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OFA ANNOUNCES SCHEDULE FOR NEW SEASON



P15

GLOBAL BANKS SEEK TO CONTAIN DAMAGE OVER \$2 TRILLION OF SUSPICIOUS TRANSFERS



P19

'I'M A MRS, AND I SALVAGE'



OMAN

HM greetings to Saudi King

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health, happiness and long life to King Salman, praying to the Almighty Allah for the return of this and similar occasions on him, and the brotherly Saudi people further aspirations of progress and prosperity.

FAO hails progress on food security

ROME: The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has commended the progress made by the Sultanate towards achieving food security. The statement was made by the FAO in a regional report prepared for discussion during the 53rd session of Near East Region Conference, held online and will conclude on Wednesday. The report said that the Sultanate made considerable progress in limiting the "lack of food security and malnutrition". The international organisation added that the rate of food shortage in the Sultanate declined from 10.5 per cent to 6.8 per cent in the period from 2004 to 2018 and, accordingly, the number of the malnourished stood at 0.03 million.

DETAILS ON P2

INSIDE



TURKEY AND GREECE 'READY TO START' EAST MED TALKS

P6



CITIES TO DIVEST FROM FOSSIL FUELS TO BOOST GREEN RECOVERY

P9

WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT
MAX: 38°C
MIN: 26°C

SALALAH
MAX: 31°C
MIN: 25°C

NIZWA
MAX: 42°C
MIN: 32°C

SUNRISE 05:56 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR: 04:41

DHUHR: 12:04

ASR: 15:30

MAGHRIB: 18:08

ISHA: 19:18



CONCERN OVER COVID-19 RESURGENCE



VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Supreme Committee on COVID-19, chaired by Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, on Tuesday announced a slew of measures including the resumption of public transport that will restore normal life in the country after months of restrictions and lockdowns. The committee appreciated the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, who presided over the meeting of the Supreme Committee last week in Dhofar. The committee praised His Majesty the Sultan's directives which aim at protecting all citizens and residents, ensuring the services rendered by the

state's institutions and supporting the national economy in a manner which secures the continuity of the private sector activities. The committee expressed grave concern over the resurgence of coronavirus in the Sultanate and across the world, leading to more infections and deaths. The committee attributed the surge to the complete lack of compliance with the instructions and precautions and stressed the need for everyone to adhere to all measures issued by the competent authorities. "All individuals have a responsibility to protect himself, his family and his community from infection." The committee reviewed health and epidemiological indicators in

- Dhofar lockdown lifted from October 1
- Public transport resumes from Sunday
- Expats with residency visa can return to Oman

Dhofar Governorate and decided to lift the lockdown from October 1 to facilitate the movement of citizens and residents. "All individuals and institutions must adhere to precautionary and preventive measures that ensure the safety of everyone." **RETURN OF RESIDENTS** The committee allowed the return of those holding valid residency from October 1 provided they undergo COVID-19 test upon arrival and quarantine for a period of 14 days. The special facilities provided by the government to the private sector and its employees will continue until the year-end, the committee said, the

details of which will be announced later. **PUBLIC TRANSPORT** The public transport between cities will resume from September 27. Service will start within Muscat from October 4, and within Salalah from October 18. The services within Suhar will be announced later by the authorities. The precautionary measures to be followed for the safety of employees and passengers are sterilisation of buses before the start of the trip and after its completion, measuring the temperature of passengers, wearing masks onboard, and providing hand sanitisers inside the buses.

Wages based on skills, not degrees

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttvyp

Academic qualifications will not be a deciding factor for minimum wages for Omanis in the private sector, according to a top official in the Ministry of Labour. Shaikh Nasr bin Amer al Hosni, Under-Secretary of Ministry of Labour, said wages are linked to skills rather than academic eligibility. "Although the general minimum wages are mandatory, employers can decide on a higher salary depending upon the competency and skills of the potential job seekers", Al Hosni said in an interview to Oman TV. While calling upon fresh graduates to take up jobs and earn the necessary experience, he said, salary should not be the factor that holds them back from starting a job. "We encourage beginners to get as much experience as possible from jobs so that they can



The minimum wage for Omanis working in the private sector is RO 325, of which RO 225 is basic salary and RO 100 allowance get higher salaries once they are skilled in a particular profession," he said. For example, a job seeker holding only a secondary certificate or General Education Diploma (GED) can still get a salary of RO1,000 if he has been competent and efficient with his tasks.

