

ObserverWeekend





**KABEER YOUSUF**  
@kabeeryousef

As we are embracing the new normal, it's paramount to stay healthy while staying home as it pays a great deal to the health of the whole family. Some might find it quite easy while some feel it 'difficult' to change the lifestyle they have been following for ages.

The key word, however, is not to lose hope and emotionally down, instead, be stronger from both within and outside.

A certain amount of 'fine tuning' can help those who find it arduous to cause a shift. A cross section of people who spoke to the *Observer* admitted that they succeeded in fine tuning their lifestyle in order to save themselves and the society as a whole.

Dr Viresh Chopra of Oman Dental College urges certain steps to be followed in order to keep our beloved ones safe.

"Believe that 'this too shall pass.' Forget politeness, and continue to avoid shaking hands and hugging. We can develop our own national greeting that involves no touching — a nod will suffice. Stay at home, call your GP, and do not attend if you have flu or any respiratory symptoms. Please come forward to report and embrace the new normal," said Dr Viresh.

Additionally, one should continue to use prescribed hand washing methods, avoid touching your face, sneeze into the elbow, cough into tissues then dispose of them.

Anita Rajan, a home maker, vows on yoga as the medium that kept her healthy besides following the national safety measures.

"The best way to keep oneself healthy is to do yoga, especially 'surya namaskar' followed by bhastrika which means inhaling and exhaling. These

are very effective to increase immunity. Drinking lots of fruit juice, mainly citrus fruit helps."

Ponnu Vinay, an academician, recommends to do cardio on an empty stomach.

"Eat more of protein-based food like egg white or smoothies rich in iron, fibre and omega 3 fatty acid," she said.

Take a teaspoon of honey mixed with turmeric. Then pour 1 cup of water, followed by adding 2 to 3 slices of onion, small pieces of ginger slices and add a bit of turmeric. Let it boil, then strain the onion and ginger and serve it hot. This will increase one's immunity.

Try not to overeat, keep oneself hydrated and allow fresh air whenever possible, and go to bed on time and get up on time," adds Ajay Raj, a media marketing executive.

Dilna Sujith, an executive with a

leading company, advocates one to pray and think positive as you know that the entire world is now in panic mode, we should think positive and avoid negativity.

"What had to happen has happened, but keeping on lamenting or worrying about it will only attract negative energy and the virus will get stronger. So just continue to take precautions from our end and believe everything will be fine soon," says Dilna.

Refrain from social media and or watch news just once a day to get an update, but don't keep watching or reading the same news again. This phase too shall also pass.

And as many said, one should use his or her time for recreation and to speak to friends and relatives to whom we have not spoken for a long time. Use some time for your passions and build bridges between friends and relatives.

INSIDESTORIES

Mecca to reopen for limited pilgrimages



**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia will reopen the holy places for the year-round Umrah pilgrimage on Sunday, scaled back and with extensive health precautions, seven months after coronavirus prompted its suspension. The Umrah, the pilgrimage that can be undertaken at any time, usually attracts millions of Muslims from across the globe each year. It will be revived in three stages, with the initial phase seeing just 6,000 citizens and residents already within the kingdom allowed to take part each day. "In the first stage, the Umrah will be performed meticulously and within a specified period of time," Hajj Minister Mohammad Benteen told state television last week. He said pilgrims will be divided into groups to ensure social distancing within the Grand Mosque in Mecca. — AFP

Hundreds of homes destroyed in fighting



**MOSCOW:** Hundreds of civilian homes in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region have been destroyed this week during fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the Red Cross said on Friday. Azerbaijan has launched an offensive to regain control over the disputed territory, held by Armenian separatists. The United Nations, the European Union and regional power Russia, a close military ally of Armenia, have all called for an immediate ceasefire. Regional power Turkey has offered all means of assistance to Azerbaijan but has denied direct involvement. Homes, schools and hospitals have been destroyed by heavy artillery, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said in Geneva, citing reports from the ground.

SEE P6

Brexit: UK worried time running out



**LONDON:** Britain's chief negotiator David Frost said on Friday the government was concerned that time was running out for a post-Brexit trade deal with the European Union before a mid-October deadline. Frost said "outlines of an agreement are visible" in many areas but there was "limited progress" on fair competition and state subsidy rules, and a deal on fisheries looked "impossible" without EU movement. "I am concerned that there is very little time now to resolve these issues ahead of the European Council (EU summit) on October 15," he added, after a week of talks with EU counterpart Michel Barnier.

SEE P5

WEATHER TODAY

|                                  |                                   |                                 |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| MUSCAT<br>MAX: 35°C<br>MIN: 26°C | SALALAH<br>MAX: 30°C<br>MIN: 23°C | NIZWA<br>MAX: 38°C<br>MIN: 25°C |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|

SUNRISE 05.59 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR: 04:44  
DHUHR: 12:01  
ASR: 15:24  
MAGHRIB: 17:57  
ISHA: 19:07



TRAVEL



RICH IN CULTURE AND NATURE, THE SULTANATE IS A PERFECT GETAWAY CLOSER TO HOME. AS SOON AS YOU CROSS THE BORDER, YOU ARE IN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT SURROUNDING

SEE P2

Trump and Melania quarantining after positive coronavirus test

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump and his wife, Melania, have tested positive for the coronavirus and will quarantine, he wrote on Twitter early on Friday.

"Tonight, @FLOTUS and I tested positive for COVID-19. We will begin our quarantine and recovery process immediately. We will get through this TOGETHER!" Trump wrote.

The White House physician said Trump and Melania are "both well at this time" but he did not say if they are showing symptoms of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus.

Trump had said several hours earlier that he would begin to quarantine, after his senior adviser Hope Hicks was confirmed to have contracted the disease caused by the novel



coronavirus.

Trump did not say how long he and the first lady would quarantine for.

The result comes five weeks before the US' November 3 election. Trump's handling of the pandemic has been repeatedly criticised by Democratic candidate Joe Biden.

Late on Thursday, the president confirmed during a Fox News interview that Hicks

had tested positive.

"She did test positive, I just heard about this," Trump said during an interview with Fox News. Trump and Melania have spent a lot of time with Hicks, Trump said.

Hicks is among Trump's closest advisers and often travels with him. After the interview Trump tweeted that he would begin to quarantine.

Trump is often seen in public without a mask, which the White House has justified by saying the president and those he has close contact with are regularly tested for the virus.

The White House in a statement said steps are taken to limit COVID-19 exposure to the president and that all plans and procedures incorporate guidance from the CDC.

— dpa

MOST LIKED TWEET!

**WASHINGTON:** President Donald Trump's revelation that he and wife Melania tested positive for COVID-19 quickly became his most liked and shared tweet.

The announcement in the early morning hours of Friday garnered more than 1.2 million likes within eight hours, and was shared or retweeted at similar levels. — AFP

### #It'sYourTurn

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The trip to Nizwa was a real trip back in time. Kids ventured to the Nizwa Fort, and had it almost exclusively for them as it was during Ramadhan. The Aladdin-like fortress kept them busy roaming through the corridors, narrow staircases and hidden passages

LIJU CHERIAN

@cherianmathiker

HOW about travelling with family and sharing your best experiences, tips and recommendations through a website.

'Of Trips and Tales' is a travel website by a couple based in the UAE. Since 2010 the gang of four have been visiting the Sultanate to enjoy and explore the countryside. Oman for them is a 'journey of exploration.'

"The site serves as a source of inspiration for families travelling with kids providing insightful information about travel news and itineraries," says Veronica Smulders, a Peruvian communications professional who along with Joost, her Dutch hubby and finance expert makes it a point to travel with their kids Daniel (9) and Gabriel (5).

The website provides valuable tips on how to get involved in packing when travelling. The couple also shares their experience of how one can continue wanderlust adventures while travelling with

kids.

"There is still much more to explore in the Sultanate, as each time we had been to different places. Rich in culture and nature, the country has so much to offer that it is the perfect getaway closer home. As soon as you cross the border, you are in an entirely different surrounding. Travelling with kid's means all activities and itineraries are planned considering what we all enjoy as a family — both adults and children," explains Smulders.

Together they have travelled to over 40 countries and several times to the Sultanate since 2010.

Smulders lists five things to do while in Oman with the family.

These are visits to Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve, The National Museum of Oman, Nizwa, Wadi Shab and souqs.

Quite impressed with Nizwa, the Smulders family took time to drive around the city and along the little original narrow alleys, market and ruins.

Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve in Sur is definitely on their list for a revisit as they had a 'memorable experience' even if they need to wake up at 4 am to see the turtles.

The kids leading the hike up to the mountain and the parents chasing them to reach the highest point at golden hour is a memory they treasure dearly.

For the guided night expedition, the kids made their best effort to keep silent as they watched with excitement the giant green turtles lay their eggs.

By a pre-planned visit to The National Museum of Oman they got an interactive introduction of the Sultanate.

"The museum captures all aspects of Oman's history and culture, with interactive activities such as experiencing the sounds of traditional music instruments on a computer. Needless to say, the kids loved it," say Smulders and Joost.

Their trip to Nizwa was a real trip back in time. They ventured to the Nizwa Fort, and had it almost exclusively for them as it

was during Ramadhan. The Aladdin-like fortress kept them busy roaming through the corridors, narrow staircases and hidden passages.

"Whoever conceived the architectural concept of this military fortification, had certainly also an eye for photography as its design is brilliant," says Joost.

They roamed around the city which was much of a delight, navigating the small streets in their 4x4 and taking turns for cars to pass through alleys from time to time. They also had a wonderful adventure to get acquainted with the locals.

The gang of four spent the day exploring the different ruins and the kids were quite amused.

"The souqs for them was no better place to capture the local spirit than at a market. They visited quite a few in the search for typical ornaments and 'treasures' as the kids call them."

Daniel bought traditional sweets and enthusiastically attempted his best Arabic

coffee at the Muttrah Souq, while Gabriel tried his best charm at the souq to wear a 'kuma', the traditional Omani cap.

They could not leave the country without going to wadis which is no better place than outdoors when travelling with kids.

"Imposing mountains adorned with palm trees welcomed them for a one-hour stroll in the dry bed river," she recollects.

Initially sceptical of their endurance, the kids' were quite impressed when they reached the end of the trek with young Gabriel cheering enthusiastically all the way and eagerly jumped into the natural pool to refresh himself. The common factor which drives them to keep coming back is the diversity of experiences it has to offer.

"It's the kind of place where you will never do something twice as there is so much choice. Though they have not travelled since the lockdown they have planned to do staycations and local escapes for the coming months," they chorus.

