

P11

MORGAN LAUDS GILL IN KOLKATA'S BIG WIN OVER SRH



P15

CHINA'S INDUSTRIAL PROFITS GROW FOR FOURTH STRAIGHT MONTH



P19

FROM BOTSWANA, AN ELOQUENT ARTIST



OMAN

Oman Air to fly to Dubai, Doha

MUSCAT: Oman Air, the national carrier of Oman, will return to scheduled service on October 1 with service to 18 cities in 12 countries including two flights per week connecting Muscat and Dubai, along with two flights per week connecting Muscat and Doha. All flights will depart and arrive on Thursdays and Saturdays. Oman Air will maintain its comprehensive safety programme throughout all elements of the travel journey to ensure that the passengers fly confidently. Masks are required when passengers are on board the aircraft and in Oman's airports. **DETAILS ON P2**

ASIA

India's farm bills become law

NEW DELHI: India's president on Sunday approved three controversial agricultural bills amid nationwide protests by farmers who say the new laws will stunt their bargaining power and instead allow large retailers to have control over pricing. Farmers' organisations say one of the three laws could lead to the government stopping buying grain at guaranteed prices, a move that would disrupt wholesale markets which have so far ensured fair and timely payments to farmers. President Ram Nath Kovind's approval is likely to further stir protests, leading farmers' organisations said.

INSIDE



WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT
MAX: 37°C
MIN: 29°C

SALALAH
MAX: 30°C
MIN: 26°C

NIZWA
MAX: 39°C
MIN: 25°C

SUNRISE 05.58 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR: 04:43

DHUHR: 12:03

ASR: 15:27

MAGHRIB: 18:02

ISHA: 19:12



30% OF CASES SUFFER FROM KIDNEY FAILURE

200 COVID-19 PATIENTS IN ICU



VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

For the first time, the number of COVID-19 patients in intensive care crossed 200 in various hospitals of Oman.

Such a high number is a matter of concern as Oman's COVID-19 death toll rises everyday. It may be noted that nearly 30 per cent of coronavirus patients in intensive care have kidney failure.

On Sunday, the Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 1,543

cases and 24 deaths as per the data available from Thursday to Saturday.

The total number of positive COVID-19 cases in the Sultanate has reached 97,450, while the number of recoveries stood at 87,801, which is 90 per cent of the cases reported.

The percentage of recoveries has dropped significantly from 94 per cent from a couple of weeks ago to 90 per cent on Sunday.

The total number of deaths

stands at 909, of which 666 are Omanis.

The ministry said 63 cases were hospitalised over the past 24 hours, adding that the total number of COVID-19 in-patients stands at 523, of which 200 are in intensive care units.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, speaking at the weekly press conference last Thursday, said the danger is far from over as deaths are not only among the old-aged or people suffering

from chronic diseases. Even a 15-year-old has succumbed to COVID-19 in the country. "It is a serious disease and requires the cooperation of all fight it", he added.

He called on all government and private agencies to adhere to the decisions and guidelines to limit the spread of the virus.

The number of COVID-19 cases among medical personnel is about 2,848, around 42 per cent of which are due to community transmission.

Over 14% drop in expats in private sector

A TOTAL OF 84,596 EXPAT WORKERS LEFT THE COUNTRY IN 3 MONTHS

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkutyyp

Expatriate workers in the public and private sectors have registered a significant fall during the recent months.

While the total number of expats fell by 14.3 per cent at the end of August 2020, those in the government sector narrowed by 19.9 per cent and 14.9 per cent.

According to the latest figures from National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the number of expatriate workers in the government sector fell from 52,462 in June to 43,986 in August.

At the same time, the private sector witnessed a decline from 1,259,814 in June to 1,182,694 in August.

This means a total of 84,596 expat workers, in addition to their family dependents numbering 13,866, left the country in just three months.

While Indians accounted for the highest decline of 17.9 per cent, Bangladeshis fell by 12.1 per cent.

According to NCSI, as of the end of August, the number of Bangladeshis stood at 565,011, with Indians forming the second highest numbers at 517,702 and Pakistanis standing at 178,702.

Filipinos and Egyptians dropped by 5.9 per cent and 3.8 per cent to reach 45,917 and 32,070, respectively.

Commenting on the remarkable change in Oman's expat population, Abdullah al Balushi, a human resource expert, said there's no denying that the coronavirus pandemic has brought about sweeping changes in the job market.

New technology attempts to better forecast wildfire spread

LOS ANGELES: When freak lightning storms passed over Northern California's wine country last month and sparked hundreds of wildfires, a newly established network of remote weather stations, orbiting satellites and supercomputers spun into action and attempted to predict the spread of what is now known as the LNU Lightning Complex fire.

Firefighters and technologists have long dreamed of a formula or device that would accurately predict the spread of fire, much the way meteorologists predict the possible effect of extreme weather, but it's only recently that big data and supercomputers have begun to show promise as a means of fire forecasting.

"I think a firefighter starting out today in his or her career, they're going to see something to the point where they leave the (station) on the fire, they'll have a simulation on their screen of where the fire is going to go, where they need to do evacuations," said Tim Chavez, a fire behaviour analyst with Cal Fire since 2000.

Past forecasts relied on huge assumptions about the landscape and upcoming weather, but today's forecasts are based on a web of remote weather stations, cameras and satellites merged with ground-level details on vegetation and moisture.

— dpa





Sultanate to export fish to Uzbekistan



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Final discussions are currently underway between Oman and Uzbekistan for fish exports and the first consignment is expected to take place early October.

Uzbekistan has invited bids from fish suppliers in the Sultanate, which will give the Sultanate access to the Central Asian nation.

"This deal with Uzbekistan will open up a new market as we are always on the lookout for newer markets," said Dr

Lubna al Kharousi, Director-General of Fish Research department at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, told the *Observer*.

She further said that identifying more international markets is good for Oman's economic development.

Currently, Oman exports its fisheries and allied products to many markets including the European Union, the US, Russia, China besides Asia and the GCC. "Bilateral relations with the Sultanate are a great advantage to us," said Anvar Abdulkhalimov,

Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Sultanate.

Lack of direct flights between Muscat and Tashkent has been deterring bilateral trade but there are plans to improve transport links, according to him. The recent charter flight to transport Uzbek citizens brought fresh food like cherry, apricot, nectarine to Oman.

"With the new cargo flights currently on the anvil by Asyad, trade relations will move to a new level," he added.

CSEPF board of directors meets

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of the Civil Service Employees Pension Fund (CSEPF) held a meeting on Sunday under the chairmanship of Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Baowain, Minister of Labour, CSEPF Board Chairman.

The meeting reviewed topics, including the approval of CSEPF audited financial statements and its

attachments for the period ending on 6/30/2020. It also reviewed the indicators and performance of CSEPF, including cash flows, its investments, and other statistical and financial indicators.

The meeting was briefed on CSEPF ongoing projects, including its new building located at the airport heights and other projects.

The meeting also reviewed a follow up report on the measures taken to implement the decisions and directives of the board at the previous meeting and other decisions and recommendations. It also discussed a number of other topics related to the fund's work listed on the agenda, and took the appropriate decisions on their regard. — ONA

SAYYID THEYAZIN RECEIVES INDIAN AMBASSADOR



His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, received in his office at the ministry on Sunday Munu Mahawar, Ambassador of the Republic of India to the Sultanate. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the bilateral relations binding the two friendly countries and discussed aspects of the existing joint cooperation in the cultural, sports and youth fields, besides exchanging views on promoting such aspects of cooperation. The Sultanate and the Republic of India signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the field of cultural cooperation on July 12, 2010. — ONA

Oman Air announces flights to Dubai, Doha

MUSCAT: Oman Air will return to scheduled service on October 1 with service to 18 cities in 12 countries including 2 flights per week connecting Muscat and Dubai, along with 2 flights per week connecting Muscat and Doha.

All flights will depart and arrive on Thursdays and Saturdays.

These schedules are valid from October 1 to October 24, 2020.

Oman Air will maintain its comprehensive safety programme throughout the journey to ensure that guests fly confidently. Masks are required when guests are onboard the aircraft and in Oman's airports. Distancing is maintained while guests board and exit the aircraft, which are carefully cleaned after each flight and at the end of every day. Cabin crew all wear a full set of personal protective equipment, meal service has been modified to further ensure safety and a number of other steps have been taken to ensure that the airline's guests and crew are safe at all times.

Guests who are planning to travel to Muscat should visit the Civil Aviation Authority

website, paca.gov.om, to ensure they are prepared to comply with requirements to enter the Sultanate.

Guests travelling to Dubai or Doha should ensure they are aware of official requirements to enter or transit through these countries.

Guests departing from Oman should also ensure that they are aware of all pre-departure requirements, as well as other requirements during their flights, which are provided at omanair.com.

MUSCAT-DHAKA FLIGHTS

Meanwhile, US-Bangla Airlines will operate two flights every week from Dhaka to Muscat.

"US-Bangla Airlines has decided to resume its regular flights on the Dhaka-Muscat route from October 1, after six months of COVID-19 forced restrictions," the airline said.

The airline said it will ensure the health safety guidelines issued by the governments of Bangladesh and Oman.

The flight from Dhaka will leave at 10 pm on Mondays and Thursdays while the flight from Muscat will leave at 2 am (local time) on Tuesdays and Fridays.

— ONA

Arab Agriculture Day marked

MUSCAT: The Sultanate today joined the rest of the Arab world in celebrating Arab Agriculture Day, which falls on September 27 every year.

Celebration of the event this time takes the motto "Rural prosperity: a necessity towards realising food security in the Arab region on the backdrops of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic."

Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) organised the virtual event in which the Sultanate was represented by Dr Saud bin Hamoud bin Ahmed al Habshi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Environment Authority discusses key issues

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority on Sunday held a meeting under the chairmanship of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, during which issues related to environment conservation were discussed.

The Authority reviewed the replies of departments concerned on a draft decision on controlling the export of waste outside the Sultanate.

It also looked into exemptions for development and service projects, like electricity, phone and fibre optic lines, from a "requirements table governing permission levels for activities falling within protection zones of water supply wells".

— ONA

OIA launches 'Rawabet' programme to enhance corporate governance

MUSCAT: In light of the recent meeting between Chairman of the Board, and President of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), with the Chairmen of Boards of its affiliated companies, the OIA launched a special programme under the name of "Rawabet", as a direct link between the Authority and its companies, in order to enhance their Corporate Governance, and link all their policies and systems with the higher policies of OIA.

The programme will help OIA's affiliated companies align their policies with Oman Vision 2040, which focuses on developing sources of economic diversification and enhancing non-oil revenues' contribution to national GDP and attract foreign direct investment to the Sultanate.

Rawabet also aims to shed light on the role that the private sector plays in developing the Omani economy and promoting successful partnership in local value-added investments, in addition to promoting the



securities markets, developing the national workforce, and working on the continuous development of different investment sectors in the Sultanate.

In order to achieve the desired goals of the programme, OIA will involve all relevant sectors, such as investment, asset management, risk & compliance, human resources, procurement and contract operations, asset allocation, finance, information technology, corporate communication, legal

affairs, and auditing, to ensure their strategic implementation of government companies' alignment with the national goals, to positively contribute in achieving Oman 2040 vision.

It is hopeful that Rawabet will help enhance the performance of OIA's companies to achieve their goals and overcome all associated challenges, in addition to creating a strong partnership with the private sector that supports the involvement of a bigger share of private sector establishments.

The programme will also help create a comprehensive plan to prepare these companies' investments in ICV initiatives, as well as exiting from investments or listing in financial markets and other areas that help create new job opportunities.

"Rawabet" will also work as a platform for the exchange of resources and expertise on best investment practice, through planning joint team activities that can enhance their general performance. — ONA

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#Living_with_COVID19

Al Dakhiliyah governor visits Bidbid municipality, traditional crafts market



AMAL AL RIYAMI

@amal92alriyami

Shaikh Hilal bin Said bin Hamdan al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, met the members of the Municipal Department Affairs Committee in the Wilayat of Bidbid.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Dr Hamoud bin

Ali bin Hamid al Marshoudi, Wali of Bidbid and Chairman of the Municipal Department Affairs Committee. The Director-General of Al Dakhiliyah Municipality was also present in the meeting.

The governor praised the municipal officials for carrying out their duties. He stressed the importance of

addressing citizens' requests for municipal services and projects.

The governor directed the committee members to prepare a comprehensive review of the wilayat's needs in terms of service projects such as pavements, lighting and public utilities projects.

He also instructed the

members of the committee to provide him with a clear-cut vision for the development and organisation of Fanja Traditional Artisan Market in line with needs of the owners of the existing stores. The project should also improve marketing of crafts and services.

He toured Fanja

Traditional Artisan Market to find out the current market situation, know the needs and demands of traders, and listen to their views and suggestions. Fanja Traditional Artisan Market is home to 31 shops dedicated to handicraft and heritage industries. It is a favourite destination for tourists.

Protect workers from exploitation: Shura council

VINOD NAIR
@VINOT_NAIR

The Majlis Ash'shura council members and representatives from the General Federation of Oman Workers (GFW) discussed the recent circular of the Ministry of Labour that delinked the qualification of the job-seekers from their wages.

The Majlis Ash'shura, who wanted the implementation of the internal circular issued by the Ministry of Labour to be slowed down, also stressed the need for clear regulations to protect workers in the private sector from any exploitation.

The General Federation of Workers (GFW) expressed dissatisfaction that some decisions regarding workers are taken without involving all competent parties.

The federation said it should be engaged when developing labour policies so that it suits everyone.

Shura members said there is a need to reduce the differences between the salaries and other benefits of employees in the public and private sectors.

It also called for developing a job classification for each private institution over a certain period of time, taking into account specialisations and the minimum appropriate qualification.

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CONDOLENCES

We extend our sincere and heartfelt condolences to

H.E Sheikh Saba'a bin Hamadan bin Saba'a Al Saadi

Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamdan bin Saba'a Al Saadi

Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamdan bin Saba'a Al Saadi

Mohammed bin Rashid Hamdan Al Saadi

Nasser bin Rashid Hamdan Al Saadi

and all members of the bereaved family on the sad demise of

SHEIKH RASHID BIN HAMADAN BIN SABA'A AL SAADI

May the Almighty grant eternal peace to the departed soul and strength to the family to endure the irreparable loss.

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Boom in delivery jobs

The ministry is working to establish an integrated national platform for the registration of delivery professionals to ensure the highest standards of efficiency. **As this job requires multiple skills related to e-commerce and customer satisfaction and the use of modern technologies like tracking,** the ministry said the training would be provided to the young Omanis once the platform is ready

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

Online shopping is thriving so is the demand for home delivery agents. The boom in e-commerce is a global phenomenon driven by precautionary measures and lockdowns to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Customers also felt it convenient to buy anything from grocery items to live cattle using smartphones during the closure of many activities that lasted for months in Oman and elsewhere.

Just by pressing one button, one can have his choice of food, clothes, books, toys, and even favourite meals from different restaurants. The beauty of it is getting them fresh at

the door-step.

Officials in the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology emphasised that the 'Shop from Your Home' initiative launched earlier this year was supportive for those working in the goods delivery businesses.

