



■ SAYYID THEYAZIN RECEIVES IRANIAN AMBASSADOR



MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth on Sunday received Ali Najafi, Iranian Ambassador to the Sultanate. During the meeting they discussed bilateral relations between the Sultanate and Iran and the aspects of existing cooperation in the domains of culture, sports and youth and ways of enhancing them. – ONA

Minister receives UK envoy



MUSCAT: Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, received Hamish Cowell, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Oman on Sunday. The meeting reviewed aspects of cooperation in the transport, communications and information technology sectors as well as matters of common concern between the Sultanate and the UK. The meeting was attended by Eng Salim bin Mohammed al Nuaimi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport Communications and Information Technology for Transport and Dr Ali bin Amir al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology. — ONA

Stay entertained during lockdown

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

As night lockdown began on Sunday in line with the Supreme Committee's decisions, many parents may find themselves faced with more time to spend with kids, which has been the case since the outbreak of COVID-19 earlier this year. However, staying home with family provides a greater opportunity to share many activities and ideas that may not have been available in the past. "This would enhance the role of the family, and restore its old role in education and upbringing of children. There is no doubt that the outcome of this will be beneficial to society as a whole," said Aisha Ali, a psychological coach.

"With the extension of school closures due to the coronavirus pandemic, parents, not only in Oman, but all over the world face the task of maintaining the mental health of their children during the quarantine period, and there is no doubt that it is a very difficult task, but parents can provide entertaining home activities for children," she said. Before starting to search for activities, parents must explain about COVID-19 to their children making sure not to pass on their fear to children when talking about infection and symptoms. One of the activities that can keep children busy during quarantine is reading or listening to stories, which help in developing their learning

abilities and increasing their horizon of imagination. Besides, parents can make their children participate in cooking food, create new foods with different flavours, or participate in scientific experiments using homemade materials. These methods help to activate the visual memory of children. Scientists agree that children and young people need to do two types of physical activity every week in order to maintain their health. This includes outdoor exercises such as running to strengthen their muscles and bones, and indoor activities within a family atmosphere. Activities like solving puzzles can help keep children busy, while arts and crafts help them stay creative.

MOH's Directorates-General granted ISO certification



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 11

The Ministry of Health's directorates-general obtained ISO 9001:2015 certification from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Directorate General for Administrative Affairs, Directorate General for Financial Affairs, Directorate General of Pharmaceutical affairs and Drug Control, Directorate General of Private Health Establishments, and Directorate General of Projects and Engineering Affairs bagged the certification. This recognition highlights the ministry's keenness in developing the provided health services in order to achieve a pioneering health system with global standards characterised by decentralisation and quality. It further proves the MOH's commitment in improving performance and developing foundations for the continuous development and the ability to provide services that consistently meet customer requirements in line with Oman Vision 2040 in improving ministerial government services. The MOH's Directorate General of Quality Assurance Center has consistently prepared the recent ISO-certified DGs during the two-year project implementation phase, starting at the end of 2018 with analysing the gap and measuring the standards status of the DGs. The project passed through many steps including operations



documentation, quality document development, internal auditing and management review, to reach to the final auditing for obtaining the international certificate. Fifty Personnel were trained as internal auditors and 9 were qualified as chief auditors of the ISO 9001/2015 system to continue improving the system and achieving the objective of obtaining this international recognition certificate by all the Ministry's central directorates in the future. Dr Fatima al Ajmi, MoH's Under-Secretary for Administrative, Financial, and Planning Affairs presented the certificates to the representatives of Directorates-General.

Knowledge Oman to host C2C founder on Omani Women's day

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 11

Knowledge Oman will host a special webinar to mark Omani Women's Day on October 17 aimed at empowering women to build resilience and overcome obstacles in their life towards reaching their full potential. The webinar, "Transforming challenges into Positive Change and Opportunities" will host international motivational speaker Dina Bseisu, moderated by Omani public speaking educator, Nabila al Barwani. The event will be broadcasted over Knowledge Oman webinar platforms free to all women to attend. Dina Bseisu is a Palestinian born mother of two who has achieved academically and professionally as a recipient of a Magna Cum Laude on the

Dean's Honour List from Georgetown University and the managing director of Deutsche Bank in Switzerland. She has committed to using her own successful experiences and the story of how she overcame challenges and hindrances to inspire and enhance the lives of other women at a community level. She is the Founder and President of the Challenge to Change (www.challengetochange.me) organisation, a Swiss Non-Profit organisation aimed at addressing Mental Wellness for Women in the Middle East. In addition to being a community which women can reach out to, the platform strives to develop women holistically and equip them with skills to take control of their lives and make an optimal difference in their own



Dina Bseisu



Nabila al Barwani

lives and the lives of others. The webinar will be moderated and coordinated by Nabila al Barwani, a Public Speaking Educator passionate about helping people share their thoughts and making their voices their ultimate superpower. Nabila runs Public Speaking & Presenting workshops that help students & professionals speak with authenticity and is also a Human Resources Manager in the health sector with over 15 years' experience in dealing with people from different walks of life. Nabila currently leads the Knowledge Oman Talks project which gathers speakers who share the same hunger for knowledge sharing under one roof. Knowledge Oman has committed to empowering women in 2020 by

placing focus on developing leadership skills within the female members of the organisation who have been placed at the forefront of leadership positions of the various teams which make up the operational structure of the organisation. Balqees al Hassani was appointed as the new President of the organisation in 2020 and has since engaged in many platforms locally and abroad to drive forward the vision of empowerment inculcated in the Oman 2040 Vision. The webinar will be broadcasted on October 17 from 07:30-08:30pm and is available for viewing across all Knowledge Oman webinar platforms. Women from all walks of life are encouraged to register for the webinar via their website: www.knowledgeoman.com/register

Breast, thyroid cancers most common among women



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 11

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the Sultanate followed by thyroid cancer, and colorectal cancer, while among men it is colorectal cancer followed by prostate cancer and blood cancer.

According to the National Cancer Registry's Cancer Incidence Report in Oman 2017, the number of recorded tumours

cases in 2017 reached 2,101 cases including 1,892 (90.05 per cent) cases among Omanis, 188 (8.95 per cent) cases among residents, and 19 (0.9 per cent) cases of Carcinoma among Omanis.

The number of cancer cases among Omani males reached 887 (46.9 per cent) compared to 1,005 (53.1 per cent) cases among Omani females while 127 (6.7 per cent) cases were registered among

Omani children at the age of 14 and under.

Cancer incidence among females in the Sultanate reached 114.2 cases per 100,000 while cases among males were 113.3 cases per 100,000 population, according to the World Population Standard that is used to reach a fair comparison on the magnitude of cancer issue compared to other countries of the world varying in population pyramid.

The number of cancer cases among Omani males reached 887 (46.9 per cent) compared to 1,005 (53.1 per cent) cases among Omani females while 127 (6.7 per cent) cases were registered among Omani children at the age of 14 and under.

The Ministry of Health's NCR provides a reliable and fundamental source of cancer treatment and control programmes for decision makers. It was established in 1985 to offer a database in cancer surveillance as well as a tool in collecting, and disseminating reliable population-based statistics in the Sultanate. Since 1996, the ministry has been keen in publishing periodically cancer incidence rates reports.

OMAN AIR REVAMPS WEBSITE

MUSCAT: Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, has debuted its new website, which delivers a smooth, simple experience for everyone. The refined user experience makes it effortless to create journeys and learn more about appealing destinations in Oman, special offers and travel-related information.

The new site, which features a fresh, contemporary design and user interface, provides simplified access to flight options and payment alternatives, along with state-of-the-art security.

Mobile users will enjoy an experience which is fully optimised for Apple and Android devices and provides the same ease of use which is accessible via laptop and desktop computers.

Content has been expanded and refined to provide improved information in more than four languages including Arabic and English, about Oman Air's activities, news and more.

To ensure that guests travel safely and efficiently, omanair.com is regularly updated to provide the latest information about travel requirements related to the coronavirus.

The new site, which features a simple, effective user interface and an attractive white, gold and blue style, will also increase brand awareness, sales and guest retention, in addition to attracting new guests. — ONA



Walk of Oman postponed to Feb 18 over COVID-19



LIJU CHERIAN
@cherianmathiker

Walking With The Wounded (WWTW), a UK-based leading military charity, decided to postpone their fundraising expedition to Oman until the new year, adhering to COVID-19 guidelines both in the UK and Oman.

Therefore, the Grenadier Walk of Oman expedition will now run from February 18 to March 9 in 2021.

The organisers said that in light of the recent COVID-19 updates and with a second spike and further restrictions expected, the safety of the team embarking on the trek was of paramount importance.

The 22-day walk was earlier scheduled to be held from November 20 till December 11 and the team was to take on an epic trek inspired by Wilfred Thesiger (1910-2003).

In August, WWTW announced the final six-member team participating in expedition. The team included David Adams, Ben McComb, Sean Gane, Brian O'Neill, Ashley Winter and Andrew Phillips.

They were selected after a rigorous selection process which took place in Grasmere village, Lake District.

The Grenadier Walk of Oman had decided to take five ex-military personnel and one member still currently serving to the hostile environment of the Omani desert.

The trek is set to see the team tackle one of their toughest challenges yet, as they pull a 100kg cart across the desert.

The Grenadier Walk of Oman is supported by The Duke of Sussex in his role as the official Expedition Patron, along with support from the Diwan of

Royal Court and in partnership with the Omani armed forces. Now that the expedition has been delayed, the team will continue to get their steps in over the next few months by focusing on WWTW's Walking Home For Christmas campaign, which will be announced soon.

Ed Parker, CEO of WWTW, said, "The team has been training extremely hard over the last few months and are mentally, physically and emotionally prepared for this huge adventure. However, in light of the current global situation and with the rise in COVID-19 cases, we decided to put the expedition on hold until the New Year. The Grenadier Walk of Oman will still go ahead in 2021, but for now we must keep in-line with the government's guidelines and ensure we only move forward once it is safe to do so. The team will continue to keep up their training in a safe and secure environment. I want to thank our partners, in the UK and Oman, for their flexibility and understanding in this delay."

Charities such as WWTW are vital to continue their support to ex-servicemen and women, who are suffering or have suffered from physical and psychological injuries. With those embarking on the challenge all having suffered from such injuries, The Grenadier Walk of Oman highlights the importance of why we must support those who have served, as they transition back into civilian life.

WWTW is a charity established to support the employment aspirations and vocational outcomes of our wounded, injured and sick ex-servicemen and women who have been physically, mentally and socially disadvantaged by their service.

OMAN OBSERVER



Be Careful, Be Responsible!



OMAN  DAILY
Observer

**For Advertisements
Please Contact with our Team**

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi

99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari

99639264
wadiameeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri

92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri

99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi

99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com



@omanobserver
www.omanobserver.om

#Living_with_COVID19



TAKE A BREAK WHILE ONLINE

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

We are sitting more than ever before during the pandemic.

And one group that is facing the challenge is students who are going through online classes. What would be the impact of this new lifestyle compared to the energy they would have spent in regular school days?

While international and private schools have been going through online classes, the national schools are set to open the schools in November. As the normal outings are impossible in the current scenario, parents are on the lookout for different ways to keep up children's physical activities.

Students not only use online facilities for schooling, but it is also used for coaching classes as well as extra tuition classes for school subjects or hobbies. But this is also the case for adults working from home.

"When you sit in a particular position for long hours one does develop problems as muscles become stiff. So you might have stiffness in your neck, legs or back. The impact is similar to travelling in a transcontinental flight for more than 10 to 14 hours. In addition, because the laptop is used continuously there is a strain on the eye as well resulting in eye itchiness, watering eyes and has difficulty in vision after a couple of hours

of work", says Dr Dilip Singvi, Specialist in Internal Medicine.

"My advice is to take a break after every hour. Get up from the chair and move about so there is a circulation of the blood again. This will keep the muscles in shape and in tone and will not become stiff. Should also give break to the eyes from constantly looking at the screen. In between, they can wash their eyes and freshen up their face."

Preferably they should take a break every hour as this will prevent long term damage. Initially many children had this problem when online classes had begun and the schools had to reduce the hours children working on a laptop from six hours to four hours for this very reason. It is very important that we should educate children what cautions they should take while studying online

"Cycling is one of the best ways to keep fit," says Mohammed al Obaidan who is the chairman of Oman Triathlon Committee.

According to him, cycling has become so popular that the market is almost running out of cycles.

"Cycling is more than a sport as it works on their personality – they learn to be responsible not just for their safety but also care for the safety of their siblings. It is not just a skill they learn but also the ability to focus. All kids should learn cycling using all the safety gear," he says.

He is of the opinion that cycling will become

part of life and routine.

"What are the options they have for a swimming pool or cycling. Covid-19 has changed the world for sure. There is hardly any place to go and cycling fits in perfectly."

But all outdoor activities must now come into a conclusion by 8 pm.

Parents continue to experiment and this is what one mother, Sharadha Krishnamurthy planned out for her son as she expressed her concern, "It is definitely concerning – both the increased screen time and excessive sedentary behaviour should not persist into adulthood. I have put my son on a very healthy eating plan and attends online fitness class under a personal trainer for an hour, thrice a week and he also does his cardio workouts for an hour during rest of the days."

What children have been missing out not just on physical fitness but social aspects too.

"On the social front, we make sure he is connected with his friends, cousins and grandparents through video calls, celebrating birthdays and other special days. We engage him with his favourite pastime – baking. Of course, as parents, we try to spend time with him and playing cards are the new family time. Challenging times, but we are managing okay," she says.

Each family has been finding their own formula to tackle the COVID-19 days.

Partygoers violate virus rules as cases rise in German cities

BERLIN: Revellers violated coronavirus rules in Berlin and other German cities this weekend as the list of urban centres introducing new restrictions due to rising infections rates grew.

Police in the capital said officers dispersed several gatherings of 20 to 50 people in front of clubs and the city's popular off-licence shops, known as "Spaetis," early on Sunday. A large group of people in the eastern neighbourhood of Friedrichshain threw eggs at police officers. "The colleagues were not hit though," a spokesperson said.

A night-time curfew banning alcohol sales and limiting outdoor gatherings to five people or two households after 11 pm came into effect in Berlin on Saturday.

Nightlife in larger cities has become one of the key drivers of rising infection numbers. Chancellor Angela Merkel on Friday appealed to young people to stick to the rules and refrain from partying beyond curfews.

Early on Sunday, police also shut down parties in the cities of Munich and Trier that violated coronavirus rules.

In Munich, police received a call that 100 to 150 people were attending an illegal rave at a former slaughterhouse, though only 25 people were there when officers arrived. The partygoers are facing charges for not wearing masks or keeping the required distance.

More than 100 youths partied in Trier "in defiance of any precautionary measure" at a private venue, police said. Some of the party guests, who came mostly from neighbouring Luxembourg,



People wearing masks take part in a parade in Cologne. – Reuters

fled to a nearby forest when officers arrived to shut down the event.

Police recorded the details of at least 70 teenagers and young adults and confiscated the speakers at what appeared to be a commercial event, according to the statement.

The mayors of Germany's 11 biggest cities agreed with Merkel earlier in the week to clamp down if the number of cases per 100,000 residents over a seven-day period exceeds 50.