TURN TO P5

Nasa plans for return to Moon to cost \$28 billion

WASHINGTON: Nasa on Monday revealed its latest plan to return astronauts to the Moon in 2024, and estimated the cost of meeting that deadline at \$28 billion, \$16 billion of which would be spent on the lunar landing module. Congress, which faces elections on November 3, will have to sign off on the financing for a project that has been set by President Donald Trump as a top priority. The \$28 billion would cover the budgetary years of 2021-25. In a phone briefing with journalists on Monday on the Artemis mission to return human beings to the Moon, Nasa administrator Jim Bridenstine noted that "political risks" were often the biggest threat to Nasa's work, especially before such a crucial election. Barack Obama cancelled plans for a manned Mars mission after his predecessor spent billions of dollars on the project. If Congress approves the first tranche of \$3.2 billion by Christmas, "we're still on track for a 2024 moon landing," Bridenstine said.



"To be clear, we're going to the South Pole," he said, ruling out the sites of the Apollo landings on the Moon's equator between 1969 and 1972. "There's no discussion of anything other than that." Three different projects are in competition to build the lunar lander that will carry two astronauts — one of them a woman — to the Moon from their vessel Orion. The first one is being developed by Blue Origin, founded by Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, in partnership

with Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Draper. The other two projects are being undertaken by Elon Musk's SpaceX and by the company Dynetics. The first flight, Artemis I, scheduled for November of 2021, will be unmanned: the new giant rocket SLS, currently in its test phase, will take off for the first time with the Orion capsule. Artemis II, in 2023, will take astronauts around the Moon but will not land. — AFP

Low risk is still a risk,
limit your time outside

LOW RISK
ISN'T
NO RISK


World Health
Organization
Western Pacific Region

Even if you are less than 60 years old and do not have an underlying health condition, you can still become sick with COVID-19.



Clean your hands often



Cough or sneeze in your bent elbow – not your hands!



Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Having no extreme risk and life returning to new normal isn't a reason to rejoice. Everyone needs to follow the precautionary measures more, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Speaking to the *Observer*, Sayyid Jaffer Hussain, Chief of Cabinet and WHO Regional Representative, said that low risk of COVID-19 is 'not no risk' and deviation from taking precaution could be fatal.

"However, one can reduce chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions," Sayyid Jaffer said.

"Even if you are less than 60 years and do not have an underlying health condition, you can still become sick with COVID-19. Hence, you should, more than anything else, besides

cleaning your hands often, wearing masks, coughing or sneezing in your bent elbow — not your hands, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces, limit your time spent outside while avoiding going out to a great extent," he added.

"Why we urge everyone to avoid going to crowded places is that one is more likely to come into close contact with someone that has COVID-19 and it is more difficult to maintain physical distance of one metre (3 feet)."

The WHO Representative further said, "Stay home and self-isolate even with minor symptoms such as cough, headache, mild fever, until you recover. Have someone bring you supplies. If you need to leave your house, wear a mask to avoid infecting others. Why? Avoiding contact with others will protect them from possible COVID-19 and other viruses."

FAO hails Sultanate's progress towards achieving food security

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The statement was made by the FAO in a regional report prepared for discussion during the 53rd session of Near East Region Conference, held online and concluded on Tuesday.

The report said that the Sultanate made considerable progress in limiting the "lack of food security and malnutrition".

The international organization added that the rate of food shortage in the Sultanate declined from 10.5 per cent to 6.8 per cent in the period from 2004 to 2018 and, accordingly, the number of the malnourished stood at 0.03 million.

The report noted that the number of people suffering malnutrition in the Near East Region stood at 98.8 million from a total of 809.9 million in the world.

Malnutrition spreads in the Arab region at a rate of 13.2 per cent, comprising 55 million men, women and children, said the FAO report.

The FAO explained that this means that one out of every eight people suffers hunger and consumes less food than what is sufficient to generate enough levels of energy that is suitable to sustain a natural and healthy life.

FAO REGIONAL MEET

The Ministerial Meeting of the 35th FAO Regional Conference for the Near East, which was held via



video-conferencing under the theme "Transforming Food and Agriculture to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals", concluded at the headquarters of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Muscat on Tuesday.

The closing meeting was chaired by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The meeting discussed regional challenges and priorities related to the transformation of food systems to achieve sustainable development

goals (SDGs) in the Near East and North Africa region. It also discussed enhancing the effectiveness of FAO in the region and helping it define its priorities for the next two years.

The meeting aimed at boosting responsibility and joining hands towards addressing the growing challenges facing the region in terms of food security, water scarcity and climate change.