# LET THERE BE PEACE!

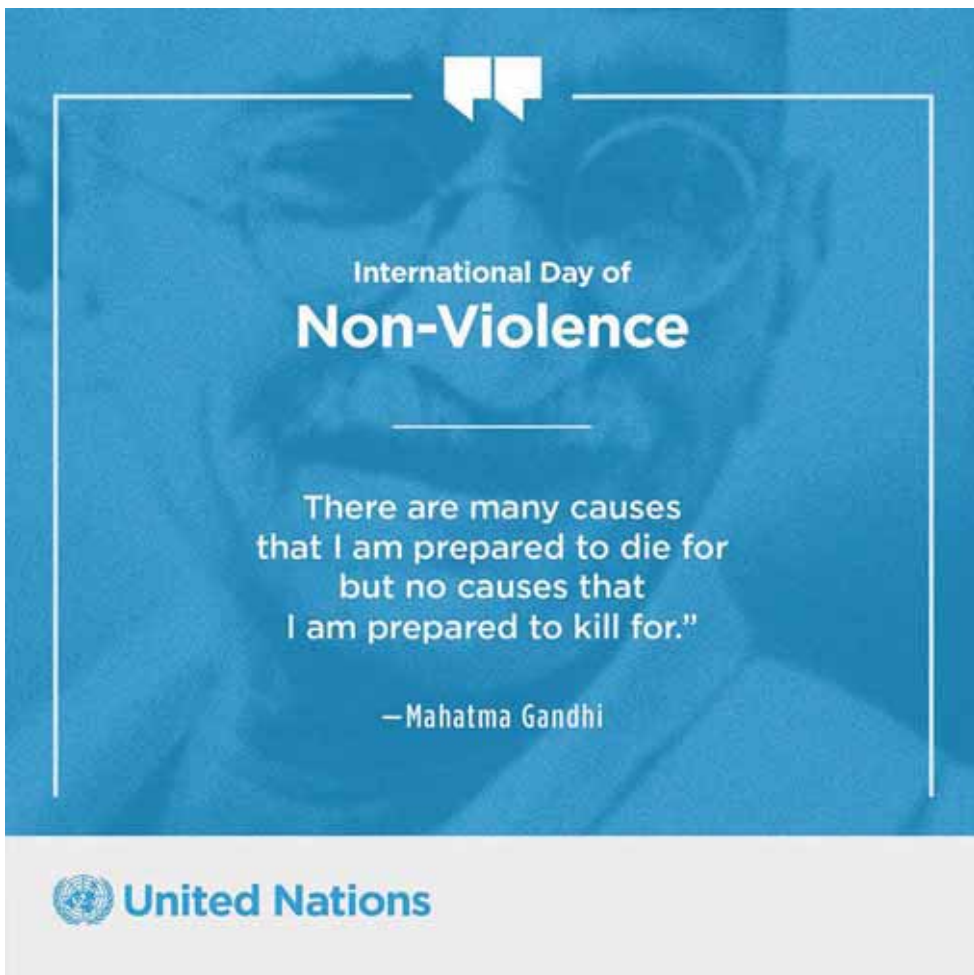
SARNGA DHARAN NAMBIAR

When the UN declared October 2 as the International Day of Non-Violence in a resolution on 15 June 2007, as an occasion to disseminate the message of non-violence as espoused by Mahatma Gandhi — who crafted a refreshingly hopeful global political discourse based on non-violence and compassion — through education and public awareness, it was a reaffirmation of the eternal relevance and magnetism of peace.

Come to think of it, is peace just an absence of conflict or war? Not at all; rather peace has everything to do with a radical shift in human consciousness whereby any potential or possibility of violence is rooted out of the world by enabling an environment that fosters cooperative, tolerant and harmonious coexistence of diverse cultures, ethnicities and political and religious beliefs.

And, for all practical purposes, we need to quantify peace in a world that is prone to violence at multiple levels and in varying degrees of complexity, as any data-driven measurement of peace could offer great insights. One such report, the 2020 Global Peace Index, exposes a world where the conflicts and crises that obstructed growth and development over the past decade continue to bog us down despite global efforts towards achieving peace. The report indicates an average 0.34 per cent decline in international peace; and this is the ninth time in the last 12 years that global peace has suffered setbacks.

Hopefully, though, last year saw as many as 81 countries improve the state of peace, even as 80 countries logged deteriorations. However, the fact that the average level of global peacefulness recorded a 2.5-per



cent deterioration since 2008 is a cause for concern. And, conflicts derail economies. Last year alone, the global economic impact of violence was pegged at \$14.5 trillion in purchasing power parity terms, which amounts to 10.6 per cent of global GDP.

According to The Institute for Economics and Peace — an independent think tank working to promote global peace as a positive, achievable and tangible measure of human well-being and progress — that releases the annual Global Peace Index,

peace is crucial to not just achieving the targeted levels of cooperation, inclusiveness and social equity at the international level that can ensure a better life for all, but to empowering the very institutions that are established to ensure peace, security and development.

Yet another organisation dedicated to peace, security and vibrant economy is the Economists for Peace and Security, an international network of 13 affiliated organisations spearheading strategic



Conflicts derail economies. Last year alone, the global economic impact of violence was pegged at \$14.5 trillion in purchasing power parity terms, which amounts to 10.6 per cent of global GDP

economic analyses and impactful action. All such organisations share a common goal: contribute to the creation of a world where people feel safe, their needs are met and there is equitable distribution of resources by working with governments on effective policy formulations so that the current and future generations get to live in beautiful, promising world.

The Sultanate, which improved its ranking in the Global Peace Index 2020 and secured the fourth spot in the MENA region, has been advocating a peaceful world order ever since the late HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said ascended to the throne in 1970. Under His Majesty's leadership, Oman commanded global respect and appreciation as an effective peace broker in the Middle East. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik too envisions a conflict-free world; and in his first address to the nation His Majesty stressed on the continuation of the country's foreign policy fundamentals that are based on peaceful coexistence and friendly relations with nations, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and international cooperation in various spheres, among others. The focus, His Majesty emphasised, will be on contributing to the resolution of disputes by peaceful means.



DR YOUSUF ALI AL MULLA

## The healing power of laughter

We know that laughter is a human feature and is a universal medium of communication. It shows the intelligence of a human being and his ability to reach others, even in the absence of other forms of communications.

So, when I look to the topics of laughter that circulate during coronavirus pandemic, it enable us to understand the imbalances caused by this small being in ourselves, the extent of anxiety, fear and obsessions that it has transmitted in us, which has revealed the weakness of humans and its inability to understand the course of things clearly, and its failure to give meaning to what the world is experiencing today.

Nevertheless, the father of medicine, Hippocrates, stressed that laughter is a kind of treatment, because it is a means of resistance, getting rid of cases of anxiety and depression that afflict a person. Interestingly, human being when it tries looking for its balance in an unthinkable manner, it is keen to get rid of its faults, fears and anxiety in front of risks it faces.

And perhaps the COVID-19 pandemic created a fertile field for the production of what unites groups of society and reassures individuals as well, that they are not alone in the crisis and what they think about is not definitely related to them alone, but the

common denominator among the general people at the time of such crisis is laughter.

People have always resorted to comedy in raising issues central to their daily lives in times of crisis, something confirmed by the famous psychologist, Sigmund Freud. He demonstrated the deep impact of laughter and humour on the soul as a way to reduce psychological tension and reduce fear. Actually, why not? I think you will agree with me to some extent that during such period when we receive jokes from friends, we often forward them to others directly and this perhaps because we try to reach out, initiate a shared experience, and thus alleviate some fears of the people.

Therefore, it is ideal if we could consider laughter or humour therapy, where the power of smiles and laughter aid healing. It sounds that laughter change brain chemistry and may boost the immune system. So, while staying within confines of home or even work, people can boost their immunity by doing laughter yoga for 15 to 30 minutes. Truly, the laughter exercise is not very technical, but easy to perform. One has to simply laugh and continue doing it.

In the current scenario, everyone should work to strengthen his immune system and laughter, I believe it is a wonderful treatment. Some studies expressed that 15 minutes

of laughing exercise a day is equivalent to 30 minutes of cardio exercise done thrice a week. A recent study explained that laughing for at least 30 minutes a day for three months reduces a second heart attack! Not only that, but some scientists went on to say that laughter yoga increases the lung capacity by ensuring controlled forced breathing. Perhaps the most important positive effect of laughter is pain inhibition, especially in people with chronic pain-causing illness (cancer and arthritis). When we laugh, we relax our muscles, reduce depression and blood pressure in some cases, in addition to reducing negative stress hormones, like cortisol and trigger the production of neuro chemicals like dopamine, which have all kinds of calming effects.

When our expectations clash with unpleasant reality and when it seems to us that we have mistaken, we absolutely need humour and laughter to minimise the impact of failure. Laughing and sense of humour, something none of us can lose, especially now, as the world has been turned upside down with such pandemic and other events. In fact, some time you need to press the pause button when you feel drowning in scary news and here humour is a good key. There are so many hurdles and difficulties you might be going through right now, but if you take a moment to laugh it off, I am sure it will make all the difference in your life.

At the end, laughter could be a key to a happy life and it is fortunate as it is sometimes contagious, transmitted from one person to another with its benefits. So, with your daily supplements, keep taking doses of laughter that will help soothe your soul and others.

Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla, MD, Ministry of Health, is a medical innovator and educator. For any queries regarding the content of the column he can be contacted at: dryusufalmulla@gmail.com

## CONDOLENCES



TECNICAS REUNIDAS DAEWOO L.L.C

express their deepest condolences to

**His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Sabah,  
Emir of Kuwait  
the Royal Family  
and the people of Kuwait**

on the sad demise of

**His Highness Sheikh Sabah  
Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah  
Late Emir of Kuwait**

*We pray that The Almighty will shower his mercy  
upon His Highness and elevate his soul to the  
highest level of paradise.*

*May his soul rest in peace*

## An intelligent engagement with *Ides of March*

Our classic book review takes us this time to the US, the birth country of the great writer Thornton Wilder (1897-1975).

Thornton Wilder was a playwright and a novelist who won the Pulitzer Prize three times. His first was for the novel *The Bridges of San Luis Rey* (1928). The second and third were awarded for dramas titled *Our Town* (1938) and *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1943).

His hit play: *The Matchmaker* (1954) was adapted as the musical *Hello, Dolly!* He also wrote the screenplay for Hitchcock's movie *Shadow of Doubt* in 1943. Wilder was proficient in four languages including French and Italian from which he translated plays and wrote two operas. He continued to write his whole life and received several awards including the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1963).

This week's novel is called the *Ides of March* and as the title suggests, the main character of the book is

Julius Caesar. What makes this book special is that it's an epistolary — a novel written as a series of letters.

