medium size
- 1 Nos Carrot medium size
- 1 clove Garlic

- 1 sprig thyme
- Salt as required
- Ground pepper as required
- 50 ml Olive oil

Peel the potato and cut into rectangle shape at 8 cm x 1 cm size. Peel the carrot, cut into square shape at 4cm x 4 cm size. Marinate both in salt, grounded pepper and thyme. Put the pan in medium heat, grease with oil and add crushed garlic and thyme. Add the potato and carrot. Cook slowly until each side becomes golden.

ASSEMBLY:

Take a clean 180 gm lamb loin seasoned with salt, crushed black pepper and herb (rosemary or thyme).
Heat the pan at 180 degrees greased with 1 Tbsp. olive oil and butter.
Sear the lamb for 45 seconds each side.
Make sure that it is thoroughly seared to keep the moisture in. Keep the pan to the side for the sauce.
Transfer to preheated oven and roast at 180 degrees for 8 minutes to achieve medium cook.
Take a plate and place the spinach in round shape. Arrange the lamb loin on top of the spinach. Drizzle the sauce around the spinach.
Nap the Pumpkin mash about 2 tablespoons opposite the lamb
Arrange the vegetables and roulade side of the plate straight wise and garnish with any green leaves.

ABOUT THE CHEF

CHEF THIERRY QUINTRIC
Executive Chef
Hormuz Grand Hotel,
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.

MUSIC

Meet the six-year-old pianist who plays Rachmaninoff



PARIS:When Guillaume Benoliel sits at the piano stool rehearsing Rachmaninoff's Italian Polka for a forthcoming concert, his feet dangle in the air.
"I've met talented people in my career but not like him," said Benoliel's teacher, Serguei Kouznetsov.
Guillaume is six years old. His parents, Claire and Dominique — both of them amateur musicians — sent him for his first piano lesson aged four after they realised he could hear a tune and play it back for himself. He also has perfect pitch.
In late August, Benoliel had his moment in Salzburg, the Austrian city and birthplace of composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Bénoliel was selected to perform on stage in a concert after winning two prizes in the Grand Prize

Virtuoso competition.
He picked up first prize in the young musician category, and a special prize in the exceptional young talent category.
Away from the concert halls, music is simply a fun experience that he shares with his family. They sometimes play together, and in the evenings Benoliel gives mini-concerts for his parents in the living room of their home south-east of Paris.
"Everyday is full of adventures and pleasure because we both love music," said his mother Claire, who works in management consulting.
As for his future career, she said she and her partner will let their son decide. But she said whatever path he takes, she hoped music will still be present in his life. — Reuters



Cut from the same cloth, Nigerian waste fabric becomes art

LAGOS: Marcellina Akpojotor weaves past thumping sewing machines, and leaves a Lagos shop with a bag brimming with discarded fabric. The colourful pieces, which

would typically be burned or thrown into the Nigerian city's lagoon as waste, find a second life in the hands of the artist. Akpojotor, 31, creates portraits using discarded pieces

of ankara, a brightly coloured African fabric that is ubiquitous from the slums of Lagos to high-powered meetings in the capital, Abuja. She says the meaning of the cloth helped fuel her work.

"I was so inspired by those materials," she said. "In this part of the world we use them to celebrate all kinds of festivity: burial, naming ceremony, wedding".

Nigeria's economy runs on oil, which pumps in billions of dollars, but its fashion, art and film are ascending, feeding national pride.

Ankara, inspired by Indonesian batik, was originally manufactured in the Netherlands, but became wildly popular in West Africa in the 1800s. Global fashion houses have used it for nearly a decade, and prices for African artwork have risen by 70 per cent to 100 per cent over the past 10 years, according to London auction house Bonhams.

Akpojotor's work combines art and fashion on canvas,

complimented with acrylic paint. A sketch of a woman's profile comes to life as she carefully adds tiny slivers of fabric to colour her skin, lips and clothing. Another canvas features a child playing, her form in bright swatches, casting a shadow.

"There's a common ground between you and the work because it is fabric, it is something that you know," she said. She has sold pieces for as much as \$25,000. Kehinde Afolabi, associate director of Lagos's Rele Gallery, found Akpojotor on social media and first featured her pieces in 2017. "You can't find anybody doing similar art," Afolabi said. "It is mind blowing, how somebody can take waste and create something out of it."

— Reuters

AUCTION

Super rare, purple-pink diamond up for auction, could fetch \$38 million

HONG KONG: An extremely rare, vivid purple-pink diamond mined in Russia is expected to fetch up to \$38 million when it goes under the hammer on November 11, the auction house Sotheby's said on Monday.

The oval gem, which is named after a Russian ballet 'The Spirit of the Rose', is the largest of its kind to be offered at auction. The trend for coloured stones has increased as an asset class by the super rich in recent years.

Mined by Russian diamond producer Alrosa, the 14.83-carat diamond was cut from the largest pink crystal ever found in Russia, Sotheby's said.

"The occurrence of pink diamonds in nature is extremely rare in any size. Only one per cent of all pink diamonds are larger than 10-carats," said Gary Schuler, worldwide chairman of Sotheby's jewellery division.

Naturally coloured diamonds occur because they possess a particular lattice structure that refracts light to produce coloured, rather than white, stones.

Pink diamonds are both rare and aesthetically highly prized by collectors, analysts say.

The gem is being shown in Hong Kong, Singapore and Taipei before being auctioned in Geneva on November 11. — Reuters

Toyota Announces 14th Dream Car Art Contest 2020 Winners

Saud Bahwan Automotive, the dealers for Toyota in Oman, recently announced the winners of the 14th Dream Car Art Contest 2020 (TDCAC). The contest was successfully conducted across Toyota showrooms in Oman.