Further, the meeting addressed the priority issues witnessed by the region in the food and agricultural sectors, the discussions on challenges

and options for strengthening and building sustainable food systems in order to achieve SDGs.

The meeting sought to tackle the challenges represented in ensuring availability, accessibility, stability and use of food in ways that provide smallholder producers and rural communities opportunities to increase income, employment, food production and productivity while ensuring the sustainability of the region's ecosystems and achieving adaptation to climate change and mitigation of its impacts. — ONA





HUAWEI WATCH FIT
10 DAYS BATTERY LIFE*



*The data comes from Huawei labs. The actual usage may vary depending on the product differences, user habits, and environment variables. Product color, shape, interface and functions are for reference only. The actual product may vary.

Sultanate joins United Nations in celebrating 75th anniversary

MUSCAT: The Sultanate on Tuesday joined the United Nations (UN) celebration of the 75th anniversary of the international organisation. The event was marked worldwide via videoconferencing.

Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, delivered the Sultanate's speech on this occasion saying, "I am honoured to convey to your gathering the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his best wishes of success in your tasks."

He added, "The Sultanate highly values its strategic partnership with the UN and reaffirms its support to this partnership. It counts on the high status gained by the UN along the past decades since its inception. The UN takes centre stage in the scheme of global relations. It represents a pivotal point and a lighthouse of hope, security, peace and a podium where disputes are resolved by peaceful means and in line with principles of international law."

Shaikh Abdulmalik proceeded saying, "We meet to mark the 75th anniversary of the UN today at a time when the world has become a stage of major turbulences and an unprecedented global health crisis with serious economic and social repercussions." He expressed Oman's hope that this crisis would be an incentive to the world to overcome the pandemic with great determination and motivate the international community to develop stronger cooperation as one global family



that works for the best of all."

The activities of the UN have ramified along with the increase of number of its members and the growth of international population over the past decades. The UN agenda has been burdened with a variety of concerns and aspirations more than any other time in the past. The international organisation finds itself face to face with modern time developments and intricate challenges that keep piling at a rapid pace. These challenges compel UN members to adopt more advanced mechanisms that respond to present and future generations' aspirations for security in terms of decent living, justice and stability, said Shaikh

Abdulmalik.

He added that the Sultanate appreciates the efforts of UN agencies and programmes in combating poverty and disease and fostering peace, harmony and sustainable development. Oman also values UN efforts in promoting environment conservation and addressing issues of climate change, extremism and terrorism worldwide, Shaikh Abdulmalik reaffirmed.

Shaikh Abdulmalik explained that the Sultanate pursues traditions of foreign policy and international relations that respect the noble principles of the United Nations and support endeavours for peace, understanding, cultural diversity,

The Sultanate highly values its strategic partnership with the UN and reaffirms its support to this partnership. It counts on the high status gained by the UN along the past decades since its inception

SHAIKH ABDULMALIK

State Council Chairman

tolerance, positive dialogue and close cooperation with all nations and peoples. Oman advocates the settlement of disputes by peaceful means in line with principles of the international law and it supports the development of the UN with a view to consolidating its capabilities and its performance while addressing challenges of the modern age, he added.

Summing up the Sultanate's speech, Shaikh Abdulmalik stressed that the Sultanate will continue to be a partner to the UN and (a supporter for) upgrading its role in accomplishing its noble mission of establishing international peace, harmony, security, stability and prosperity. — ONA

FOR SALE

Residential, Commercial Land - With an area of 5000 m², located on the first line of Highway/adjacent to Oman Mall – South Al-Gubrah- Wilayat of Baushar in square phase2.

Building permit (ground + 4 floors)

97365922/ 92822040

Kamaljeetk666@gmail.com

660 NEW COVID-19 CASES



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Tuesday announced 660 new cases of COVID-19 in the Sultanate, taking the total confirmed cases to 94,711.

The number of recoveries stood at 86,195, which is 91 per cent of the total cases reported so far.

Twelve new COVID-19 related deaths were reported on Tuesday, taking the total to 865. — ONA

Oman organises virtual cybersecurity drill

The drill, themed 'Managing cyber risks of remote work', was held at OCERT's headquarters in Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM) with the participation of 25 Arab and regional countries



headquarters in Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM) with the participation of 25 Arab and regional countries.

The drill was hosted by the Sultanate in partnership with the OIC. It has been aimed at strengthening efforts among national CERTs by qualifying human cadres in the field of emergency cases management, enhancing readiness to

deal with various e-risks and threats, and identifying the best ways to address them.