Saleh al Shuaili, a founding partner of Mandoob, said that the demand for home delivery services has increased dramatically, "which led to an increase in the number of part-time workers of which 3,000 are Omani youths.

Al Shuaili added: "The company employees take all the preventive precautions to ensure the safety of consumers and workers. We

communicate with many shops and institutions that provide basic commodities people need. We deliver them to consumers' homes in the various governorates of the Sultanate."

According to the ministry, the income of some Omanis working in delivery services has reached RO 980 per month amid the outbreak of the COVID-19. Statistics indicate that some electronic platforms get 15,000 requests daily on an average. One-day delivery has become a new competitive advantage, which has attracted last-minute shoppers on various festival occasions such as Ramadhan and Eid.

The 'Delivery Person' profession is considered promising as income goes

up along with demand and it can also be practised as a part-time job. Many Omani start-ups in delivery services have expanded across the Sultanate and hired hundreds of citizens as their employees.

The ministry is working to establish an integrated national platform for the registration of the national workforce in the field of delivery to ensure the highest standards of efficiency. And because this kind of job requires multiple skills related to e-commerce and customer satisfaction and the use of modern technologies like tracking, the ministry said the training would be provided to the young Omanis once the platform is ready.



Community key to tourism in post COVID-19 world

LIJU CHERIAN
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the limits of the globalised economy. Dr Angelo Battaglia, a tourism international expert and policy adviser, told the *Observer* that globalisation based on the connectivity, supply chains, movement of people for different purposes (tourism, leisure and business travels) have shown how the 'global fragile world' was dealing with deep and terrific changes.

Dr Angelo quotes Edgard Morin, the 99-year-old famous French philosopher and sociologist, who in last April wrote a short article explaining and arguing about the crisis and challenge of complexity.

The Muscat-based tourism international expert believes that the analysis from Morin about 'la crise de la complexité' is crucial if one wants to understand how the world is changing from a global dimension to a more local perspective.

The meaning of 'local' is becoming more and more interesting under different points of view and the tourism sector is reflecting absolutely these dynamics of structural change, he explains.

"The challenge of the complexity or the crises of



globalisation suggests how important today is the local dimension and how the 'local world' with its social and cultural relations, identities and unique local traditions. It is more appealing and attractive for understanding the current global changes, highlighting the resilient capacity of the local communities to react to these disruptions", he adds.

Dr Angelo believes that tourism is a fantastic example of this transformation in perceiving the reality, where local experiences and unique natural and cultural landscapes with their authenticity are the most important drivers for the implementation of 'soft' tourism development projects

and tourism planning strategies everywhere and, in particular, the Sultanate.

"The feeling of 'being local' reminds us of an old world in 'black and white' where the local characteristics, local storytelling and local places where much more appreciated", he adds.

He further believes that the Sultanate can positively represent this new approach of focusing on local tourism until the 'globalised interconnected tourism' is back on track.

"The Sultanate has extraordinary local destinations, traditional handicrafts, wonderful natural ecosystems and unique storytelling atmosphere where the Omani communities are the main

“The Sultanate has extraordinary local destinations, traditional handicrafts, wonderful natural ecosystems and unique storytelling atmosphere where the Omani communities are the main creative producers of this new way to do tourism”

DR ANGELO BATTAGLIA
Tourism expert

creative producers of this new way to do tourism", he explains.

The responsible tourism will take advantage of the inclusiveness and participation of the Omani people in doing tourism by recognising the importance of the social relations and local traditions in developing the tourism products, Dr Angelo concludes.

Al Bashair imports 10,000 sheep, 250 calves

SALALAH: Government-owned firm Al Bashair Investment Company (ABIC) has imported 10,000 heads of merino sheep and 250 heads of calves for fattening at its farm in the Wilayat of Thamrait, Governorate of Dhofar.

The consignment was received via the Port of Salalah from the Republic of South Africa as part of an operational programme to produce high quality and healthy meat.

ABIC management seeks to realize abundance with a view to serving individuals and establishments in Oman and exporting to adjoining markets. The programme is a contribution to food security and ensures the availability of safe red meat.

The company's strategy focuses on importing livestock from different destinations and isolating the animals at the company's quarantine approved and directly supervised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

During the quarantine period, all necessary vaccinations are given to the livestock to protect the imported animals against common diseases. After this period,



the livestock is taken to the fattening area where they are nourished with natural fodder, food concentrates and vitamins to help increase weight and meat quality.

ABIC is considered the first integrated red meat project of its kind in the Sultanate and the largest in the region. It was established with prime aim of contributing to the system of food security and self-sufficiency in the Sultanate. — ONA

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

Al Ghubrah Power & Desalination Company (GPDC) invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tenders below;

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	LAST DATE FOR COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS	TIME & LAST DATE FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSION	TENDER FEE (OMR)-EXCLUDED TRANSFER CHARGES
GPDC/05/2020	Sale of Desalination Inventory Spare Parts in GPDC	27-OCT-2020	11-NOV-2020	100/-
GPDC/06/2020	Dismantling of OETC 132 kV GIS and MEDC 33kV switchgear assets and buy back (Purchase) of Assets by Bidder in GPDC premises as per project scope and deliverables stipulated in the Tender document (RFP)	15-OCT-2020	26-OCT-2020	100/-

- Bids shall be submitted in a single envelope and sealed with red wax addressed to the "Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee", and must write on the envelope the tender name & number.
- 3 separate envelopes shall be included inside the single sealed envelope, and each of these 3 envelopes must be marked with a tenderer name & tender no. as per the below:
 - Commercial Proposal
 - Technical Proposal
 - Bid Bond
- Bids should be dropped in the tender box at Nama Holding reception before 12.00 pm, time of the Sultanate, on 11-NOV-2020 for tender No. (GPDC/05/2020), and on 26-OCT-2020 for tender No. (GPDC/06/2020).
- Each bid should be accompanied with a temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers, addressed to the "Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee of GPDC". Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered.
- GPDC is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- Interested party to deposit Tender Fee (Non-Refundable) on: Account Name: Al Ghubrah Power & Desalination Company, Bank Muscat, 0423011069510017 (Bidder name and Tender Number to be clearly mentioned). Tender Documents will be received by email.
- Bidders to send the deposit slip to: Yasmeen.allawati@holding.nama.om.
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 12.00 pm.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.



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Expats exit hits real estate rental market

RAY PETERSEN
NIZWA, SEPT 27

The much publicised contraction in the real estate rental market in Oman is just one consequence of the departure of tens of thousands of expatriates from the Sultanate during the last year, and with COVID-19 still with us, and oil and gas returns still comparatively moderate, the economy continues its modest performance of the last three years.

Omanisation policies, and revised expatriate visa conditions, are certainly a positive move in elevating Omanis to greater levels of responsibility, however, the residential rental market and retail spending are being significantly affected. The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) quoted in a report by the Oxford Business Group, indicated that

during the 2019 financial year there had been a contraction in the real estate market, the buying and selling of houses, of 11 per cent, which is especially significant as residential construction continues.

A leading global real estate advisers indicated just last month that COVID-19, oil prices, and increased visa restrictions, are creating increasingly challenging economic conditions, with Ihsan Kharouf, of Savills Oman, urging caution, and perhaps reflection, telling Trade Arabia, "Expatriates play a significant role in influencing the demand for real estate".

Although most expatriates come here for "the money, the sunshine, the lifestyle", and know that they are rarely here for a lifetime, the majority spend well while they are here. Those in the legal, oil and gas, education and

service industries rent expensive villas and apartments, buy expensive cars, and live an 'expat' lifestyle to the full under the "work hard, play harder", banner, all the time spending! "It's been great", one departing General Manager explained, "with the Recreation Club, gym, tennis courts, swimming, boating, a bit of intellectual stuff like drama and book clubs, the kids in great schools, fantastic housing, great roads and inexpensive modern vehicles and petrol. What's not to like? Of course, the downside is that you do tend, in spite of your best intentions, to spend quite freely, and it is only over the last year, since we found that we would be leaving soon, that we've cut back on expenses. That said", he laughed, "we're still spending quite a bit. But that's what it is, isn't it? Lifestyle".



ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Environment Authority invites all specialized companies and establishments to submit their offers to the following tenders:

Tender No	Tender Title	The tender document value (no retrieved)	Date of purchase of tender documents	Last date for purchasing tender	Last date for submission of tender
3/2020	Maintenance and gardening of the Environment Authority Garden in Al-Khuwair for 2021	R.O 25/-	27/9/2020	25/10/2020	1/11/2020
4/2020	Cleaning works of the Authority building in Al-Khuwair and Warehouses in Mabila South in the Wilayat of Al-Seeb for 2021				

Companies registered with the Secretariat General of the Tender Board wishing to purchase the tenders can apply through the e-tendering website (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) provided that an original copy of a Bank guarantee (1%) of the tender value valid for (120) days from the date of tender submission shall be submitted to the Financial Affairs Department at the Authority's main building in Al-Khuwair before bids opening.

For assistance in tender purchase and tender submission, please contact 24166670, e-mail: etenderhd@ita.gov.om



Yemen warring sides agree to swap prisoners as UN seeks truce

GLION: The UN Special Envoy for Yemen wants to build on Sunday’s announcement of the largest prisoner exchange agreement in the five-year conflict to pave the way for a national ceasefire and a political solution to end the war, he said. Yemen’s warring parties agreed to exchange 1,081 prisoners, including 15 Saudis, as part of trust-building steps aimed at reviving a stalled peace process, the United Nations and sources said.

“I was told that it’s very rare to have prisoner releases of this scale during the conflict, that they mostly happen after a conflict,” UN envoy Martin Griffiths said.

But the timing, sequence and logistics of the exchange were still being finalised by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which will organise the transfers, he said, calling for further releases. Griffiths is trying to restart political negotiations to end the war, which has killed tens of thousands of people and caused what the United Nations describes as the world’s largest humanitarian crisis with millions on the brink of famine.

“Our overall aim at the moment is to bring an agreement on what we call a joint declaration which is a national ceasefire to end the war in Yemen,” Griffiths said, adding it would be accompanied by measures to open up ports, airports and roads. “This achievement here I think will undoubtedly have a bounce effect for that, that it will encourage the parties to go the extra mile to resolve final differences,” he said.



Fabrizio Carboni, Regional Director for the Near and Middle East of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Abdulkader al Murtada, Head of the Houthi prisoner exchange committee and Hadi Haig, Head of the Yemeni government delegation, after the closing plenary of the fourth meeting of the Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Prisoners’ Exchange Agreement in Yemen, in Glion, Switzerland. — Reuters

“So what we will be looking to do as a result of the announcement here today is in the coming days...to go and visit the parties to finalise the specifics of that agreement. And it’s important because it ends the war.”

The Yemeni government, backed by a military coalition, and the Ansar Allah movement they have been battling for over five years signed a deal in late 2018 to swap some 15,000 detainees split between both sides but the pact has been slowly and only partially implemented.

Heads of the two sides of the

Yemen’s warring parties agreed to exchange 1,081 prisoners, including 15 Saudis, as part of trust-building steps

committee hugged at the end of their final meeting, with Griffiths telling them: “Well done, well done.”

Sources familiar with the talks and Ansar Allah-run Masirah TV said the movement would release

400 people, including 15 Saudis and four Sudanese, while the coalition would free 681 Ansar Allah fighters in the largest swap since peace talks in Stockholm in December 2018.

Abdulkader al Murtada, of the Ansar Allah prisoner exchange committee Abdulkader al Murtada, gave the same figures to reporters in Glion, saying: “Of course this file is considered to be one of building trust between the parties and if there has been any positive movement in the prisoners’ file, without a doubt it will influence the other files.” — Reuters

Lebanese leaders warn of ‘multiple dangers’



A Lebanese army soldier stands on guard near a scooter that was used by armed assailants in an overnight attack that killed other army soldiers, north of Lebanon’s northern city of Tripoli. — AFP

BEIRUT: Lebanon’s top cleric said on Sunday the nation faced “multiple dangers” that would be hard to weather without a government, speaking after the prime minister-designate quit and dealt a blow to France’s bid to lift the country out of crisis. Religious figures also said Lebanon needed to unite following Mustapha Adib’s decision to step down on Saturday after his efforts to form a cabinet hit a roadblock over ministerial appointments in the sectarian system.

It leaves Lebanon, with its arrangement of sharing power between Muslims and Christians, rudderless as it faces its deepest crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war. French President Emmanuel Macron, who had pressed Lebanon’s fractious politicians to reach a consensus over naming Adib on Aug. 31, will speak about the crisis later on Sunday.

Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al Rai, leader of the Maronite church, Lebanon’s biggest Christian community, said Adib’s resignation had “disappointed citizens, especially the youth, who were betting on the start of change in the political class”.

Many top politicians have held sway for years or even decades. Some are former warlords.

Rai said Lebanon now had to navigate “multiple dangers” without a government at the helm. Rai’s comments were echoed on the streets

of Beirut, where mass protests erupted in 2019 as years of mismanagement, corruption and mounting debts finally led to economic collapse.

“We need new people. We need new blood,” said Hassan Amer, 24, serving coffee at a roadside cafe in the capital, which was hammered by a huge port blast on August 4 that killed almost 200 people.

Frustration at Adib’s failure to form a government was voiced by many across religious communities. A senior cleric Sheikh Ahmed Qabalan, said it was a “disaster” that Adib had resigned and called for national unity, state news agency reported.

“We don’t want sectarian or confessional talk,” Lebanon’s top religious leader, Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian, was quoted by broadcasters as saying.

He said Lebanon’s communities needed to show “understanding and balance” to face the major challenges ahead. The cabinet formation effort stumbled after Lebanon’s two main groups, Amal and the Hezbollah, demanded they name several ministers, including finance, a key role as the nation draws up a rescue plan. Saad al Hariri, a former prime minister and leading politician, said he would not be involved in naming any new premier and that the French plan was “the last and only opportunity to halt Lebanon’s collapse”. — Reuters

Two decades after second uprising Palestinians still face bleak future

JENIN: Two decades on from the second intifada, Palestinians who grew up in the shadow of the uprising find themselves surrounded by physical and political barriers with little hope for the future.

In Jenin refugee camp, in the north of the occupied West Bank, the walls are plastered with posters showing young Palestinian men wearing keffiyeh scarfs around their necks and clutching AK-47 assault rifles.

Whether killed by Israeli forces or jailed, their images have faded over the years.

“When I walk through the camp, I try to reconcile my memory with what I see today,” said Nidal Nagnhaghyeh Turkeman, 48, who spent 17 years in prison for his role in the uprising.

Nidal fought in the ranks of the main Palestinian faction Fatah in the first intifada (1987 to 1993) which preceded a brief optimistic period when the Oslo peace accords brought hope of a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But by the turn of the century



Palestinian student at Al Quds University Aya Abu al Amal poses by the wall separating East Jerusalem from the Palestinian village of Abu Dis. — AFP

disillusionment had set in and the second intifada broke out after right-wing Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon visited the Al Aqsa mosque compound in annexed east Jerusalem on September 28, 2000.

The move was seen as a provocation

by Palestinians and violent clashes between them and Israeli forces followed.