The letters are exchanged between many famous characters that existed during the lifetime of Julius Caesar: Cicero the lawyer and orator, Catullus the poet, Clodia and Clodius Pulcher the infamous siblings, Caesar's second wife Pompina, Caesar's aunt Julia Marcia, Marc Antony the well-known general and Cleopatra the queen of Egypt. Other minor characters correspond as well such as Brutus and his mother Servilia.

The letters exchanged between the different characters outlines a clear picture of Rome during that time including its culture, politics, famous incidents and the daily life of Roman citizens. Different political and social events in the book lead gradually to the assassination of Caesar on the 15th of March 44 B.C. Although the correspondence is totally imagined by the writer, yet the incidents mentioned are real.

For example: the visit of

THE LETTERS EXCHANGED BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT CHARACTERS OUTLINES A CLEAR PICTURE OF ROME DURING THAT TIME INCLUDING ITS CULTURE, POLITICS, FAMOUS INCIDENTS AND THE DAILY LIFE OF ROMAN CITIZENS

Cleopatra to Rome and the violation of the sacred rites by Clodius Pulcher. Thornton adds a fictional figure: Turrinus — a retired soldier and a friend of Caesar who lives on the island of Capri — to whom various characters write but never receive a reply. What makes the book fascinating and unique are these exchanged letters.

The same event could be narrated and analysed by different characters depending on how closely they're related to each other and how intimate they are to the main character Julius Caesar. Another interesting angle is Caesar's own opinion and concerns regarding different characters and incidents — mainly voiced to his friend Turrinus — based on letters and personal documents intercepted by his network of spies.

The novel is divided into four books, each starting earlier and ending later than the previous one. Although his real inspiration for writing the book came after eight months visit to Rome as a visiting archaeology student in 1921, Wilder

started writing it almost twenty years later and published it in 1948.

At that time, he met Sartre and was influenced by his existentialist ideas — as well as the work of Danish philosopher Kierkegaard — which set the philosophical framework of this novel. The book I read is the 2003 copy which has extra materials for those interested in knowing more about the writer, the concept behind the book, interview extracts and the impact it had after being published.

The forward is written by a fellow American writer Kurt Vonnegut Jr. and the last few pages has original manuscript extracts with corrections made by the writer himself. Although the theme of *Ides of March* is well known and overly written, yet Wilder's version remains the best being richly textured and timeless. History fans won't be disappointed.

**Rasha al Raisi** is a certified skills trainer and the author of: *The World According to Bahja*.  
rashabooks@yahoo.com



RASHAAL RAISI

## Opera house in Amazon brings music back to virus-hit city



Manaus' Amazonas Theatre was built in the late 1800s during the region's rubber boom. — AFP

Five months after the coronavirus pandemic turned the Brazilian city of Manaus into a horror show of mass graves and overflowing morgues, music has returned to the Amazonian capital's famed opera house.

Built in the late 19th century at the height of the rubber boom that once made Manaus one of the wealthiest cities in the Americas, the Amazonas Theatre is known for its Renaissance revival architecture, opulent interior and location near the banks of the Amazon River.

It emerged from its COVID-19 lockdown last week with a series of performances featuring the work of Mozart and Beethoven, in a sign of the rainforest city's hopefulness that the worst of its outbreak is past.

"I'm very grateful for this opportunity," said music lover Marcelino Aguiar from behind his face mask, attending his first concert in months with his wife and children.

The theater adapted its programming to the times: string quartets with no conductor, in order to respect social distancing guidelines.

Ticket sales were limited to half the theater's 700 velvet-covered seats.

The infection curve in Manaus, a city of 2.2 million people, had plunged dramatically in recent weeks.

That led some experts to speculate that the city's epidemic may have been so bad that it reached "herd immunity," in which enough members of a population are immune to a disease that it can no longer spread effectively.

Last week, the city declared a new 30-day closure of beaches.

The Amazonas Theatre, however, plans to continue holding concerts, with strict health protocols including temperature checks and hand sanitiser at the entrance.

"Art resists and persists. And as for us, we're adapting," said historian and concert-goer Bruno Miranda, 35, just before the curtain went up. — AFP



DR PRITI SWARUP  
drpritiswarup@gmail.com

## FROM MOHAN TO BAPU

Peace. Non-violence. Persistence. With these words, one of the most prominent names that come to one's mind is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi or simply Gandhiji. For most of us in India, he is Bapu. 150 years ago, Gandhiji was born in an elite Gujarati Indian family. Little does the world know that this rebellious teenager once placed utmost importance to fulfilling carnal desires even when his own father was on death-bed, the moment which he regretted and felt guilty about, for the rest of his life. After seeking professional education in London, he graduated as a lawyer and blended his lifestyles with those of the Westerners. He was soon influenced by the Theosophical Society, after which he started formulating his own ideas of uniting all people and religions. His young mind then tried to unify the teachings of the Gita, The Light of Asia and the Sermon on the Mount. Appalled by the mistreatment of Indian immigrants based on skin colour, Gandhiji started "Satyagraha" — the non-violent civil protest in South Africa. Because of this, Gandhi was a famous name worldwide, even before coming back to India.

It is a lesser known fact that the calm, fearless, courageous man whom we know today as Gandhi, was not always comfortable in front of crowds and suffered from acute fear of public speaking. His glossophobia was so severe, that while fighting his first case as a lawyer, he panicked and ran out of the courtroom without speaking a word in front of the judge. However, over the years, he managed to overcome his weakness and turned this into his advantage. He had excellent listening capabilities and this power of 'saying more with less', has made him connect and inspire countless souls across the globe even today.

Gandhiji was deeply affected by the condition of his people in India. What started as a protest against the infamous Rowlatt Act and subsequent massacre in India by the British in 1919, led to the rise of full-fledged freedom struggle. Boycotting of western goods, peaceful non-cooperation of British rule, was what followed ahead. After a 250-mile march to an Indian coastal town, Gandhiji held up a handful of self-produced salt and announced, 'With this I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire'. And he did it with persistence and non-violence.

Gandhiji was a staunch believer of equality of rights, especially for women, which constitute approximately half the population. Sarojini Naidu, another independence activist and the Nightingale of India, was the first woman delegate to have ever attended the Indian Round Table conference at London. He had proudly announced that she was the elected President of the Indian National Congress, giving equal importance to women in making important political decisions, which no other nation had even thought about in those days.

'Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.' With this philosophy, he also believed in the power of continuous education. In today's tumultuous world, education should not only be for remuneration, but for cultivating peace rather than disharmony.

Even years after his death, Gandhi is not just a name. He was both a transformational and transactional leader whose natural charisma added a great deal of required momentum to the ongoing struggle for independence of India. His grandeur is so much that over 100 nations have released postal stamps depicting his life. A number of monuments and murals have been dedicated to the Mahatma outside India; Garden of Peace (Austria), Ariana Park (Geneva), Church Street (South Africa) to name a few and the recent additions being statue at Parliament Square (London) and Gandhi Statue of Peace at California (USA).

Clearly, he wasn't the first, and certainly he wouldn't be the last. Outside India, Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela, and Dalai Lama have been known to be influenced by him and have emulated his methodology in shaping the world politics at large. But the round rim spectacled, thin, loin-cloth clad man from a western Indian state remains our favourite, our Bapu.

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#Living\_with\_COVID19

Lebanon to put over 100 districts on lockdown

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon is to put 111 villages and towns nationwide on lockdown for a week after a series of record novel coronavirus daily infection rates, the interior ministry said on Friday.

The move came after widespread objections to a nationwide lockdown in August, as the country faces its worst economic crisis in decades.

From early Sunday and for eight days in the villages listed, residents were to “remain at home”, and “wear a mask covering their mouth and nose if forced to go out”, the ministry said in a statement.

State institutions and places of worship would close, but health centres and delivery services would be exempted, it added.

The head of a major Beirut public hospital battling COVID-19, Firass Abiad, welcomed the new district-by-district approach.

“This will help identify hotspots and (implement) a more focused approach to restrictive measures. This can be a good alternative to the unpopular total lockdown,” he said on Twitter.

Cases have spiked in the aftermath of a massive explosion at the Beirut port on August 4 that killed more than 190 people and overwhelmed the capital’s health services, with thousands of wounded.

The country has recorded 40,868 COVID-19 cases since February, including 374 deaths.

Authorities fear that a major spike would overwhelm the country’s fragile health sector.

— AFP

NO BREAKTHROUGH IN BREXIT TALKS, BUT SOME PROGRESS MADE

■ ANY DEAL MUST BE IN PLACE BY YEAR-END ■ SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES REMAIN IN TRADE TALKS

■ MERKEL SIGNALS TENTATIVE PROGRESS ON FISHERIES ■ IT’S UP TO THE EU, SAYS JOHNSON

**BRUSSELS/LONDON:** German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she had no breakthrough to announce on Friday as a week of EU talks with Britain ended, but remained optimistic that sealing a deal on a post-Brexit trade relationship was still possible before the end of the year.

Her words were echoed by Britain’s chief negotiator, David Frost, who said that while progress had been made in some areas, the main differences between the two sides remained, with the gap on fisheries “unfortunately very large”. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was more blunt, telling the European Union it was up to the bloc to show common sense.

Both Johnson and the EU have set a mid-October goal for reaching a trade agreement, but the EU’s chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier suggested talks would continue up until the end of the month. There are still major hurdles to ensuring smooth ties after December 31, when a standstill post-Brexit transition ends, and a chaotic split without a new agreement in place would jeopardise an estimated trillion euros worth of annual trade.

Barnier noted fresh progress on aviation safety and safeguards of fundamental rights but said there was none on personal data protection or carbon pricing. “Serious divergences” persisted, he said, citing a need for level playing field guarantees of fair competition, including on state aid, “robust” mechanisms to solve disputes, including “effective remedies”, and an agreement on fisheries.



Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel gives a press conference on the second day of a European Union summit at The European Council Building in Brussels on Friday. — AFP

“I can’t announce a breakthrough,” Merkel told an earlier news conference after two-day talks among the 27 national EU leaders in Brussels. “As long as negotiations on Brexit are ongoing, I’m optimistic.” Johnson again said Britain only wanted a deal similar to the kind that the EU had handed other countries such as Canada.

“It’s up to our friends and partners to be common-sensical,” he told BBC regional journalists. His chief negotiator, Frost, rammed home

London’s point that he believed the EU needed to show more “realism and flexibility” to reach an agreement, saying: “I am concerned that there is very little time now to resolve these issues ahead of the European Council on October 15.”

BORDER

Johnson will speak to the head of the EU’s executive, Ursula von der Leyen, on Saturday to agree next steps after the bloc launched a legal case against Britain over moving to undercut their

Brexit divorce treaty. Speaking after the summit on Friday, von der Leyen said it was time to “intensify” Brexit talks with time available by the end of the year to put a new deal in place running out.