The drill annually keeps pace with the latest developments in the field of cybersecurity, cyber-attacks and malware. The drill focused this year on simulating international cross-border cooperation to deal with cybersecurity incidents in light

of the COVID-19 pandemic, and ways to address cyber risks that have emerged because of remote work of institutions and governments.

OIC has chosen the Sultanate, represented by OCERT, for the third time in a row, to host this drill as the centre is chairing the Board of Directors of OIC-CERT. — ONA

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, represented by Oman National Computer Emergency Readiness Team (OCERT), on Tuesday organised the 8th virtual cybersecurity drill for the Arab countries and member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

The drill, themed 'Managing cyber risks of remote work', was held at OCERT's

Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos Private School

Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos PVT School is currently seeking teachers to fill the following vacancies:

1. Biology Teacher (Female).
2. Physics Teacher (Female).

Requirements: Candidates must have:

- B.A. in the subject /B.Ed.
- Minimum 3 Years experience.
- Must be resident in Oman.
- Minimum score 6 in IELTS.

Please submit your CVs in via E-mail

schoolhr@gmail.com

Note. CV from outside Oman will not be considered

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#Living_with_COVID19



Public elated over restart of bus services



GREEN SIGNAL: COMMUTERS WHO SOLELY DEPEND ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT WELCOME MOVE

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The roads of Oman will see red buses again as per the latest decision from the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology to resume public transport services. According to the details released by the Ministry, as per the approved decision by the Supreme Committee, the public transport services between cities will begin from September 27 and within Muscat from October 4, and within Salalah from October 18 while the services within Suhar will be announced

later by the authorities. "I think it is great news to have the public transport back because it is very useful for the members who do not have their own transport. If safety measures are taken in an appropriate manner such as safety distance and sanitization of the buses are taken care of then there is nothing like it. I think it is a blessing," said Arvin Sampat, a member of the business community. Dawood Riyami opines that Mwasalat can actually help in eliminating congestion in high density areas however he feels there should be caution. "It is a critical situation to be in – to assure the safety of the public during this pandemic period. My opinion is it would be safe enough if we strictly follow the precautions as public transportation is a place of high level interactions. The best thing

is the buses can really make an impact in lifestyle – they are spread out, they are convenient and easily accessible which is highly beneficial when you are in cities and most importantly we can save on fuel expenditure. "Public transportation can also reduce traffic if people opt to park and use the public transport system. I really think we would even bring down pollution," pointed out Dawood. "Resuming public transport is definitely a good initiative, especially while rolling back businesses along with the new norms; it surely helps people who regularly commute through public transport, which has been instrumental in many ways. Generally the compliance from both the citizens and residents are much to be appreciated, we are in this together as one. Once again appreciate all the concerned authorities who have been tirelessly working hard to bring back normality in the new age times," explained Vivek Arcot Ramesh. The move is going to make a major difference for commuters who solely depend on public transport. Tippu Bhomik said, "Once the public transport begins commuting to work will be easier because it is cheaper than taxis. It is also safer in the bus because there will be distance between the passengers unlike taxis." Mohammed Siddiq who totally depends on public transportation said, "There is a lot of excitement although there might be a bit of fear initially but we have to move forward." There is a relief expressed by the general public who do not possess personal vehicles with the announcement of opening up of public transportation. A segment of the general public was also using the public transport to commute to the airport. Meanwhile, the orange taxi drivers say even otherwise the pandemic period has been extremely challenging and there is hardly any income. The public transport bus stand lies vacant without a single passenger except for the last lane designated for the orange taxis. Nasser al Saadi, Rashid al Sunaidi and Ashraf al Siyabi have parked their taxis and have been waiting for potential passengers. "Taxi business is almost gone as there are very few passengers," said Rashid al Sunaidi. But every day they try and at 3.30 pm they were sitting under the shade discussing the latest developments while waiting for passengers. Nasser al Saadi said, "Many companies are still closed or are working from home. If we do not have the passengers how can we purchase the petrol? There are not many people out there. Still we continue to be positive and hopeful."



Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtaining of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)
8/2020	Provision of laptops for social security and limited income students enrolled in the first year of higher education	Excellent & One	Thursday 1-10-2020 02:00 PM	Sunday 18-10-2020 10:00 AM	R.O. 50/=

- Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>), On Wednesday 23/9/2020.
- Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- The original (1%) bank warranty to be submitted at same day of submitting at tender box located in Directorate of Finance & Administration at MOSD HQ.
- For Inquiry , please contact through the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402222 or 24166670)

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

www.mosd.gov.om



Recall Campaign for KIA Pegas (AB) - TPMS Variant Coding Procedure

Date of Campaign : 23/09/2020
Recall Segment : Mechanical
Product Description : New Variant Coding Application

Division	Vehicle Model	Affected Vehicle Production Range	VIN Range	No. of Affected Vehicles
KIA	PEGAS (AB)	08th Jan'2019 to 23rd Jul'2019	LJD0AA293L0051087 LJD0AA290L0088839	85

Description of defect:
Some vehicles might experience the TPMS' (Tyre Pressure Monitoring System) warning light does not light up because low pressure of tyre is not detected in Pegas (AB) on all affected vehicles.

Procedure:
Verify affected vehicles as per VIN and update that current TPMS variant coding procedure.

For more information:
Customers, who own Pegas (AB) models, may please contact M/s. Reliable International Automotive LLC for details / booking appointment etc from 23/09/2020 onwards for installations.

Contact Details:
Toll free No. 80073222 on all working days (Sunday to Thursday) between 08.30 to 17.30hrs.

C.R. 1707/83

the general public was also using the public transport to commute to the airport. Meanwhile, the orange taxi drivers say even otherwise the pandemic period has been extremely challenging and there is hardly any income. The public transport bus stand lies vacant without a single passenger except for the last lane designated for the orange taxis. Nasser al Saadi, Rashid al Sunaidi and Ashraf al Siyabi have parked their taxis and have been waiting for potential passengers. "Taxi business is almost gone as there are very few passengers," said Rashid al Sunaidi. But every day they try and at 3.30 pm they were sitting under the shade discussing the latest developments while waiting for passengers. Nasser al Saadi said, "Many companies are still closed or are working from home. If we do not have the passengers how can we purchase the petrol? There are not many people out there. Still we continue to be positive and hopeful."



Cooperation with Unicef discussed

MUSCAT: Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development, on Tuesday met Lena al Wreikat, Unicef Representative in Muscat.

They discussed aspects of the existing cooperation between the Ministry of Social Development and the Unicef in various fields related to children in the Sultanate.

The meeting also touched on the

efforts exerted and achievements made by the Sultanate in the childhood sector since it ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1996. The meeting also stressed the importance of continuing cooperation between the Ministry and the Unicef, as well as benefiting from the Unicef expertise in serving this sector. — ONA

CBO treasury bills tender results

MUSCAT: A tender of government treasury bills, issue number 523, held at the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) this week.

The results of issue are as follows: the total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO 10 million, for a maturity period of 91 days, from 23 September 2020 until 23 December 2020. The average accepted price reached 99.804 for every RO 100 while the minimum accepted price arrived at 99.800 per RO 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 0.78816 per cent and 0.78971 per cent, respectively. Note that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 0.5 per cent while the discount rate on the treasury bills discounting facility with CBO is 1 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the CBO on behalf of the government, which help the licensed commercial banks to gainfully invest their surplus funds, with added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo) offered by the Central Bank. — ONA

Wages based on skills, not academic degrees

FROM PAGE 1

Most of the job seekers are university graduates (bachelor or diploma) and the job market does not need all of them. “Most of the available vacancies require some level of work experience, which they will not get unless they take a job from any level.

Earlier in a circular, the Under-Secretary said the new decision comes within the Fiscal Balance Program 2020-2024 plan (Tawazon), which includes two initiatives to review the Omanisation rates and abolish the minimum wage.

The minimum salary for Omanis working in the private sector is currently set at RO325, of which RO 225 is basic salary and RO 100 allowance.

Oman’s labour law mandates that

the employer deposits the wages in the employee’s bank account within seven days from the end of the period in which such wages become due.

While welcoming the new initiative, Rashid al Balushi, human resource manager at a non-banking finance company, said that the new move will remove the discrimination of employees in the lower wage brackets.

“While the minimum wages are mandated to be paid regardless of the qualification, skilled employees can still have contracts for higher wages,” he said. From February 2018, it is mandatory for all private sector employers to register on the wage protection system of the Ministry of Labour and provide up to date information about wages of their workforce.

says Dr Mohammed al Zadjali, a renowned legal adviser and member of Majlis AshShura.

“The first reason is that with this certificate, the employee is eligible for 14 days paid special leave with full salary and secondly, it is a proof that the employee underwent quarantine and he has no symptoms,” he further said.

Quarantine period is paid leave as per the decision of the Supreme Committee and an employee is eligible to all rights and perks as per job contract.

Navas Chengala, a businessman and a social worker at the Muttrah Souq, said he had come across a number of such individuals without COVID-19 certificate.