Essen in the western state of North Rhine Westphalia became the latest city to join that list on Sunday, alongside Berlin, Cologne, Frankfurt and Stuttgart.

Anticipating the further rise in cases, Essen — a city of 600,000 — presented a package of measures on Friday that would come into effect once infections passed the 50-mark. These include reducing the number of people allowed to meet for private celebrations from

50 to 25, while mask rules have been extended to cover all public buildings, among other things.

Unlike Berlin and Cologne, Essen has refrained from introducing a night-time curfew.

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) on Sunday recorded 3,483 new coronavirus infections and 11 deaths related to the virus, for a total of 322,864 cases and 9,615 fatalities since the beginning of the pandemic. — dpa

■ CAR-FREE STREET



People walk on a street closed to motorists on Sundays in Tokyo's Ginza district. – AFP

Iran nuclear chief tests positive for coronavirus

TEHRAN: The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Ali Akbar Salehi, has caught the coronavirus, according to a local media report.

A test for the virus came back positive in the past week, the Tasnim news agency reported, citing a statement from the AEOI.

Since then, Salehi is said to be in home quarantine. He is doing well, the agency cites the statement as saying.

Salehi is the second deputy of President Hassan Rowhani to catch the virus, after Mohammad Bagher Nobakht announced that he too had tested positive on Saturday.

On Sunday, the number of coronavirus cases reported in Iran since the pandemic started surpassed half a million.

The Health Ministry said 3,822 new infections had been confirmed over the past day, bringing the total to 500,075.

The death toll jumped to 28,544, which was an increase of over 250 on the previous day, ministry spokeswoman Sima Lari told the state broadcaster. — dpa

Hurricane leaves Louisianans reeling and out of power

LAKE CHARLES: Weary residents of coastal Louisiana began cleaning up on Sunday from wind and water damage inflicted by Hurricane Delta to their already storm-battered region, even as it weakened and moved northeast.

Delta made landfall near the town of Creole in Cameron Parish as a Category 2 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale, packing sustained winds of 100 miles per hour. Though not as powerful as August's Hurricane Laura, a Category 4 storm that tore homes and businesses apart, Delta toppled trees and power poles, leaving hundreds of thousands of Gulf Coast residents without power.

The storm weakened to a tropical depression as it moved inland to western Mississippi, according to the National Hurricane Center, but still carried heavy rains.

Sylvia Pastrano, 65, said the roof of her Lake Charles, Louisiana home leaked from Delta's rains after being initially damaged by Laura. She positioned three trash cans over her bed to catch the water.

"We were debating whether to leave or not but my husband has got orthopaedic issues and I do too and we're just too exhausted to even get up and evacuate," Pastrano said.

"Last night it was terrifying, the whistling and whistling," Delta brought widespread flooding of streets and riverbanks, mostly in southwestern Louisiana, tracking the path of destruction left by Laura but causing damage over a larger swath of the Gulf Coast.

"Even if it wasn't quite as powerful as Hurricane Laura, it was much bigger," Governor John Bel Edwards told a briefing in Baton Rouge. Some 3,000 National Guard troops had been called up to distribute relief supplies, clear roads, maintain security and conduct search and rescue operations, the governor said. 600,000.

WITHOUT POWER

While no deaths have so far been linked to Delta, Edwards said storm-related

Though not as powerful as August's Hurricane Laura, a Category 4 storm that tore homes and businesses apart, Delta toppled trees and power poles, leaving hundreds of thousands of Gulf Coast residents without power

fatalities often occur in accidents such as falls, during clean-up operations, or from carbon monoxide poisoning from residents using home generators.

About 600,000 of the state's electric customers, 25% of the total, were without power at midday, Edwards said. But restoration was progressing faster than it did after Laura because Delta's winds were less damaging to the infrastructure, he said.

Laura's winds damaged tens of thousands of homes, leaving roofs across the region dotted with blue tarpaulins. More than 6,000 people were still living temporarily in hotels when Delta struck. Delta spared many of the rooftop tarps that were still up, but deluged some streets and littered others with downed trees and branches.

"Laura was much worse," said Lake Charles resident Matthew Williams, 49. "This was more rain than wind." Williams, who had just gotten his power back about a week and a half ago after the outage left by Laura, said he rode out the storm at his home. With the sun shining brightly, Frederick Hannie, 35, surveyed the water damage to his gym, CrossFit Lake Charles, which had already sustained wind and roof damage from Laura.

Between two hurricanes and the coronavirus pandemic, Hannie said, "it definitely takes a little financial gymnastics" to run a business this year. — Reuters

Brexit deal needs to be done by start of November

PARIS: The European Union and Britain must reach an agreement on their post-Brexit ties by the start of November, France's European affairs minister said on Sunday, but the bloc would not accept a bad deal just for the sake of reaching a compromise.

"There needs to be an agreement in the coming weeks. That means around the beginning of November," Clement Beaune told FranceInfo radio.

"We must not lose our calm in the final days of negotiations because that is sometimes when

bad concessions are made."

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday that he would explore every avenue for a trade deal with the European Union but said progress to bridge significant gaps

needed to be made in the coming days.

Johnson has set a deadline of the Oct. 15 EU summit for agreeing a deal, and the EU is seeking a few more concessions before entering the final phase of negotiations.

— Reuters



OMAN UNITED INSURANCE CO. SAOG

P O Box 1522, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24477300, Fax: 24477323, E-mail: info@omanutd.com

Announcement to the Shareholders of Oman United Company SAOG with regard to the Unclaimed Dividends for the year ended 31st December 2019

Oman United Insurance Company SAOG is pleased to announce to its honored Shareholders that we have authorized Muscat Clearance & Depository Company SAOC to distribute cash dividends of 30 Baizes per share to the shareholders who are registered in the shareholders' register on 30 March 2020. The Shareholders who did not receive their dividends have to contact Muscat Clearance & Depository Company SAOC located in Commercial Banking District CBD AREA – Ruwi. In order to receive their dividends the shareholders have to update their personal information and submit their identity cards along with the other supportive documents that proof their rights to MCD.

You also could obtain the dividend claiming form from the below website

<https://www.mcd.gov.om>

For further inquiries please contact with
Muscat Clearance and Depository (SAOC)
Phone No. +968 24822222

Spokes person
Nassir Bin Salim Al Busaidi

Lebanon to lock down nearly 170 districts



Women wait to get tested for COVID-19 at a hospital in Beirut. — Reuters

BEIRUT: Almost 170 Lebanese villages and towns will go into lockdown for the next week, the government said on Sunday, as it grapples with record numbers of novel coronavirus cases. Authorities have also ordered nightclubs nationwide closed “until further notice”. An interior ministry statement said 169 villages and towns across the country would be locked down for one week from 6:00 am (03:00 GMT) on Monday. Around half of those localities had already been placed in lockdown under measures announced this month, including the closure of all public and private institutions excluding bakeries and pharmacies. Lebanon, a Mediterranean country reeling from its worst economic crisis in decades, has recorded 52,558 novel coronavirus cases, including 455 deaths. Infections have spiked in the aftermath

of a catastrophic explosion at Beirut’s port on August 4 that killed more than 200 people, injured thousands, damaged several hospitals and overwhelmed the capital’s health services. Lebanon’s caretaker health minister warned on Monday that increasing virus cases in the country could reach levels seen in Europe and called localised lockdowns a “last chance”. Authorities fear the continuous rise of cases could further overwhelm the country’s fragile healthcare sector. On August 21, authorities imposed an almost nationwide lockdown as well as a night-time curfew, but they eased the restrictions a week later after protest from the private sector. **48-HOUR LOCKDOWN IN JORDAN** Meanwhile, Jordan has entered a nationwide 48-hour lockdown on Friday for the first time in months as health officials worry a major spike in coronavirus infections could threaten its

stretched healthcare system. The country has seen what officials say is an “exponential” rise, with around 10,000 cases confirmed in just over a week — a near-doubling of the total number of infections since the first cases in early March and a reversal what had been among the lowest infection and death rates in the Middle East. Senior officials are struggling to avoid a broader lockdown that the hard-hit economy can ill afford. “The last thing we want is a complete lockdown for two weeks or three weeks, we don’t want to reach this .It remains the last weapon if cases rise unbelievably high and lead to our hospitals being overwhelmed,” Health Minister Saad Jaber has said. The community spread of the virus has forced authorities to maintain the closure of schools for 2 million pupils, after a brief resumption of lessons at the start of last month, and impose strict bans on large public gatherings. — AFP

Fires in Syria, Lebanon brought under control

DAMASCUS: Fires that ravaged parts of Syria and Lebanon in recent days have been brought under control, authorities in the two countries said on Sunday. In Syria, blazes fuelled by high temperatures broke out on Friday in the provinces of Homs, Tartus and Latakia, where at least three people died, according to the health ministry. Several families had to flee residential areas near the fires, according to media reports. “Civil defence teams, supported by army units and the population, are now in control of all the fires in the province” of Latakia, governor Ibrahim Khader al Salem said, quoted by news agency SANA. Firefighters were still on the scene trying “to cool the burned sites,” he added. SANA said all fires in Tartus had also been brought under control, and crews had managed to completely extinguish a fire in the Korb Ali forest in the western suburbs of Homs. Authorities have yet to reveal



Soldiers help firefighters contain wildfires in Latakia. — Reuters

Syrian Prime Minister Hussein Arnous said efforts were under way to recover from the blazes and support those who had been forced to flee their homes. In neighbouring Lebanon, more than 100 forest fires that raged since Thursday were also completely under control, a civil defence source said. Authorities have yet to reveal the full extent of the damage from the fires in Syria and Lebanon. In Israel, fires fuelled by the heatwave were brought under control overnight Friday-Saturday, the firefighting service said. “After more than 30 hours of firefighting, we have brought the main fires under control... (but) we remain vigilant,” the fire service there said. — AFP

PALESTINIAN MARCH



Palestinians march in front of the media during an anti-Israel rally in the southern Gaza Strip. — Reuters

Turkish Cypriots vote for new leader amid tensions

NICOSIA: The self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was voting on Sunday for a new leader amid heightened tensions on the divided island and in the wider eastern Mediterranean. The presidential election in the breakaway region pits the incumbent Mustafa Akinci, who supports the reunification of Cyprus, against nationalist Ersin Tatar. The vote in the TRNC, which is recognised only by Ankara, comes three days after Turkish troops angered the Republic of Cyprus, an EU member, by reopening access to the seaside ghost town of Varosha for the

first time in decades. That move sparked protests in the majority Greek-speaking Republic of Cyprus, which exercises its authority over the island’s southern two thirds, separated from the north by a UN-patrolled buffer zone. Almost 200,000 of the about 300,000 residents are registered to vote in the TRNC. The election comes amid tensions in the eastern Mediterranean over the planned exploitation of hydrocarbons between Turkey on the one hand, and Greece as well as its close ally Cyprus on the other. Turkey announced on Tuesday,



A Turkish-Cypriot woman casts her ballot at a voting station in the northern part of Nicosia. — AFP

together with Tatar, the partial reopening of Varosha, a beachside resort that drew Hollywood stars and other celebrities in the 1970s before it was abandoned by its Greek-Cypriot inhabitants. The move to allow visitors back into the abandoned and fenced-off area was condemned by Akinci and other candidates, who saw it as interference in the election. It was also heavily criticised by the Republic of Cyprus, the European Union and the United Nations, whose peacekeepers monitor the 180-kilometre buffer zone between the two parts of the island.

Kemal Baykalli, founder of the non-government group Unite Cyprus Now, said “the main issue of this election is how we will define our relationship with Turkey”. Eleven candidates are in the running, and the favourite is Akinci, 72, a Social Democrat who favours loosening ties with Ankara. The negotiations aimed at reunification stalled during Akinci’s term of office, notably on the question of the withdrawal of tens of thousands of Turkish soldiers stationed in the TRNC. Turkey supports the nationalist Tatar, 60, currently “prime minister”

SHORT TAKES

CAIRO

Libya’s political, military talks to resume: UN

The United Nations says that inclusive political and military talks between Libya’s warring parties are to resume. The Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) will be held through a series of online sessions as well as face-to-face meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN Support Mission in Libya said in a statement. Libya has been in turmoil since the 2011 and has become a battleground for rival proxy forces that has drawn in foreign powers. The UN-recognised government of Prime Minister Fayeza al Serraj is be-



ing backed by Turkey, while the forces in the east of the country under military strongman Khalifa Haftar are supported by Russia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. — dpa

RAMALLAH

Abbas holds talks with head of Jewish congress

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas met with World Jewish Congress President Ronald Lauder in the West Bank, a Palestinian minister said, following a call by Lauder for Palestinians to revive peace talks with Israel. Civil Affairs Minister Hussein al Shaikh revealed the meeting in a Twitter posting but gave no details. Lauder, a US businessman who also met Abbas a year ago in New York, attended the September 15 White House signing ceremony of an agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain to forge formal ties. He hoped the accord would bring the Palestinians and Israel back to peace talks, which collapsed in 2014. The World Jewish Congress said in a statement that Lauder met the Palestinian leader on Saturday “for a private visit at Abbas’ invitation, to discuss a range of issues regarding Palestine and the Middle East.” In Washington, a person familiar with the matter said Lauder’s visit was not coordinated with or on behalf of the Trump administration but was in a strictly private capacity. — Reuters

TEHRAN

China backs Iran N-deal, calls for new forum

China’s foreign minister Wang Yi has called for a new forum to defuse tensions in the Middle East after a meeting with his Iranian counterpart where he reiterated Beijing’s support for Tehran. Wang and Javid Zarif also reaffirmed their commitment to Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, according to the Chinese foreign ministry, an implicit rebuke of the United States for abandoning the accord during their meeting in China’s southwestern Tengchong city. “China proposes to build a regional multilateral dialogue plat-



form with equal participation of all stakeholders,” said the Chinese foreign ministry statement. The forum would “enhance mutual understanding through dialogue and explore political and diplomatic solutions to security issues in the Middle East”, the statement added. — AFP

In brief

■ KAMPONG CHAM

FARMERS DEPLOY
SCARECROWS TO WARD
OFF CORONAVIRUS

Armed with a stick, a floral-shirted scarecrow with a plastic pot for a head stands guard in front of a rural Cambodian home — a sentry erected by farmers to ward off the coronavirus.

Known as “Ting Mong” in Khmer, the creatively rendered scarecrows often pop up in villages that have been hard-hit by infectious diseases like dengue or water-borne diarrhoea. This time, “I’ve set up the Ting Mong to prevent the coronavirus from threatening my family,” says farmer Sok Chany, 45.

She has two posted in front of her wooden stilt home in Kampong Cham province, about 110 kilometres northeast of the capital Phnom Penh. — AFP

■ TOKYO

CHINESE VESSELS
SAIL NEAR DISPUTED
SEA ISLANDS

Japan’s Coast Guard said on Sunday that two Chinese vessels entered what Japan considers its territorial waters near disputed islands in the East China Sea.

It marked the 21st time this year that Chinese boats have entered Japanese waters and the first since late August, a Japanese Coast Guard representative said.