“Where there’s a will, there’s a way,” she said. “We have made progress on many, many difficult fields but the main ones all remain very much open,” she added, naming guarantees on a level playing field of fair competition as a key sticking point. “There is still a lot of work to do.”

— Reuters

Lebanese artists in overdrive to restore Beirut’s beauty

**BEIRUT:** Lebanese stained glass artist Maya Hussein had hoped to retire after decades spent designing colourful windows, but she has been flooded with work since the blast that ripped through Beirut.

“I can’t possibly not try to restore what is gone,” said the 60-year-old woman, her bright red curly hair in a short bob.

The massive explosion at the capital’s port on August 4 killed more than 190 people and wounded thousands more as it sent lethal shockwaves pummelling through the city. But it also ravaged dozens of Beirut’s most cherished heritage buildings.

Hussein is one of several artists slowly starting to restore artworks devastated in the disaster.

In her basement workshop on the outskirts of Beirut, she gestured at what remained of windows of a 19th-century church she had restored after the 1975-1990 civil war.

A gaping mess of mangled metal, dotted by a few surviving pieces of orange and blue glass, lay in a cardboard box.

“At least seven projects I had worked on were blown away,” Hussein said.

They included one of her first projects designing biblical scenes on glass for a church, and the dazzling yellow and orange windows she had crafted for the famed Sursock Museum. Before the blast, she had planned to retire after completing glass windows for a last cathedral in Jordan. “But now I won’t allow myself to stop,” she said.

On her work table, she picked a green piece of glass and lodged it between curving lengths of soft lead



Lebanese stained glass artist Maya Hussein, 60, works on a piece for a cathedral under construction in Jordan, her main project before the Beirut port blast, in her basement workshop on the outskirts of Beirut. — AFP

to rebuild a window of flowers and leaves for a private home.

Even if she has now taken on apprentices, she said there is still a lot of work ahead.

“For some people who have asked me, I won’t be able to start anything for at least two years,” she said.

In neighbourhoods near the port, the race is on to cover up 100 heritage buildings before the autumn rain.

The United Nations culture and education fund, Unesco, has said it will hold a conference to try to drum up hundreds of millions of dollars for restorations. But until that aid arrives, Lebanese are doing what

they can on their own. Among them, artwork conservation specialist Gaby Maamary has decided to offer to restore damaged paintings for free.

He says he was inspired after seeing Lebanese youths sweeping away seas of rubble and glass after the blast, and decided to channels his skills towards preserving Beirut’s heritage. “It’s something that you can lose easily if you don’t pay attention,” the 58-year-old artist and university lecturer said.

In his Beirut studio, he carefully held up a 17th-century nature morte by Italian artist Elena Recco, depicting a cat greedily eyeing up

some dead fish.

In several places, the canvas had been slashed by flying shards of glass.

Wearing white gloves, he turned over the back of another canvas he had started cleaning, the untreated part a shade darker and shimmering with fine glass dust.

Nearby, he pointed to a work by late Lebanese artist Sophie Yeramian whose dried paint had been cracked by the blast.

“We did not expect that amount of calls,” he said.

The initiative has taken him to assess damage in art galleries, but also private homes.

In one, he pulled a painting worth tens of thousands of dollars out of the trash. To his horror, he found another bound up in sticky tape.

The owner had rushed to hospital with her severely injured son after the explosion, and someone helping to clean up the mess had not realised their worth.

But even without sticky tape to complicate matters, Maamary said conservation is a complex process that involves hours of planning before even touching the artwork.

“Sometimes the same step has to be done several times, simply because we don’t have the museum equipment,” he said.

Bringing in specialised materials from abroad is also tricky, with bank transfers blocked from Lebanon’s crisis-hit banks.

But drawing on the help of friends and using what is locally available, Maamary is determined to carry on.

“We’re going to continue doing that on a daily basis until we run out of materials or means,” he said.

— AFP

N Korean leader Kim tours flood-hit town, sister reappears in public

**SEOUL:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspected recovery efforts in a flooded village, his latest visit to areas damaged by recent typhoons, while his sister reappeared in public for the first time in about two months, state media said on Friday.

Kim praised the speed of reconstruction work in Kimhwa County in the country’s southeast during the visit with Kim Yo Jong, KCNA reported. He said of the storms and other natural disasters, “This year has been one of unprecedentedly hardships.”

The younger Kim, considered the de facto second in command, is believed to be in her early 30s and is the leader’s only close relative with a public role in politics. She became prominent with her harsh rhetoric against South Korea.

Summer storms and floods have hit North Korea hard, destroying thousands of homes and raising concerns of a worsening of the country’s chronic food shortages. While praising the recovery,

Kim said he “felt regretful” that new houses in the area were of a “monotonous” design.

Earlier, state media had called the cookie-cutter houses a model of the “socialist fairyland”, advertising the regime’s recovery efforts after thousands of homes were destroyed by floods. Kim’s comments were the latest official criticism in the tightly controlled country, where socialist glorification is the norm.

In recent weeks state media said Pyongyang had discovered “faults” in its efforts to battle COVID-19, and Kim offered a rare apology for North Korea’s killing a South Korean official in waters off the west coast of the peninsula.

On Friday, the ruling party newspaper *Rodong Sinmun* featured Kim’s tour, showing lines of houses with red roofs and beige and white walls. Kim said that although speed was important, he wished “artistic harmony with the surrounding environment and diversity had been appropriately combined”, KCNA said. — Reuters



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspects sites of reconstruction in Kimhwa County, in this image released by North Korea’s Central News Agency on Friday. — Reuters

# UK says virus still likely to be spreading exponentially

**LONDON:** British government scientists said on Friday it was still likely that a resurgence in the COVID-19 epidemic was spreading exponentially despite survey data that suggested a small levelling off in a recent sharp rise of cases. The Office for National Statistics had said there was some evidence that the steep increases in new COVID-19 cases, seen in recent weeks in England, was slowing down.

But government scientists urged caution as they published a reproduction “R” number that had risen slightly to 1.3-1.6 from 1.2-1.5, meaning that on average, every 10 people infected will infect between 13 and 16 other people. An R number above 1 indicates the epidemic is growing exponentially.

“While there are some early indications suggesting that the growth of the epidemic might be slowing, SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) urges caution and believes it is too early to draw firm conclusions,” the Government Office for Science said.

“More data are needed to accurately assess any recent changes in transmission and it is still highly likely that the epidemic is growing exponentially across the country,” The ONS estimate said new cases of COVID-19 in England were around 8,400 per day in the latest week to September 24, down from around 9,600 per day during the previous week, providing “some limited evidence” that the incidence rate may be levelling off after steep increases during August and September. Britain reported a slight dip in those testing



A woman struggles with an umbrella as she crosses London Bridge in strong winds and rain, in London, on Friday. — Reuters

positive on Thursday after two straight days of more than 7,000 new daily cases.

The ONS infection survey looks to estimate infection numbers in the

community beyond those who have been tested. An estimated 116,600 people had the disease in England, up from an estimated 103,600 people

last week, and the ONS added there was clear evidence of an increase in the number of people testing positive in recent weeks. — Reuters

## ARMENIA SAYS ‘READY’ FOR MEDIATION

**STEPANAKERT, Azerbaijan:** Armenia accused Azerbaijani forces of striking the main city in the disputed Nagorny Karabakh region on Friday as fighting raged for a sixth day.

Yerevan said it was ready to work with mediators for a ceasefire but Azerbaijan fired back that Armenia must first withdraw its troops.

Baku and Yerevan have for decades been locked in a simmering conflict over the ethnic Armenian province that broke away from Azerbaijan in a bitterly fought war in the 1990s.

New fighting that erupted on Sunday has been the heaviest in decades and has claimed nearly 200 lives, including more than 30 civilians.

Intermittent shelling and ambulance sirens were heard in Stepanakert, the main city in Karabakh, throughout the day, an AFP team reported.

Armenia said Azerbaijani forces struck Stepanakert, wounding “many” people, but some



Men are seen in the yard of a house which is said to be damaged in shelling during ongoing fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in the village of Djojugh Marjanli in Azerbaijan's Jabrayil district on Friday. — AFP

locals said they were not afraid. “There is no fear. We have our pride,” Arkady, a 66-year-old resident, said. “There will be victims. A war is a war.”

Separatist authorities said ten emergency response workers had been injured when Azerbaijan struck.

International calls for the neighbours to halt clashes and begin talks have intensified as fears grow that the fighting could expand into a multi-front war sucking in regional powers Turkey and Russia.

French President Emmanuel Macron has warned Nato member Turkey — which backs Azerbaijan — against the alleged deployment of militants from Syria to the Karabakh conflict.

Yerevan expressed its readiness to work with international mediators to halt the fighting.

Armenia “stands ready to engage” with France, Russia and the United States “to re-establish a ceasefire regime,” the foreign ministry in Yerevan said. — AFP

# Thousands of US-bound migrants surge into Guatemala

**ENTRE-RIOS, Guatemala:** Thousands of mostly Honduran migrants bound for the United States surged across the border into Guatemala on Thursday, just weeks before a tense American presidential election where immigration is a key issue.

Carrying backpacks and plastic bags, the migrants pushed past two lines of Guatemalan soldiers at the Entre Rios border crossing and continued north — defying the risks and restrictions linked to the coronavirus pandemic.

However, late on Thursday Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei, in an address to the nation, ordered the Hondurans detained and sent back to their home country.

However, he urged them to “please return” voluntarily to their country.

Guatemalan Migration Institute officials said some 3,000 people had crossed the border without submitting to a COVID-19 test, required for foreigners entering the country.



Honduran migrants, part of a caravan heading to the US, are seen onboard a truck in Entre Rios, Guatemala, after crossing the border from Honduras, on Thursday. — AFP

| Covid-19                                    |         |                     |           |
|---------------------------------------------|---------|---------------------|-----------|
| World toll on Friday October 2 at 1100 GMT  |         |                     |           |
| Deaths                                      | New     | Cases               | New       |
| 1,024,093                                   | 5,628   | 34,354,354          | 324,076   |
| New: 24-hour increase on Thursday October 1 |         |                     |           |
| Hardest-hit countries                       |         |                     |           |
|                                             | Deaths  | New (latest report) | Cases     |
| UNITED STATES                               | 207,816 | 949                 | 7,279,065 |
| BRAZIL                                      | 144,680 | 728                 | 4,847,092 |
| INDIA                                       | 99,773  | 1,095               | 6,391,068 |
| MEXICO                                      | 78,078  | 432                 | 748,315   |
| UNITED KINGDOM                              | 42,202  | 59                  | 460,178   |
| ITALY                                       | 35,918  | 24                  | 317,409   |
| PERU                                        | 32,535  | 72                  | 818,297   |
| FRANCE                                      | 32,019  | 63                  | 611,977   |
| SPAIN                                       | 31,973  | 182                 | 778,607   |
| IRAN                                        | 26,567  | 187                 | 464,596   |
| COLOMBIA                                    | 26,196  | 198                 | 835,339   |
| RUSSIA                                      | 21,077  | 186                 | 1,194,643 |

Increases over 24 hours may not tally exactly with previous day's total due to inavailability or late publication of data or corrections made by authorities

Sources: AFP tallies based on official tolls

**AFP**

## Madrid returns to lockdown

**MADRID:** Madrid will become the first European capital to go back to lockdown on Friday night as some 4.8 million residents of Spain's capital and nine satellite towns will be barred from leaving due to the resurgent coronavirus. Restaurants and bars will shut earlier and slash capacity by half in Europe's worst infection hotspot.