The second intifada lasted five years, during which attacks were carried out in Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

In response, Israel reoccupied much of the West Bank and began building a separation barrier between the two communities that in places cuts deep into occupied territory.

Jenin refugee camp was caught up in the violence and in 2002 was besieged by Israeli forces for more than a month.

REMINDERS

Turkeman, who lost two brothers in the fighting, was jailed for his role in an attack shortly after the siege which killed six Israeli civilians.

While reminders of the uprising can be seen on the streets of Jenin, such as a former fighter selling grapes in a wheelchair, daily life has changed significantly over the past two decades.

Turkeman’s twin daughters, Yara and Sara, were born just weeks before the siege and saw little of their father growing up.

“At the start we rejected him. We couldn’t find a place for him in our hearts,” said Sara, an 18-year-old studying IT at university.

— AFP

TENSE MOMENTS



A Palestinian boy, mask-clad due to the coronavirus pandemic, waits before crossing to the Egyptian side of Rafah border crossing in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

TEHRAN

Iran Guards unveil naval ballistic missile

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards on Sunday unveiled a new naval ballistic missile with a potential range of over 700 kilometres, local media reported, following months of tensions with arch-enemy the United States.

The missile, dubbed “Zolfaghar Basir”, is the naval variant of the surface-to-surface Zolfaghar ballistic missile, according to Tasnim news agency.

Its range is more than twice that of the Islamic republic’s other naval missiles, including the “Hormuz-2”, with a range of 300 kilometres, which



Tehran said it successfully tested in March 2017.

CAIRO

Sisi warns of instability after protest calls

Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah al Sisi warned on Sunday against attempts to stoke instability in the country, following a recent spate of scattered and small-scale anti-government protests.

“Some people have been trying in recent weeks to take advantage of the tough measures we are taking,” Sisi said at a ceremony to inaugurate an oil refining complex north of Cairo. Dozens of people took part in rare protests in recent days in several villages in Egypt, according to videos shared widely on social

media, especially by sympathisers of the Brotherhood.

The small-scale demonstrations come amid mounting anger, particularly in rural and low-income areas, against sweeping government campaigns to stop illegal construction, which has required people to pay fines to legalise home-ownership.

Exiled businessman Mohamed Ali, who has urged protests since last year, has intensified his calls in recent weeks, calling on Egyptians take to the streets.

KHARTOUM

Sudan for ‘deep’ debate before any deal: PM

Sudan’s Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok has said that normalising ties with Israel was a “complicated” issue needing wide debate within society, media reported Sunday.

The administration of US President Donald Trump wants Sudan to follow suit, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Khartoum in August to push a deal.

Sudan’s economy is in crisis, partly due to sanctions imposed because it is on a US blacklist as an alleged state sponsor of terrorism.

On Saturday, Hamdok was



questioned by reporters on the two issues of lifting US sanctions and normalising ties with Washington’s ally Israel. — Agencies

In brief

■ ISLAMABAD

14 KILLED IN PAKISTANI ROAD ACCIDENT



At least 14 people including women and children were killed after a passenger van overturned and caught fire in southern Pakistan, police said on Sunday.

The accident took place on Saturday night some 40 kilometres from the port city of Karachi when the bonnet of a car driving in front of the van, which was carrying 25 passengers, fell off and the van's driver tried to avoid it. The van's compressed natural gas (CNG) cylinder, which powered it, exploded after the van overturned.

■ COLOMBO

LANKA RETURNS ILLEGAL WASTE TO UK

Sri Lanka has shipped back to Britain container-loads of waste that the government said was brought into the island in violation of international laws governing the shipping of hazardous material.

The 21 containers — holding up to 260 tonnes of rubbish — first arrived by ship in the capital Colombo's main port between September 2017 and March 2018, customs said, adding that they departed Sri Lanka on Saturday.

They were meant to carry used mattresses, carpets and rugs, but had also contained hospital waste, officials said.

"The shipper had agreed to take back these 21 contain-

■ BEIJING

16 DEAD IN CHINESE COAL MINE TRAGEDY



Sixteen workers died and one is in a critical condition after being trapped underground in a coal mine in southwest China on Sunday, reported state broadcaster CCTV.

A conveyor belt caught fire in the early hours of the morning, state news agency Xinhua cited the government as saying, which produced dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. Medics are fighting to save the life of the remaining survivor, CCTV reported.

■ TOKYO

CHINA'S FM MAY VISIT JAPAN IN OCT

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi may visit Japan as early as October, a government source said on Sunday, after the leaders of the two countries agreed to pursue high-level contacts to promote regional and international stability.

Wang would hold talks with his Japanese counterpart Toshimitsu Motegi and Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga during the trip, the source said.

The visit would come after Suga and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed during a phone conversation on Friday to have more high-level contacts.

— Reuters

N Korea warns Seoul's navy over search for dead official

SEOUL: North Korea said on Sunday it is searching for the body a South Korean official killed by its troops, but warned that South Korean naval operations in the area threatened to raise tensions by intruding across a disputed sea border.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un issued a rare apology on Friday for the fatal shooting of the South Korean fisheries official in North Korean waters, according to Seoul.

South Korea's military has accused the North's soldiers of killing the man, dousing his body in fuel and setting it on fire near the sea border.

After South Korean President Moon Jae-in convened a ministers' meeting to discuss North Korea on Sunday, the presidential Blue House reiterated calls for Pyongyang to allow a joint investigation into the killing. It urged the restoration of military communication hotlines that the North severed earlier this year as relations soured.

North Korean state news agency KCNA called the killing an "awful case which should not have happened" but accused South Korean naval operations near in the area of crossing into North Korean waters.

"We urge the south side to immediately halt the intrusion across the military demarcation line in the west sea that may lead to escalation of tensions," KCNA said.

A spokesman for South Korea's Ministry of National Defence had no immediate comment on the North's accusations.

The South has been searching only in waters south of the Northern Limit Line, a contested sea demarcation between the two Koreas that dates to the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, South Korea's Yonhap news agency said, quoting an unnamed coast guard



South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff officer Lieutenant-General Ahn Young-ho during a briefing on a missing official near the western border sea at the Defence Ministry in Seoul. — AFP File Photo

N Korea accuses S Korean ships of crossing contested border

official. South Korea has mobilised 39 vessels, including 16 naval ships, and six aircraft for the search, which continued on Sunday despite the North Korean complaints, Yonhap said.

North Korea was beginning its own search operation to recover the body, KCNA said. "We also took more necessary security measures in order to make sure that no more incident spoiling the relations of trust and respect between the north and the south

would happen in any case," the report added, without elaborating.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in convened an emergency meeting with his security ministers on Sunday and said Seoul had requested a joint probe with the North on the shooting.

"The North's swift apology and its promise to prevent a recurrence were assessed positively," Moon's office said in a statement.

Apologies from North Korea are unusual and the message from Kim came with inter-Korean ties in a deep freeze and nuclear negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington deadlocked. There have been no North Korean media reports on the contents of the letter from Kim. — AFP

■ PROTEST AGAINST NEW FARM BILLS



Farmers block railway tracks during a protest against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government following the recent passing of new farm bills in parliament on the outskirts of Amritsar. — AFP

Virus curfew to be lifted in Australia



Australia's Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews during a press conference in Melbourne. — AFP

MELBOURNE: An overnight curfew in Australia's second-largest city will be lifted this week, officials said on Sunday, even as the global coronavirus toll inched towards one million dead.

Despite the number of infections worldwide passing 32 million — with the US state of New York reporting a fresh spike — more than 10,000 anti-lockdown protesters demonstrated in central London ahead of the re-imposition of restrictions there. In more positive news, residents of the Chinese city of Wuhan — where the virus emerged last year — reported a hesitant return to normalcy, while the French Open got underway at Roland Garros in Paris.

In Australia, Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews said Melbourne residents would be free from Monday to leave their homes for work, exercise, shop for essentials, or provide care after active cases in the state fell below 400 for the first time since June 30.

The relaxation of the curfew, imposed August 2, comes after 16 new infections and two deaths were reported on Sunday. People will still be confined to within five kilometres of their homes, and fines for breaching other restrictions will be increased to almost Aus\$ 5,000 (\$3,515).

Andrews said several other restrictions, including on religious services and childcare centres, will also be lifted.

It was a different story in the UK, now battling to contain a mounting second wave, as thousands marched in London on Saturday against coronavirus restrictions.

At least 10 people were arrested as police moved in with batons to disperse more than 10,000 protesters gathered in Trafalgar Square.

This week Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government imposed a ban on gatherings of more than six people and ordered pubs and restaurants to close at 10 pm in a bid to slow the spread of the virus, which has claimed 42,000 lives in the country so far — making it the worst-affected nation in Europe.

In New York state — once the epicentre of the US outbreak — new infections rose for the first time since June to above 1,000 a day, local officials said. In India, meanwhile, infections closed in on six million on Sunday as Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on people to keep wearing face masks in public.

"They are potent tools to save the life of every citizen," he said. Health ministry figures showed that the total number of cases had risen to 5,992,532. India is expected to take over the United States — which has reported more than seven million cases so far — as the worst-hit country in the next few weeks. — AFP

Yangon under strain as Myanmar covid cases surge

YANGON: Myanmar's biggest city Yangon has rapidly built new quarantine centres as it scrambles to contain the commercial hub's first significant coronavirus outbreak, with overworked medical staff fearing thousands more cases to come.

The Southeast Asian nation has one of the world's most impoverished healthcare systems, but had until recently remained relatively unscathed by the pandemic.

Last month there were fewer than 400 total confirmed cases nationwide and just six deaths from the disease.

But rising case numbers in the country's west quickly spread elsewhere and infection numbers have doubled every week.

They are expected to pass 10,000 in the coming days with a current death toll of 174.

Yangon has seen the vast majority of patients and is now back under a strict lockdown many fear will devastate the livelihoods of the city's poorest inhabitants.



An under construction emergency building to be used as an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for COVID-19 coronavirus patients at a football stadium in Yangon. — AFP

Around 6,000 people have been quarantined in the city, and state media reported on Saturday that seven new facilities had been built to isolate another 1,000 people. "We estimate there could be 10,000 more suspected cases out there," said Ye Nyei Nyei Htut, a doctor in a city clinic.

Medical staff around Yangon were "exhausted," he added. Residents have been told to stay at home unless working in certain key industries or shopping for food or medical supplies.

Domestic travel out of the city is forbidden and a ban on international commercial flights has been extended until the end of October.

Myanmar's civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi has placed herself front and centre in the nation's fight against the disease.

In an address to the nation on Friday, she urged the country to ignore the spread of false rumours and "ridiculous" treatments.

"Don't believe that certain foods or drinks could relieve the disease," she said. "Get medical tests at the hospitals." — AFP



Trump nominates conservative judge Barrett to Supreme Court

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Saturday nominated Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, and she pledged to become a justice in the mold of the late staunch conservative Antonin Scalia, setting another milestone in Trump’s rightward shift of the top US judicial body. Trump’s announcement during a flag-festooned White House Rose Garden ceremony — with Barrett, 48, by his side and her seven children on hand — sets off a scramble by Senate Republicans to confirm her as the president has requested before Election Day in 5-1/2 weeks, when he will be seeking a second term in office.

If confirmed by the Senate to replace liberal icon Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who died at age 87 on September 18, Barrett would become the fifth woman ever to serve on the court and would push its conservative majority to a commanding 6-3.

Like Trump’s two other appointees, Neil Gorsuch in 2017 and Brett Kavanaugh in 2018, Barrett is young enough that she could serve for decades in the lifetime job, leaving a lasting conservative imprint.

Barrett is the youngest Supreme Court nominee since conservative Clarence Thomas was 43 in 1991. Scalia, who died in 2016, was one of the most influential conservative justices in recent history. Barrett previously served as a clerk for Scalia on the high court and described him as her mentor, citing his “incalculable influence” on her life.

“His judicial philosophy is mine too: a judge must apply the law as written. Judges are not policymakers,” Barrett said. On the court, Scalia voted to curb abortion rights, dissented when the court legalised marriage — he called it a “judicial putsch” — and backed broad gun rights, among other positions. With Trump’s fellow Republicans holding a 53-47 Senate majority, confirmation appears certain, although Democrats may try to make it as difficult as possible.



US President Donald Trump announces his US Supreme Court nominee, Judge Amy Coney Barrett in White House, Washington, DC. — AFP

An emboldened Supreme Court conservative majority could shift the United States to the right on hot-button issues by, among other things, curbing abortion rights, expanding religious rights, striking down gun control laws, halting the expansion of rights, and endorsing new restrictions on voting rights.

Barrett, a devout Roman Catholic who earned her law degree and taught at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, was appointed by Trump to the Chicago-based 7th US Circuit Court of Appeals in 2017 and is a favourite of religious conservatives, a key Trump voter bloc. “Today it is my honour to nominate one of our nation’s most brilliant and gifted legal minds to the Supreme Court,” Trump said.

Trump said Barrett would be the first mother of school-age children ever on the court. Along with her lawyer husband, her children, two of whom were adopted from Haiti, were in the audience. Later on Saturday



A protester reacts while demonstrating with others outside the US Supreme Court. — AFP

Barrett is the youngest SC nominee since conservative Clarence Thomas was 43 in 1991

evening, the president drew loud cheers from thousands of supporters at a campaign rally in Middletown, Pennsylvania, when he called Barrett

“an extraordinary scholar” who would defend their “God-given rights and freedoms.”

“She should be running for president,” he said, comparing her academic record to that of his Democratic rival Joe Biden. Barrett also praised Ginsburg, saying the late justice was “a woman of enormous talent and consequence” and mentioned Ginsburg’s long friendship with Scalia.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell issued a statement praising Barrett and pledging to move forward quickly with the confirmation process. But Biden repeated his call for the appointment to be made by the winner of the November 3 election.

“The Senate should not act on this vacancy until after the American people select their next president and the next Congress,” Biden said. Democrats are still furious over McConnell’s 2016 refusal to consider President Barack Obama’s Supreme Court nomination of Merrick Garland because it came during an election

Thousands rally against Belarus president



An opposition supporter waves former white-red-white flag of Belarus with the Pahonia coat of arms during a rally to protest the country’s presidential inauguration in Minsk. — AFP

MINSK: Belarus police on Sunday arrested dozens of people during a weekly protest that drew diminished crowds in support of protest figure Svetlana Tikhonovskaya days after the strongman president staged a secret inauguration.

Tens of thousands of protesters including prominent athletes, drummers and a choir marched through Minsk despite rain but the column was visibly smaller compared to previous weekend protests against Alexander Lukashenko.

Armoured vehicles and water cannon were deployed on the streets ahead of the protest, several metro stations in central Minsk were closed, and the Palace of Independence, Lukashenko’s residence, was heavily guarded by riot police and barriers.

Viasna rights group said more than 40 people were detained as police sought to break up the protest.

Police used tear gas in the second largest city of Gomel and stun grenades in the eastern city of Mogilev, Viasna added.

The opposition movement calling for an end to Lukashenko’s regime

has kept up a wave of large-scale demonstrations since his disputed win last month, with around 100,000 or more people taking to the streets on previous weekends.