Japan’s government has complained of “relentless” intrusions in waters around the group of islets claimed by both nations. The contested territory contains islands known as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China. — Reuters

■ KABUL

ROADSIDE BOMB
KILLS 13 IN NORTH
AFGHANISTAN

At least 13 people, including three civilians, have been killed by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan’s northern province of Sar-e Pul, officials said on Sunday. The blast, which took place near the provincial capital of the same name was followed by a heavy exchange of fire between the Taliban and the Afghan forces. The incident lasted six hours. Three soldiers were wounded, a councillor and anonymous source said. Sar-e Pul has always been a battlefield between the Taliban and the security forces due to its strategic location in the country’s north. The Taliban has controlled large parts of the province for years now.

A provincial councillor, Aminullah Aydin, said at least 46 Afghan forces were killed, wounded or captured by the Taliban in various parts of the province over the past 48 hours. — dpa

S Korea eases social
distancing curbs

SEOUL: South Korea will relax some rules on social distancing from Monday, allowing nightspots to re-open and spectators to attend sports events, after new coronavirus cases edged lower in recent weeks, authorities said.

Daily infections have fallen largely into the double-digit range in the past two weeks, down from 440 during outbreaks at a church and a political rally in August that prompted clampdowns on gatherings and some businesses.

“We will lower the level of social distancing nationwide but maintain controls on risk factors such as the door-to-door sales industry,” Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun told a meeting on Sunday.

“Many citizens are feeling fatigue over prolonged distancing, and we also took its negative impact on the economy into consideration.”

The relaxation means places of entertainment, such as nightclubs, karaoke bars and buffets can re-open, and audiences of up to 30 per cent of stadium capacity will be allowed at sports matches such as the

popular Korea Baseball Organization League, as long as they comply with anti-virus guidelines.

But high-risk activities such as door-to-door sales businesses and small religious gatherings remain banned, with new limits on guests and spacing at nightspots and indoor sport venues in the heavily populated Seoul area, the government said.

Health Minister Park Neung-hoo warned against complacency, saying the country still faced the dangers of what he called a “twindemic” of the virus and a winter seasonal flu.

“We all know from past experiences that any slight carelessness could lead to another large-scale spread of the virus,” he told a separate briefing.

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency reported 58 cases by midnight on Saturday, taking total infections to 24,606, with 432 deaths.

Of the new cases, 46 were domestically transmitted, most of them in the greater Seoul region, where small clusters continue to emerge from churches, door-to-door sales firms and medical institutions. — AFP



People walk at a shopping district in Seoul. — AFP



Officials and onlookers gather near the wreckage after the accident. — AFP

20 dead, 40 wounded in
Thai bus-train collision

CHACHOENGSAO: At least 20 people were killed and more than 40 injured in Thailand on Sunday when a freight train crashed into a bus taking passengers to a temple, officials said.

The morning collision, around 50 kilometres east of the capital Bangkok, toppled the bus on its side and sheared off part of its roof.

Dozens of injured passengers were rushed to nearby medical facilities for treatment, said provincial hospital director Sombat Chutimanukul.

“Four are in critical condition and eight remain under observation” out of the 23 admitted to her hospital, she told reporters.

State Railway of Thailand governor Nirut Maneephan confirmed the death toll at the site of the crash to reporters.

Footage shared by a government department showed the bus edging from the road onto train tracks before a blue cargo train slammed into its side.

Early photos taken by rescue workers showed gnarled metal and debris, with bodies lying by the tracks and people’s belongings scattered around the scene.

Rescue workers lifted the injured on stretchers into nearby parked ambulances, and a crane arrived to lift the vehicle off the tracks so that police could better assess the carnage.

There were some 60 passengers in the chartered bus travelling from neighbouring Samut Prakan province to a temple in Chachoengsao, said province governor Maitree Tritilanond.

They were planning to offer yellow robes to monks — a traditional ceremony held within a month of the end of Buddhist Lent, he told reporters.

DEADLY ROADS

Thai premier Prayut Chan-O-Cha gave his condolences and instructed authorities to investigate the cause of the crash, a government spokesman

said.

Such deadly accidents are common in Thailand, which regularly tops lists of the world’s most lethal roads, with speeding, drunk driving and weak law enforcement all contributing factors.

Thailand has the second-highest traffic fatality rate in the world, according to a 2018 World Health Organization report.

Though a majority of the victims are motorcyclists, bus crashes involving groups of tourists and migrant labourers often grab headlines.

In March 2018, at least 18 people were killed and dozens wounded when a bus carrying people returning from holiday in northeastern Thailand swerved off the road and smashed into a tree.

Travel throughout the kingdom has been thrown into disarray this weekend by a big storm hitting the region, leaving roads in poor conditions and some provinces deluged in shin-high floods. — AFP

Mystery of India’s low COVID deaths

NEW DELHI: India, with its population of 1.3 billion people, has the world’s second-highest number of coronavirus cases, now more than seven million, but far fewer reported deaths than other badly-hit countries.

The figures have baffled experts, with explanations ranging from the young population to immunity given by other endemic viral diseases and under-reporting.

Here are some of the questions and theories raised by India’s pandemic statistics:

WHAT ARE THE FIGURES?

India said on Sunday there had been 108,334 fatalities from COVID-19 since the first death was reported in mid-March.

The world’s second-most populous nation has the lowest number of deaths per 100 confirmed cases — the observed case-fatality ratio — among the top 20 worst-affected nations at 1.5 per cent, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally.

In comparison, the United States, the most infected country, has a death rate of 2.8 per cent. India’s number of deaths per 100,000 population is 7.73, compared with 64.74 in the United States.

YOUNGER POPULATION

Older people suffering from conditions such as diabetes and heart disease have become a particular target of the pandemic but India has a young population with a median age of 28.4, according to the UN World Population Prospects report.



A general view of a crowded market area in New Delhi. — AFP

In comparison, France — which has reported almost 700,000 cases and more than 32,000 deaths for a death rate of 4.7 per cent — has a median age of 42.3.

LATE START, STRICT
LOCKDOWN

The Indian government says the first infection was detected on January 30, with numbers passing 100 in mid-March.

By that time, the epidemic was already raging across Europe. Italy had reported more than

24,000 infections and almost 2,000 deaths, while France recorded nearly 5,500 cases and around 150 deaths.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered a nationwide lockdown from March 25 that severely limited movement. That gave India time to prepare for the pandemic, while experts say the strict lockdown may have helped doctors learn from the experiences of other countries.

“Many of the treatment protocols were much better

stabilised (by that time), whether it was oxygen use or ICU use,” Anand Krishnan, a community medicine professor at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi, said.

POSSIBLE IMMUNITY

Virologist T Jacob John and other experts said it is possible that other viral diseases such as dengue fever, which is endemic in India, may have given the population some antibody protection against the coronavirus.

Others say it is also plausible that exposure to other milder coronaviruses could give some cross-immunity. But all experts say more research is needed into this line of defence.

UNDER-COUNTING

India already does not count all deaths. The problem is more acute in rural areas where 70 per cent of the population live. Many rural deaths are not recorded unless the person has been in a hospital.

This has been accentuated during the coronavirus. In many cities, tallies given by city governments and at cemeteries and crematoria do not match. Activists accuse some states of deliberately blaming other conditions for COVID-19 deaths.

“Our poor routine death surveillance system... misses many deaths in the first place,” Bangalore-based community medicine expert Hemant Shewade said. He reckons that only one in five deaths is recorded with a cause. — AFP

Taliban endorses
Trump in US
presidential race

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has received an unusual endorsement in the race for the White House, getting the nod from the Taliban militant group in Afghanistan, CBS News reported.

“We hope he will win the election and wind up [the] US military presence in Afghanistan,” Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told CBS News in a phone interview at the weekend.

But the Taliban militants expressed concern about Trump’s battle with COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. “When we heard about Trump being COVID-19 positive, we got worried for his health, but seems he is getting better,” another Taliban senior leader told CBS News. Trump campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh on Saturday said the campaign “rejects” the Taliban support. “The Taliban should know that the president will always protect American interests by any means necessary,” Murtaugh told CBS News. With less than a month to go until the November 3 election, Trump said earlier this week that US troops could be fully withdrawn from Afghanistan by the end of the year.

The president has made reducing US troop presence abroad a central campaign issue as he slams “endless” US wars. In mid-September Trump said he aimed to soon reduce the US footprint in Afghanistan to 4,000 troops.

In February, the United States signed a peace deal with the Taliban to end the longest war in US history.

Under the agreement, all international troops should leave Afghanistan within 14 months in return for the Taliban’s security guarantees. — dpa



‘Feeling great’: Trump gets back on campaign trail



Supporters of Trump hold a rally in California. – AFP

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump rallied hundreds of supporters for a comeback event at the White House, jumping back into the election race nine days after being stopped in his tracks by COVID-19 — a disease his doctor says he is no longer at risk of spreading.

“I am feeling great!” Trump declared as he stepped out to a White House balcony on Saturday — tugging off his mask to address the crowd, most of them masked under their red “Make America Great Again” hats, but with little social distancing.

“Get out and vote — and I love you,” Trump told supporters, who chanted “USA” and “Four more years” throughout the address lasting just under 20 minutes.

Badly trailing his 77-year-old Democratic rival Joe Biden in the polls less than four weeks from election day, Trump has been counting the days until he can hit the trail again.

The White House doctor announced late on Saturday the president was “no longer considered a transmission risk.”



US President Donald Trump speaks to supporters gathered on the South Lawn of White House. – Reuters

Tests showed there was “no longer evidence of actively replicating virus” and that Trump’s viral load was “decreasing,” Sean Conley said — though he did not state that the president was virus-free.

Guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say that, for mild or moderate COVID-19

cases, isolation and precautions can be discontinued 10 days after symptom onset, and once patients have been fever-free for 24 hours. However, the severity of Trump’s illness has not been confirmed.

Saturday’s event set the stage for a full-fledged campaign rally on Monday in Florida — followed immediately

by two more in battleground Pennsylvania on Tuesday and Iowa on Wednesday.

Biden has slammed as “reckless” Trump’s determination to rally huge crowds during the pandemic — but the president has brushed the concerns aside, insisting America has the upper hand against the virus despite a death toll of 213,000 and rising.

“I want you to know our nation is going to defeat this terrible China virus,” Trump said.

“It’s going to disappear. It is disappearing.”

“We are producing powerful therapies and drugs, and we are healing the sick and we are going to recover, and the vaccine is coming out very quickly, in record time as you know.”

‘THE HARD TRUTH’

While Trump, 74, has declared himself recovered — and appeared smiling and energetic at the White House — doubts linger over his health, with the president’s doctor accused of a lack of transparency with the public.

Trump’s biggest liability — overwhelming public dissatisfaction over his handling of the pandemic — has returned as the headline issue of the campaign thanks to his own infection, with cases again on the rise nationwide.

The seven-day average of new daily cases recorded between October 3 and 9 — 47,184 — was the highest since the week of August 13 to 19, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

“Over 213,000 Americans have died from this virus — and the hard truth is it didn’t have to happen this way,” Biden tweeted on Saturday.

For months, taking their cue from a president who mostly shunned and at times mocked the wearing of masks, White House advisors were rarely seen masked inside the West Wing.

Since Trump and his wife Melania tested positive, the mood has shifted and mask-wearing was compulsory at Saturday’s event. — AFP



Debris burns along the street after a microlight aircraft carrying two, collided with a DA40 tourist plane carrying three in Loches, France. – Reuters

Police station targeted in fireworks attack

PARIS: Around 40 people staged an hour-long fireworks attack against a police station outside Paris on Sunday, authorities said, the latest in a string of incidents targeting security forces in recent months.

The station’s entrance and several police vehicles were damaged but nobody was injured during the raid launched just before midnight in Champigny-sur-Marne, around 12 kilometres east of the capital.

The city’s mayor, Laurent Jeanne, told BFM television the police might have been targeted in retaliation for an “incident” involving a scooter driver who was stopped by officers a few days ago, without providing details.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin tweeted that “these little dealers don’t scare anyone, and will not discourage our anti-drug work,” though police officials did not identify the attackers, and no arrests were made.

But police union officials said the attack underscored a growing threat against law enforcement in depressed

suburbs of Paris and other large cities.

The Champigny-sur-Marne station had already been struck by youths wielding fireworks, most recently last April, and several others across France have sustained similar attacks this year.

The assault came after two officers were attacked and shot with their own guns in a Paris suburb last Wednesday, prompting renewed calls for stepped-up efforts to tackle crime and insecurity.

“There is no longer any respect for law enforcement, and unfortunately the government has not succeeded in changing this trend,” Frederic Lagache of the Alliance police union said on Sunday.

“What will it take for the government to commit to protecting its security forces?” he said.

Tensions have long run high between police and residents in poor cities, often with large immigrant communities, where protests erupted this summer over claims of brutality and racism in their ranks. — AFP

Turning local, UK PM to unveil rules on travel in England

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to announce new measures to tackle a growing coronavirus crisis on Monday, moving to work more closely with local leaders from England’s worst affected areas.

With Johnson reluctant to repeat a national lockdown that would further hurt a struggling economy, the government is trying to contain a surge in cases, as well as growing anger, in parts of northern and central England.

Robert Jenrick, Britain’s housing minister, refused on Sunday to detail the measures Johnson would announce, but suggested that more work would be done with local leaders. “In addition to the basic simple rules

that apply to the whole country, we are designing a framework for those places for where the virus is very strong,” Jenrick told Sky News.

“We want the strongest possible working relationship now between central government and local government,” he said, “So it’s right that we take action in those communities and design the measures in conjunction with people who know those places best.”

Jenrick said local leaders would be more involved in contact tracing after the robustness of Britain’s test-and-trace system has been repeatedly questioned, and that there would be more guidance on travel.

The government, local media said,



People enjoy the morning sunshine at Windsor Great Park, west of London. – AFP

STEPANAKERT

Shelling dashes Karabakh ceasefire hopes

Hopes that a Russian-brokered ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan might hold were further dashed on Sunday, with both sides accusing the other of intense shelling on civilian areas and escalating two weeks of fierce clashes.

The agreement to pause hostilities in order to exchange prisoners and the bodies of people killed after two weeks of fighting was approved by Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers in Azerbaijanian Russia-brokered talks in Moscow.

Azerbaijan’s foreign ministry said that overnight shelling by Armenian



forces on the country’s second largest city, Ganja, had left seven people dead and 33 wounded including children, less than 24 hours after the halt to fighting was supposed to take effect. — AFP

MEXICO CITY

Mexico asks pope for loan of ancient books

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador asked the pope for the temporary return of a number of ancient indigenous manuscripts ahead of three major anniversaries next year, in a letter made public on Saturday.

In the letter — dated October 2 and delivered to Pope Francis by his wife, Beatriz Gutierrez Muller — Lopez Obrador asked to borrow the Codex Borgia, a pre-Columbian pictorial manuscript, as well as two other ancient codices and maps of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, which are all held in the Vatican library. The Mexican leader asked to borrow the items for one year in 2021, which marks three major anniversaries: 500 years since the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan fell to the Spaniards in 1521; 700 years since the city was founded in 1321 and 200 years since Mexico declared independence in 1821.

Lopez Obrador, who has expressed his hope that 2021 would be a year of “historical reconciliation,” also repeated a request made in March 2019 to the pope and the king of Spain that they apologise to indigenous peoples for the “dreadful atrocities” committed against them during the 16th-century conquest of Mexico. — dpa

LISBON

Cross-border access to health for citizens

Spain and Portugal have announced a series of measures to strengthen cross-border cooperation, including better access to health and social services for citizens living along their shared 1,200 km border.