The new restrictions, to start at 10 pm (2000 GMT), were not as strict as the previous lockdown from March, when people were barred from leaving their homes. Still, residents were anxious and exasperated at the political wrangling between central and regional government.

“We have been eight months with masks and without nightclubs and parties, and there is still contagion. Then what kind of impact will these restrictions make?” said Sonny van den Holstein, owner of Sanissimo restaurant. “People are confused, they hesitate to go out,” he said,

just as a customer called to cancel a reservation for Saturday. “Another cancellation — because they are in fear.”

The conservative-led Madrid area authority reluctantly complied with the order from the Socialist-led central government to ban travel except for school, work, health or shopping. Famous for its late-night carousing and usually lively tourist flow, Madrid is also seeing a curfew for bars and restaurants moved to 11 pm from 1 am. Restaurants, gyms and shops are having capacity cut by half.

“We are obliged to start this from today,” senior Madrid regional official Enrique Lopez told a news conference, apologising to Madrid residents for uncertainty of past days while blaming the central government. The measure widens a confinement already in place in poorer parts of the city with high infection rates.

— Reuters

## EU hits 40 Belarus officials with sanctions, spares Lukashenko

**BRUSSELS:** The European Union imposed sanctions on Belarus' interior minister and the head of its electoral commission but spared President Alexander Lukashenko, the bloc said in its Official Journal on Friday.

Publishing the names of the 40 individuals that EU leaders agreed to sanction early on Friday in response to an August 9 election that the West says was rigged, the EU list included commanders, security officials and prison directors. Lukashenko is not on the EU's list, however. Despite pressure from the EU's Baltic states, diplomats said Brussels was sticking to its policy of punishing powerbrokers as a last resort, so as to push for new elections.

Interior Minister Yuri Karaev and his deputy are the most senior officials to be targeted, which was first reported by Reuters on September 7. The draft list faced a series of delays

as the EU's decision-making became entangled in internal conflicts. EU leaders broke the impasse following a summit dinner in the small hours of Friday in Brussels.

The EU's Belarus sanctions aim to support pro-democracy protests in Minsk against Lukashenko, whom opponents say has illegally prolonged his 26-year rule through a fraudulent vote. The EU travel bans and asset freezes also include top security officials such as Alexander Valerievich Bykov, commander of rapid response forces and whom the EU accuses of “arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment, including torture, of peaceful demonstrators.” Electoral commission chairwoman Lidia Mikhailovna Yermoshina is also now under sanctions, accused of intimidating voters and distorting the vote result. Belarus earlier announced retaliatory sanctions against the EU. — Reuters

# Constitutional referendum for ‘New Republic’ splits Algeria

AMAL BELALLOUFI

Algeria is readying for a constitutional referendum that the establishment says will usher in a “New Republic” and boost freedoms, but the opposition dismisses as window-dressing by a repressive government.

With a month to go before the November 1 vote, many ordinary Algerians — struggling during a deep economic crisis that has seen unemployment soar — appear unaware of the technical details of the government’s proposals.

And opposition leaders say President Abdelmadjid Tebboune’s flagship initiative fails to provide meaningful political change in the North African nation.

“It is yet another coup against popular sovereignty,” said Djamel Bahloul, of the Front of Socialist Forces (FFS), Algeria’s oldest opposition party.

“The authorities continue to concoct constitutions through



President-elect Abdelmadjid Tebboune

MANY ORDINARY ALGERIANS APPEAR UNAWARE OF THE TECHNICAL DETAILS OF THE GOVERNMENT’S PROPOSALS

technical commissions or experts — while ignoring the people.”

An unprecedented protest movement, known as “Hirak”, mobilised from February 2019 and in April that year people massed in their hundreds of thousands to force veteran ruler Abdelaziz Bouteflika to resign after two decades in power.

Tebboune won a presidential election in December, but the protest movement boycotted a vote it derided as a sham and even the official turnout was less than 40 per cent.

Tebboune served as prime minister under Bouteflika and is seen by protesters as emblematic of an old regime that they want to dismantle.

Peaceful demonstrations continued, until the need to social distance brought a curtain down on street mobilisations earlier this year.

In a bid to shore up his mandate, Tebboune pledged to revise the constitution — which Bouteflika modified for his needs — and allow people to approve or reject proposals in a referendum.

In January, the president appointed a commission of constitutional experts, who held consultations with political parties and civil society leaders.

The commission submitted its proposals in March, and the draft changes were adopted without debate by parliament in early September.

The government claims it offers “radical change in the mode of governance” by better separating powers and boosting transparency.

Critics point out that parliament remains dominated by two allied parties who held power under the old regime.

They are the National Liberation Front (FLN), Bouteflika’s party, and the Democratic National Rally (RND).

FLN Secretary-General Abou El Fadhl Baadji touts the constitutional changes as a “qualitative leap” that gives birth to a “New Republic where justice, law and the equitable distribution of the country’s wealth reign”. Tayeb Zitouni, the RND’s Secretary-General, is similarly enthusiastic.

— AFP

## GLOBAL LAB

### New network to compare virus vaccines head-to-head

KATE KELLAND

A major non-profit health emergencies group has set up a global laboratory network to assess data from potential COVID-19 vaccines, allowing scientists and drugmakers to compare them and speed up selection of the most effective shots.

Speaking to Reuters ahead of announcing the labs involved, Melanie Saville, director of vaccine R&D at the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), said the idea was to “compare apples with apples” as drugmakers race to develop an effective shot to help control the COVID-19 pandemic.

The centralised network is the first of its kind to be set up in response to a pandemic. In a network spanning Europe, Asia and North America, the labs will centralise analysis of samples from trials of COVID-19 candidates “as though vaccines are all being tested under one roof”, Saville said, aiming to minimise the risk of variation in results.

“When you start off (with developing potential new vaccines) especially with a new disease, everyone develops their own assays, they all use different protocols and different reagents — so while you get a readout, the ability to compare between different candidates is very difficult,” she said. “By taking the centralised lab approach... it will give us a chance to really make sure we are comparing apples with apples.”

The CEPI network will initially involve six labs, one each in Canada, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Bangladesh and India, Saville said. Hundreds of potential COVID-19 vaccines are in various stages of development around the world, with shots developed in Russia and China already being deployed before full efficacy trials have been done, and front-runners from Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca likely to have final-stage trial results before year-end.

Typically, the immunogenicity of potential vaccines is assessed in individual lab analyses, which aim to see whether biomarkers of immune response — such as antibodies and T-cell responses — are produced after clinical trial volunteers receive a dose, or doses, of the vaccine candidate. But with more than 320 COVID-19 vaccine candidates in the works, Saville said, the many differences in data collection and evaluation methods are an issue. As well as potential variations in markers of immunity, there are differences in how and where samples are collected, transported and stored — all of which can impact the quality and usefulness of the data produced, and make comparisons tricky. And with a range of different vaccine technologies being explored — from viral vector vaccines to ones based on messenger RNA — standard evaluation of their true potential “becomes very complex”, she said.

“With hundreds of COVID-19 vaccines in development... it’s essential that we have a system that can reliably evaluate and compare the immune response of candidates currently undergoing testing,” she said.

By centralising the analysis in a lab network, much of what Saville called the “inter-laboratory variability” can be removed, allowing for head-to-head comparisons. — Reuters

## REUTERS/IPSOS POLL

# Trump’s Supreme Court gambit could benefit rival Joe Biden

JAMES OLIPHANT AND CHRIS KAHN

President Donald Trump’s nomination of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the US Supreme Court has energised his conservative supporters, but public opinion on abortion, healthcare and other hot-button issues the court may face could work against him in the November election, according to Reuters/Ipsos polling.

Trailing Democrat Joe Biden in national opinion polls, the Republican Trump hopes to build enthusiasm for his re-election among undecided and independent voters, especially in US battleground states that decide presidential elections. But those voters are more likely to align with Democratic positions favouring abortion rights and the Affordable Care Act(ACA), a healthcare law popularly known as Obamacare, and may be turned off by the appointment of a conservative judge at odds with their views, according to the polling conducted in September and released this week.

Among both independent and undecided voters, those who want abortion to remain legal outnumber those who do not by nearly a 2-to-1 margin, according to the Reuters/Ipsos polling. The polls also show that 56 per cent of suburban women, a demographic that Trump has been courting, support abortion rights.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll found that Obamacare, which Trump has vowed to scrap, is backed by six of 10 registered independent and undecided voters. It also is relatively popular among groups that Trump usually relies on for support, such as whites without a college degree, half of whom say the law should be retained.

Obamacare is on the high court



► Judge Amy Coney Barrett, President Donald Trump’s nominee for Supreme Court, poses for a photo at the United States Capitol Building in Washington, DC on Thursday. — AFP

BARRETT HAS PROVEN RELIABLY CONSERVATIVE SINCE TRUMP APPOINTED HER TO A FEDERAL APPEALS COURT IN 2017

docket on November 10, a week after the election. The Trump administration has sued to overturn the law. If the Supreme Court strikes down the law, more than 20 million Americans would lose their health insurance outright and millions more could have reduced coverage. The Biden campaign has made the uncertain future of Obamacare a staple of its messaging.

The law requires insurance

companies to cover consumers with pre-existing conditions at affordable rates. Biden favours expanding Obamacare by allowing consumers to buy into a government-run health plan. Priorities USA, a political-action committee that backs Biden, has launched a multi-million-dollar TV ad campaign in Midwestern states that highlights Trump’s efforts to “gut” Obamacare in the Supreme Court. — Reuters

By taking the centralised lab approach... it will give us a chance to really make sure we are comparing apples with apples

MELANIE

Director, vaccine R&D, CEPI

# Oman crude exports to China rise as shipments to Japan, India slump

**STRONG GROWTH:** CHINA LIFTED 88.4 PER CENT OF TOTAL OMANI CRUDE EXPORTS OF 193 MILLION BARRELS DURING THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF 2020

CONRAD PRABHU  
@conradprabhu

MUSCAT: Japan and India, once leading markets for Oman crude, saw their respective shares dramatically decline during the first eight months of this year.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), Japanese imports of crude from the Sultanate plummeted 90.8 per cent to around 1.6 million barrels as of August 31, 2020, down from 17.529 million barrels for the corresponding period of 2019. India too saw its share plunge 49.7 per cent to 6.675 million barrels this year, down from 13.270 million barrels last year.