When asked why he didn’t collect the COVID-19 negative certificate from the medical facility where he

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

A person who has been cured of COVID-19 needs to produce a negative test certificate when s/he resumes work. It is also a proof that s/he cannot spread the virus and underwent 14-day quarantine.

There are some instances of COVID-19 patients who come to workplaces without taking tests, which is public health risk.

“Those who have remained isolated after they were found positive in the COVID-19 test should not fail to collect the certificate that says they are tested negative,” an official of the Ministry of Health said.

“We strongly advocate collecting the COVID-19 negative certificate on two important grounds although it is not mandatory to obtain the same,”

MAFWR and OIFC sign agreement to support honey industry

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) on Tuesday signed an agreement with Oman-Indian Fertilizer Company (OIFC), in cooperation with the Office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), with the aim of supporting the honey industries in the Sultanate.

The agreement was signed by Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture, and Said bin Talib al Maawali, Chairman of OIFC Board of Directors.

The project aims to address some of the challenges being faced by the honey industry in the Sultanate



in line with the agricultural and rural development strategy 2040, its investment plan, FAO strategic objectives and the provision of capacity building programmes with a focus on the organisational and technical aspects.

The project will provide support to beekeepers to develop a common vision and action plan through a series of multi-stakeholder

workshops to have a sustainable and economic beekeeping.

The project also aims to enhance the technical skills of beekeepers and beekeeping-related institutions, low-income families and family projects, in addition to honey bee technicians in agriculture departments, which results in the adoption of good agricultural practices in beekeeping. — ONA

Real estate deals fall 7.3 per cent



MUSCAT: The total value of property transactions in the Sultanate at the end of August 2020 fell 7.3 per cent to reach RO 1,527.6 million from RO 1,647.4 million for the same period of 2019, as indicated by the preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The number of plots issued at the end of August 2020 was 107,192, which is a decline of 24 per cent compared to the end of August 2019, when 140,952 plots were issued.

Of the total traded value at the end of August

2020, RO 510 million worth transactions were sales contracts while RO 965.1 million transactions were mortgage deals.

As many as 32,460 sales contracts were executed in August 2020 against 38,279 contracts during the same period of 2019. However, the total number of mortgage contracts declined by 25.8 per cent to reach 7,989 contracts against 10,771 contracts in 2019.

The Sultanate’s government collected RO 41.6 million as real estate transaction fees at the end of August 2020, which is a drop of 25.4 per cent

compared to the same period of 2019.

NCSI data revealed a significant rise in traded value of exchange (barter) contracts by 233.1 per cent at the end of August 2020 to RO 52.5 million, as against RO 15.8 million posted in the comparable period of 2019.

The number of barter contracts witnessed a rise of 1 per cent to a total of 1,100, compared to 1,089 contracts in 2019. The number of plots allocated to GCC citizens fell by 63.2 per cent to reach 228 plots compared to 620 plots during the same period of 2019, the data showed. — ONA



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

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

Several people injured in huge arms depot blast in Lebanon

BEIRUT: An arms depot of the Hizbullah exploded in southern Lebanon on Tuesday, a security source said, injuring several people and sending a new shockwave across a nation grappling with its deepest crisis in three decades. The security source said the arms depot blast, which sent a huge column of black smoke into the sky, was caused by a “technical error”.

The explosion rocked the village of Ain Qana in south Lebanon, a region that is a political stronghold of the heavily armed and politically powerful group which has fought wars with neighbouring Israel.

The blast has further rattled a nation grappling with its worst crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war and still reeling from a devastating explosion at Beirut port that ripped through the capital, killing at least 190 people.

Since the Beirut blast on August 4, subsequent fires at the port and elsewhere in the capital have caused panic in Beirut and across the country, whose economy is in meltdown while politicians have yet to agree on how to form a new government. The previous government resigned after Beirut blast and is acting in a caretaker capacity.

Forming the new cabinet has hit a logjam as Hezbollah and its main ally have demanded they name the finance and some other ministers.

Another security source said Hizbullah had set up a security cordon around Tuesday’s blast site, about 50 km south of Beirut. Journalists were



People and members of the Lebanese army gather near the site of an explosion in the village of Ain Qana in southern Lebanon. — Reuters

prevented from approaching the area.

There was no immediate statement from Hizbullah. The group’s television channel Al Manar said in a news broadcast that the cause of the blast was still not clear.

Security sources said there were several injuries without giving figures.