Following an annual summit in Guarda, Portugal, the prime ministers of both countries said a new identity card would allow people working on the other side of the border to access health services there.

The measures are aimed at helping 1.6 million Portuguese and 3.4 Spanish inhabitants along the border, which comprises some of the



poorest districts in both countries.

At a press conference after the summit, Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa said ambulance services would operate across both countries so that patients could be served by the nearest vehicle, whether from Portugal or Spain. — Reuters

Craft a vision of own growth

Self-development is undoubtedly very essential for everyone. It helps people discover their internal secrets, potentials and talents. In fact it goes beyond being just a source of reviving one's spirit and energy. The focus on developing one's own personality and striving to discover hidden capabilities mark a significant recharge, which we all need.

Otherwise, one will end up being static, useless human being doing nothing, but like the remotely controlled machines, which function merely on the same way over and over. As a point of fact, we all need a certain personal development plan or task so that we can let up our charisma and values instead of just being the same person for ages. This improves identity and attitudes, develops abilities and potentials and builds human capital.

Likewise, self-development enhances ones quality of life and contributes to the realisation of one's dreams and aspirations. What is really thrilling is the return value, which is limited not only to self-help, but it extends to developing others too in roles such as those of teachers, guides, counsellors, managers or life coaches.



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
aljahdhami22@gmail.com

SELF-DEVELOPMENT IS A CONSTRUCTIVE WAY FOR PEOPLE TO EVALUATE THEIR SKILLS AND QUALITIES

Self-development is a constructive way for people to evaluate their skills and qualities, and set their life goals and principles to realise and maximise their potential and the would-be efforts. Simply, it marks a road map for the future. However, along the way towards, one will be coming across different challenges, though the journey is very rewarding.

The different challenges usually emerge to test our capabilities, patience and persistence, but successful people never surrender. They believe in the saying: "What doesn't kill you; makes you strong". Strength does not come from winning, but the struggles develop one's strengths. Thus, when one goes through hardships and decides not to surrender, that is strength. Nobody can change the direction of the winds, but s/he can adjust the sails.

That is why achieving dreams is never an easy thing, it sometimes requires sacrifice! One should not give up on dreams no matter what it takes. As the saying goes, "Where there is a will, there is a way," and success comes only to those who believe in their dreams. It is all about keeping hope alive and staying focused.

For those intending to get

acquainted with self-development and achieving dreams, they should have a positive personal intention first. More to the point, they should believe in the power of change, which is highly required to amend and develop one's life norms for better. Besides, starting the self-development journey could only happen with hope and persistence, which are key principles that one should have.

Albert Einstein said: "A person who never made a mistake; never tried anything new." Accordingly, remember that every time you tear a sheet off a calendar, you present a space for new ideas and progress in your life. Thus, you need to welcome new experiences, challenges and dreams to have a fruitful journey of self-development.

Just think of what you want to achieve and plan it well. What matters is not always the duration of time spent in achieving dreams and goals, but the sincerity in achieving them. You just take all the time you need to develop yourself, make your dreams come true and achieve success. A dream does not become a reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work.

GRIM OUTLOOK

Apathy making the pandemic worse in India

SIDDHARTHA KUMAR AND SUNRITA SEN

"It's all in God's hands, only he decides when we live and when we die, what will a mere mask do?" says Chandrapal Yadav, a building contractor, when a guard prevents him from entering a construction site in Delhi without a mask.

Yadav's views are not uncommon in India, a country of 1.3 billion people, where many trust faith to protect them from the coronavirus, while others refuse to wear masks due to physical discomfort or lockdown fatigue. Looking ahead, experts warn that indifference and apathy, coupled with the festival season, could lead to a second wave of infections.

COVID-19 infections have exploded since India eased its strict lockdown. Relatively safe at the time, the country is now one of the world's most infected places, with 7 million cases. Millions ventured out to make a living in the battered economy. Many use shared transport, while others work in close proximity. People can now travel longer distances, too, leading to crowds at bus and railway stations and airports. Streets and markets are now teeming with people and festival season is approaching.

And thousands joined mass protests in recent



We can't play cricket with masks on and physical distancing can't be maintained in such a sport. We trust our friends to take precautions

SARVESH DHAWAN
A Delhi resident

weeks, ignoring calls to practice social distancing. All this made September the worst month since the outbreak began, accounting for 40 per cent of all the country's infections and with a daily death toll of more than 1,000. Cases have risen more slowly since September

20, but this could easily change. At least 90 per cent of Indians have not been exposed to the virus, a national antibody survey found. But people are tired. "We should not let fears of this disease dominate our lives. Why be so tense about it all the time?" Yadav argues at the Delhi construction site, before relenting and using his scarf to cover his face. Such nonchalance is seen at every level of society.

Groups of young people play football, basketball and other games in the evenings in New Delhi's residential areas. One popular private football ground, AB Plaza in Vasant Kunj, says business is brisk. Delhi resident Sarvesh Dhawan has been playing football with his friends each week since August, even though the capital is among the country's worst-affected cities. "We can't play with masks on and physical distancing can't be maintained in such a sport. We trust our friends to take precautions and also to stay away if they are feeling unwell or have COVID-19 symptoms," Dhawan said.

"A sense of complacency and fatigue has set in," said Shivkumar Utture, chief of Maharashtra state physicians association, credited with successfully protecting the densely-packed Dharavi, Asia's largest slum, from the worst of the pandemic.

"People think we have not been infected till now, so we are safe. Go out on the streets of Mumbai and you will find 50 per cent not wearing masks or not wearing them properly, particularly the young who will end up carrying the infection to elders at home."

Not everyone is ignoring the rules, though. Utture contrasts the "irresponsible behaviour" of most Mumbai residents with the discipline shown by Dharavi slum-dwellers who have maintained high levels of cleanliness, wearing masks and washing their hands. — dpa

SELF-DEFENCE!

North Korea's Kim speaks softly, shows off new military might

JOSH SMITH

North Korea's unprecedented nighttime military parade on Saturday showcased an unusually broad array of new weapons, from a show-stopping "monster" ballistic missile to previously unseen battle tanks.

The hardware, likely still in varying stages of development, offered leader Kim Jong Un a chance to show the world his cutting-edge military power while adding practical capabilities to the North Korea's already formidable nuclear and conventional forces, experts said.

Kim is walking a fine line, seeking to increase pressure on the United States to ease sanctions while not destroying rapport with US President Donald Trump or Pyongyang's partners in China.

"Kim Jong Un's speech was not threatening to the United States, instead labelling North Korea's nuclear forces as self-defensive," said Bruce Klingner, a retired CIA North Korea analyst now at the Heritage Foundation.

"The clear message was that, counter to US claims, the North Korean nuclear threat has not been solved."



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un waves as he attends a parade to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea on Saturday. — Reuters

KIM IS WALKING A FINE LINE, SEEKING TO INCREASE PRESSURE ON THE US WHILE NOT DESTROYING RAPPORT WITH TRUMP OR CHINA

be 25 to 26 metres long and 2.5 to 2.9 metres in diameter, the unidentified missile would be the largest road-mobile ICBM in the world, military analysts said.

Given that the Hwasong-15, the largest missile ever test-flown by North Korea, can already target anywhere in the United States, the most likely practical use for the new ICBM would be the ability to carry multiple warheads, said Melissa Hanham, deputy director of the Open Nuclear

Network.

It is much cheaper for North Korea to add warheads than for the United States to add interceptors, said Jeffrey Lewis, a missile researcher at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS).

"If each new North Korean ICBM can carry 3-4 warheads, we would need about 12-16 interceptors for each missile," he said on Twitter. "The last time the US bought 14 interceptors, it cost \$1 billion." — Reuters

HEAD OFFICE

Tel: 24649444, 24649450,
24649451, 24604563,
24699437
Fax: 24699643

SALALAH OFFICE

Tel: 23292633
Fax: 23293909

NIZWA OFFICE

Tel: 25411099
P.O. Box 955, P.C. 611

ADVERTISING

AL OMANEYA ADVERTISING &
PUBLIC RELATIONS, P.O. Box 3303, P.C.
112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: SWITCHBOARD: 24649444,
24649430/24649437/24649401

Fax: 24649434

DISTRIBUTION AGENT

AL OMANEYA for Distribution &
Marketing, P.O. Box 974, P.C. 100,
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24649351/24649360

Fax: 24649379

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY:

Ministry of Information
P.O. Box 974, Postal Code 100, Muscat,
Sultanate of Oman



Matthew Wolff tees off on the 17th hole during the third round of the Shriners Hospitals for Children Open golf tournament at TPC Summerlin. — USA Today Sports

Wolff feasts on eagles; Laird, Cantlay share lead

LOS ANGELES: US Open runner-up Matthew Wolff made three eagles in a five-hole span but it was Patrick Cantlay and Martin Laird who shared the lead after Saturday's third round of the PGA Shriners Hospitals for Children Open.

Scotsman Laird, chasing his first win since the 2013 Texas Open, and American Cantlay each fired six-under par 65s to set the pace on 20-under 193 after 54 holes at TPC of Summerlin in suburban Las Vegas.

Laird's round was highlighted by a 50-foot eagle putt at the par-five ninth. He hit all 14 fairways and 16 of 18 greens in regulation.

"It got a little tricky in spells," Laird said. "The wind was kind of swirling on the front nine."

"I hit the ball nicely, got the ball in the fairway a lot, which is what you've got to do around here. If you get it in the fairway you can be aggressive."

Cantlay could join Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus and Tom Watson as the only players since 1960 with four straight top-two finishes at the same event after a 2017 win and runner-ups

the past two years.

But it was Wolff, a 21-year-old American and 2019 US college crown, who stole the show by shooting a 61, one off the course record and in a third-place pack on 195 with compatriots Brian Harman, Wyndham Clark and Austin Cook.

"I put myself in a really good spot for the final day," Wolff said. "I'm pretty pleased with my ball striking and how everything has come together."

Wolff became only the fifth US PGA player since 1983 to make three eagles on a front or back nine in a PGA event.

"With those three eagles, it kind of just propelled me to the top," Wolff said.

Wolff, who won his first PGA title at last year's 3M Open just weeks after turning professional, shared fourth at the PGA Championship in August in his major debut, then led entering the last day before losing to Bryson DeChambeau at the US Open

After pitching in a birdie from the rough from 70 feet at the third hole and back-to-back birdies at nine and 10,

Wolff began his eagle run at the par-4 11th, holing out from the fairway from 116 yards with a lob wedge.

"It was just a smooth one and one hop," Wolff said. "I think skipped past the hole and spun back in, so really nice to jump start the back nine."

"You never expect to hole out but when it happens it puts you in a really good mindset."

Wolff reached the green in two at the par-5 13th, dropping his approach just inside 18 feet and sinking the putt.

"Another great drive and then a perfect number on the second shot," Wolff said. "Hit my hybrid way up in to the air and then rolled in a putt for that."

Wolff blasted his tee shot at the par-4 15th 298 yards to 15 feet and sank another eagle putt.

"The 3-wood on 15 was probably one of the best shots of the day," Wolff said.

DECHAMBEAU STRUGGLES

Wolff missed a 15-foot eagle putt at the par-5 16th and birdie putts from just outside 14 and 12 feet and 17 and

18, settling for a back-nine 28.

DeChambeau, one stroke adrift after 36 holes, stumbled with two bogeys and two double bogeys in the first six holes but reeled off four birdies in a row starting at the par-3 eighth and shot 71 to stand on 200.

"Didn't really hit bad shots, just didn't go where I wanted," he said. "Went into some really bad places and unfortunately didn't save par from them. Just stuff didn't go my way. It's OK. Not a big deal." — AFP

US PGA Shriners Hospitals Open scores Third-round (USA unless noted, par-71): 193 - Martin Laird (SCO) 65-63-65, Patrick Cantlay 63-65-65 195 - Matthew Wolff 68-66-61, Wyndham Clark 67-63-65, Brian Harman 65-63-67, Austin Cook 63-65-67 196 - Will Zalatoris 68-64-64, Kevin Na 66-66-64 197 - Adam Hadwin (CAN) 67-68-62, Kim Si-woo (KOR) 67-67-63, Abraham Ancer (MEX) 66-66-65, Harold Varner 63-68-66, James Hahn 64-66-67 198 - Brandt Snedeker 67-68-63, Matthew NeSmith 66-68-64, Joseph Bramlett 68-66-64, Michael Gligic (CAN) 65-67-66, Cameron Tringale 66-66-66

Kim stretches lead to two strokes

NEW YORK: South Korea's Kim Sei-young, chasing her first major title, fired a three-under par 67 and stretched her lead to two strokes after Saturday's third round of the Women's PGA Championship.

The 27-year-old from Seoul, whose most recent of 10 LPGA victories came in last year's Tour Championship, stood on seven-under 203 after 54 holes at Aronimink in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania.

Kim, who led by a stroke when the day began, made six birdies against three bogeys, lipping out a six-foot par putt off the left edge of the cup at the par-4 18th to miss out on a three-shot advantage entering Sunday's final round.

Sweden's Anna Nordqvist and Canada's Brooke Henderson shared second on 205 with South Korean Park In-bee fourth on 206 and Filipino 22-year-old Bianca Pagdanganan fifth on 207 after a second straight 65.

Kim birdied the par-4 second and made bogey at the fourth, then answered with three birdies in a row starting at the par-3 fifth. She opened and closed the back nine with bogeys but offset that with birdies at 15 and the par-5 16th.

"On 10, a missed tee shot led to a bogey, but I got my composure back and I'm glad I finished strong," Kim said. "The last bogey on 18 was disappointing, too."

"I wouldn't say I'm nervous, but I'm excited about going into the final day. I just want to take each shot at a time and just keep focus, and the results will follow."

Two-time major winner Nordqvist, who ran off three birdies in a row starting at the sixth hole, bounced over the 18th green on the

way to a bogey that dropped her level with Henderson.

"I'm feeling pretty good," Nordqvist said. "The wind makes it really tough out there and it felt like it was a lot of tucked pins there on the back nine. I hit a lot of good shots and kept my patience up out there."

"I feel like on this course anything can happen, but I'm just happy to be in a good position."