But China, long the dominant market for Omani crude, bolstered its share by 18.2 per cent to 171.07 million barrels during the January–August 2020 period, up from 144.7 million barrels last year. Compared with total Omani crude exports aggregating 193.639 million barrels over this period, China's share accounted for an unassailable 88.4 per cent of this figure.

Despite a cut in production in keeping with its commitment to the Opec+ grouping of oil producers to help shore up sagging international crude prices, Oman's

output averaged 957K barrels per day (bpd) during the eight months of this year, slightly lower than the corresponding average of 970K bpd last year. While black oil output fell 7.5 per cent to 190.9 million barrels during this period, from 206.4 million barrels last year, condensate production surged 45 per cent to 42.6 million barrels this year, up from 29.4 million barrels last year.

The average price of crude was lower by 26.3 per cent at \$47.7/b this year, down from \$64.7/b during the corresponding period of 2019.

Natural gas production, on the other hand, remained relatively stable at 30.3 billion cubic metres (local output and Dolphin imports) this year, versus 30.7 bcm during the first eight months of 2019, according to the NCSI report.

While 60 per cent of this output was consumed by heavy industries, including Oman LNG for production of liquefied natural gas (LNG), the power generation sector accounted for a roughly 18 per cent share. About 23 per cent was used by oilfields primarily to support Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) operations, while the remainder was channelled towards industries cities administered by Madayan.



# World stocks slide after Trump catches coronavirus

The increase in political uncertainty connected with Trump's diagnosis is... weighing on stocks and stock futures, and supporting safe havens such as the yen, Swiss franc and the US dollar.

JANE FOLEY,  
Rabobank analyst

LONDON: Global equities dropped on Friday after US President Donald Trump revealed that he and his wife have tested positive for COVID-19, sparking fresh political chaos in the world's biggest economy just one month before Americans go to the polls.

The heightened turmoil sent US futures sinking as investors nervously awaited Wall Street's reopening at 1330 GMT, with key non-farm payrolls data slated for publication.

Europe's major bourses dropped sharply at the open before clawing back ground.

Japan's Nikkei closed down 0.7 per cent as trading resumed following Thursday's market shutdown caused by a technical fault — and amid holiday closures in many key Asian hubs.

Oil prices tanked four per cent, extending Thursday's heady losses



A man wearing protective face mask stands in front of a stock quotation board outside a brokerage in Tokyo, Japan. — Reuters

that were also rooted in the market being awash in crude amid timid demand.

"The increase in political uncertainty connected with Trump's diagnosis is... weighing on stocks and stock futures, and supporting safe havens such as the yen, Swiss franc and the US dollar,"

Rabobank analyst Jane Foley said. "The extent to which the election campaign is affected will depend on the outcome for Trump's health."

She added: "There are sufficient unknowns at this stage to fan speculation that the election could be quite different from

the one that was expected just 24 hours ago."

The extraordinary setback for Trump, 74, has immediate political consequences just 31 days before election day, forcing him to cancel campaign trips and adding new volatility to a contest already steeped in tension.

The White House doctor has said that both were well and that Trump would continue his presidential "duties without disruption".

The president had taken a test after his close White House aide Hope Hicks had tested positive earlier in the day, meaning he will now have to go into quarantine just weeks before one of the most crucial elections the country has ever had.

Investors were already feeling pessimistic over US lawmakers' failure to pass a new stimulus bill, dealers said.

"We are seeing some risk aversion on the back of the Trump news, although as yet the moves we're seeing are quite modest," Oanda analyst Craig Erlam said.

"Should Trump's health deteriorate, I expect we would see more significant moves, but there's no sign of that at this moment."

Sentiment had already been weak as hopes for a new US rescue package fade.

"It is also worth noting that stimulus talks this week have not gone well which may be contributing to the risk-aversion we're seeing in the markets, while today's (US) jobs report may be making people a little cautious," Erlam added.

Democrats pushed their latest \$2.2 trillion proposal through the House, where they hold a majority, but without any opposition support, there is no chance it will be agreed by the Republican-dominated Senate. — AFP

## Oil falls further as Trump tests positive for COVID-19



A worker holds up a fuel pump nozzle after filling up the tank of a car at a petrol station in Cairo. — Reuters

TOKYO: Oil prices extended losses to fall around 2 per cent on Friday after US President Donald Trump tested positive for the coronavirus, while a US stimulus package eluded negotiators amid ongoing worries about demand. Brent crude slipped on the news and was down 78 cents, or 1.9 per cent, at \$40.53 a barrel at 0516 GMT. US oil was 79 cents, or 2 per cent, lower at \$37.93. US oil is heading for a drop of more than 5 per cent this week, while Brent is on track to fall more than 4 per cent, in a second consecutive week of decline for both contracts.

In a tweet, Trump said he and First Lady Melania Trump tested positive for COVID-19. Trump said earlier he had started a quarantine process after Hope Hicks, a top adviser, had returned a positive test.

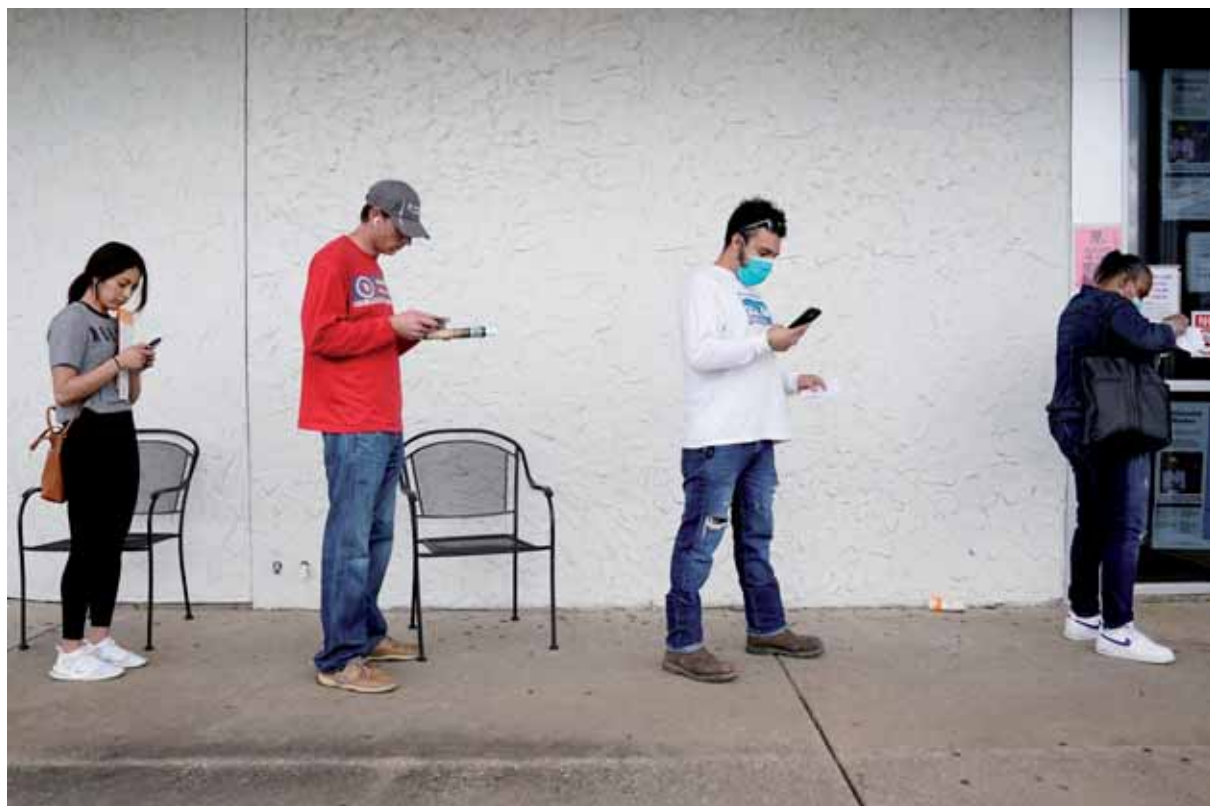
Oil was already in negative territory after a bipartisan deal for more economic relief in response to the pandemic continued to elude House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the White House, adding to fears about worsening demand without more support for the economy. "The chief culprit appears to be a lack of a new US stimulus package, reflecting the disappointment seen in other asset classes," said Jeffrey Halley, Senior Market Analyst at OANDA. — Reuters

# US employment growth slows; unemployment rate drops to 7.9%

Nonfarm payrolls likely rose by 850,000 jobs last month after increasing 1.371 million in August amid the hiring of nearly a quarter million workers for the 2020 Census. That would leave employment 10.7 million below its level in February.

WASHINGTON: US job growth likely slowed further in September as the recovery from the COVID-19 slump shifts into lower gear amid diminishing government money and a relentless pandemic, leaving many at the risk of being permanently unemployed.

The Labor Department's closely watched employment report on Friday will be the last before the fiercely contested November 3 presidential election for which the economic blow from the pandemic has been a top issue. Republican President Donald Trump is likely to see the fifth straight month of job gains as a sign of progress for an economy that plunged



People who lost their jobs wait in line to file for unemployment benefits at an Arkansas Workforce Center in Fayetteville, Arkansas. — Reuters

into recession in February.

But September's anticipated employment gains would be the smallest since the jobs recovery started in May and would still leave

the labour market a long way from recouping the 22.2 million jobs lost in March and April. Former vice-president Joe Biden, the Democratic Party nominee, blames the economic

turmoil on the White House's handling of the pandemic, which has killed more than 200,000 people and infected over 7 million in the nation. "The recovery continues but

at slower rate in part because the government stimulus has diminished significantly," said Sung Won Sohn, a finance and economics professor at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. "We are seeing more layoffs and bankruptcies, and until the next government comes in with more support, I would not be surprised to see a renewed decline in employment towards the end of the year."

According to a survey of economists nonfarm payrolls likely rose by 850,000 jobs last month after increasing 1.371 million in August amid the hiring of nearly a quarter million workers for the 2020 Census. That would leave employment 10.7 million below its level in February.

Though payrolls have beat forecasts over the past months, that has not changed the narrative of slower growth heading into the fourth quarter. Employment growth peaked in June when payrolls jumped by a record 4.781 million jobs. Third-quarter gross domestic product growth estimates are topping a 32 per cent annualised rate, reversing a historic 31.4 per cent pace of contraction in the April-June quarter. Growth estimates for the fourth quarter have been cut to around a 2.5 per cent rate from above a 10 per cent pace.