Security source blames “technical error” for blast

A witness near the village said they felt the ground shake. Footage from the area broadcast by Al Jadeed showed

men walking over scorched ground littered with debris. The damage was shown in an adjacent house where the floor was covered in glass and what appeared to be a pool of blood. At least one fire was still burning in the location, the footage showed.

— Reuters

Fuel shortages, lack of basic supplies make lives of Yemen doctors harder

SANAA: In the Yemeni capital Sanaa, Mohammed al Ghazaaly’s kidney dialysis machine often cuts out due to an escalating fuel shortage in the country’s north. When the electricity generator runs out of diesel, nurse Mohammed al Hattamy turns the blood-filtering machines by hand to prevent clots. “

We try to do our best,” Hattamy said. Northern Yemen, controlled by the Ansar Allah movement since it ousted the government from power in Sanaa in late 2014, has suffered fuel shortages throughout a five-year war that has shattered Yemen’s health care system.

Short of fuel, needed for generators, water pumps and transporting goods, have dropped sharply in the past three months, the United Nations said, deepening a humanitarian crisis that has left 80 per cent of Yemen’s population reliant on aid.

The United Nations says fuel in the north’s informal market is double the official price. Long queues at filling



People donate blood at the blood bank in Sanaa. — Reuters

stations are common, and Ghazaaly said he paid an “exorbitant” amount for a taxi he eventually found willing to take him to hospital.

Imports into Ansar Allah-held areas have to go through stringent controls imposed by a military coalition battling the group. The Ansar Allah accuse the coalition of waging economic warfare by holding

UN-cleared commercial vessels which want to unload in the north. The coalition, which controls the sea and air space, says it is preventing arms smuggling.

Two weeks ago, the Ansar Allah suspended humanitarian flights to Sanaa in an apparent act of protest, further impacting aid provision as the ill-equipped country also battles

the coronavirus pandemic. Testing and reporting of coronavirus cases in Yemen is low and the United Nations says the virus is circulating undetected. Yemeni government authorities have declared 2,029 cases, including 586 deaths. Ansar Allah authorities have not provided figures since May 16, when they reported four cases and one death.

Ahead of a possible second wave of the virus, the International Committee of the Red Cross this week opened a free 60-bed COVID-19 clinic in the southern port city of Aden, the Yemeni government’s temporary capital.

Fatima Elkendi, a volunteer doctor with a Yemeni charity, said it was hard to treat patients due to the lack of basic supplies.

“What’s more, in Aden infectious diseases such as dengue fever and malaria are spreading. These diseases affect people greatly, due to the lack of proper nutrition and as most of the population is below the poverty line.”

— Reuters

Turkey, Greece ready for talks to defuse tension



President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan gives a press conference after the cabinet meeting at the Presidential Complex in Ankara. — AFP

ANKARA: Turkey and Greece have agreed to start talks over disputed waters in the eastern Mediterranean, the Turkish presidency said on Tuesday after diplomatic efforts to defuse a crisis that has raised fears of conflict.

The two sides said they were “ready to start exploratory talks” during a three-way videoconference between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Council chief Charles Michel on Tuesday, it said in a statement.

The issue over gas exploration has pitted the Nato allies against each other, with rival military drills staged in strategic waters between Cyprus and the Greek island of Crete.

The last exploratory talks between Ankara and Athens were held in 2016.

Germany has mediated between the two neighbours to calm down the tensions. The presidency said Erdogan remarked, “the steps to be taken by Greece will be important in terms of how the exploratory talks and other dialogue channels will proceed.” “The momentum to lower tensions and explore channels of dialogue must be supported by reciprocal steps.”

Erdogan added he hoped the European Council summit on Thursday and Friday — where possible sanctions against Turkey will be discussed — would “breathe new life” into troubled EU-Turkey relations, the statement added.

He also suggested a regional conference with all sides including Turkish Cypriots would be “positive and constructive” in addressing the eastern Mediterranean issue.

At the centre of the row was Turkey’s deployment last month of the seismic research vessel, the Oruc Reis, accompanied by warships near the Greek island of Kastellorizo.

After the ship was ordered back for maintenance, both sides have stressed dialogue, with Erdogan last week saying he was ready to meet with the Greek prime minister.

But Turkish officials have insisted the Oruc Reis would return to its work, while Turkish media on Tuesday reported the ship had left Antalya port.

Ship-tracking website marinetraffic.com showed that the Oruc Reis was off the coast of Turkey near Antalya on Tuesday late afternoon. — AFP

Iraq to bar pilgrims over COVID-19 fears

BAGHDAD: Iraq is to bar entry to religious pilgrims to the country, its government health committee said in a statement on Monday, just weeks ahead of a pilgrimage which is the largest annual religious gathering in the world.