Ahead of Sunday’s march the top opposition Telegram channel, Nexta Live, which has more than two million subscribers, urged Belarusians to stage a symbolic “people’s inauguration of the real president” Tikhonovskaya.

Tikhonovskaya, who claimed victory over Lukashenko in the election and has taken shelter in neighbouring Lithuania, said she supported the demonstrators.

“Today is the 50th day of our protests,” she said in a video address.

“We’ve come out to stop this regime, and we are doing this peacefully.”

Sunday’s march came a day after riot police in balaclavas detained 150 people at women’s rallies where protesters chanted “Sveta the president”.

Central squares and shopping centres where protesters have sought refuge from violent police detentions during earlier rallies were closed, journalists reported. — AFP

Swiss voters clearly reject curbs on EU immigration

ZURICH: Swiss voters overwhelmingly rejected on Sunday a right-wing party’s attempt to scrap a pact allowing the free movement of people from the European Union, opting for stability amid the economic uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Swiss People’s Party (SVP) had forced a binding referendum on the EU agreement in a bid to curb immigration to the country where foreigners make up a quarter of the population. The measure lost by 62 per cent-38 per cent margin.

The SVP — the biggest party in parliament — has long pushed to take back control of immigration, echoing some arguments pro-Brexit politicians used in the run-up to Britain’s exit

Voters narrowly back \$6.5 billion fighter jet purchase

from the EU. It won a referendum on the issue in 2014, only to see parliament water down its implementation.

Opponents said the plan would have robbed business of skilled workers and torpedoed accords that enhance non-EU member Switzerland’s access to the crucial EU single market.

Under Switzerland’s system of direct democracy, the referendum could have forced the government to annul the EU agreement if negotiations did not produce a deal on ending the pact voluntarily, something Brussels has



Backlit electoral posters advertise a right-wing Swiss People Party (SVP)-backed initiative that voted demanding that the government scrap the freedom of movement agreement with the EU within a year. — AFP

ruled out. A “guillotine clause” meant that ending free movement would have toppled other bilateral pacts on land and air transport, procurement, technical barriers to trade, and research.

Around two-thirds of the 2.1 million foreigners living in Switzerland in 2019 were citizens of the EU, as well as Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, which with Switzerland are members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

More than 450,000 Swiss live in the EU.

The domestic political battle immediately turned to Switzerland’s biggest foreign policy headache: a stalled treaty meant to cement ties with the EU but which critics say infringes

too much on Swiss sovereignty and would never win a referendum. The treaty would have Bern routinely adopt single market rules and create a new platform to resolve disputes.

With questions open over state aid, rules to protect high Swiss wages, and access to welfare benefits, the Swiss have dragged their feet while trying to forge a domestic consensus, triggering a row over cross-border stock trading.

Amid relatively high turnout, voters narrowly blocked an attempt to make it easier to shoot wolves deemed a threat to livestock. In an unexpectedly close vote, they approved the government’s plans to buy new fighter jets for up to 6 billion Swiss francs (\$6.46 billion).

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

BAKU

Azerbaijan’s parliament approves martial law

Azerbaijan’s parliament approved the introduction of martial law across the country and imposed curfews on Sunday, Hikmet Hajiyev, an aide to the president, said. The moves come after clashes on Sunday morning between Azeri and Armenian forces over the breakaway province of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is inside Azerbaijan but run by ethnic Armenians. The clashes have reignited concerns about instability in the South Caucasus, a corridor for pipelines transporting oil and gas to world markets.



WARSAW

Czech Republic mulls anti-Covid measures

The Czech Republic mulls introducing new measures against the coronavirus pandemic in the country, including limits on social gatherings or remote learning in secondary schools, Health Minister Roman Prymula said.

Only groups of no more than 10-20 people may be allowed to participate in leisure activities, the CTK news agency quoted Prymulaas saying on Czech television on Sunday.

This limit could be set to0 in case of weddings, he said.

Prymulad said he did not expect closures of primary schools, but universities should use remote learning for at least one month to start the academic year.

Potential decisions on new measures may be announced next week.

Their aim would be to reduce the virus reproduction rate, which currently stands at below 1.3 in the Czech Republic, the official said. Any value above one indicates that the epidemic is gaining steam.

BRUSSELS

Protest against possible new govt in Belgium

Thousands of supporters of the Flemish far-right party Vlaams Belang protested on Sunday against a possible new Belgian government, as year-long coalition talks were nearing a breakthrough.

According to police, the protest consisted of 4,500 cars with an average of three passengers each, news agency Belga reported. The protesters criticised that the planned new government was more left-wing than foreseen by the result of the 2019 parliamentary elections, in which Vlaams Belang saw a surge in



support. “On May 26 the Flemish people sent a stark signal that the leadership should be more Flemish and right-wing.

I hear your hands talking... !

As an individual, what is the first thing which comes to your mind when you hear the word communication?!

Possibly, you think of speaking as most people relate to communication with speech. However, there are many other ways of communication that a person can use to talk with others. Facial expressions, gestures, pointing with hands, writing, drawing, text message and eye contact are just to name a few ways of communication. Nevertheless, for communication to be effective, people have to be able to understand what others are trying to communicate to them.

Communication is a very complicated process so it is not surprising that the brain has more than one area dedicated to communication. Different areas of the brain connect together to collect, understand and respond to all the different types of communication. That is why people interact with each other through different languages and means of communication, which sometimes are based on the context of a conversation. The understanding ability of the people involved in a particular conversation could be the reason to define which tool or way of communication should be used!

Speaking to a person with communication difficulties is harder than talking to other normal people.



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FOR COMMUNICATION TO BE EFFECTIVE, PEOPLE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT OTHERS ARE TRYING TO TELL THEM

Hence, a different audience requires a different language or way of communication. Case in a point, having a conversation with a baby requires a different language and skills of communications. Delivering a message, an expression or a feeling to a baby is undoubtedly harder than conveying the same message to an adult.

This diversity on ways of communication makes some people to learn different languages as a second language. Speaking or at least understanding the basics of other languages can be an icebreaker to start a conversation with others speaking that particular language. Perhaps, learning some phrases in other languages to greet serve as an effective starter for a friendly conversation. It is believed that understanding or speaking other languages is a doorway to wisdom!

However, in order to acquire the spoken form of a new language, one should master the sounds or phonemes that make the language and understand how to arrange words to make meaningful utterances.

Learners must also acquire new vocabularies from that language as well as practice dialogues in different contexts with native speakers. Once this learning process starts, one has to keep in mind that the journey to multilingualism feels like a never-ending road trip with countless humps.

One of the most interesting languages

that are unusually learned or spoken among people is the sign language. It is a very significant tool to communicate with deaf people and the world has designated a special day, September 23, to celebrate its importance and acknowledge the human rights of deaf people. According to the World Federation of the Deaf, there are approximately 72 million deaf people worldwide. More than 80 per cent of them live in developing countries and collectively, they use more than 300 different sign languages.

The International Day of Sign Languages is a significant date presenting the opportunity to support and protect the linguistic identity and cultural diversity of all deaf people and other sign language users. According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, around 14.2 per cent of individuals with hearing disability out of the total number of people with disabilities in the Sultanate are registered in disabled person cardholders system.

Sign language is based on the idea that sight is the most useful tool for deaf people to communicate and receive information. They use their hands to speak and move their mouths to illustrate what their hands' signs indicate. To deaf people, sign language is the noblest gift that Allah has given to them! A message from deaf people says, "Just because I can't speak, doesn't mean I don't have anything to say".

MULTIPLE CRISES

Lebanon reels after efforts to form govt collapse

BACHIR EL KHOURY

Lebanon was left reeling on Sunday without the slightest prospect of ending multiple crises, after its premier-designate stepped down following the failure of talks to form a government, despite international pressure.

Mustapha Adib's resignation on Saturday ended efforts to hammer out a reformist government in the wake of a colossal August 4 explosion in Beirut that killed 190 people, injured thousands and ravaged large parts of the capital.

Political parties had pledged in early September, during a visit to Lebanon by French President Emmanuel Macron, to form within two weeks a cabinet of independent ministers tasked with ending the country's economic malaise.

"As the efforts to form a government reached their final phase, it became apparent to me that this consensus... was no longer there", Adib said on Saturday.

Under the Lebanese constitution, the president must now hold further talks to nominate another prime minister to form a government, but it is a process that risks

dragging out and even failing.

As the efforts to form a government reached their final phase, it became apparent to me that this consensus... was no longer there

MUSTAPHA ADIB
Premier-designate

"I don't expect a government anytime soon", said Sami Atallah, who heads the Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies. "There was a chance, there was a lot of pressure to form a government and it didn't happen", he said, adding there was a "bigger problem"

of geopolitical tensions, especially between the United States and Iran.

Adib's efforts were hampered by the claims of two formations, the Hizbullah movement, and its ally Amal, led by parliament speaker Nabih Berri, who demanded the finance portfolio.

According to observers, the allies dug in their heels after recent US sanctions were imposed on a minister of the Amal party and two companies affiliated with Hizbullah. Adib's decision to step aside 26 days after his appointment has left the people of Lebanon feeling as though they are back to square one.

"The page of Mustapha Adib has turned", the French-language *L'Orient-Le Jour* newspaper declared on Sunday. It described the return to the drawing board as "a leap into the unknown, even a highway to hell".

Last week, Lebanese President Michel Aoun warned the country was headed to "hell" without a new cabinet.

The Arabic-language newspaper *Annahar* warned of "grave repercussions", and said all eyes were on Macron, who is due to hold a news conference on Sunday evening. The UN envoy to Lebanon, Jan Kubis, on Saturday reacted with disbelief: "Such a degree of irresponsibility when the fate of Lebanon and its people is at stake!"

"Politicians, have you really scuppered this unique chance created by France?"

Even before the devastating Beirut port blast, the country was already mired in its worst economic crisis in decades, and its entrenched political class was dealing with widespread popular discontent.

After the country for the first time defaulted on its sovereign debt in March, it launched talks with the International Monetary Fund towards lifting the country out of crisis, but those discussions soon stalled. — AFP

NAIL-BITING CONTEST

In first Trump-Biden debate, US will finally see its choice

SEBASTIAN SMITH

The volatile US presidential election enters a fierce new stage this week when Donald Trump and Joe Biden hold their first debate — a television spectacle finally allowing Americans to witness the two antagonists head to head.

Tuesday's clash, coming right after Trump defied Democrats and nominated a conservative to replace the late Supreme Court liberal icon Ruth Bader Ginsburg, could again upend an already nail-biting contest.

Biden, 77, leads in polls against the Republican incumbent, both nationwide and in most of the crucial swing states set to provide the decisive electoral college count on November 3.

But Trump, 74, is campaigning hard, criss-crossing those battlegrounds on Air Force One while Biden runs a far lower profile strategy. And with his history of skilful showmanship and brutal debate tactics, Trump is hoping the meeting in Cleveland will put him back on top.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions this has been a mostly long-distance election season. That puts even more weight on the first of three 90-minute debates, where tens of millions of Americans will weigh up two men who each accuses the other of posing an existential threat to the United States.

Trump sees his nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court — potentially tilting the court to the



US President Donald Trump (L) speaks as he makes his way to board Air Force One before departing from Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, and Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden speaking in Wilmington, Delaware. — AFP

TRUMP SEES HIS NOMINATION OF AMY CONEY BARRETT TO THE SUPREME COURT AS A FUNDAMENTAL BOOST TO HIS CAMPAIGN

right for years — as a fundamental boost to his troubled reelection campaign. But the live TV debate will be a wild card.

Trump needs to break through the bad news of 200,000 coronavirus deaths, the long-lasting economic fallout and fatigue among swaths of the country at the constant scandal and upheaval roiling his

administration.

And Trump has huge confidence in his prowess on stage.

Yet unlike the fawning treatment he enjoys during his weekly call-ins to Fox News or the adoring atmosphere at rallies, he'll find himself facing a man painting him as "toxic" in front of the entire country.

— AFP



DUPLANTIS NAILS 16TH STRAIGHT WIN



Sweden’s Armand Duplantis in action during the men’s pole vault during the Diamond League Athletics in Doha. – Reuters

DOHA: Sweden’s Armand Duplantis maintained his amazing form to turn the tables on world champion Sam Hendricks for a 16th consecutive victory in the men’s pole vault at Friday’s Diamond League meet in Doha.

American Hendricks was the last person to beat the Swede, in Doha’s Khalifa Stadium at last year’s world championships.

But a couple of kilometres away at the more intimate Qatari Sports Club, Duplantis walked away with a victory with a best vault of 5.82 metres, far off the world outdoor record of 6.15m he set in Rome last week.

Duplantis failed once at 5.92 and also 6.00m before calling it a day.

“It’s been a fantastic season and I enjoyed sharing the moment tonight with the guys,” said Duplantis.

“I enjoyed the jump and the rivalry with Sam. It’s been fun with him as we have always got back at each other.”

Echoing the views of many athletes, Duplantis added: “It’s been a rollercoaster year, sort of. I broke the indoor world record earlier in the year and I was enjoying the season but all of a sudden the pandemic came and everything shut down and no one knew what will happen next.

“It’s great (to be) back and I hope things keep improving.”

Hendricks was second on



“It’s been a fantastic season and I enjoyed sharing the moment tonight with the guys

ARMAND DUPLANTIS

Swedish pole vaulter

countback and France’s Renaud Lavillenie third in humid, hot conditions with a temperature of 32 degrees Celsius (90F).

ELAINE SHINES IN 100M

On the track, Elaine Thompson-Herah of Jamaica followed up on



Jamaica’s Elaine Thompson-Herah celebrates after winning the Women’s 100m during the IAAF Diamond League in Doha. – AFP

her 10.85sec in Rome with a facile victory in the 100m in 10.87sec, Ivorian Marie-Josée Ta Lou a distant second in 11.21.

“I am happy to win but my major focus is to finish the year healthy,” said Thompson-Herah.

“Preparations for the Olympics is next on my agenda and it begins in earnest.”

Kenya’s Olympic 1500m champion Faith Kipyegon timed a world-leading time of 1:57.61 in winning the women’s 800m, an event won by sidelined South African Caster Semenya in the last three meets in the Qatari capital.

“I am happy to win here in Doha considering this is my second 800m

race after about three years break from it,” Kipyegon said, adding that she was looking forward to turning the page on the coronavirus pandemic.

“The year has been a disturbing one for everyone and I am glad it is coming to an end. We can’t wait enough for 2021 to be here.”

There was no such luck for Kipyegon’s compatriot Timothy Cheruiyot, the world 1500m champion struggling as he, too, stepped down to race the men’s 800m. Two-lap specialist Ferguson Rotich won in 1:44.16, 0.40sec ahead of Briton Elliot Giles, Cheruiyot eventually coming in eighth well off the pace.

There was a success for another Kenyan who had chosen to swap her normal distance, two-time world 5,000m champion Hellen Obiri winning a high-quality 3,000m in 8:22.54, with seven runners nailing personal bests. “The season has not been the best for everyone but I am happy it is coming to an end. We are all focusing on next year — an Olympic year,” said Obiri.