House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat, and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin are working towards a bipartisan agreement for another rescue package for businesses and the unemployed.

New coronavirus cases are rising, with a surge expected in the fall, which could lead to some restrictions being imposed on businesses in the services sector. Political uncertainty is rising and could extend beyond the election, and make businesses cautious about hiring. Several months after operations resumed, demand has remained poor, especially in the services sector, leading some businesses to permanently shut down or lay off more workers.

Walt Disney Co said this week it would lay off roughly 28,000 employees in its theme parks division. American Airlines and United Airlines, two of the largest US carriers, said they were beginning furloughs of more than 32,000 workers on Thursday, absent additional government assistance.

As the pandemic drags on, furloughed workers are in danger of losing their jobs permanently. There were 3.4 million people who had lost their employment for good in August, accounting for 25 per cent of the 13.6 million unemployed. — Reuters

## Walmart sells UK supermarket Asda for \$8.8 billion

LONDON: The British billionaire Issa brothers and private equity group TDR Capital have agreed to buy the British supermarket chain Asda from Walmart for an enterprise value of \$8.8 billion and plan to roll out more smaller stores.

The deal will enable Mohsin and Zuber Issa, who founded petrol station operator EG Group nearly two decades ago, to take Asda back under British ownership for the first time since 1999, when Walmart paid £6.7 billion for the business.

The new owners want to drive growth at Britain's third-biggest supermarket chain by expanding its presence into smaller neighbourhood shops to add to its large supermarket format, bringing it more in line with competitors Tesco and Sainsbury's which offer both.

Walmart will retain an unspecified equity investment in the business, an ongoing commercial relationship and a seat on the board, while British retail veteran Roger Burnley will remain in charge at Asda. — Reuters

## EU trade chief sees easier US ties with Biden than Trump

BRUSSELS: The European Union's trade relations with the United States would likely be easier if Democratic challenger Joe Biden won November's US election rather than President Donald Trump, European Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis (pictured) said on Friday.

The EU still faces US tariffs on its steel and aluminium and is in dispute with Washington over aircraft subsidies and EU plans to tax digital services companies. The two sides also have differing view on the value of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Asked how Brussels was preparing for the US election on November 3, Dombrovskis told EU lawmakers the bloc wanted strong transatlantic ties and would work with Washington whatever the outcome. "Probably under a new administration it would be easier because we know that the Trump administration is unfortunately supporting this unilateral action in areas of trade which is creating lots of tensions and lots of problems," he said.



"But in any case we will need to work closely and deliver positive results where we can," he continued.

On aircraft subsidies, Dombrovskis said that, in the absence of an agreement, the EU would impose tariffs related to Boeing once the WTO decides on the size of damages. Dombrovskis was speaking at a hearing at the European Parliament, which needs to approve his new role as the commissioner in charge of trade.

Dombrovskis, one of three executive vice-presidents among the 27 commissioners, will continue to oversee the European Union economy, but is also taking on trade after the resignation of Irishman Phil Hogan.

Dombrovskis also spoke about an EU trade accord struck with Mercosur countries Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. It faces criticism from environmental advocates who blame Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro for emboldening illegal ranchers and land speculators to deforest Amazon land. — Reuters

# UK expats count Brexit impact as banks shut accounts

For major UK bank Lloyds, the choice has been made. It is closing 13,000 accounts belonging to British expats spread across six EU countries — Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovakia.

LONDON: For Roger Morton and his wife living in France — and many other UK expats across the European Union — Brexit is causing the closure of their British banking services.

Morton, a 78-year-old retired photographer, laments a letter from Barclaycard, informing him that their credit account will no longer be accessible, as Britain prepares for the end of the Brexit transition period on December 31.

"It was a surprise and something draconian," he said of the letter, which he says comes on top of "an already stressful time" amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Their current account with Barclays, where they have banked for about 40 years, is not affected.

One of the first direct conse-



A woman uses the ATM machine at Lloyds Bank branch in central London. — Reuters

quences of Brexit, the move by UK lenders to shut expat services is said to affect tens of thousands of people across Europe.

From January 1 following the end of the transition period, UK banks will be deprived of their "passporting" rights that have allowed them

to offer services across the European Union.

To continue exercising these rights, they must have a legal entity

in the countries of operation.

"This will obviously incur additional costs so banks will need to make decisions about which markets

are likely to be cost-effective and profitable for them," noted Sarah Hall, professor of economic geography at the University of Nottingham, central England.

"This would mean that they choose to operate in some EU countries but not others," she said.

For major UK bank Lloyds, the choice has been made. It is closing 13,000 accounts belonging to British expats spread across six EU countries — Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovakia.

Banks are advising customers on their next steps.

Coutts, the bank of British monarch Queen Elizabeth II, has set up a dedicated team after warning its expat clients in July.

Expat newspapers, such as *The Connexion* in France, informs readers of their options such as changing banks so for example they can continue to receive UK state pensions.

HSBC and Santander have decided against closing accounts.

"HSBC has a legal entity in France and is planning on using that to service UK expats in France," added professor Hall.

Concerned that other banks are not taking the same measures, British parliament's Treasury Committee made up of cross-party lawmakers has written to the UK's financial regulator for clarification. — AFP



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (23) passes the ball against Miami Heat forward Bam Adebayo (13). – USA Today Sports

# Jealousy-free Lakers thriving with James-Davis double act

ORLANDO: LeBron James believes an absence of locker-room jealousy is the key to his successful partnership with Anthony Davis as the Los Angeles Lakers bear down on a record-equaling 17th NBA championship.

Davis joined the Lakers last year from the New Orleans Pelicans, and has played a crucial role in guiding the team back to the NBA Finals for the first time in 10 years after missing the playoffs in 2018-2019.

On Wednesday, Davis excelled with 34 points, nine rebounds and five assists as the Lakers demolished the Miami Heat 116-98 in a game-one blowout.

James, meanwhile, added 25 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists in a dominant performance against his former team to open the best-of-seven series.

The James-Davis double act has provided the Lakers with the team's most potent axis since Kobe Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal were leading the team to three consecutive NBA titles between 2000 and 2002.

But while Bryant and O'Neal's relationship was undercut with tension, James says his partnership with Davis couldn't be more different.

"We're not jealous of each other," James said on Thursday. "I think that's the best thing. In professional sports, you have guys that join forces to become alpha males. That's what they call them."

"Two guys that have been



Los Angeles Lakers' Anthony Davis (3) celebrates with forward LeBron James (23) after a play during the third quarter against the Miami Heat. – USA Today Sports

dominant in a specific sport on their own respective teams, and they get together and they talk about how dominant they can be and they talk about this is going to be this and that.

**'JEALOUSY CREEPS IN'**  
"I believe jealousy creeps in a lot.

And that is the absolute contrary of what we are. We know who we are. We know what we're about. We want the best, seriously, every single day, both on and off the floor, for one another."

Davis, 27, agreed, saying he had never once considered the possibility

that locker room envy could destabilise the Lakers locker room.

"The thought never crossed my mind when the trade happened," Davis said. "I'm not jealous of him. He's not jealous of me. I think it shows on the court."

"When you've got two guys who are very selfless and want to win as bad as both of us want to, the rest of it goes away and just takes care of itself."

Davis said a free flow of ideas and opinions characterised his partnership with James.

"We hold each other accountable," Davis said. "When we watch film or even during the course of a game, if I did something wrong, he tells me."

"If he does something wrong, I tell him. I think that's what makes it work, knowing that we trust one another to make reads, to make calls."

"We're able to talk to one another. Some guys on some teams are afraid to jump on the star player. Our team, a guy can tell a guy something, and we know it's coming from a great place and we know it's coming from a guy who wants to win."

Davis, however, does admit to envying James's three NBA championship rings.

"I want a ring, and he has three of them," Davis said. "That would be the one thing for sure that I would be jealous about... Hopefully I don't have to be envious of that much longer."

— AFP

# Klopp voices fears over internationals as virus spikes



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp. – Reuters

LONDON: Liverpool coach Jurgen Klopp said on Friday he is concerned about the number of his players travelling across the world to represent their national teams in the coming weeks as coronavirus infections continue to soar.

The Reds' Brazilian trio of Alisson Becker, Fabinho and Roberto Firmino have been called up for the Selecao's first two World Cup qualifiers this month — at home to Bolivia and away to Peru.

A host of other players will disperse across Europe for Euro 2020 qualifiers, Nations League fixtures and friendlies.

"I am slightly concerned because it is difficult to get in contact with all FAs (football associations) all over the world," said Klopp on Friday.

"I understand the demands on all FAs, UEFA, Fifa, I know how difficult the situation is for everybody. But it is just not exactly perfect the information we get from some FAs."

Klopp also turned on the Premier League and TV broadcasters for a schedule that could see many of his

players return on Friday, October 16, before facing Everton a day later. No date or kick-off time has yet been set for the Merseyside derby.

"The Premier League and TV broadcasters give us a challenge on top because they just don't care if our players play on (Tuesday) night in Peru. They still think it is a good idea to play on Saturday pretty early," added Klopp.

"In these moments as a club we are completely alone. You have to make sure you bring the players home in the quickest and the most safe (way) because nobody helps you. It's not like the FA says 'we pay the private plane'."

"Then they arrive on Friday, then we have to make the test and see if we get the result before the Saturday, so it is really tricky. We try everything to make it as safe as possible, but from time to time a little bit more help would not be bad." Liverpool are already missing one star player due to a coronavirus infection for Sunday's trip to Aston Villa as new signing Thiago Alcantara tested positive earlier this week. — AFP

## SHORT TAKES

### BERLIN

#### Cologne sign Wolf on loan from Dortmund

Cologne have signed winger Marius Wolf on loan from Borussia Dortmund until the end of the season, the Bundesliga club said on Friday. "Marius fits exactly into our profile. He is a fast winger, who is flexible and is a goal threat. He has already proven this in the Bundesliga," managing director Horst Heldt said.

During the previous season, the 25-year-old was on loan at Hertha Berlin, where he scored one goal and served seven assists in 23 games. "I had really good discussions with Cologne," Wolf said. "Horst Heldt and Markus Gisdol gave me a very good feeling and shown me the perspective of first-team football." — dpa



### MANCHESTER

#### Man Utd squad is big enough, says Solskjaer

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer believes Manchester United have the squad depth to compete this season despite a lack of new arrivals in the transfer market. Solskjaer had stressed the need for new signings after United's 2-1 defeat by Sevilla in the Europa League semifinals last season but Dutch midfielder Donny van de Beek remains the Premier League club's only signing of the summer. "We've got players we believe in," Solskjaer told reporters ahead of Sunday's Premier League clash against Tottenham Hotspur. "The window is still open and the club know my view and we're here to strengthen in the long-term."