Henderson, whose lone major win came at the 2016 Women's PGA, reeled off five birdies in an 11-hole span from the second through the 12th in a bogey-free round to grab a share of second with a 65 after an opening 71. — AFP

Women's PGA Championship scores Third-round (USA unless noted, par-70): **203** - Kim Sei-young (KOR) 71-65-67 **205** - Brooke Henderson (CAN) 71-69-65, Anna Nordqvist (SWE) 69-68-68 **206** - Park In-bee (KOR) 70-70-66 **207** - Bianca Pagdanganan (PHI) 77-65-65 **208** - Mina Harigae 74-68-66, Gaby Lopez (MEX) 68-72-68, Carlota Ciganda (ESP) 68-69-71, Jennifer Kupcho 72-65-71 **209** - Nasa Hataoka (JPN) 72-69-68 **210** - Nanna Koerstz Madsen (DEN) 72-69-69, Charley Hull (ENG) 70-71-69, Chun In-gee (KOR) 72-67-71, Kelly Tan (MAS) 67-71-72, Danielle Kang 68-69-73 **211** - Park Sung-hyun (KOR) 71-71-69, Jodi Ewart Shadoff (ENG) 72-67-72, Brittany Lincicome 67-72-72 **212** - Ally McDonald 71-71-70, Lee Jeong-eun (KOR) 70-72-70, Moriya Jutanugarn (THA) 72-68-72, Lauren Stephenson 70-68-74, Ashleigh Buhai (RSA) 70-68-74, Lydia Ko (NZL) 68-70-74 **213** - Ji Eun-hee (KOR) 71-72-70, Yealimi Noh 74-68-71, Amy Yang (KOR) 69-72-72, Jennifer Song 72-68-73



Sei Young Kim hits her approach shot on the 12th fairway during the third round of the 2020 KPMG Women's PGA Championship golf tournament at Aronimink Golf Club. — USA Today Sports

SHORT TAKES

SURREY

Hatton takes three-shot lead

England's Tyrrell Hatton took control of the BMW PGA Championship on Saturday as overnight leaders Shane Lowry and Matthew Fitzpatrick both failed to impress on day three at Wentworth Club in Surrey. Hatton produced a brilliant round three-under-par 69 to sit at 14-under overall heading into the final day, three shots clear of nearest challengers Joachim B Hansen of Denmark and Frenchman Victor Perez.

Having returned on the home soil after a long spell in the US, Hatton is aiming to win the event that he used to attend as a fan when he was five years old.

— Reuters



LONDON

England can 'shine' at Euros, World Cup

Belgium midfielder Kevin De Bruyne has tipped England as one of the leading contenders to win Euro 2020 and the 2022 World Cup. De Bruyne will get a close look at England on Sunday when Belgium visit Wembley for a Nations League clash.

But the Manchester City midfielder already knows plenty about the players in Gareth Southgate's squad after spending the last five years in the Premier League. England reached the World Cup semi-finals in 2018 and De Bruyne expects them to have an even stronger run at the next two major tournaments.



THE HAGUE

Hassan smashes European 10,000m record

Ethiopian-born Dutch runner Sifan Hassan smashed Paula Ratcliffe's long-standing European record for the women's 10,000m on Saturday.

Hassan, who won double gold in the 1,500m and 10,000m at last year's world championships in Doha, timed 29min 36.67sec after 25 laps in rainy conditions at Hengelo.

It obliterated by more than 24 seconds the previous record of 30:01:09 set by Britain's Ratcliffe in 2002.

Only seven other female runners have been below the 30min mark, and Hassan becomes the first European to do so. — AFP





Narine reported for suspect bowling action

Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Sunil Narine's bowling action has been reported again after Saturday's Indian Premier League (IPL) match against Kings XI Punjab, the league has said. "The report was made by the on-field umpires according to the IPL's suspected illegal bowling action policy," league authorities said.



Gayle recovers from stomach bug in UAE

Chris Gayle has been recovering from a stomach bug in a hospital in the United Arab Emirates as his IPL side Kings XI Punjab languishes at the bottom of table. Gayle has not played a single game for the KL Rahul-led side and coach Anil Kumble revealed last week that Gayle missed out on being part of the XI after being down with an upset stomach.

KOHLI STARS AS BANGALORE THRASH CHENNAI



DUBAI: Skipper Virat Kohli hit an unbeaten 90 as Royal Challengers Bangalore outplayed Chennai Super Kings by 37 runs in the Indian Premier League on Saturday.

Kohli held the innings strong despite early losses including AB de Villiers for nought and a slow start to take the attack to the opposition in Bangalore's 169 for four in Dubai.

The star batsman scored his second half-century of the IPL season and exploded in the last four overs to help Bangalore get 66 runs as Mahendra Singh Dhoni's Chennai lost the plot.

"It was one of our more complete performances," man of the match Kohli said after leading Bangalore to their fourth win of the season in six matches.

"We spoke at the time out that around 150 would be great. When you don't get too far ahead of the game, it rewards you.

"If you're in at the death overs and you have a score and you're hitting it well, you can capitalise well. That was something for us to learn tonight."

Bangalore's South African paceman Chris Morris led a disciplined bowling attack with figures of 3-19 from his four overs to keep down Chennai to 132 for eight at the end of 20 overs.

Ambati Rayudu top-scored with 42 but the top and the middle order faltered including Dhoni scoring just 10 runs in Chennai's fifth loss in seven games.

"I think the last four overs when we were bowling (didn't go to plan), before that the bowlers had done a good job, we needed to close in nicely," said a disappointed Dhoni.

"Batting has been bit of a worry and today also it was evident. We need to do something about it. I think we are better off playing the other way round, playing the bigger shots even if you get out."

Coach Stephen Fleming said the team needs to bat with more "intent" in the upcoming games and the play-off race will get "further away" if the three-time IPL champions keep playing like this.

Kohli stood out with a well-paced knock as he scored fifty in 39 balls and then smashed the bowlers to all parts of the ground with four fours and four sixes in his 52-ball stay.

"What fun that was to watch Kohli. Not just the shots but the running (between the wickets)!" veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle wrote on Twitter.

Earlier in the first match of the day, skipper Dinesh Karthik led by example with a blazing 58 to set up Kolkata Knight Riders' narrow two-run win over Kings XI Punjab.

Karthik top-scored to guide Kolkata to 164 for six, a total their bowlers defended by restricting Kings XI Punjab to 162-5 in Abu Dhabi.

Paceman Prasidh Krishna claimed three wickets and spinner Sunil Narine returned figures of 2-28 to choke the opposition chase despite skipper KL Rahul's 74.

— AFP

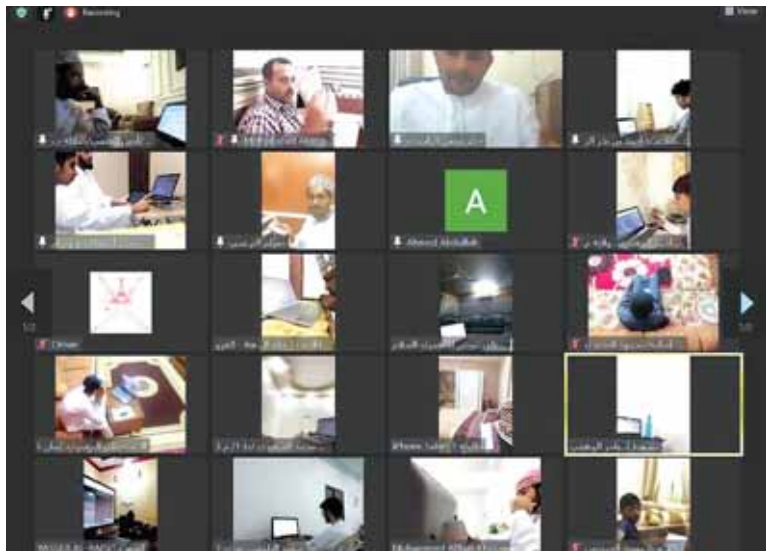
Brief Scores: Royal Challengers Bangalore 169/4 (Virat Kohli 90*, Devdutt Padikkal 33; Shardul Thakur 2/40) beat Chennai Super Kings 132/6 (Ambati Rayudu 42, N Jagadeesan 33; Chris Morris 3/19) by 37 runs

Defending champions Salalah impress at national chess

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

Defending champions Salalah commenced their campaign at the online National Chess Championship strongly as all the teams (A,B and C) secured a spot in the finals. The qualification phase registered advancing Salalah A and Al Suwaiq from group A while Salalah B and Saham booked direct tickets to the next round from group B. In the third group, Al Bashayer and Al Nasr secured spots to the finals while Mirbat and Salalah C ensured their presence at the finals as they positioned in the first and second positions respectively. Ibri and Oman clubs advanced as well to the finals from group E.

At junior team level, as many as 16 teams representing 14 clubs took part in the qualification stage. More than 80 players were present and they distributed into three groups. Only ten teams confirmed their presence at the finals. Ibri and Salalah B ensured their presence at the finals from group A. The following group B featured participation of six teams and teams of Al Bashayer, Madaha, Al Rustaq and Al Salam secured spot in the finals. Madha's players from Musandam Governorate impressed all as they showed solid performance during the competitions. Salalah A team, Al Khabourah and Ahli Sidab



confirmed their presence at the finals from group B.

The finals will start on Monday and will conclude on Thursday. It is expected that the competitions will be tough as all the teams will look

forward to claim the top places in the online version tournament. The tournament which is based on "Zoom" platform is conducted on Lichess system and it is the same format which is followed by the FIDE.

The tournament is monitored by head coach of the national chess team, Basheer al Qudaimi. The Yemeni coach will note down the performance of each player and he will select the top players for the forthcoming events. Oman Chess Committee (OCC) is keen to organise different chess events and encourage the domestic teams to take part to provide a better technical platform for competitions. Through this events, the technical staff of the team will select the right technical capable players for the national team.

Squads named for Women's T20 Challenge, Aussies miss out

NEW DELHI: India's top cricketer Smriti Mandhana will lead the Trailblazers squad in the Women's T20 Challenge to be held during the play-off week of the Indian Premier League in the United Arab Emirates, organisers said on Sunday.

Australian stars will miss out on the four-match tournament to be held from November 4 to 9 as the dates clash with the Women's Big Bash League (WBBL), widely considered the top women's Twenty20 tournament.

The WBBL is due to be held from October 25 to November 29 in Sydney where an Olympic-style sports village has been set up.

Australian stars had in August expressed displeasure over the scheduling of the Women's Challenge, saying it would force players to pick between the two competitions.

India's Harmanpreet Kaur, and Mithali Raj were named as captains of the Supernovas and Velocity teams in the squads named by the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

The teams were picked by a selection committee, unlike the IPL where players are bought in auctions.

England's Sophie Ecclestone, named the ICC Emerging Player of the Year in 2018, would play for the Trailblazers in the tournament which will also have players from Sri Lanka, New Zealand, South Africa and the West Indies.



Thailand's Natthakan Chantham, who scored her country's first Women's T20 World Cup half-century, will become the first Thai cricketer to feature in the tournament, the BCCI statement added.

The IPL and the Women's Challenge were moved to the UAE

as coronavirus cases soared in India, the second worst-hit country in the world after the United States.

The games are being played behind closed doors at three venues including Dubai and Sharjah.

The IPL final will be played on November 10.

— AFP

sport



SPAIN EDGE SWISS

Germany beat Ukraine in Nations League

PARIS: Mikel Oyarzabal pounced on a horror slip by Swiss captain Granit Khaka to seal a 1-0 victory for Spain in the Nations League on Saturday. The night's other League A Group 4 match saw Germany beat Ukraine 2-1 in Kiev.

At the Estadio Alfredo Di Stefano in Madrid, usually home of Real Madrid's second string side, Real Sociedad striker Oyarzabal struck in the 14th minute.

The Swiss boldly tried to play out from the back, but Khaka slipped as he sought to collect goalkeeper Yann Sommer's pass.

Mikel Merino pounced and

threaded the ball through to clubmate Oyarzabal, who finished superbly past Sommer.

"I am happy for the victory and for adding three points," Oyarzabal told Spanish television.

"We knew that (Switzerland) were a powerful team, that they liked to play a lot and that they had fewer points than they deserved.

"We also knew they were risking a lot from behind and we wanted to pressure them because we believed we could rob them and hurt them and that's the way it worked out."

There was a golden opportunity for Oyarzabal to double his tally in

the 52nd minute.

Switzerland again struggled to clear their lines, Jesus Navas fizzed a cross-shot into the area which Sommer could only push into the path of Oyarzabal.

The striker's effort, however, hit the post and went wide.

It was then the turn of Merino to scuff another prime chance. On the hour mark, a badly cleared corner fell to his unfavoured right foot and he shot high and wide directly in front of goal.

Sergio Ramos then saw an effort shielded away by Khaka before a header went just wide moments later

with Spain in the driving seat.

Switzerland thought they had an equaliser as Xherdan Shaqiri pivoted and sent the ball spiralling into the Spanish net.

But it was not to be as the referee handed Atalanta's Remo Freuler a yellow card for a foul on Sergio Busquets in the build-up.

It was then the turn of Gerard Moreno to blast high after a smart twist and turn in front of the Swiss goal after a nice ball from Sergio Canales.

UNBEATEN RUN EXTENDED
Luis Enrique's side then contented

themselves with seeing out the game, extending to 14 their current unbeaten run. They have also not lost in Madrid in 20 games dating back to 1987.

"It was not an easy game, it was not a game in which we have been especially fluid," said Enrique.

"We took advantage of hard pressing to score the goal and then we had further opportunities to close down the game, but without luck." The Spaniards top their group, having kicked off with a creditable 1-1 away draw against Germany before a sparkling 4-0 victory over Ukraine, whom they now face on

Tuesday. In Kiev, Germany picked up a first win in their Nations League group with a workmanlike 2-1 away victory over the Ukrainians.

Defender Matthias Ginter gave Germany a first-half lead, then Leon Goretzka capitalised on a horrible mistake by the Ukraine goalkeeper before Ruslan Malinovskyi converted a late penalty for the hosts. Germany coach Joachim Loew said he was "satisfied" with the away win, but admitted "we should have been three or four goals ahead before they scored".

"In some phases we gave the ball away too easily." — **AFP**

Babos and Mladenovic enjoy sweet revenge

PARIS: Timea Babos and Kristina Mladenovic enjoyed some sweet revenge following their US Open heartbreak as they retained their French Open doubles title to claim their fourth Grand Slam as a pair on Sunday.

Hungary's Babos and local favourite Kristina Mladenovic, who were withdrawn from the US Open due to COVID-19 protocols, have now won four of the last 11 women's majors with a 6-4, 7-5 victory against Desirae Krawczyk and Alexa Guarachi in the Roland

Garros final.

Mladenovic and Babos were withdrawn from the tournament ahead of the second round at Flushing Meadows after the Frenchwoman had to stay in quarantine in her hotel room following a game of cards with Benoit Paire, who tested positive for COVID-19.

"Just a few weeks after being unjustly disqualified from the US Open, being here with you and with this trophy is something very strong," Mladenovic told Babos in

her post-match speech after the pair lifted the Simonne Mathieu Cup.

"Physically, mentally, I'm exhausted today. You carried me all the way, I'm proud to have you as a partner."

Mladenovic now has five women's doubles titles to her name after also winning the French Open with compatriot Caroline Garcia.

Sunday's final was an intense contest as nerves played their part, with 10 of the 22 games

going against serve. After an early trade of breaks, second seeds Mladenovic and Babos decisively stole 14th seeds American Krawczyk and Chilean Guarachi's serve for 5-3 and bagged the opening set in 50 minutes. Babos, who won all her women's doubles major titles with Mladenovic, served for the match at 5-4 after five games went against serve but the pair were broken again, only for Mladenovic to wrap it up with a forehand winner down the line after yet another break. — **Reuters**



Terms & conditions apply



#It'sYourTurn

To get a chance to win with 50th National Day Prizes From BankDhofar Savings Scheme!

Open Savings Account today!
To get your chance to be one of the winners With BankDhofar Savings Scheme.