In-form Stewart McSweyn bettered his own Australian record for a new personal best in the men’s 1500m, sprinting away for the victory in an impressive 3:30.51. “I wasn’t in the best of shape coming into this race but to win tonight is something I am very delighted about,” said McSweyn. — AFP

STAR ACT



Los Angeles Lakers’ LeBron James (23) is defended by Denver Nuggets’ Torrey Craig (3) in game five at AdventHealth Arena. – USA Today Sports

LEBRON POWERS LA LAKERS INTO NBA FINALS

MIAMI: The Los Angeles Lakers, fueled by a triple-double from superstar LeBron James, beat the Denver Nuggets 117-107 on Saturday to reach the NBA Finals.

With the win in the league’s quarantine bubble in Orlando, the Lakers completed a 4-1 victory over the Nuggets in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals.

James scored 16 of his 38 points in the fourth quarter as the Lakers remained perfect in elimination games this post-season.

Denver, already the first team to twice come back from 1-3 series deficits in the same play-offs, couldn’t work the magic again.

James added 16 rebounds and 10 assists, and Anthony Davis scored 27 points for the Lakers, who are back in the championship series for the 32nd time — and the first time since they lifted the trophy for the 16th time in 2010. Kobe Bryant was NBA Finals MVP that year, and it has been an emotional road to the finals this season for the Lakers after the death of Bryant in a helicopter crash in January.

“Every time you put on the purple and gold you think about his legacy, you think about him and what he meant to this franchise for 20-plus years,” James said of Bryant.

The Lakers will take on the winners of the Eastern Conference final series between the Boston Celtics and Miami Heat. The Heat lead that series 3-2 with game six coming up on Monday.

“We’re going to enjoy it tonight, but we understand we’ve got bigger fish to fry,” James said as the Western Conference title was celebrated on the

court. “We understand there’s a bigger goal.

Nikola Jokic and Jerami Grant scored 20 points apiece for the Nuggets and Jamal Murray added 19 points with eight assists despite being slowed by injury.

A tight first quarter that featured nine lead changes ended with the Lakers up 33-30, with reserve Alex Caruso pushing the Lakers’ lead in the closing seconds with a layup off an assist by James.

With 14 points from James in the second quarter, the Lakers began to separate themselves, leading by as many as 11 points and taking a 61-51 lead into halftime.

It looked like the Lakers might run away with it when they built a 16-point lead early in the third quarter.

But Denver kept chipping away. Murray drove for a basket and was fouled, converting the free throw to cut the Lakers’ lead to two points. Murray’s two free throws with 11 seconds left in the third made it 84-84 before Davis drained a three-pointer to put the Lakers up 87-84 heading into the final period.

‘AMAZING’ LEBRON

That’s when James took over. Fouled on back-to-back baskets he made the free-throws to stretch the Lakers lead to 95-88 with 9:33 remaining.

James scored nine straight points late in the period — a stretch capped by a three-pointer that put the Lakers up 115-103 with 1:57 left. “I don’t know if I’ve ever witnessed a guy take over a game the way he did in the fourth quarter tonight in person,” Lakers coach Frank Vogel said of James. “It was remarkable.” — AFP

Lakers are back in the championship series for the 32nd time – and the first time since they lifted the trophy for the 16th time in 2010

SHORT TAKES

MIAMI

Long takes two-shot lead at PGA Puntacana

Adam Long fired an eight-under-par 64 to open up a two-shot lead at the PGA Tour Corales Puntacana Championship on Saturday.

The 33-year-old American carded eight birdies and 10 pars in a flawless bogey-free round at the Corales Puntacana resort in the Dominican Republic. Long went on a run of three consecutive birdies on the 12th, 13th and 14th holes to move two shots clear of the pack on 17 under overall.

Second-round leader Hudson Swafford will lead the pursuit of Long in Sunday’s final round after a battling three-under-par 69.

Canada’s Mackenzie Hughes is alone in third place on 14 under



after a five-under-par 67.

The biggest move came from India’s Anirban Lahiri. He jumped 47 places up the leaderboard with an eight-under-par 64. — AFP

WARSAW

30 test positive for COVID-19 at Polish club

Thirty players and staff of Pogon Szczecin, a Polish top-flight football team, have tested positive for COVID-19, the club said in a statement on Sunday. Among the infected are 21 players and two members of the coaching staff, the club said.

Dozens of tests were conducted among the staff of the Ekstraklasa club on Friday and Saturday after several players displayed flu-like symptoms earlier in the week. Those infected are in home quarantine, the club said.

In view of the positive

tests, next week’s game between Pogon and Jagiellonia Bialystok has been postponed.

Pogon’s Sunday away game at Lech Poznan had been postponed earlier at the request of the Poznan club, who wanted more time to prepare for their Europa League play-off on Thursday against Belgian side Charleroi.

Pogon had protested Poznan’s request, saying that Poznan had a large, strong squad and that they would have four days to rest after the game. — dpa

RIYADH

AFC dismisses Al Hilal’s appeal over CL withdrawal

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) on Saturday dismissed a protest lodged by Al Hilal against their withdrawal from the Asian Champions League because they were able to name only 11 players for their final Group B fixture.

The Saudi club, who had already qualified for the last 16, said they had been determined to defend their title despite 30 players and staff becoming infected with COVID-19 in the Qatar hub where Asia’s premier club competition resumed last week. But AFC rules state teams must name a minimum of 13 players in their matchday squads and Wednesday’s game did not go ahead. The AFC ruled that Al Hilal



were “deemed to have withdrawn from the competition.” Al Hilal’s departure means Shabab Al Ahli Dubai progressed to the knockout stage from Group B along with Uzbeki club Pakhtakor. — Reuters

SCIVER STARS AS ENGLAND SEAL SERIES

Nat Sciver starred for England Women as her quick-fire 82 led the hosts to a 20-run win over the West Indies in Saturday's Twenty20 clash in London. Sciver's 61-ball innings was her T20 best and played a key role in England reaching 154-6 in Derby and sealing the series 3-0. West Indies were restricted to 134-5 under lights.



SCHUTT, GARDNER GUIDE AUSTRALIA TO T20 WIN

Australia's Megan Schutt took two vital wickets in the closing stages as the world champions beat New Zealand by 17 runs in Saturday's opening T20 clash in Brisbane. With the visitors closing in on Australia's total of 138, Schutt claimed the vital wickets of Katey Martin and Suzie Bates in the 18th over to leave the Kiwis at 105-5.

QUARTARARO

WINS THIRD RACE OF YEAR

Monster Energy Yamaha's Italian rider Valentino Rossi (L) and Petronas Yamaha SRT's French rider Fabio Quartararo compete during the MotoGP race of the Moto Grand Prix de Catalunya at the Circuit de Catalunya in Montmelo, Barcelona. — AFP

BARCELONA: France's Fabio Quartararo produced a thrilling and perfect ride to claim a resounding victory at the Catalonia MotoGP on Sunday, his third of the season which sends him top of the world championship standings.

Joan Mir came through to take second and is now eight points behind Quartararo in the standings while Alex Rins completed the podium.

The race began in dramatic fashion with Andrea Dovizioso, who led the title race by a single point from the Frenchman and Maverick Vinales, taken out in the opening lap after tangling with Johann Zarcho.

Quartararo, on a Yamaha, won the opening two races of the season but

has struggled since then, failing to reach the podium in the last five races.

But the Frenchman, who showed signs of a return to form in the last race at Emilia Romagna when he came fourth, was back to his best in Barcelona.

"The race was very hard for me," said Quartararo after the race. "I am not completely 100 per cent but I went step by step and I am very happy with this win."

"I suffered in my head a lot in the last month, not getting on the podium, it wasn't easy."

Starting from pole, alongside the fellow Yamahas of Franco Morbidelli and Valentino Rossi, he set a fierce pace which put the pressure on the



I am not completely 100 per cent but I went step by step and I am very happy with this win

FABIO QUARTARARO

French MotoGP rider

field, especially those trying to close him down. One who suffered was Rossi who had taken advantage of a wobble by Morbidelli with 11 laps to go to move into second spot.

Two laps later, however, trying to make up ground on the flying Quartararo, the 41-year-old slid into the gravel on turn two, his race over.

Morbidelli, who won in San Marino two races ago, looked good to take second but could not hold off Mir who swept past him with two laps to go. He then lost a place on the podium as Rins, who started down in 13th, put the gloss on an excellent race.

Quartararo heads the standings with 108 points, eight clear of Mir.

— AFP

Morgan lauds Gill in Kolkata's big win over SRH



DUBAI: England's Eoin Morgan heaped praise on young Indian opener Shubman Gill after the batting duo led Kolkata Knight Riders to a comprehensive win in the Indian Premier League on Saturday.

Gill and Morgan put on an unbeaten fourth-wicket partnership of 92 as Kolkata chased down their target of 143 with two overs to spare and win by seven wickets against David Warner's Sunrisers Hyderabad. Gill top-scored with 70 off 62 deliveries and the left-handed Morgan hit the winning boundary in his 29-ball 42 as Kolkata recorded their first victory in two matches.

"I didn't have to tell Gill a great deal to be honest, beautiful to watch," Morgan, England's limited-overs captain, said of his 21-year-old batting partner who was named man of the match. "Good bat swing,

very languid style, magnificent to watch. He's good kid, very hungry to learn and I would love to bat with him once again."

Kolkata's Australian paceman Pat Cummins returned impressive figures of 1-19 from his four overs to help keep down Hyderabad to 142 for four. Cummins — the most expensive foreign player for the 2020 season with a \$2.17 million fee — got Jonny Bairstow bowled for five and kept down the lid on SRH scoring with an economy rate of 4.75.

"Patty Cummins, as he does, (bowled) Test match line and length," said Warner, who made 36.

Manish Pandey top-scored with 51 for 2016 winners Hyderabad, who have lost both their games so far, before being caught and bowled by West Indian quick Andre Russell.

— AFP

SCOREBOARD

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD	
D Warner c&b V Chakravathy	36
J Bairstow b P Cummins	5
M Pandey c&b A Russell	51
W Saha run out (P Cummins)	30
M Nabi not out	11
A Sharma not out	2
Extras (2b 2lb 0nb 0pen 3w)	7
Total (20 overs)	142-4
Fall of wickets: 1-24, 2-59, 3-121, 4-138	
Bowling: Sunil Narine 4-0-31-0, Pat Cummins 4-0-19-1, Shivam Mavi 2-0-15-0, Kuldeep Yadav 2-0-15-0, Varun Chakravathy 4-0-25-1, Kamlesh Nagarkoti 2-0-17-0, Andre Russell 2-0-16-1	
KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS	
Shubman Gill not out	70
S Narine c D Warner b K Ahmed	26
N Rana c W Saha b T Natarajan	0
D Karthik lbw R Khan	0
E Morgan not out	42
Extras (0b 2lb 1nb 0pen 4w)	7
Total (18 overs)	145-3
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-43, 3-53	
Bowling: Bhuvneshwar 3-0-29-0, Khaleel Ahmed 3-0-28-1, T Natarajan 3-0-27-1, Rashid Khan 4-0-25-1, Mohammad Nabi 4-0-23-0, Abhishek Sharma 1-0-11-0	

Eoin Morgan and Shubman Gill of Kolkata Knight Riders shake hands with Sunrisers Hyderabad players after the IPL match at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi. — BCCI



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sport



Mercedes' Finnish driver Valtteri Bottas steers his car during the Russian Grand Prix at the Sochi Autodrom Circuit in Sochi. — AFP

Bottas exploits Hamilton's penalties

■ BRITON'S OVERALL LEAD TRIMMED TO 44 POINTS ■ VERSTAPPEN SECOND, HAMILTON THIRD

SOCHI, Russia: Valtteri Bottas took full advantage of a troubled day for his Mercedes team-mate Lewis Hamilton to claim the ninth win of his career with a measured drive to victory in Sunday's incident-packed Russian Grand Prix.

The Finn swooped to take second place at the start and inherited the lead when the runaway series leader and six-time champion took an extended pit-stop to serve two five-second penalties for irregular pre-race practice starts.

A disgruntled Hamilton, aiming to win and equal Michael Schumacher's record of 91 Grand Prix triumphs, re-joined in 11th place, but fought back to finish third behind Bottas and Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

His second win in Russia and second this season reinvigorated Bottas' challenge for the drivers' title and reduced Hamilton's lead to 44 points.

Sergio Perez came home fourth for Racing Point ahead of Renault's Daniel Ricciardo, who had to take a five second penalty for an infringement, and Charles Leclerc, who was sixth for Ferrari.

Russian Grand Prix

Sochi Autodrome

1	V. Bottas (FIN)	1h34:00.364	26
		Mercedes	
2	M. Verstappen (NED)	at 7.729 secs	18
		Red Bull	
3	L. Hamilton (GBR)	at 22.729	15
		Mercedes	
4	S. Perez (MEX)	at 30.558	12
		Racing Point	
5	D. Ricciardo (AUS)	at 52.065	10
		Renault	

Esteban Ocon was seventh for Renault ahead of local hero Daniil Kvyat and his Alpha Tauri team-mate Pierre Gasly and Alex Albon, who was also given a five-second penalty, in the

second Red Bull.

Hamilton did not want to talk about his penalty. "It doesn't matter. It's done now. I'll take the points and move on, but congratulations to Valtteri."

Sept 27



Driver standings

Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	205
Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	161
Max Verstappen (NED)	128
Lando Norris (GBR)	65
Alexander Albon (THA)	64

Teams

Mercedes	366
Red Bull	192
McLaren	106
Racing Point	104

AFP



Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas celebrates with the trophy on the podium. — Reuters

"A big thank-you to the fans here this weekend — spasibo," he said. "It's not the greatest day, but it is what it is..."

Bottas said: "It's very nice to get a

win. It's been a while! I need to try and keep the momentum. I've managed to squeeze a few points over Lewis, but there's still quite a few races to go so you never know. I'll keep pushing. I

won't give up."

Verstappen said: "We split the Mercedes again so that is good — and we can be happy with that."

All three drivers wore their racing overalls on the podium after the race, obeying the latest revised rules from the sport's ruling body not to wear any items carrying 'political' messages.

Hamilton had made a solid start from his record 96th pole and fended off the slipstreaming Bottas, who had passed Verstappen's Red Bull.

'THIS IS RIDICULOUS'

The Dutchman, recovering from a ragged getaway, ran off-line to defend against a rapid Ricciardo before two first lap crashes behind them ended the early action and brought out the Safety Car.

The action resumed on lap six, when Hamilton's penalties were announced.

"What happened? What happened?" he responded on team radio. "Those starts, going to the grid, we got five seconds for each — out of position," he was told. "Where is that in the rule book?" said a disgruntled Hamilton. "Anything to slow me down, but it's OK. I can take it." — AFP

'Ridiculous' cold, rain spark French Open revolt

PARIS: Roland Garros got under way in the "ridiculous" chill and damp of Paris on Sunday with former world number one Victoria Azarenka walking off court, complaining that it was "too cold" to play.

The French Open, which was pushed back from its traditional May-June slot due to the coronavirus, began in steady drizzle and temperatures struggling to reach 10 degrees (50F).

It was all too much for Azarenka who left the almost deserted Court Suzanne Lenglen after just three games.