— AFP



### BARBADOS

#### Walsh named West Indies women head coach

Former West Indies pacer Courtney Walsh has been appointed head coach of the West Indies women's team, the sport's national governing body said. Walsh, 57, will take charge of the team until the end of 2022 and oversee their run in the Women's Cricket World Cup and the Women's T20 World Cup. Walsh, who is West Indies' leading wicket-taker in tests with 519 wickets in 132 matches, had worked on a short-term contract with the women's team at this year's T20 World Cup in Australia. "It's an exciting challenge and I've always wanted to give back in any way I can and help with the development of the game in the West Indies," Walsh said in a statement. — Reuters



‘ARSENAL STILL HOPE TO SEAL LATE TRANSFER’

**LONDON:** Arsenal are set to make some key decisions before the transfer window shuts on October 5 to ensure the squad has the right balance for the rest of the season, manager Mikel Arteta said on Friday. British media reported that Arsenal have been in talks to sign highly-rated midfielder Houssem Aouar.



ANSU FATI MAKES SPAIN SQUAD AGAIN

**BARCELONA:** Spain coach Luis Enrique named a squad of 25 players on Friday with Barcelona’s 17-year-old striker Ansu Fati once again in the group. Fati has scored three goals in Barcelona’s first two games of the season and is picked ahead of Real Madrid’s Marco Asensio who was not included.

DOMESTIC CLUBS GEAR UP FOR RESUMPTION OF OMANTEL LEAGUE



**ADIL AL BALUSHI**  
MUSCAT, OCTOBER 2

The Omantel League will resume in less than three weeks with the remaining three rounds of the 2019/2020 season. The domestic clubs had raised their technical preparation for Omantel League through comprehensive training sessions at the internal camps and from friendly matches.

The league leaders Seeb beat Samayil 2-0 in a friendly game

on Thursday at Seeb club. Seeb’s goal struck by Younis al Mushefari and Marwan Taeab. It was the first preparatory match for both teams to gear up to the resumption of the league matches. The team that is positioned second in the league, Dhofar, suffered a 1-0 defeat from Al Ettihad at Salalah Sports Complex. Dhofar’s coach Rasheed Jaber affirmed that the friendly match was a chance for him to test different new players and evaluate their technical readiness.

He added in his statement to the media team of the club that the team’s preparatory plan is moving as per the plan and there are two more games before resumption of the league. Oman club’s gearing up match against ROP team postponed due to the latter’s team request.

All the training sessions and preparatory matches from the domestic team are done under full implementation of the approved OFA medical protocol and precautionary

measures that will prevent spreading of the COVID-19 virus.

Moreover, all the matches were held without attendance of the spectators due to the current health situation and in full adherence to the instructions of the Supreme Committee and Ministry of Health.

OFA had received the permission from the Supreme Committee in the first week of September for the resumption of domestic footballing activities for 2019/2020

and commencement of new season 2020/2021.

Accordingly, OFA instructed all the domestic teams to do the COVID-19 test for all the players and technical staff.

Later, the competition committee has announced the schedule for the remaining matches of Omantel League which will start on October 23 and will conclude on November 1.

The new season of 2020-2021 from top tier Omantel League will begin on

December 3 and conclude on April 30, 2021. The prestigious His Majesty’s Cup 2020-21 tournament will begin on January 1, 2021, and conclude on April 9, 2021.

Seeb are topping Omantel League by 50 points while Dhofar are placed second with 45 points. At the bottom of the league table order, Mirbat are confirmed of their relegation to the first division league while Al Oruba and Oman Club are positioned in the 12th and 13th positions respectively.

Arsenal reach League Cup quarters after Liverpool shoot-out

**LONDON:** Mikel Arteta praised Arsenal goalkeeper Bernd Leno for repaying his faith after the German’s two penalty saves clinched a 5-4 shoot-out win over Liverpool that sent the Gunners into the League Cup quarterfinals.

Arteta’s side had already beaten Liverpool on penalties in the Community Shield earlier this season and they repeated the trick in the fourth round tie.

Joe Willock scored the winning penalty after Leno saved from Divock Origi and Harry Wilson.

Adrian kept out Arsenal’s third spot-kick from Mohamed Elneny, but Alexandre Lacazette, Cedric Soares, Ainsley Maitland-Niles and Nicolas Pepe all netted before Willock set up a last eight clash with Manchester City.

Asked about facing City, where he worked as Pep Guardiola’s assistant until December, Arteta said: “I was waiting and enjoying the victory and then we have to play Manchester City.

“It is what is. There are a lot of tough teams left in the competition.”

Arsenal, who haven’t lifted the League Cup since 1993, have won three of their last four meetings with Liverpool in the space of just 11 weeks.

Liverpool beat the Gunners 3-1 in the Premier League at Anfield on Monday, but Arsenal took the spoils against the champions in the league in July and the Community Shield in August.

Arsenal’s disciplined display was



Arsenal’s Bernd Leno makes a save. – Reuters

another sign that the FA Cup winners are heading in the right direction under Arteta’s astute leadership.

Leno underlined why Arteta decided to restore him to the team and sell back-up Emiliano Martinez to Aston Villa, making a series of superb saves before emerging as the hero in the shoot-out.

“Bernd Leno was really good. When we needed him we had him. You need a top individual

performance to win at Anfield,” Arteta said.

“I really have belief in Bernd. I know him really well. We didn’t want Emiliano Martinez to go but it was probably the right thing.

“To come here and play with the determination and courage is a big step forward for the team. They are on the right path.”

Arsenal’s win was revenge for last season’s League Cup defeat on

penalties against Liverpool, when the Gunners led 3-1 and 4-2 in a 5-5 draw.

There was less drama until the shoot-out on this occasion as Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp made nine changes and Arteta eight, contributing to a stop-start encounter.

“If there would have been a winner in 90 minutes it should have been us but we are not in dreamland, you have to score,” Klopp said.



Arsenal celebrate winning the penalty shootout. – Reuters

“A penalty shootout is tricky, everyone knows it.”

**‘AWFUL PERFORMANCE’**

In Thursday’s other fourth round action, Stoke claimed a shock 1-0 win at Aston Villa, while Brentford reached the last eight for the first time with a surprise 3-0 victory against Fulham.

Villa have won their first two Premier League games this season, but boss Dean Smith made 11 changes for Stoke’s visit and his understudies were not up to the task.

Stoke also fielded an under-strength team, but Michael O’Neill’s Championship team won it in the 26th minute when Sam Vokes headed in Jordan Thompson’s corner.

After reaching the final last season,

when they lost to Manchester City, this was a more forgettable exit for Villa.

“It’s a massive missed opportunity and I said that to the players,” Smith said.

“With the tempo we played at it was a lacklustre first half and an awful performance.”

Stoke will host Tottenham in the quarterfinals.

Brentford earned a measure of revenge for their Championship play-off final defeat to Fulham last season as they swept aside their struggling Premier League opponents.

Thomas Frank’s team scored through Marcus Forss before Said Benrahma’s brace set up a last eight clash with Newcastle.

— AFP



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# sport



Austria's Dominic Thiem returns the ball to Norway's Casper Ruud during their third round French Open match. – AFP

# THIEM, SVITOLINA INTO LAST 16 AS NADAL EXPECTS TOUGHER TASK

**PARIS:** US Open winner Dominic Thiem swept into the last 16 at Roland Garros on Friday along with women's third seed Elina Svitolina while Rafael Nadal anticipated a stiffer challenge after serene progress in his first two matches at the tournament.

Former champion Simona Halep faces a fascinating rematch with Amanda Anisimova, the American teenager who knocked her out of last year's competition. Thiem broke down early resistance from Norway's Casper Ruud to secure an impressive 6-4, 6-3, 6-1 victory and set up a possible showdown with 2015 French Open winner Stan Wawrinka.

"I'm very happy. It was a great match and I didn't do any mistakes," said Thiem, the runner-up to Nadal the past two years. "The conditions are very nice to play in under the roof — no wind and the court is perfect."

Wawrinka, the 16th seed, goes up against the lone Frenchman remaining in the draw, Hugo Gaston, the world number 239.

Two-time quarter-finalist Svitolina ensured she will stick around for the second week in Paris with a 6-4, 7-5 win over Russia's Ekaterina Alexandrova, the 27th seed.

Ukrainian Svitolina is full of confidence after capturing her 15th career WTA at Strasbourg last weekend.

"It's always really nice to have

another chance to go deep in the tournament," said Svitolina.

"It's a little bit different without the crowd, so you start to treasure every match and every Grand Slam you play."

Polish teenager Iga Swiatek dismissed former Wimbledon finalist Eugenie Bouchard 6-3, 6-2 to seal a return to the last 16, matching her best result at a Grand Slam.

Later on Wednesday, 12-time champion Nadal meets 74th-ranked Italian Stefano Travaglia, who is through to the last 32 of a Grand Slam for the first time. Unsurprisingly, Nadal has yet to drop a set in Paris against opponents with a combined ranking of 319, but the Spaniard knows tougher examinations await in his pursuit of Roger Federer's record 20 major titles.

"I've won two matches in three sets. When you win like this it's not bad, it means you don't make many mistakes and manage to make a difference," said Nadal.

"It's a good thing. I know in the next round more is going to be asked of me and I need to be ready for that."

## PAINFUL MEMORY SPURS ON HALEP

Halep's status as the women's favourite was reinforced following the withdrawal of Serena Williams, on top of the absence of world number one and defending champion Ashleigh Barty, as well as US Open winner Naomi Osaka.

The Romanian is riding a career-best 16-match winning streak but is well aware of the threat posed by her upcoming opponent.

Anisimova, who turned 19 in August, became the first player born in the 2000s to reach the last four at a major when she defeated Halep in the quarterfinals last year. "I'm going to talk with the coach, I know it's going to be tough because she's hitting the ball strong and flat, so it's going to be tough," said Halep.

"I remember the match from last year, I remember also that I didn't play what I wanted, so I will do some changes and I will just try to play better and to take my chance."

Sixth seed Alexander Zverev tackles Italian qualifier Marco Cecchinato, who famously beat Novak Djokovic on his way to a semifinal appearance at Roland Garros in 2018.

Zverev was again taken to five sets in round two — 31 per cent of his Grand Slam matches have now gone the distance, compared to just nine per cent for Nadal.

Kiki Bertens will attempt to move on her from her stormy win over Sara Errani after which the Dutch fifth seed departed the court in a wheelchair.

Former finalist Errani accused Bertens of faking injury during a three-hour clash which left her in cramps and the Italian screaming an obscenity. — AFP



Ukraine's Elina Svitolina in action during her third round match against Russia's Ekaterina Alexandrova. – Reuters