Guaranteed prizes for every branch • Bigger prizes • More winners
Be a winner with BankDhofar Savings Account

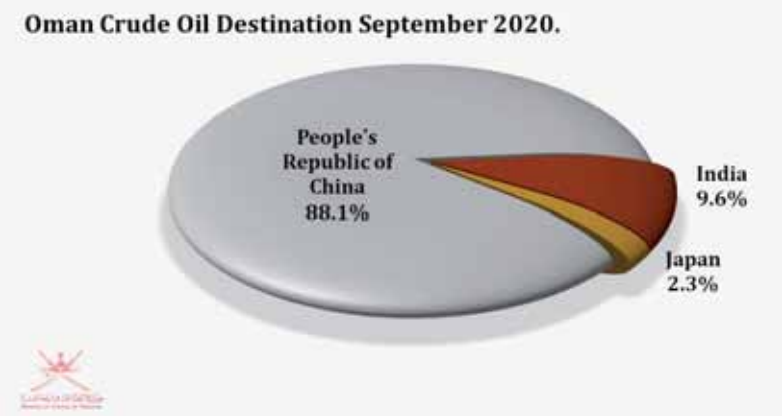
For more information
www.bankdhofar.com/en-GB/Saving_Account.aspx



بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

the best bank for you 24791111 www.bankdhofar.com

China remains leading market for Oman crude exports in September



JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Shipments of Oman Export Blend (OEB) to China rose 1.90 per cent m-o-m to account for 88.1 per of total exports averaging 736,165 barrels per day (bpd) in September 2020.

India saw its share climb 7.4 per cent m-o-m to account for 9.6 per cent of total exports during the month, while Japanese imports dipped slightly to reach 2.3 per cent for the month, according to figures released by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals on Sunday.

Oman's daily production averaged 718,700 barrels in September, which was lower by 0.18 per cent compared with the daily average for August 2020. Exports were declined 1.21 per cent compared with the previous month.

Oil prices for all reference crude oil grades around the world experienced a bullish trend during the trading days of September 2020 — for November 2020 delivery — compared with trading of August

2020.

The average price of West Texas Intermediate Crude Oil at the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) settled at \$39.41 per barrel, a decrease of \$3.35.

The average price of North Sea Oil (Brent) at the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) in London averaged \$41.87 per barrel, entailing an increase of \$3.15 compared with trading during August 2020. The average price of Oman's Crude Oil futures contract on the Dubai Mercantile Exchange similarly increased by 6.1 per cent compared with the previous month.

The monthly official selling price for Oman Crude oil for November 2020 delivery — traded during September 2020 — was announced to be \$41.60 per barrel, which was higher by \$2.72 compared with the August 2020 official selling price.

The daily trading marker price ranged between \$39.04 per barrel and \$45.43 per barrel, the report added.

Sur Industrial City weighs new projects worth RO 1 billion

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 11

Sur Industrial City, part of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), is currently evaluating project applications involving investments totaling in excess of RO 1 billion.

According to Eng Abdulqadir bin Salim al Balushi, Director General of Sur Industrial City, the list includes petrochemical, mining and technology-related ventures. "We hope these projects will be localised in the coming period to contribute in creating promising job opportunities for the Omanis," he stated.

The revelations during the visit of Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion on Sunday.

Accompanied by Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, Chief Executive Officer of Madayn, the Under-Secretary visited a number of industrial units at Sur Industrial City and interacted with the investors and business owners on topics related to the production processes, the companies' requirements, and the support provided by Madayn to overcome the current challenges.

The Director General stated that the total volume of investments at Sur Industrial City has surpassed RO 2.045 billion as of mid-2020, marking a growth rate of 0.67 per cent



Key feature: First ever SME Industrial Cluster under development

compared to the same period in 2019. "Moreover, the size of workforce at the industrial city increased to 4,111 noting an Omanisation rate of 49 per cent. The total number of localised projects touched 127 by mid-2020, and the total area of Sur Industrial City reached 36.1 million sqm, which

makes it the largest industrial city in terms of its area."

Al Balushi pointed out that Madayn is currently working on boosting the quality of investment environment in Sur Industrial City.

A package of investment opportunities was announced to be developed by the private sector, which include the establishment of labour township, integrated engineering workshop, facility building, and shipyard complex.

"We hope these projects will

contribute in providing support services to the companies and factories operating in the industrial city," he pointed out.

A tender has also been floated for the project of developing cluster of Small and Medium Enterprises at a total cost of more than RO 12.5 million. The project includes developing an area of 2 million sqm that includes construction of roads and provision of all basic services. The implementation period of this project is estimated to reach 18 months.

PAYMENT INITIATIVE

Oman studies launch of International Bank Account Number system

PAYMENT ARCHITECTURE: The IBAN system is among a slate of initiatives currently being studied by the CBO to help underpin the development of a robust payment infrastructure in the Sultanate

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) is weighing efforts to support the launch of the International Bank Account Number (IBAN) system in

the Sultanate — a globally recognised code designed to identify overseas bank accounts when sending or receiving international payments.

The move is among a slate of initiatives currently being studied by the Sultanate's apex bank to underpin the development of a robust payment infrastructure integrated seamlessly, efficiently and safely with regional and international payment systems.

Those initiatives also include plans for the establishment of a National Payment Company to operate retail payments, and the launch of an awareness and marketing drive highlighting the benefits of electronic payments over conventional



payment methodologies, CBO Executive President Taher bin Salim al Amri said at a banking forum held in the city last week. According to experts, the proposed inclusion of the Sultanate in the globally accepted IBAN system

will strengthen Oman's integration into the international payments architecture.

An IBAN is an alphanumeric code typically comprising of up to 35 letters and numbers written in a standardised format. Incorporated

into this code are characters that identify the specific bank and country that a payment is remitted to, thereby ensuring that international transfers are speedy, convenient, automatic and error-free.

As many as 78 countries around the world, including all of the European Union (EU) countries, are part of the IBAN system. The list, however, does not include the United States and Canada, which nonetheless recognise and process payments in accordance with the IBAN system.

Some experts insist that IBAN has many advantages over the more widely accepted SWIFT (Society

for World Interbank Financial Telecommunication) code, which is an internationally recognised system for identifying bank accounts when making cross-border payments. A global network in its own right, SWIFT is used throughout the financial world to make payments.

But unlike SWIFT codes, which are used primarily to identify a specific bank or branch, the IBAN code specifies the country, bank and account number of the recipient account. Both systems however complement each other and are at the heart of international money transfers and cross-borders payments in today's world.

BRIEF BITES INSIDE

COMMODITIES

TIGHTENING SUPPLY KEEPS GRAIN SECTOR SUPPORTED



The agricultural sector has continued to build on the strong gains seen during third quarter when the Bloomberg Agriculture Index recorded its best quarter since the second quarter of 2016. The grains sector in particular was, and continues to be, the sector which is driving these strong gains.

< Page 14

DIGITAL CURRENCY

WHY IS THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK EYEING A 'DIGITAL EURO'?



The ECB will launch a public consultation and start experiments to help it decide whether to create a "digital euro" for the 19-nation currency club. The move comes as the pandemic accelerates a shift away from cash, and as policymakers nervously eye the rise of private cryptocurrencies.

< Page 15

SOLAR ENERGY

TRUMP BACKS REVOKING TARIFF EXEMPTION FOR SOLAR PANEL IMPORTS



US President Donald Trump signed a proclamation underscoring his support for revoking an exclusion from tariffs on some imported double-sided solar panels, and for raising the planned tariff rate to 18 per cent for 2021 from 15 per cent. He said the US industry was starting to increase production.

< Page 15



Tight supply keeps grain sector supported

OLE S HANSEN

The agricultural sector has continued to build on the strong gains seen during Q3 when the Bloomberg Agriculture Index recorded its best quarter since Q2 2016.

The grains sector in particular was, and continues to be, the sector which is driving these strong gains.

An unexpected decline in US inventories, strong US export demand from China, dryness in key growing areas together with growing concerns over La Nina are all potential strong forces that may support a sector that has already rallied by close to 15 per cent during the second half of Q3. This week, the price of Chicago Wheat raced past \$6/bushel to reach the highest levels since December 2014, before seeing some profit taking ahead of a global supply and demand report from the US Department of Agriculture on Friday.

The latest rally has been backed by Russia and US dryness worries, at a critical time as it challenges the establishment of the winter wheat crop.

Bloomberg reports that in eastern Ukraine, some areas have been the driest on record since mid-July, while in Russia some regions are the most



arid in three decades.

Soybeans, meanwhile, continue to find fresh buying interest with the price of the current front month contract reaching \$10.65/bushel, the highest since 2018.

On top of continued strong buying interest from China, the planting progress in South America has also been hampered by dry conditions across Brazil and Argentina.

In Brazil, a bumper export

programme to China has reduced supplies while farmers have been hoarding stocks as a dollar-linked hedge against a weakening peso. The result of these developments across the grain market can be seen in the weekly COT report, released on Fridays covering the week ending the previous Tuesday.

In the latest reporting week to September 29, the combined net-long speculative position in US based grain

and soy futures reached 533,000 lots (one lot equals 5000 bushels), very close to the previous two peaks in March 2018 and June 2016.

The total net-long in soybeans, oil and meal reached a record 396,000 lots or 74 per cent of the total sector long, while corn at 107,000 lots took up 20 per cent. That left just 6 per cent or 30,000 lots of the total exposure in the Kansas and Chicago wheat contracts.

While soybeans will need continued fundamental and technical support to sustain a speculative position this elevated, wheat is a different story with plenty of room before reaching the February high at 79,000 lots or the August 2018 record of 130,000 lots.

The risk of food price inflation emerging again following years of stable to lower prices was highlighted in the United Nations FAO's latest update on food prices for September.

The FAO Food Price Index which tracks the change in international prices of a basket of 95 food commodities rose by 2.1 per cent to the highest since February 2020.

The year-on-year rise reached 5 per cent with firming in prices of vegetables oils and cereals being the main driver. Not all sectors rose with those of sugar and meat retreating from their August levels.

In a separate cereal supply and demand brief they did however say that: "Global cereal markets are expected to remain adequately supplied in 2020/21 despite this month's downward revisions to production and inventories.

With trade in cereals seen expanding in 2020/21, global cereal markets continue to demonstrate their

resilience amidst the challenges and uncertainty caused by COVID-19."

Bulging stocks from a continued rise in production in recent years helped keep the forward curves in a state of contango where the spot futures contract traded lower than the next.

This meant that long-only investors were facing headwinds from negative roll yields. The rally during the past quarter across the whole agriculture sector has flattened the forward curves and sharply reduced the mentioned headwind.

The grains sector in particular has seen its average one-year roll move from a contango, averaging -5 to -10 per cent since 2016, to backwardation for the first time since 2014. While supply and demand differences will always be the ultimate determining driver for prices, the removal of the contango headwind may potentially now also attract increased investment demand. ETF's that are designed to track the performance of a basket of agriculture commodities are showing signs of breaking the downtrends which for most was established close to ten years ago.

[The writer is Head of Commodity Strategy at Saxo Bank]

TBY discusses latest research on Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 11

The Business Year (TBY) has been conducting research on the Omani economy for seven years, sitting down with the country's top business and political leaders to provide investors with a concise picture of the local investment environment. TBY's latest research, led by Project Director Elena Barreiro, conducted in association with Ithraa, and published in The Business Year: Oman 2020, took place against the backdrop of a global health pandemic, which has changed the way we gather information. TBY is used to sitting down with hundreds of executives over the course of a year, but with social distancing measures in place, the conversation moved online and the discussion was rooted firmly in the local response and expectations for recovery. With the vast majority of interviews conducted online, The Business Year: Oman 2020 features the thoughts and opinions of top business and political leaders, including Qais

al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; HH Sayyid Adham al Said, Chairman of the Competition and Monopoly Prevention Centre (CMC); Tahir bin Salim al Amri, Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO); Said bin Hamoud al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education,

Scientific Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation; Rahma al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation; Peter Walichnowski, CEO of Omran; and many more. Alongside this myriad of interviews with figures from across the country's business landscape, The Business Year: Oman 2020 also features a range of articles and analysis, with topics including oil sector automation, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, potential in hydro energy, ICT services, R&D, tertiary care, smart technologies in real estate, and business tourism prospects.



Bank Muscat and Omran Group sign agreement to digitise business operations

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, has signed an agreement with Omran Group, the executive arm of the Sultanate for tourism development, to provide a number of advanced digital solutions that are integrated in the Group's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.

The agreement aims to enhance the collaboration between Bank Muscat and Omran Group through offering state-of-the-art technology to enable customer service excellence.

Bank Muscat's highly secure B2B Connect solution will seamlessly integrate with Omran Group's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to provide an automated, two-way data transfer service for high volume online payments leading to greater operational efficiencies.

Tariq Atiq, DGM — Transaction & Public Sector Banking, said, "Bank Muscat has collaborated with Omran



Tariq Atiq

Group to introduce state-of-the-art technology to digitise its operations for greater efficiency in services delivery.

The growing shift to digital brings a number of benefits including efficiency, cost reduction, accountability, speed and scalability. Going ahead, we expect more organisations to take advantage of the high degree of automation and security that is made possible by the B2B Connect solution."

Hussain bin Noor al Bulushi,



Hussain bin Noor al Bulushi

Senior VP — Shared Services at Omran Group, said: "We are proud to partner with Bank Muscat to use its cutting-edge B2B Connect solution.

Omran Group has been constantly embracing digitalisation through the deployment of advanced technical solutions as part of our corporate sustainability to greatly improve our operational efficiencies, streamline processes and look into contemporary methods of reducing overall operational cost wherever possible through the utilisation of

latest technologies. We are confident that these solutions will ease our business mechanisms and create a high-quality, safe and efficient business environment."

The niche B2B Connect solution is an advanced version of online banking targeted mainly at large corporates. With the B2B Connect solution, corporates can carry out payment approvals in their ERP and the information can flow to the bank for processing.

Through this solution, institutions can build an efficient and robust payment and reconciliation system. The bank's corporate online banking platform serves as a key solution for corporate payments. With the integration of corporate enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems with the online banking platform, a complete digitalisation process is now in place for corporate payables as well as reconciliation.

SHORT TAKES

MUSCAT

JW MARRIOTT MUSCAT NOW OFFICIAL CATERER FOR OCEC

Continuing to enhance the Sultanate's meetings and conferences offerings, JW Marriott Muscat is now the official catering



partner for the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC). The agreement was signed between Giuseppe Ressa, General Manager of JW Marriott Muscat and Eng Said al Shanfari, Chief Executive Officer of OCEC, with Zoltan Kali, Senior Vice-President of Omran Hospitality, also in attendance. The partnership will see JW Marriott Muscat undertake all of the catering requirements for OCEC's events, which are held throughout the year. Developed by Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN), the five-star hotel and OCEC are situated side-by-side in the up-and-coming Madinat Al Irfan development, and an integral part of the country's conference tourism drive.

Giuseppe Ressa said, "With the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre directly connected with the hotel, it is a natural partnership and one that we're delighted to embark upon. Bringing our tailored culinary experiences and 'Mindful and Present' philosophy to OCEC's prestigious events, we look forward to contributing further to boost Oman's growing events sector and adding another layer to our role in attracting both business and leisure travellers to Oman."

SINAW

MEETHAQ INAUGURATES NEW BRANCH IN SINAW

Meethaq, the pioneer of Islamic banking in Oman from Bank Muscat, celebrated the official opening of its newest Sinaw branch recently. The opening of the new branch is in line with the bank's vision "To serve you better, everyday" and to continue to expand operations across the Sultanate to offer a world-class Islamic banking experience to customers in every corner of the country.