"I don't see the point of sitting on the court when it's eight degrees," fumed two-time major winner Azarenka.

On court she complained: "We are sitting like ducks. It's too cold, it's eight degrees, I live in Florida. This is getting a little ridiculous. I'm not waiting," she

said before storming off to seek shelter.

She returned to complete a 6-1, 6-2 win, playing in black leggings and a tracksuit top.

"Does it increase the risk of players getting injured? Absolutely, I think that it does," she added ahead of a week in which the cold, wet conditions are forecast to continue.

That echoed fears expressed by 12-time champion Rafael Nadal who said the conditions combined with a new heavier ball could cause elbow and shoulder problems for players.

On Court Simonne Mathieu, Belgian 16th seed Elise Mertens and Russia's Margarita Gasparyan twice left the arena after also halting play due to the slippery conditions.

There were no such problems, however, for top seed and former champion Simona Halep who swept into the second round with a 6-4, 6-0



Belarus' Victoria Azarenka in action during her first round match against Montenegro's Danka Kovinic at Roland Garros. — Reuters

victory over Spanish world number 70 Sara Sorribes Tormo.

Playing under the new roof of Court Philippe Chatrier, second-

ranked Halep, who won the 2018 title, trailed 4-2 but claimed the final 10 games to progress in 82 minutes.

Italian teenager Jannik Sinner

had the honour of claiming the first ever win under the roof, demolishing Belgian 11th seed David Goffin 7-5, 6-0, 6-3. The 19-year-old Sinner reeled off 11 games in succession as he defeated Goffin for the second time in as many meetings.

Another early winner was Sebastian Korda, the son of 1992 Roland Garros runner-up and 1998 Australian Open champion Petr Korda, who saw off Andreas Seppi of Italy 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, 6-3.

VENUS KNOCKED OUT

Venus Williams suffered a third successive first round exit at the French Open as she lost in straight sets to Slovakia's Anna Karolina Schmiedlova.

The 40-year-old Williams, runner-up at Roland Garros to sister Serena in 2002, was beaten 6-4, 6-4 by an opponent who snapped a 12-match

Grand Slam losing streak.

It marked Williams' third first round defeat in a row at a Slam after exiting the US Open and Australian Open at the same stage. The seven-time Grand Slam champion has not been past the third round at a major since 2017.

Williams dropped serve six times in cold, blustery conditions in Paris as Schmiedlova registered her first main draw victory at a Slam since the 2015 US Open. Her reward is a second round tie against Azarenka.

NISHIKORI THROUGH

Japan's Kei Nishikori surrendered two sets 6-1 but still managed to battle past Britain's Dan Evans.

The 30-year-old, playing only his fifth match of the year after elbow surgery and a positive COVID-19 test which ruled him out of the US Open, won 1-6, 6-1, 7-6(3), 1-6, 6-4. — AFP

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Satellite coverage for remote villages across Oman

SCT will be providing and running the full satellite communication infrastructure to cover the whole Sultanate of Oman, including Multiple government institutions that exceed 100 schools and health centres, while Oman Broadband will coordinate with the local fixed line Internet service providers in the Sultanate of Oman to accommodate the need of users in the designated areas as per the initiative

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

Wholly government owned Space Communication Technologies Company (SCT) has signed a multi-year contract with Oman Broadband (OB) for the Universal Service Obligation project as part of the national initiative by Telecommunication Regularity Authority (TRA) to provide communications and Internet services to around 598 remote villages and residential areas in Oman, as SCT considered the government investment arm in the field of space technologies. The signing of the contract



took place in the headquarters of Oman Broadband. Eng Salim al Alawi, Managing Director of SCT, signed the contract along with Eng Bader a Zeidi, acting CEO of OB. SCT will be providing and running the full satellite communication infrastructure to cover the whole Sultanate of Oman, including Multiple government institutions that exceed 100 schools and health centres, while Oman Broadband will coordinate with the local fixed line Internet service providers in the Sultanate of Oman to accommodate the need of users in the designated areas as per the initiative The infrastructure Satellite communication services provided by SCT with the Latest technologies using High

Throughput Satellites (HTS) on Ka-Band. This will allow the users to benefit from the multiple online service and communications such as E-government services, online streaming services, online education tools, and so on. “In order to keep pace with the fourth industrial revolution and its technological and educational requirements, the Sultanate is intending to provide telecommunications services to all including the rural areas, which pose a great challenge to telecommunication companies. Choosing Space Communication Technologies (SCT) to provide the infrastructure for this service throughout the Sultanate is a great honour for the company and it will help tremendously in the advancement of telecommunication services

in these areas to the level that everyone aspires to, especially in the fields of education, health and government services”, said Eng Salim al Alawi, Managing Director of SCT. Eng Bader al Zeidi of Oman Broadband added: “The signing of this agreement is a great accomplishment that adds up to all the initial successful steps in the National Broadband Initiative of bridging the digital gap within the rural areas of the Sultanate. This sustainable partnership with Space Communication Technologies (SCT) will contribute towards achieving that objective through utilizing the latest satellite technologies using Ka-Band Spectrums. The technology was selected post conducting intensive research and studies with respect to align with the challenging terrains and population density of the benefited villages and individuals. This partnership will enable Oman Broadband to provide the necessary broadband infrastructure for the beneficiaries of these areas in addition to coordinating with the local Internet Service Providers to build an operating model that is similar to the FTTH model based on open access network which gives the end user the opportunity to choose a service provider according to their preference”.

Oman banks now obliged to share customer data with Tax Authority

CONRAD PRABHU
[@conradprabhu](https://twitter.com/conradprabhu)

In what is billed as an effort to bolster the creation of a transparent tax environment in the Sultanate, the newly amended Income Tax Law makes it mandatory for licensed banks to share any financial information sought by the Tax Authority about specific customers — a requirement designed to ensure that Oman meets its commitments under various international tax-related agreements it has signed up to. The measure is one of a string of far-reaching changes to the Income Tax Law, which was amended vide Royal Decree 118/2020 and which came into effect following its publication in the Official Gazette last week. According to well-known professional services firm KPMG Oman, the amendments include enabling provisions to facilitate the Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) between tax jurisdictions. “The Income Tax Law has been amended to empower the government to conclude bilateral and multilateral agreements and also join existing international agreements dealing with taxation matters.



This facilitates not only conclusion of bilateral or multilateral tax treaties but also allows automatic exchange of information”, the firm said in an advisory sent out to clients last week. Significantly, the amended law enables the collection of information and documents in line with Oman’s obligations under international pacts to facilitate the exchange of information with other tax jurisdictions, said KPMG. Decision 78/2020 of the Tax Authority identifies ‘Reported Financial Institutions’ as ‘appointed persons’ who are responsible for collecting, keeping and submitting specified information to the Tax Authority within prescribed timelines. In particular, commercial banks are obligated to furnish any customer information sought by the Tax Authority to ensure that Oman complies with its commitments under the AEOI provisions. **TURN TO P14**

RO 10.4m deal to support financing of date processing complex in Nizwa

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

Nakheel Oman Development Company SAOC, a joint venture partnership of the Directorate General of Million Date Palm Plantation Project and Oman National Investments Development Company (Tanmia), has signed a strategic financing deal worth RO10.4 million with Bank Nizwa to support the development and construction of a date processing industrial complex in the Wilayat of Nizwa. Representing Bank Nizwa at the Musharaka financing transaction signing were Shaikh Khalid al Khailli, Chairman, Khalid al Kayed, CEO, and R Narasimhan, GM of Wholesale Banking, while Nakheel Oman Development Company was represented by Dr Saif Rashid Saif al Shaqsi Chairman, Shaikh Rashid Saif al Mardhoof al Saadi, Vice Chairman and Ali Said Ali al Aرامي, General Manager In 2009, an announcement was made for planting of one million date palm trees (MDPP) in Oman. The Diwan of Royal Court initiated and now manages this project through the Directorate General of Million Date Palm Plantation Project. Nakheel Oman Development Company was established by the Diwan of Royal Court represented by the Directorate General of Million Date Palm Plantation Project and Oman National Investments Development Company (Tanmia) to invest in an array of endeavours related to date palm products and by-products including post harvesting activities, logistics, marketing and retail.



Omantel takes concrete steps to bolster cyber security

Sustained Efforts to Protect Enterprise Customers and boosts the Company's sustained efforts in preventing cyber attacks and threats

As businesses, organizations and individuals have begun to exceedingly depend on the Internet and telecommunications for business and services, the need for data security and cyber defense cannot be emphasized enough. Omantel, the Sultanate’s pioneering and trusted telecommunications service provider, has remained steadfast in aligning its efforts with Oman’s national information security strategy, which is based on international best practices, while understanding national and regional service demands. Commenting on this, Abdullah Hamood Al Barwani, GM Corporate Security from Omantel said: “Telecom networks are the backbone of any information exchange. They are usually the target of malicious and criminal attacks - especially with recent developments in IP-based communications networks. These systems are subject to all forms of digital sabotage, data privacy violation and theft. Therefore, data integrity and security become a priority for us at Omantel”. Al Barwani added: “Omantel understands these potential threats and works relentlessly to safeguard its systems on which Oman’s corporate organizations rely on. The company is one of the pioneering organizations to adopt the best international standards, policies and practices in information security and was among the first companies globally to adopt and implement the ISO 27701 for privacy and data protection which is scheduled to be completed in 2020. It is worth mentioning that obtaining the ISO Certificate, Payment Card Industry Data Security

Standard (PCO-DSS) and Content Management Interoperability Services Certificate (CMIS-OEM) are a testimony of the company’s data security initiatives”. “Omantel takes pride in maintaining a clean record while protecting the privacy of customers as the company does not sell, trade or lease any personal information. The company’s advanced risk management framework is based on internationally recognized best practice. Omantel has implemented the guidelines and practices of the GSM Association (GSMA), an industry organization representing interests of mobile network operators worldwide. Omantel has also works closely with GSMA in the development of global security guidelines for Internet of Things (IoT) and was among the first companies to implement GSMA guidelines on obtaining business opportunities in this field. In recognition of its contribution to the GSMA vision, Omantel was awarded the ‘IoT Security Champion Award” concluded Al Barwani.



Omantel’s one of the main achievements in Cyber Security, the around clock Cyber Defense Centre with a noticeable development from 0.8 to 2.9 in a period of no more than two years according to the CMMI rate and uses artificial intelligence to achieve response to security incidents. In 2017, Omantel launched its information security strategy to secure its own assets and those of its subscribers. To protect the assets, Omantel uses advanced technologies to discover, classify and protect data in all systems, whether that data is in motion or at rest. The implementation of international standards such as the ISO 27701 for the data protection and privacy in critical systems ensures that Omantel has a comprehensive and structured management of other associated protection initiatives.

Omantel Cyber Security Achievements

Adopting and Implementing ISO 27701 for privacy and data protection

A cyber defense center operating around the clock

Obtaining the Proficiency in Internet of Things Security Award from the GSMA in 2019

Achieving advanced network protection

Establishing an advanced risk management framework based on multiple international standards

Using artificial intelligence tools to achieve response to security incidents

Commodities lower on dollar strength; silver hardest hit

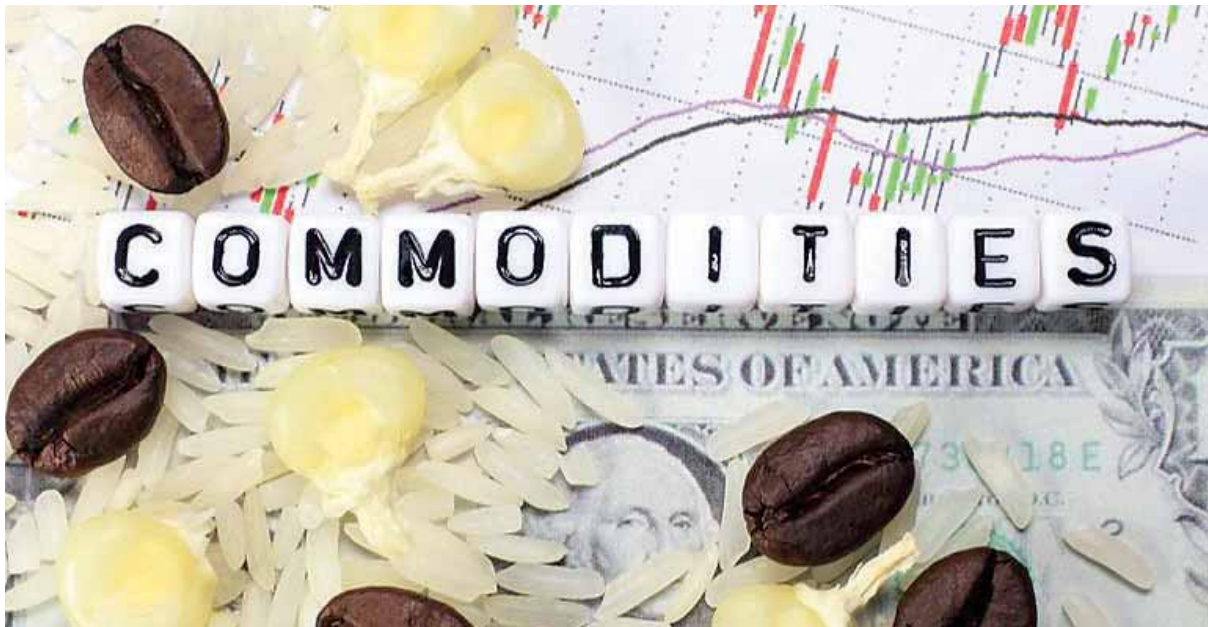
Grain traders took profit as the strong dollar reduced export demand. Crude oil held up very well despite worries about demand and the risk of rising supply. Commodities traded lower during the week where the stronger dollar left many markets bruised

OLE HANSEN

Commodities traded lower with the stronger dollar and reduced inflation worries delivering a blow to the sector. Precious metals led by silver took the biggest hit while coppers strong momentum since March also faded.

Grain traders took profit as the strong dollar reduced export demand. Crude oil held up very well despite worries about demand and the risk of rising supply. Commodities traded lower during the week where the stronger dollar left many markets bruised.

The Bloomberg Commodity Index, which tracks a basket of major commodities spread evenly across energy, metals and agriculture, traded lower by 3.2 per cent with energy, due to strong gains in natural gas, being the only sector strong enough to put up a fight against the adverse impact of the stronger dollar.



The dollar rose to a two-month high against the euro as risk adversity returned.

This was in response to a continued rise in coronavirus cases around the world together with infighting in Washington raising doubts about Congress' ability to push through another stimulus package.

The negative dollar view that had been growing in recent months had particularly, according to positions in the futures market, been expressed through a near-record euro long.

The break below €1.1700, therefore, created some nervousness about a deeper correction which hurt markets with an elevated bullish positioning in particular, such as precious and industrial metals. Silver slumped

and has now already clocked up two +20 per cent corrections since almost hitting \$30/oz just six weeks ago. Wild swings like these have left a trail of battered investors, thereby raising some doubts about the metal's ability to move higher. While the dollar has yet to show signs of topping out, sentiment did try to improve ahead of the weekend.