Since 2004, Toyota Dream Car Art Contest has been conducted as part of Toyota Motor Corporation's social contribution initiatives. It gives children throughout the world the opportunity to develop an interest in cars and helps them feel the joy and importance of having a dream.

The Annual Toyota Dream Car Art Contest is held in different countries all over the world with the theme 'Your Dream Car'. The importance of recognizing a dream for children is the goal, as well as, encouraging children to become interested in cars by using their creativity and imagination. Toyota has great hopes for the Dream Cars from the children's rich imaginative powers.

In Oman, the 14th Toyota Dream Car Art Contest was conducted by Saud Bahwan Automotive to provide unique opportunity to kids in Oman to showcase their imagination, creativity & talent. Kids up to 15 Years of age were welcomed from all over Sultanate of Oman to participate in 14th Dream Car Art Contest. The talented ones stood a chance to win exciting prizes such as Apple iPad, LG 43" Smart LED UHD TV, JBL 2.1 Soundbar, PlayStation 4,



Samsung Galaxy Tab A, Canon DSLR 4000D and more.

Thousands of entries were received for the competition, which encouraged children to imagine what cars of the future would be like, and creatively design their imaginations for the contest. With the successful conclusion of the event, the jubilant winners have now emerged.

In the Under 8 Category: From Liwa, Abdullah Mohammed Ali Al Farsi took



home an Apple iPad 10.2 with WIFI. Rashid Abdul Aziz Al Jasasi, hailing from Ibri won a LG 43" Smart LED UHD TV. Adam Hani Ibrahim from Suwaiq was the happy winner of a JBL 2.1 Channel Sound Bar.

In the 8 to 11 years category, the winners comprised Rahaf Sultan Rashid Al Marshodi from Ibri, who won LG 43" Smart LED UHD TV. From Muscat, it was Balamurali Krishna Benoj who took home a PS4 500GB, while Reetaj Ahmed Al Mandhari from Sumail,

won a Samsung Galaxy Tab A 8 Inch.

In the children aged from 12-15, the winners comprised Abdul Salam Salim Humaid Al Mabsali from Sinaw, who won LG 43" Smart LED UHD TV. From Muscat, Ahmed Ali Al Senaidi won a PS4 500GB and Jiya Sajeev from Bureimi won a Canon DSLR 4000D.

Apart from the above nine national winners, 60 branch winners were also declared in the 14th Toyota Dream Car Art Contest 2020, Oman and they each won Lulu gift vouchers. And every contestant who participated received a certificate of participation.

According to a spokesperson from Saud Bahwan Automotive, "It is very encouraging to see the imaginations of these young and fertile minds. It gives us immense joy to provide such talent with a platform to demonstrate their imaginations. We congratulate all the winners and encourage all participants to continue to give their imaginations a shape. And to look forward to the next Toyota Dream Car Art Contest."

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Stretch and breathe while tackling lifestyle changes during the pandemic



BY LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

What are the best ways to counter the impacts of sitting long hours in front of laptops? The biggest lifestyle change individuals faced is the encroachment of screen time.

Prema Nagesh is a yoga expert and instructor who feels these issues can be solved with stretch and breathing exercises.

"For more than six months everyone is at home for most of the time whether they are young or old with each one looking at the problem differently," she reflected.

On the personal front, she said she took the opportunity to learn many new skills.

"But for children, it is a completely different story. All their classes are online including physical fitness. They cannot waste their academic year because of COVID-19. However, it has been noted that staying glued to the screen and being exposed to the heat emitted out of the screen is creating hyperactivity and anxiety. Also, there is a lack of movement and an added stress of not being able to meet their peer group," she pointed out.

These are this yoga teacher's suggestions: Parents should be taught eye exercise and simple candle gazing techniques to relax their eyes and mind. They should include the children in these sessions and increase family time.

In the growing stage, children should be taught stretch exercise so they learn to relax their back as during the growing stages a strong spine is important.

Breathing exercise is important to improve the immunity especially lung capacity, which is a top priority when the school reopens. Families should decide weekly once to go through digital fasting to rejuvenate the mind and body.

Here is a look at some of the exercises both children and parents could practice:

Yoga asanas for children during the lockdown:

Hamstring stretch and Prasarita paduttanasana exercises improve the flexibility of the back, groin and increase circulation towards the head.

Ushtrasana or Chakrasana for a healthy spine especially for the neck and the shoulders.

Adults can take care of themselves by practising the postures using props like chairs to facilitate and they should learn under guidance.

Breathing exercises called pranayama are the best to improve immunity and to develop more strength to face the upcoming situations.

Deep breathing is extremely important and this is how to do it — while inhaling allow the stomach to go out and when exhaling let your stomach go in.

Practice deep breathing in a ratio of 1:2.

If inhaling is for three seconds then exhale should be performed for six seconds or more.

Slowly develop the lung capacity by increasing the inhalation and exhalation and then practice for five minutes.

Prasarita paduttanasana is excellent for tired eyes and increase blood flow towards head and shoulders and the lower limbs which are sedentary as children not able to play outside.

Ustrasana is excellent for tired neck and back and lower core as the pooling of blood happens again due to lack of movement.

More children are used to eating continuously due to boredom which will lead to more fat deposit at a young age and for this sun salutations are the best.

These 12 steps are helping many to stay fit and get over many diseases.

"Children should be taught at a young age about how to respond to different situations in life and these lockdowns we have been going through are examples," she added.



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