With the opening of the new branch, the total number of Meethaq branches in Oman has now reached 22, which includes 11 branches in the Governorate of Muscat and 11 branches in other governorates. In addition to the new Sinaw branch, Meethaq is also happy to announce the plan to open two more new branches during this year.



already excellent network of branches and a dedicated network of 40 ATMs/CDMs as well as access through the Bank Muscat ATM/CDM network across different governorates of the country.

The branch, which will operate from 8 am to 2 pm, will provide many facilities and services that are compatible with the principles and provisions of Islamic Sharia'a. It will offer a full suite of retail banking operations and services such as home finance, auto finance and other retail facilities.

MUSCAT

AL MOUJ MUSCAT LAUNCHES NEW RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOOD

Al Mouj Muscat, Oman's leading Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) and a public-private venture between the UAE-

based Majid Al Futtaim Properties, Omran and Tanmia, announces the launch of Murooj Lanes, a new residential neighbourhood where homes are priced to suit first-time buyers and investors.

Situated within the much sought-after Ghadeer District in the heart of Al Mouj Muscat, strong demand is anticipated for this first phase of development which features prices that range from RO 53,000 for a studio apartment and RO 155,000 for a three-bed townhouse with all properties modern in their design, with spacious layouts, great views and a high quality of build synonymous with all of the community's residences.

Murooj Lanes is located close to the marina and championship golf course, and within easy strolling distance of the cafes and restaurants of The Walk. In addition, there are first-class community facilities including a school, nursery, masjid, beach and parks, swimming pools, gyms, cycle and jogging paths.



MUSCAT

AJIA LAUNCHES SPECIAL BENEFITS ACROSS SELECT BMW MODELS THIS OCTOBER

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles LLC (AJIA), the official importer of BMW Group in Oman, has launched a limited time offer across their extensive range of BMW models, valid until October 31, 2020.

Upon purchase, customers can enjoy BMW Service Inclusive PLUS up to 5 years or 100,000 km (whichever comes first), BMW repair inclusive (BMW warranty) up to 5 years or 200,000 km (whichever comes first), and complimentary window tinting.

To ensure an exceptional shopping experience, AJIA will also be providing complimentary insurance and registration for 1 year.

Salim Sabbagh, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Al Jenaibi International Automobiles said: "With a model line-up that is more varied and sophisticated than ever before, these deals have been created considering both prospective and existing clients who can now enjoy discounts and special services on some of the dealership's most sought out vehicles."

For more information on AJIA's offers, please visit bmw-oman.com or call 96178383, 96179393 or toll-free on 800 50008.



Why is the ECB eyeing a 'digital euro'?

BERLIN: The European Central Bank will on Monday launch a public consultation and start experiments to help it decide whether to create a "digital euro" for the 19-nation currency club.

The move comes as the pandemic accelerates a shift away from cash, and as policymakers nervously eye the rise of private cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin. Here's an explainer of what a "digital euro" would mean for the region's citizens.

WHAT IS A DIGITAL EURO?

A digital, or virtual, euro would be an electronic version of euro notes and coins, it would be legal tender and guaranteed by the European Central Bank.

It would also for the first time allow individuals to have deposits directly with the ECB.

This could be safer than with commercial banks, which could go bust, or than holding cash that could be stolen or lost.

And like cash, money could be stored outside of the banking system, such as in a "digital wallet".

It would allow citizens and firms to make their daily payments "in a fast, easy and secure way," the ECB said as it published a report on virtual money in October.

A digital euro would "complement cash, not replace it",



A 100 euro bill is merged with a Bitcoin cryptocurrency, in this illustration photo. — AFP

the ECB stressed.

Issuing and transferring digital euros could be done using the distributed ledger technology known as blockchain on which cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin rely.

WHY NOW?

The COVID-19 pandemic has boosted electronic payments as customers avoid notes and coins over fears they might spread the

coronavirus.

Even in Germany, where cash is said to be king, consumers are this year expected to spend more money by card than in cash for the first time, according to a recent Euromonitor International report.

Like other central banks around the world, the ECB is also wary of falling behind virtual money issued by foreign private players like Bitcoin and Facebook's yet-to-be-launched

Libra.

If people in the euro zone were to switch en masse to virtual currencies that operate outside the ECB's reach it could hamper the effectiveness of its monetary policy measures.

Facebook's plan to create the Libra, "has accelerated central banks' thinking" on the subject, Pictet Wealth Management economist Frederik Ducroz said.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

It would also for the first time allow individuals to have deposits directly with the ECB. This could be safer than with commercial banks, which could go bust, or than holding cash that could be stolen or lost.

People might avoid traditional accounts in favour of going digital, weakening retail banks in the euro area. The risk would be higher in times of crisis, when savers might be tempted to flee to the safety of a "digital euro" and trigger a run on traditional banks.

To avoid this, the ECB might propose to limit the number of digital euros that each citizen could own or exchange.

Concerns about privacy and making sure the "digital euro" can't be used for money laundering will also be part of the ECB's thinking as it weighs the pros and cons in the months ahead.

WHO ELSE IS DOING IT?

Privately-issued digital currencies

are extremely volatile. The price of Bitcoin has nearly halved since its late-2017 high of around \$20,000.

But in recent years, central banks have begun looking into offering their own virtual money — known as Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) — as a stable and risk-free alternative.

The Chinese central bank started trials with digital currency in four cities in April, and the Bank of France has started experiments as well.

On Friday, the Bank of Japan said it would step up research into the topic. The Bank for International Settlements, a network of central banks, in January announced the creation of a working group dedicated to the issue.

WHEN CAN I SPEND MINE?

The ECB launches a three-month consultation on Monday and will carry out a series of experiments on the feasibility of a digital euro over the next six months.

The central bank aims to decide around mid-2021 whether or not to launch the project, it said.

But don't expect a digital euro in your electronic wallet soon.

It will take "between 18 months and three or four years" to see the initiative come to life, a source close to the project said. — AFP

FULL-YEAR MONEY

Spain's budget minister rules out corporation tax rise



Spain's Budget Minister Maria Jesus Montero speaks to media in Madrid, Spain, in this file photo. — Reuters

BARCELONA: Spain will not raise corporation tax while its economy struggles to recover from the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the budget minister said in an interview published on Sunday.

In a country that has not managed to approve a full-year budget since 2016 because of a prolonged political paralysis, Spain's minority left-wing coalition government is currently trying to garner support from other parties to pass the 2021 spending plan.

A fresh surge in infections is compounding the hit to the economy, which is expected to shrink by more than 11 per cent in the year as a whole, according to Spanish government estimates.

In an interview with *La Vanguardia* newspaper published on Sunday, Budget Minister Maria Jesus Montero discounted the possibility of hiking corporation tax in the midst of an economic downturn.

"But as for the profound reforms, which affect the production model, the structure (of the economy), such as corporation tax, it would be logical and reasonable for us to wait for this storm pass," she said.

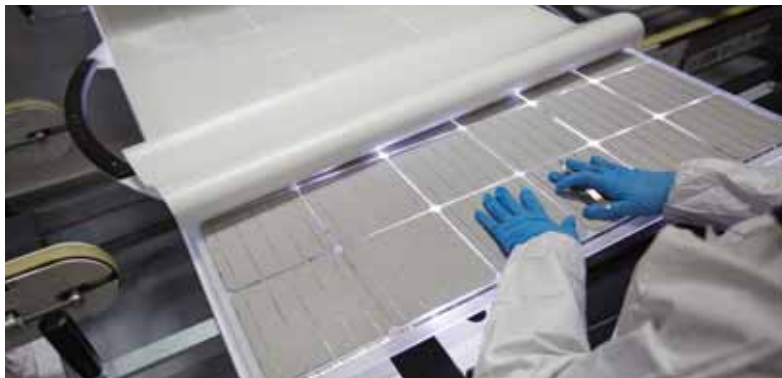
— Reuters

Trump backs revoking tariff exemption for solar panel imports

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Saturday signed a proclamation underscoring his support for revoking an exclusion from tariffs on some imported double-sided solar panels, and for raising the planned tariff rate to 18 per cent for 2021 from 15 per cent.

Trump said the domestic US industry was starting to increase production and market share of certain solar modules after he imposed tariffs on imports in January 2018, but further steps were needed. Bifacial panels should not be excluded from the tariffs, Trump said, adding that doing so had limited the overall measures and would likely continue to impair their effectiveness.

"In light of the increased imports of competing products such exclusion entails... it is necessary to revoke (the) exclusion and



A production operator checks a panel at the SolarWorld solar panel factory in Hillsboro, Oregon. — Reuters

to apply the safeguard tariff to bifacial panels," Trump said in a proclamation released by the White House.

"To achieve the full remedial effect envisaged for that action, it is necessary to adjust the duty rate of the safeguard tariff for the fourth year of the safeguard measure to 18

per cent." Solar farm developers, including Chicago-based Invenery Renewables LLC, had sued to maintain the exemption initially granted by the Trump administration, but it was later rescinded after officials realised it led to a spike in imports. — Reuters

China to invest almost \$900bn in power grids

BEIJING:

China will invest close to \$900 billion in the next five years to help further develop the country's power grids, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Investments in power grids and related industries are

expected to exceed 6 trillion yuan (\$896 billion) in 2021-2025, Xinhua reported, citing Mao Weiming, chairman of the State Grid Corp of China, the country's biggest power utility.

The investments will centre on areas such as ultra high voltage power transmission, electric vehicle chargers and new digital infrastructure, Mao said. — Reuters



Chinese electricians check and repair electricity grids and power transmission equipment in Yichang city, central China's Hubei province. — Reuters

Haunted by Christmas past, Britain's M&S tackles food waste

LONDON: British retailer Marks & Spencer, seeking to avoid a repeat of last Christmas when its performance was ruined by excessive food waste, is rolling out a supply chain programme it says will crack the problem. Reporting on festive trading in January, two months before the COVID-19 pandemic brought much of Britain to a standstill, Chief Executive Steve Rowe said that while M&S had enjoyed record food sales its profit margins were dented by high levels of waste.

M&S normally accounts for just over 3 per cent of the UK grocery market but at Christmas it punches above its weight, selling, for example, one in four of all fresh turkeys consumed.

Nevertheless, the group has been dogged by food availability issues and waste levels that are amongst the highest in the industry.

For Rowe, attempting to boost M&S's fortunes after a decade of failed reinventions, the antidote to waste is a supply chain initiative called Vangarde — named after the shopping park in the northern



The food section of Marks & Spencer in London is seen in this photo. — Reuters

English city of York where the group frequently tests new ideas.

"It's absolutely going to reset the foundations of our business and the platform to grow," Ryan Lemon, M&S head of retail supply chain said.

The Vangarde programme aims to get all parts of M&S's supply chain working better, from planning, to

suppliers, to logistics and stores.

Its first phase included 92 M&S stores served by a regional distribution centre (RDC) in Barnsley, northern England.

A second phase starts on Monday with a further 65 stores served by a RDC in Thatcham, southern England, with a full roll-out serving

M&S NORMALLY ACCOUNTS FOR JUST OVER 3 PER CENT OF THE UK GROCERY MARKET BUT AT CHRISTMAS IT PUNCHES ABOVE ITS WEIGHT, SELLING, FOR EXAMPLE, ONE IN FOUR OF ALL FRESH TURKEYS CONSUMED.

595 stores by July 2021.

We believe that we're going to see an improvement in sales in these stores, a reduction in waste and an improvement in availability," said Lemon.

He explained that Vangarde lowers the total levels of stock in stores, finely tailors deliveries from depots to an individual store's needs and increases the number of deliveries to stores out of trading

hours.

Ambient foods are delivered to stores consistently seven days a week instead of four or five previously. There are more frequent and smaller deliveries from M&S suppliers to RDCs, with delivery timings aligned more closely to store requirements.

M&S store workers' shift patterns have also been upended so more are available to re-stock when stores are closed. That means customers aren't bumping into staff stacking shelves — a key benefit during the COVID crisis.

The programme also embraces new technology. For example shop floor workers use handheld Honeywell devices to gauge stock levels. "The customer's going to see a massive difference because every Vangarde store will be ready to trade from opening," said Lemon. COVID means Christmas 2020 is shaping up to be a unique trading period. "Last Christmas there was some big challenges. This time there's going to be a lot of complexity in terms of customer behaviour." — Reuters

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

اوربیت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

SITUATION VACANT
Required for reputed club
IT SOFTWARE ENGINEER - OMANI ONLY

Educational Qualification: Graduate in IT or Computer Science.

Job Requirement: Software Engineer candidate with knowledge of Python, Java Script, XML, Linux, MS SQL Database, Web Site Designing and Security System.

Experience: Minimum 3 years.

Please email CV to: oceanint@omantel.net.om

MONDAY | **OCTOBER 12, 2020** | **SAFAR 24, 1442 AH**

Observer Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahd186@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

Target For Training Services
An Approved **AHA**, **Highfield**, **Medic First Aid** Center

Now we are in: (SALALAH, SUR, SOHAR, IBRI, NIZWA, BURAIMI)

Register for your Course Now

- AHA** (Certified) the only awarded center in Oman in 2019 for conducting: BLS, ACLS, HeartSaver
- Highfield** (Certified): HACCP, Food Safety
- Medic First Aid** (Certified): Care Plus, Basic Plus, Pediatric Plus

For registration/more information visit: www.target-gulf.com
24490622 - 90159534 - 90197426

American Heart Association, MEDIC First Aid TRAINING CENTER, Highfield International, JSRS

FOR RENT

FLAT for rent in Maabela 3 master rooms. 96088926.

South Al Ghubra flat on villa in the second floor, 3 rooms + 3 toilets + majlis + one family room and dining room. 96445044.

2 BEDROOM flat Al Khuwair. 99322344

FOR rent in Salalah, north Auqadain. Call 91711118

FLATS for rent in Al Khuwair, Al Hail, Wadi Kabir, Al Falaj, MBD and Muttrah. 99119699/ 95250300/ 24813002

ONE bedroom flat at Darsait near Medical RO 170/- . Two BHK Al Khuwair RO 300/- . Athaiba behind Zubair RO 300/- . 24790449, Fax: 24790559

NEW apartment for rent, one room, 2 toilets, kitchen and dinning. Location, Al Khoudh Market, Red Taj building, 7th floor. Per month rent RO 190/- . 92838118

WELL maintained 1&2 BHK and office space/ store available at Rex Road. Contact 92227165

NEW family flats in Darsait near the beach, 5 bedrooms, hall with AC, 4 bathrooms, balcony with sea view, RO 450 per month. Contact: 99315986.

SHOWROOM and flats FLATS for rent near Diwan Zafraniya area end of Muttrah Corniche close to (Muscat Shiva Temple), family, bachelor. Contact 99083071, 99323015.

FLAT for rent at Al Khuwair 33, 4 bedrooms, majlis, 2 halls, kitchen and store. 99383446

NEW penthouse, N Ghubra — 2 bedroom + 3 toilets + 1 maid room with toilet and 1 big hall 99370300

NEW apartment in Ruwi near church consists of 2 rooms with its facilities. Contact. 94664635, 95850345.

1BHK & 2 bhk flats for rent at Ruwi and Al Khoudh. 93994402, 93994403, 24834644.