Despite the stand-off over Trump's plans to nominate a replacement for the Supreme Court in the last weeks before what could become an ugly election, Democrats caught on the backfoot by Trump's recovery in the polls, are drawing up plans for a new but relatively small \$2.4 trillion stimulus and Trump's Secretary of Treasury Mnuchin made positive comments on the prospects for

negotiations. Gold dropped below \$1900/oz but managed to find support ahead of key support at \$1837/oz, the 38.2 per cent retracement of the March to August rally.

Silver, which as mentioned recorded its second bear market (a 20 per cent movement from the recent peak), saw its relative value against gold tank to a near two-month low. In the short-term, both metals will be facing some headwinds from the recent drop in inflation expectations leading to rising real yields as well as the strong dollar and the recent high correlation with stocks, which may cause it to continue to trade nervously ahead of the November US election. *(The writer is Head of Commodity Strategy at Saxo Bank)*



OPAL signs agreement to support COVID-19 testing for Omani students

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

Oman Society for Petroleum Services (OPAL), the Sultanate's first and only oil and gas/energy society, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation to support COVID-19 testing for Omani students going overseas on scholarships during the 2020/2021 academic year.

The agreement is in line with OPAL's ongoing efforts to assist the competent authorities, as well as the local community, in mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The agreement was signed by Dr Bakhit bin Ahmed al Mahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, with Abdulrahman bin Humaid al Yahyai, CEO of Oman Society for Petroleum Services (OPAL).

It commits to providing free COVID-19 testing for 650 male and female students who have received scholarships to study abroad by the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation.

Commenting on the signing of the agreement, Dr Al Mahri underlined the role of non-government organisations like OPAL in supporting the ministry's efforts to provide basic services to students to face the exceptional circumstances that the country and the world are witnessing in light of the

The agreement affirms the commitment of the association and its members to supporting the general community within the framework of our corporate social responsibility

ABDUL RAHMAN
AL YAHYAEI
OPAL CEO

spread of the coronavirus. Abdul Rahman al Yahyai, CEO of OPAL, affirmed the association's constant keenness to support society in all spheres.

"The new agreement between OPAL and the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation is an extension of the Society's continuous determination to support the national efforts of the Sultanate in limiting the spread of COVID-19 and helping the concerned authorities to contribute to easing the burden on the nation. We are undoubtedly very happy to provide this support to students on scholarships to study outside the Sultanate."

"The agreement also affirms the commitment of the association and its members to supporting the general community within the framework of our corporate social responsibility."

FROM PAGE 13

Oman banks now obliged to share customer data

KPMG explained: "The Tax Authority is empowered to directly require licensed banks to provide information about any person for the purpose of adhering to international agreements dealing with taxation matters to which Oman is a signatory. Further, the licensed bank is not permitted to inform/

notify its client about the same." The amendments vest the Authority with new powers to enforce these provisions.

Penalty provisions under the Income Tax Law have been amended to cover 'appointed persons', if they do not comply with the new provisions, according to the professional

services firm. Additionally, the Authority is empowered to conduct 'search proceedings' at the concerned person's premises to unearth the requisite information. Importantly, the changes underscore the government's commitment to fostering the growth of a robust and transparent tax environment in the Sultanate,

says KPMG.

"The above amendments confirm the importance the government is giving to create a tax transparent environment in collaboration with other jurisdictions to identify arrangements or transactions resulting in tax avoidance," it added.

PDO staff coaching scheme wins top HR award

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has won a top prize at a prestigious regional competition which recognises organisations, teams and individuals for their outstanding achievements in human resources and learning and development.

The Company came first at the Chartered Institute of People and Development (CIPD) Middle East People Awards 2020 in the category of "Best Coaching & Mentoring Initiative."

The triumph was announced during a virtual ceremony at the CIPD's headquarters in Dubai last week. The competition attracted more than 180 high-quality entries in 12 categories with the judges, including world-renowned HR experts, selecting 39 finalists who were assessed for their project's innovation, impact, business alignment and relevance.

PDO won for its efforts in setting the foundations

to support its staff coaching culture which included building a coaching framework that has been integrated into the Company's people processes, and launching the Accredited Award in Coaching Training (AACT) programme in 2019.

The externally certified scheme certified 24 human resources specialists as internal coaches.

These initiatives offer support in a range of business-critical areas such as career development, performance improvement and leading virtual teams. Such guidance and assistance have helped other staff develop their team leadership capabilities and gain positive feedback from their colleagues.

PDO People Director Faiza Rahmatullah said: "We are delighted that our efforts to develop a first-rate coaching environment for our staff have been recognised and celebrated by a globally respected organisation like the CIPD."

BRIEF BITES

MUSCAT



BE READY FOR SCHOOL WITH HUAWEI WATCH FIT AND HUAWEI Y9A SMARTPHONE

Huawei has recently announced the launch of a number of products geared towards creating a seamless AI experience for users. With the school year around the corner, students are in for a treat from the company with two of the latest devices, the Huawei Watch Fit and the Huawei Y9a.

Huawei's latest smartwatch comes with a large and stylish HD display, 10-day battery life, precise health monitoring and comprehensive fitness tracking in addition to some smart life assistant features. As for the Huawei Y9a, this brand-new product has some features from some of Huawei's flagship devices. It comes with a super camera, supercharger, ample storage and a sleek design that catches your breath.

The Huawei Watch Fit is Huawei's first-ever smart sports watch with a rounded rectangular face.

SINAW

OAB OPENS NEW BRANCH

Oman Arab Bank has opened its new branch in Sinaw, in North Al Sharqiyah, after reallocating to the entrance of the Wilayat, next to the Shell Petrol Station. Strategically positioned, the branch will allow easy access for OAB's customers to conduct their banking transactions.

Highlighting the importance of the branch transformation, Rashad al Shaikh, Acting Head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB, said, "The Bank's strategy focuses on the development and transformation of our branch network to create a unique banking experience for all our customers and to enhance our share in the market with an unparalleled level of services. We believe that our customers in Sinaw and the surrounding towns will be able to benefit from the location of the new branch."



AL SAWADI



OOMCO SIGNS PACT WITH AL MADINA LOGISTICS

Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) signed an agreement with Al Madina Logistics (AMLS) for the management of the new OOMCO's central warehouse. The integrated logistics solutions and services company will take over handling and maintaining storage of all products, along with operations of the new storage facility in Al Sawadi. This partnership with AMLS allows the fuel marketing company to build on its reputation as the most customer-centric fuel marketer in both consumer and business-to-business aspects.

"We are always working on building long-term and equally beneficial partnerships with local companies. Our agreement with AMLS is a great addition to this portfolio, and their expertise, equipment and information technology will certainly be an added value to our operations," said Ali Muqaibal, OOMCO GM of Strategy, Business Development, Marketing and Digital.

US shale producer Devon Energy in talks to acquire peer WPX



A pump jack operates at a well site leased by Devon Energy Production Company near Guthrie, Oklahoma, in this file photo. — Reuters

Buffered by reduced demand for hydrocarbons amid coronavirus lockdown measures, which helped push US crude prices briefly into negative territory for the first time earlier this year, US oil and gas producers are seeking out combinations

NEW YORK: US shale producer Devon Energy Corp is in talks to acquire rival WPX Energy Inc in an all-stock transaction that would create a company worth around \$6 billion, people familiar with the matter said. The deal talks show how consolidation in the oil and gas industry is picking up, as low energy prices drive some independent producers to seek scale through mergers. In July, Noble Energy Inc agreed to be acquired by Chevron Corp for \$5 billion in stock. The deal, which would value

Tulsa, Oklahoma-based WPX at a small premium to its current share price, could be announced as soon as next week, according to one of the sources. The sources, who requested anonymity to discuss the private talks, cautioned that an agreement was not guaranteed. Devon and WPX did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Buffered by reduced demand for hydrocarbons amid coronavirus lockdown measures, which helped push US crude prices briefly into

negative territory for the first time earlier this year, US oil and gas producers are seeking out combinations. Such mergers allow companies to remove duplication and create economies of scale, while structuring them at a small premium or none to existing valuations to retain as much cash as possible. Oklahoma City-based Devon was valued at \$3.4 billion as of the end of Friday. WPX shares closed on Friday at \$4.44, giving the company a market capitalisation of \$2.5 billion. — Reuters

China’s industrial profits grow for fourth straight month

SHANGHAI: Profits at China’s industrial firms grew for the fourth straight month in August, buoyed in part by a rebound in commodities prices and equipment manufacturing, the statistics bureau said on Sunday. China’s recovery has been gaining momentum as pent-up demand, government stimulus and surprisingly resilient exports propel a rebound. Industrial firm profits grew 19.1 per cent year-on-year in August to 612.81 billion yuan (\$89.8 billion), the statistics bureau said. That compares with a 19.6 per cent increase in July and is the fourth straight month of profit growth. However, industrial firms’ profits still face external pressures as rising tensions between Washington and Beijing cloud the global trade outlook. Raw material manufacturing profits increased by 32.5 per cent in August, up from 14.7 per cent in July, according to Zhu Hong, an official at the statistics bureau. This was driven in part by a rebound in the prices of international commodities such as crude oil and iron ore, he added. Meanwhile, profits of the general equipment manufacturing sector notched up 37 per cent in August on-year, with electrical machinery up by 13.3 per cent over the same period. Economic indicators in August, ranging from exports



A worker cuts an oil pipe at a factory in Qingdao, China. — Reuters

to producer prices and factory output, all pointed to a further pickup in the industrial sector. However, factory activity grew at a slower pace with smaller firms facing sluggish market demand and financial strains. The country has introduced a slew of measures to kick-start

the economy, from tax and fee reductions to grace periods for the calling in of debt. China’s economy may stagnate if it fails to rise up the value chain, as it faces increasing competition from countries with advanced technologies and lower labour costs, economists warned.

Authorities have pledged to boost investment in strategic industries including core tech sectors such as 5G, artificial intelligence and semiconductors, and accelerate new material development to ensure stable supply chains. For January-August,

industrial firms’ profits fell 4.4 per cent from a year earlier to 3.72 trillion yuan, better than the 8.1 per cent decrease in the first seven months. Liabilities at industrial firms rose 6.6 per cent on-year at end-August, edging higher than the 6.5 per cent at end-July. — Reuters

US tightens exports to China’s SMIC

SHANGHAI: The United States has imposed restrictions on exports to China’s biggest chip maker SMIC after concluding there is an “unacceptable risk” equipment supplied to it could be used for military purposes. Suppliers of certain equipment to Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation will now have to apply for individual export licenses, according to a letter from the Commerce Department. The latest move marks a shift in US policy from earlier this year, when applicants seeking “military end user” licenses to sell to SMIC were told by the Commerce Department that the licenses weren’t necessary, according to three people familiar with the matter. SMIC said it had not received any official notice of the restrictions and said it has no ties with the Chinese military. “SMIC reiterates that it manufactures semiconductors and provides services solely for civilian and commercial end-users and end-uses,”



A security officer stands outside a building of Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation (SMIC) in Shanghai, in this file photo. — Reuters

SMIC said. “The Company has no relationship with the Chinese military and does not manufacture for any military end-users or end-uses.” SMIC is the latest leading Chinese technology company to face US trade restrictions related to national security issues or US foreign policy efforts. — Reuters

Ex-Audi boss to stand trial for ‘dieselgate’

FRANKFURT: Former Audi boss Rupert Stadler on Wednesday becomes the first to stand trial in Germany over the “dieselgate” emissions scandal, five years after parent company VW admitted responsibility. Stadler, 57, faces charges of “fraud, falsifying certifications and false advertising” according to an indictment to be read out before the Munich district court. He is in the dock alongside

former Audi and Porsche manager Wolfgang Hatz and two Audi engineers. Not a single senior executive has been convicted in Germany so far in connection with the scandal that erupted in September 2015 when the Volkswagen group acknowledged it had installed cheating software in 11 million diesel engines. The so-called defeat devices made the cars appear to pollute less in lab tests than they did on the road. — AFP

In brief

BERLIN

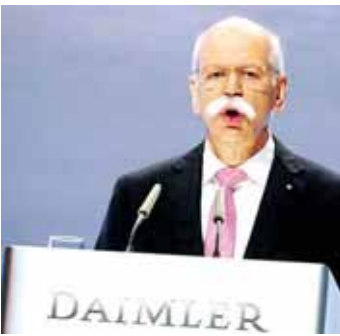
DEUTSCHE BANK’S KNOF TO HEAD GERMANY’S COMMERZBANK

Manfred Knof, currently at Deutsche Bank, was named chief executive of Germany’s Commerzbank. Commerzbank’s supervisory board unilaterally agreed on Saturday that Knof was to succeed CEO Martin Zielke as of January 1, 2021, the German lender said. The appointment is still subject to the approval of regulators. Knof, a lawyer, has been head of Deutsche Bank’s private clients business since August 1, 2019.

Previously, the 55-year-old was in charge of Germany at the Allianz insurance group. Knof is “an experienced and strong executive who has proven himself in a wide range of tasks in the financial services industry,” explained Commerzbank supervisory board chairman Hans-Joerg Vetter. — dpa

FRANKFURT

DAIMLER’S DESIGNATED CHAIRMAN ZETSCHKE RENOUNCES JOB



Daimler’s Dieter Zetsche will not seek to become chairman of the German carmaker’s supervisory board, he told *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* newspaper. Zetsche, 67, a former chief executive of the company which owns the Mercedes-Benz brand, was due to take a seat as chairman on the board of directors, which in Germany is known as the supervisory board. “Naturally I would like to have done the job. I also believe I would have done it well. But in the end I decided that I do not want it, that I renounce this opportunity,” Zetsche is quoted as telling the paper. “We acknowledge Dr Zetsche’s decision with great respect,” a Daimler spokesman said. Zetsche says Daimler’s top investors would have backed him to succeed Manfred Bischoff but that there may have been opposition from other shareholders. — Reuters

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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

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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

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.

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

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

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In Paris, a fashion eco-system on edge as shows disappear

When Swedish fashion brand Acne Studios last hosted a catwalk show in Paris in January, it ordered dozens of vegan-friendly rice bowls from cafe owner and caterer Pearlyn Lee for models and crew to pick on backstage.

Those types of orders have all but dried up since the pandemic forced most luxury labels to cancel parties and presentations.

Even as some of the world's biggest brands return to Paris on Monday, few are planning physical shows, a blow for make-up artists, lighting specialists, caterers and hundreds of other businesses in fashion's eco-system.

"Basically catering is gone for us. And I'm not sure when it's coming back", said Lee, who only last year expanded her kitchen through a crowdfunding campaign.

From Monday, 85 brands will showcase womenswear looks during Paris Fashion Week. Only 19 — among them Chanel and LVMH LVMH.PA owned Christian Dior and Louis Vuitton — are pressing ahead with socially-distanced front rows.

Others are holding small presentations by appointment, or streaming videos.

Fledgling designers cannot afford to hire big venues for tiny audiences or risk a last-minute cancellation, said Stephane Vienne, from production and press firm Mephistopheles.

None of Mephistopheles' 14

most regular customers are staging full events next week. In a normal year, each event would have cost at least 30,000 to 40,000 euros.