3 BHK Flat & studio flat in central Ruwi & 2 BHK in Medinat Al Ilam. Call 99238012/ 24704994.

INDUSTRIAL land 5,500 sqm in Jufnin 95490842, 97928817.

FOR SALE

INSTITUTION Licence contact 95595512.

DIESEL Tanker, 1,600 gallon Volvo, 1987. 92836774

WE supply quantities of excellent mountainous soil in Bausher (suitable for compaction and filling) 99242445, 99327939.

A SHOWROOM in Al Qurum in strategic location with extravagant interior design on 280 sqm is offered for sale at RO 25,000. 92470024.

INVESTMENT

AN organic jaggery (Al Harifayuh)1 manufacturing industry available for partnership or investment in Hubli India. 0091 9742421122.

BUYING

AL Awsad Modern llc, electronic and furniture used. 99834373.

We buy used and broken cars which have instalments in cash. 90202090.

MANPOWER

MANPOWER from Philippines. Whatsapp: 91206344.

SIT. VACANT

Project Engineer
B. Tech Mechanical with minimum 6 years of experience in Pre Engineered Steel Building (PEB) erection works at site. Responsibility involves material approvals, work supervision and liaison with client/ consultant, quality control, work force and scheduling. Valid GCC driving licence is a must. Contact: hrjob191@yahoo.com/ 99202640.

Medical Jobs
NEEDED to private clinic:
1- **Indian nurse**
2- **Indian GP doctors**
3- **Indian male pharmacist**
Mobile and WhatsApp: 95440765.

Duct Man/ Fabricator

URGENTLY required for Duct Factory **Duct Men/ Fabricator** With minimum 4 years Oman experience. Contact: 98901648.

A LEADING Training Centre located in Muscat, looking for Highfield Food Safety & HACCP, level 1-4 courses trainer, with Omani driving licence. CVs send to kashoob1@yahoo.com

ACC AVAILABLE

SINGLE room with attached bathroom and air-condition for executive bachelor, non cooking, Wadi Kabir/ Al Falaj/ Ruwi High Street area. Contact 99657906

WANTED

WANTED scraps HMS1 & HMS2 scrap all kind of copper scrap. Connect us: 90765659.

FOR SALE/RENT

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

NEW 3 storey villas for sale/rents Wadi Kabir/Al Khuwair), (Shops/offices for rent/ Al Khuwair) (Flats for rent/Wadi Kabir). 96596348.

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crococaraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SIT. VACANT

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

Required Accountant (Male)

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

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

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

RENT A CAR

abc RENT A CAR
SPECIAL Rates on New Cars & 4 WDs RENTING & LEASING
Tours and Airport Transfer
Tel: 24582663
GSM: 95859497, Fax: 24582664, abcrent@omantel.net.om

Buttercup Rent A Car AMAZING OFFERS

○ Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.
○ Rent for one month and get 5 days free.
All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts. ☎97249490.

LUXURIOUS Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/annually, Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A leading facilities management company in Oman

URGENTLY REQUIRE

- ★ **AC Technicians**
- ★ **Electricians**
- ★ **Fire Alarm Technicians**
- ★ **Plumbers**

Interested candidates with NOC may email resume to omanfmjobs@gmail.com

SITUATION WANTED
A Graduate Civil Engineer having 25+ years of rich experience in Oman and GCC in lead roles is looking for a suitable placement. Visa available.
Contact mob: 78391432. Email: mohamedpmc2020@gmail.com

Observer

For Advertisements
Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office
Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahd186@yahoo.com

Salalah Office
Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office
Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suham Office
Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

[@omanobserver](https://www.omanobserver.om)



The daily battle of rural nurses on S Africa's COVID-19 frontline

South African nurse Ruth Seikaneng did not have time to mourn her colleague Dudu, who died from COVID-19 in one quick, painful week in July. In the town of Reivilo in the country's North West Province where Seikaneng works, patients were waiting for a diagnosis, personal protective equipment (PPE) had to be ordered, and a full week of 12-hour shifts lay ahead. "We miss Dudu. That loss, it was so bad. But we had to come straight back to work to make sure no one else got sick," Seikaneng said between consultations.

Seikaneng, 64, is one of 11 nurses in the town about 500 km (310 miles) west of the country's biggest city, Johannesburg, fighting the spread of the coronavirus in a nation with the highest numbers of confirmed cases on the continent. According to the Africa Centre for Disease Control, South Africa has some 681,200 COVID-19 cases. About 16,976 people have died from the disease. Seikaneng's experience in this former mining town of roughly 4,000 people is echoed by nurses across the country who have spoken out in recent months about their working conditions, with protests erupting over pay, short-staffing and a lack of PPE.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that there are about 28 million nurses in the global workforce



- 6 million less than are needed, with 90% of the shortfall concentrated in low- and middle-income countries such as South Africa. For Seikaneng and her colleagues, minimal PPE and staff shortages have forced them to innovate and adapt to prevent more lives being lost to COVID-19.

"We're doing the best we can with the little we have," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation from an office in Reivilo Health Centre where she works. It has meant working longer hours when a colleague has to quarantine and carefully assessing patients' symptoms to decide whether to call for an ambulance from the nearest hospital 70 km (43 miles) away, where tests can be carried out. On some days, no PPE was delivered to the health centre, forcing the nurses to re-use masks or go without. Often their priority

was simply stabilising patients until the ambulance arrived to take them to Taung hospital, which has the municipality's only COVID-19 ward. "We're in a rural area far from supporting health services," Siphobathlaping, 29, another nurse at the Reivilo centre. "What we need is more PPE, but also moral support," he said.

'WE HAVE TO KEEP WORKING'

At Taung hospital, COVID-19 ward manager Vicky Shikwambana receives patients from surrounding towns including Reivilo, dividing them between rooms for suspected or confirmed cases. If a patient's condition worsens, they have to be moved to Klerksdorp hospital, some 250 km (155 miles) away. "We only have one ventilator in the whole hospital. What can we do? We have to keep working because this is a pandemic,"

Shikwambana said. Shikwambana and the other nurses sometimes speak to patients through the window, cutting down on the need for PPE and preserving precious supplies. "My family are nervous about me working here, but they are also proud," Shikwambana said, standing outside the ward.

'SAVE OUR COMMUNITY'

In Pudumong, a town of 3,000 people not far from Taung hospital, a group of community health care workers gathered outside the clinic, adjusting their hats in the glaring sun. "We are here to save our community," said Kgomo Moremedi, 43, who is one of 26 members of an outreach team doing door-to-door contact tracing to stem the virus's spread. Gontlafetse Leinane, 45, sprayed the last drops of hand sanitiser onto her colleagues' open palms. "This is all the sanitiser we have today," she said, as the mostly women team members rubbed their hands and adjusted their face masks before heading out on their rounds. About 90% of the global nursing workforce is female, even though few women occupy leadership positions in the health care sector, according to the WHO. With no thermometer, they use a verbal assessment form to ask quarantining residents who they last saw and whether their symptoms are better or worse. —**Thomson Reuters Foundation**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS

ali59alvi • Follow
Jebel Akhdar

withyouiwander • Follow
Oman

m_alhasni • Follow
Salalah, Oman

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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

ENTERTAINMENT

Get full stories online at www.omanobserver.om

Steve McQueen opens London film Festival with racially-charged drama



Steve McQueen's latest film "Mangrove" opened the London film Festival on Wednesday, with the Oscar-winning UK director calling it a "love letter to black resilience".

"Mangrove" is the first in McQueen's five-film "Small Axe" anthology, focusing on the decades-long struggles of London's West Indian community against racial injustice.

It chronicles nine black protest leaders battling police discrimination in the streets and courts in the 1960s and 1970s.

The eventual acquittal of the group, who became known as the Mangrove Nine, is seen as a key moment in British race relations but their story is not widely known.

McQueen — the first black director to win the best picture Academy Award in 2014 for "12 Years a Slave" — said making the anthology was "a celebration of all that that community has succeeded in achieving against the odds".

"It is a love letter to black resilience, triumph, hope, music, joy and love as well as to friendship and family," he said in a statement to open the festival.

"Although they are about the past, they are very much concerned with the present. A commentary on where we were, where we are and where we want to go."

The London film Festival is now in its 64th year but is taking place largely online over 12 days because of coronavirus restrictions.

It features films and documentaries from over 40 countries, closing with Francis Lee's biopic of the 19th century paleontologist Mary Anning, "Ammonite", starring Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan.

In 2017 the Windrush scandal caused uproar when it emerged a generation of Britons of Caribbean origin who moved to the UK legally in the 1950s and 1960s had been wrongly

McQueen — the first black director to win the best picture Academy Award in 2014 for "12 Years a Slave" -- said making the anthology was "a celebration of all that that community has succeeded in achieving against the odds".

detained or deported for being illegal immigrants,

The films also arrive against the global back-drop of the Black Lives Matter protests sparked by the death in US police cus-

tody of an unarmed black man, George Floyd.

McQueen dedicated two of the movies to Floyd and other black victims in the United States, Britain and elsewhere when they were selected earlier this year at the Cannes film Festival.

"As the proverb goes, 'if you are the big tree, we are the small axe'. Black Lives Matter," he said.

'RACIAL HATRED'

"Mangrove" depicts how the West Indian community in London's Notting Hill neighbourhood faced years of unrelenting police harassment from racist officers, leading to a protest and clashes in 1970.

The subsequent trial of nine protest organisers, for rioting and affray, resulted in the first judicial acknowledgement that some police behaviour was motivated by racism.

"What this trial has shown is that there is clearly evidence of racial hatred on both sides," the judge is recounted as saying in the closing stages of the film.

Actress Letitia Wright, who plays a leader of the British Black Panther Movement, Altheia Jones-LeCointe, said she wished the "really important" story had been told to a mass audience sooner. — **AFP**

MUSIC



ROHM produces new patriotic song 'Great and Glorious' that features emerging young Omani artist

THE ROYAL Opera House Muscat (ROHM) has announced the production of a new patriotic song entitled Great and Glorious, released to coincide with the upcoming anniversary of the opera house on October 12, 2020.

Great and Glorious pays tribute to the renewed renaissance under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al Said.

The piece is written by the Omani poet Ibrahim al Salmi, to music composed by Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad al Busaidi, conducted and orchestrated by Amir Abdul Majeed, and performed by emerging talent Fahd al Balushi.

Marking Al Balushi's debut official engagement and first collaboration with the composer and conductor, the release has been hailed as a stellar production. Al Balushi began developing his singing talent pursuing a challenging repertoire, following a career journey

inspired by two significant voices in modern Arab Music, those of Sabah Fakhri and Lotfi Bouchnak.

Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad al Busaidi commented: "His voice is rare and unique. He has a wide range at multiple levels that allow him to sing the most difficult songs and connect with any melody, no matter how difficult it is. I was very happy to discover his voice and very optimistic about his future."

Al Busaidi added, "I would especially like to thank the Royal Opera House Muscat for being the producer of this patriotic piece."

Recorded in a studio in Egypt, Great and Glorious was directed by Nasser al Ruqishi of Alquds Art Production Company.

This production reflects the Royal Opera House Muscat's ongoing commitment to supporting and encouraging young Omani talent, and to promoting creative industries throughout Oman.



Fighting lockdown boredom with backyard gardening

BY KABEER YOUSUF

How can one convert the negativity being spewed by the pandemic into positive, creative and inspirational initiatives? A man in his fifties has dedicated his interest in backyard farming and has become an inspiration for how we can channel our interests and make ourselves productive during this troublesome time.

Living in Oman for the last 32 years, Azeez Hashim has no background in farming. He doesn't know what is involved in crop production and has very limited knowledge in farming, seedling, ploughing or fertilising. His only connection to fruit and crop harvesting is buying fresh fruits and vegetables from the supermarket for their day to day needs.

Today, Azeez is an ardent gardener who grows dozens of varieties of fresh fruits and vegetables which he distributes among his friends after a rich harvest.

Azeez ventured into vegetable gardening and horticulture in 2013 after he was transferred from Muscat to Suhar and when he found there was a huge unoccupied land lying attached to his villa in Suhar.

"It was all accidental," Azeez said.

"I just wanted to make use of the land and prepared the ground for that and put some seeds in it. Later, I experimented with various types of gardening and crops. Today, I have more than three dozen varieties of crops. A large flock of birds camp in my garden every day enjoying what I've built from scratch," he said adding that waking up every morning to the

chirping sounds of the birds is a life lived to the fullest.

What started as a hobby became a life extension that provided him with reason to wake up excited every morning. It also provided him with a new purpose and life mission. He visits the farm every morning with a cup of coffee in hand. Despite his busy routines, he finds it refreshing to spend time with the plants and birds.

"Just by being there among the green vegetation, the positive energy that I derive is amazing. Anyone can try this in their backyard or elsewhere," he urged.

During the crisis caused by the pandemic, he devoted more of his time and his family members, efforts and resources into expanding the farm, adding more crops to it. And the result?

The farm that that once was just a barren terrain with rock pieces measuring a few square metres is now a very rich, fertile land with lush greens and houses a plethora of naturally grown varieties.

"I would strongly advocate people interested in gardening to begin by planting herbs in pots and that can be done even in the smallest apartments and even in a terrace," Azeez said.

One can begin with growing coriander, mint, basil, curry leaves and even parsley which are suitable to Oman's climate and make the lockdown period a useful one.

Azeez added that with limited movement around, gardening helps to take away one's mind from the daily conundrum of life. He added that as the weather is also starting to get cooler, it is the perfect time for everyone to try their hands on backyard gardening.



features

Twitter Facebook Instagram YouTube follow us @omanobserver | www.omanobserver.om | observerfeatures@gmail.com



Fighting lockdown boredom with backyard gardening

Living in Oman in the last 32 years, Azeez Hashim has no background in farming. He doesn't know what is involved in crop production and has very limited knowledge in farming. What started as a hobby now produces enough fruits and vegetables for his family and a few spare that he distributes to his neighbours and friends... **P19**

DAILY PICKS

HUMAN INTEREST

THE DAILY BATTLE OF RURAL NURSES ON S AFRICA'S COVID-19 FRONTLINE

South African nurse Ruth Seikaneng did not have time to mourn her colleague Dudu, who died from COVID-19 in one quick, painful week in July.... Story on **Page 17**

ENTERTAINMENT

STEVE MCQUEEN OPENS LONDON FILM FESTIVAL WITH RACIALLY-CHARGED DRAMA

Steve McQueen's latest film "Mangrove" opened the London film Festival on Wednesday, with the Oscar-winning UK director calling it a "love letter to black resilience"... Story on **Page 18**

READ

THE RETURN

BY NICHOLAS SPARKS

A doctor serving in the Navy in Afghanistan goes back to North Carolina where two women change his life.

MUSIC

ROHM PRODUCES NEW PATRIOTIC SONG 'GREAT AND GLORIOUS' THAT FEATURES EMERGING YOUNG OMANI ARTIST

The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) has announced the production of a new patriotic song entitled Great and Glorious, released to coincide with the upcoming anniversary of the opera house on October 12, 2020... Story on **Page 18**

TODAY IN HISTORY

COLUMBUS'S EXPEDITION

In 1492, Christopher Columbus's expedition makes landfall on a Caribbean island he named San Salvador (likely Watling Island, Bahamas). The explorer believes he has reached East Asia.