"We used to do four shows a day, our whole budget comes from these events", Vienne told Reuters.

FILM SETS AND PHOTO SHOOTS

Still, he said he was optimistic revenues would pick up again in the longer run, as brands try to reach shoppers virtually.

His company is producing a fashion film, rather than a traditional show with an audience, inside the 19th century Hotel Le Marois for Polish label La Metamorphose.

The palatial venue has also been reinventing itself, upgrading its systems to lure companies wanting to live-stream events from its ornate rooms, Site Manager Valerie Taieb said.

But even small parties are getting complicated as coronavirus cases in France rise and restrictions on gatherings tighten.

"The fashion sector and the events industry have really been forgotten in this crisis", Taieb said. Her team of around 20 have only returned to work part-time, and are still relying on the state's partial unemployment aid.

At the shoot for La Metamorphose at Hotel Le Marois, 25-year-old model Tiffany Fournier said some of her work had dried up too, although she still does magazine and advertising



From Monday, 85 brands will showcase womenswear looks during Paris Fashion Week. Only 19 — among them Chanel and LVMH LVMH.PA owned Christian Dior and Louis Vuitton — are pressing ahead with socially-distanced front rows

campaigns.

"I haven't done a catwalk show since February", Fournier said. Some big brands have pushed to hold physical events where possible in part to support suppliers and other businesses. Designers also want to keep up connections with professional buyers and media.

"There's an energy and an excitement, there's music, the first model to appear on the catwalk, applause at the end", said Alexandre Mattiussi, creator of French brand AMI. "That doesn't exist in a digital format". AMI is planning to hold a show on October 3, with fewer than 150 guests rather than the usual 600 to 700.

"It will be like a very nice wedding", Mattiussi said. — **Reuters**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS

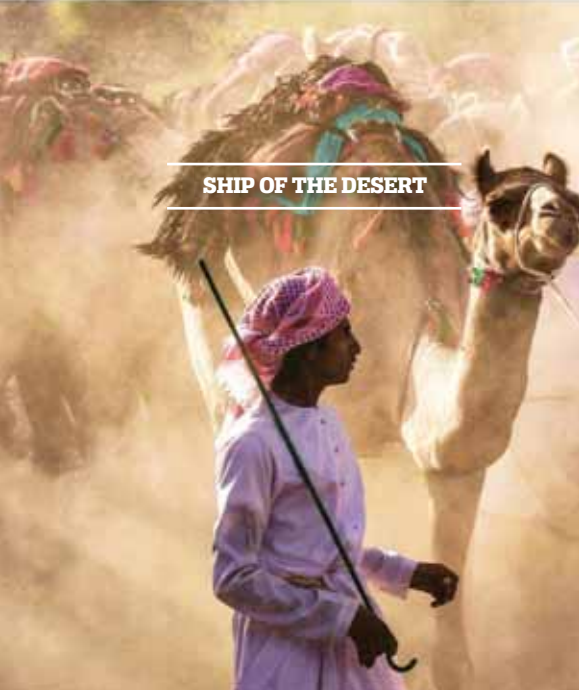


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HUMAN INTEREST

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Kenya's Maasai gather for once-in-a-decade ceremony to turn warriors into elders



MAPARASHA HILLS, Kenya: Thousands of Maasai men clad in red and purple shawls and with their heads coated in red ochre gathered this week for a ceremony that transforms them from Moran (warriors) to Mzee (elders). Around 15,000 men from all over Kenya and neighbouring Tanzania congregated in Maparasha Hills in Kajiado County, 128 km from Nairobi, to feast on an estimated 3,000 bulls and 30,000 goats and sheep.

The ceremony occurs once every decade at the site, which is surrounded by hills and dotted with acacia trees. On Wednesday, the men roasted the meat on beds of coal from acacia trees, holding staffs and swords. "I used to be a Moran, But after this ceremony, I now graduate to be a Mzee (elder)," Stephen Seriamu Sarbabi, a 34-year-old livestock trader, said. "I will now be having a lot of responsibilities in the community. I will be chairing some different meetings, I will be consulted," he added. The arrival of the novel coronavirus in March forced a postponement of the ceremony, which was meant to have been held

Around 15,000 men from all over Kenya and neighbouring Tanzania congregated in Maparasha Hills in Kajiado County, 128 km from Nairobi, to feast on an estimated 3,000 bulls and 30,000 goats and sheep

earlier in the year. "My role here in this ceremony, is to come and bless my boys to graduate, to another stage of being wazees (elders), and to give them their privileges," Moses Lepunyo ole Purkei, a farmer, community health volunteer and elder, said. During the ceremony, the men were accompanied by their wives, who also wore colourful shawls and beads around their necks and sang songs praising and encouraging the incoming group of elders. There are about 1.2 million Maasai living in Kenya, according to the government statistics office. — **Reuters**

ART



Japanese artist creates ramen face mask to complement fogged glasses

SYDNEY: Japanese artist Takahiro Shibata's glasses are fogging up because of his face mask - a problem familiar to many spectacles wearers during the coronavirus pandemic. But Shibata has turned the annoying side effect into a one-of-a-kind piece of art. The more his glasses fog up, the hotter and

have some fun instead. The 3D ramen mask, made from felt and clay, has everything you'd want in a real bowl of the noodle soup. Shibata's nose disappears into chashu braised pork, green onions, bamboo shoots, and a slice of fish cake. Shibata, who said he wanted "to cheer peo-



steamier the noodle soup on his "ramen mask" appears to be. Shibata, an animator and artist, initially set out to solve the problem bugging many a spectacles wearer who dons a mask to protect themselves from COVID-19. But once he discovered that was impossible, he decided to

ple up a little bit", has no plans to sell the mask along with his other artwork. Although he may not be wearing it much either. "The 'bowl' is filled with cotton and it weighs almost as heavy as a stuffed toy," he said. "So it doesn't feel comfortable when I put it on." — **Reuters**



■ ART FUSION

From Botswana, an Eloquent Artist

BY RAY PETERSEN

Bokamoso Kumwenda, known to most around her as 'BK' is an artist with a rich African heritage who has merged into the Omani art scene in the same manner as her art appeals to the aficionado... with subtlety and charm.

Born in Botswana, a beautiful Southern African Country known for its stunning diamonds and broad savannahs, or plains, Kumwenda grew up in a small mining town in the north-central part of the country, one that has since the turn of the century emerged from poverty as a thriving nation with a growing economy. The University of Botswana graduate explained that "My first real exposure to different cultures and people happened when I went to school in South Africa. Attending an international school there offered me an appreciation for both our cultural similarities and differences."

That too, is where she was exposed to the different artistic genres through the formal art lessons and painting. "Art attracted me because I learned that within the artistry there is more to it than meets the eye. There is research, observation, discovery, and sometimes the art evolves over a period of time, and can change quite significantly, the end product being more of what you intend it to be originally, and certainly more rewarding spiritually."

John Singer Sargent's watercolour portraits have inspired her painting with their, "unique way of evoking tangible emotion as you look at them. I find it fascinating how he manages to paint both tight and loose to capture beautiful moments in time." He is famed for his 'Lady Agnew of Lochnaw,' and is regarded by many as 'the master of elevated grace.'

Similarly, Albrecht Durer's 16th-century woodcuts, in his still popular 'snail line' form, are so intricate, detailed, and evocative that she commented, "Its staggering to thinking that those are made from blocks of wood he carved himself!"

"I'm inspired too by culture, which is why I gravitate to objects that represent cultural and traditional societal influences. Inevitably this does lead to the diversity of so many representations of faith, so I will paint buildings that represent religion and faith such as churches, mosques, and temples, which are always so immaculately layered and beautifully detailed. I love the diversity and serenity they offer!"

A medium Kumwenda has enjoyed for a long time has been graphite – the humble pencil. She shared that, "There is something so intriguing about something as simple and every day being used to create intricate works of art, and it is by far my favourite to work with. It is also very easy to control and there are generally no surprises within its amazing complexities of monochromatic colour and shade, and its homage to the concept of the noir, that nothing is ever as clear, in black or white, as it seems."

"Another medium I love is watercolour. Unlike with graphite, there is no predicting what might happen when you put paint to water, to paper," she laughed, "That spontaneity and chaos were captivating, yet at the same time, challenged me!" Commenting that she soon learned to let the paint have its way, to do what it wants to do, she has found the results are so often, in her humble



and humorous manner, "almost magical, certainly better than I would have achieved had it been up to me alone!"

Last, but certainly not least, she is an advocate of linocut printmaking saying, "It takes patience, a steady hand and a strong wrist, but the hours of carving are almost always rewarded with a beautiful print in the end. I love this genre because there is such a physical element to carving the blocks, yet the work has an almost therapeutic, and certainly a calming effect despite its repetition."

Pressed to categorise her art, Kumwenda explained, "My art is a mix of many things, from still life, to abstract, prints, and I do like to experiment with the diverse mediums. I ask myself, can the unpredictable watercolor be controlled? How much realism can I achieve in lino-printing? Or how to seamlessly reflect light

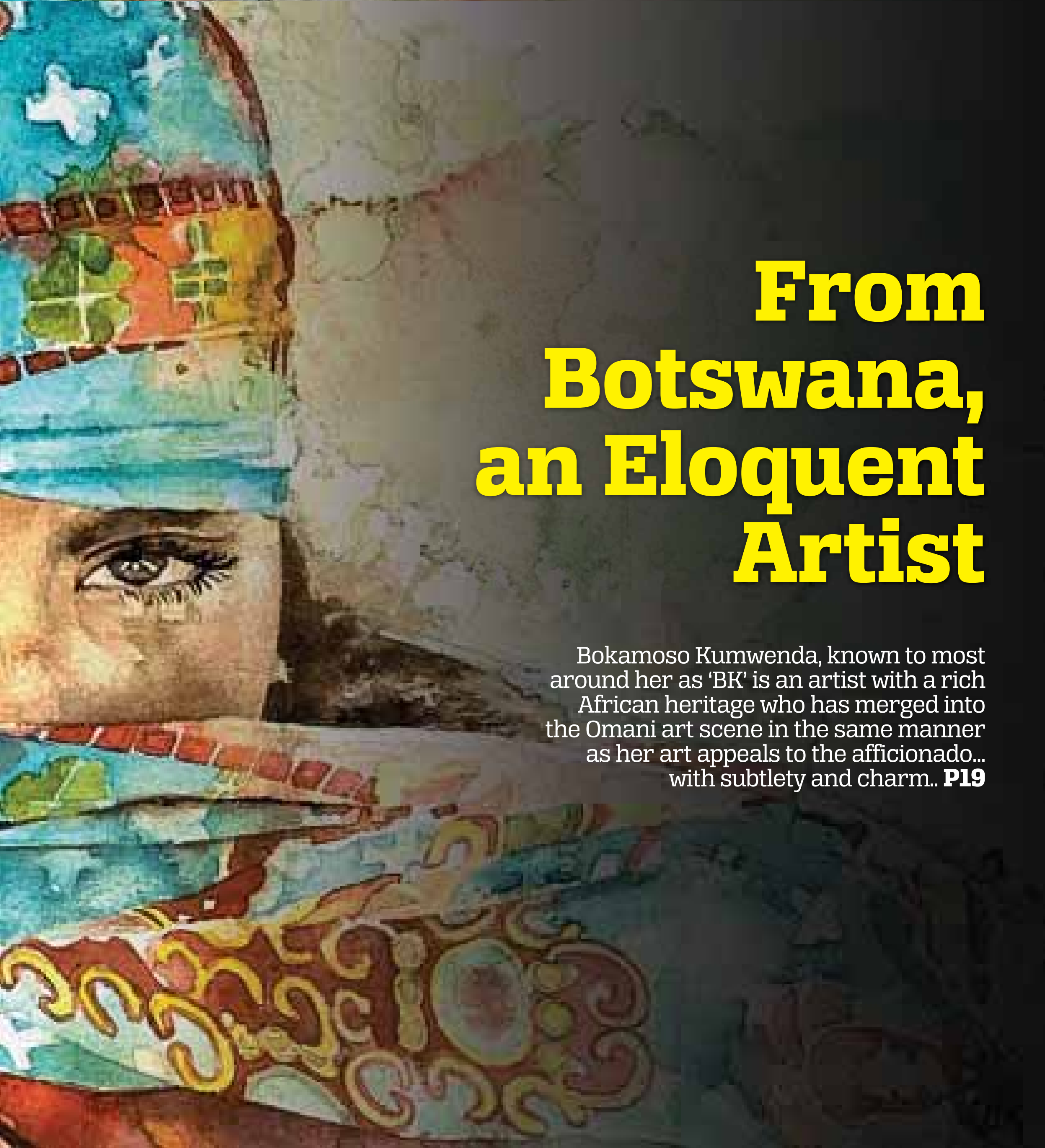
through the rigidity of graphite? All to push the boundaries, to explore possibilities, and I've recently gotten into graphic design too, so I have been exploring digital art. It's all very stimulating and dynamic."

Bokamoso Kumwenda says, "My husband Gome, is from Malawi in the South East of Africa, commonly referred to as 'the warm heart of Africa,' and home to some of the friendliest people you will ever meet, and we have been in Oman since 2011, another nation of warm, peaceable people, with our ten year old daughter Sophiah Grace and seven year old son Micaiah-Joel. Oman is a little slice of heaven."

The artist then, brings an eloquence, a diversity of genre, color, style, and artistic resilience, and is yet another expatriate contributing to the rich creative tapestry of the Sultanate of Oman.

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From Botswana, an Eloquent Artist

Bokamoso Kumwenda, known to most around her as ‘BK’ is an artist with a rich African heritage who has merged into the Omani art scene in the same manner as her art appeals to the aficionado... with subtlety and charm.. **P19**

DAILY PICKS

FASHION

IN PARIS, A FASHION ECO-SYSTEM ON EDGE AS SHOWS DISAPPEAR

When Swedish fashion brand Acne Studios last hosted a catwalk show in Paris in January, it ordered dozens of vegan-friendly rice bowls from cafe owner and caterer Pearlyn Lee for models and crew to pick on backstage.... Story on **Page 17**

HUMAN INTEREST

KENYA'S MAASAI GATHER FOR ONCE-IN-A-DECADE CEREMONY TO TURN WARRIORS INTO ELDERS

Thousands of Maasai men clad in red and purple shawls and with their heads coated in red ochre gathered this week for a ceremony that transforms them from Moran (warriors) to Mzee (elders).... Story on **Page 18**

READ

TROUBLED BLOOD

BY ROBERT GALBRAITH

The fifth book in the Cormoran Strike series. A decades-old cold case might be connected to a serial killer; by J K Rowling, writing pseudonymously.

ART

JAPANESE ARTIST CREATES RAMEN FACE MASK TO COMPLEMENT FOGGED GLASSES

Japanese artist Takahiro Shibata's glasses are fogging up because of his face mask – a problem familiar to many spectacles wearers during the coronavirus pandemic.... Story on **Page 18**

CELEBRATE

FAMILY DAY

Family Day is celebrated to remind everyone of the importance of family and good relationship. While not all families are related by blood, that doesn't stop one from being kind or affectionate towards another person. Today is a good day to indulge in fun activities to strengthen the family bond.