Arbaeen, due in early October, usually draws millions of people to the holy city of Kerbala.

The virus is spreading in Iraq faster than most countries in the Middle East, as it records several thousand new cases every day. More than 8,000 people have died of COVID-19 in Iraq and more than 300,000 have

been infected, according to the Health Ministry.

“The committee ... decided to ban the entry of (religious) visitors from any country in the world,” the statement said.

It gave no further details about travel to and from Iraq for other visitors, and did not say how long the ban would last or when it would be implemented.

The statement said places of worship would be opened provided they adhere to health and safety standards over the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

RAMALLAH

Palestinians quit Arab League role in protest

The Palestinians have stepped down from a key Arab League role in protest at the regional bloc’s failure to take a stand against Israeli-Arab deals, an official said on Tuesday.

Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al Maliki announced the decision to resign from the rotating presidency of the Council of the Arab League, after its failure to agree on a draft resolution condemning a normalisation accord between the UAE and Israel.

“The state of Palestine... refuses to record in its history the association of its presidency with the regression in values and principles that was evident in the last meeting of the council of foreign ministers,”



Maliki said in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

The Palestinians presided over the council’s latest session earlier this month and had been due to stay in the role until March.

KHARTOUM

Trial of Bashir adjourned to October 6

The trial of ousted Sudanese president Omar al Bashir and others for a 1989 coup was adjourned on Tuesday to October 6, the presiding judge said.

Proceedings have been repeatedly delayed, with Tuesday’s hearing the fifth since the trial opened in July. The case involves a total of 28 defendants who stand accused of plotting the 1989 coup which brought Bashir to power.

“The next hearing will be held on October 6 to go through with the procedures,” Judge Essam el Din Mohamed told the hearing, which was broadcast on Sudan TV.

If convicted, Bashir and other co-accused — including former

top officials — could face the death penalty. In December, the former strongman was convicted of corruption and sentenced to two years in a correctional centre.

Bashir had ruled with an iron fist for 30 years until his overthrow on April 11, 2019 following unprecedented youth-led street demonstrations.

He is also wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to face charges of genocide and crimes against humanity in the western region of Darfur.

The United Nations estimates 300,000 people were killed and 2.5 million displaced in the conflict since 2003.

TEHRAN

Iran records highest COVID cases in a day



Shoppers, wearing protective masks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, walk past shops in Valiasr square in the Iranian capital Tehran

Iran on Tuesday announced the highest number of cases of the novel coronavirus in a single day, with 3,712 people infected in 24 hours.

“We are seeing an increase in confirmed cases, and daily hospitalisations in most of our provinces,” health ministry

spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said in televised remarks. “The rate of compliance with health protocols and wearing masks is declining,” she warned. The highest case number recorded before was on June 4, when 3,574 cases were detected, according to official figures. — Agencies

In brief

■ KABUL

‘PEN GUNS’ THE LATEST THREAT IN AFGHAN

Police in Kabul have seized a stash of “pen guns” they say criminals and insurgents are using in a wave of targeted assassinations that has gripped the Afghan capital in recent months.

The cylindrical, single-bullet firearms look much like regular ink pens and are easy to carry undetected.

“It is like a click pen, the shooter puts the bullet in the cartridge, aims and clicks the thrust button to fire the bullet,” an official at Kabul’s Criminal Investigation Department (CID) said on condition of anonymity.

Police last weekend unveiled a cache of 48 pen guns discovered in a larger haul of weapons including “sticky bombs” that can be slapped under vehicles and detonated remotely or on a timer.

■ GENEVA

EXPERTS SEEK PROBE OF DRUG WAR KILLINGS

UN rights experts and activists called on Tuesday for launching an international investigation into unlawful killings in the so-called war on drugs in the Philippines and for the International Criminal Court to step up its preliminary probe. Sanctions should be slapped on officials responsible for inciting killings or failing to prevent them, said Agnes Callamard, UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

Callamard, speaking on a panel, read out a statement issued by 32 UN experts in late June, which she said “is as relevant as ever” as the Human Rights Council meets in Geneva.

■ KARACHI

2 SENTENCED FOR 2012 PAKISTAN FACTORY FIRE

Two men were sentenced to death on Tuesday for starting a fire at a Pakistan garment factory that killed over 260 people in 2012. A Karachi court found Mohammad Zubair and Abdul Rehman guilty of arson, ruling the pair intentionally set the Ali Enterprises factory ablaze after the owner refused to pay a bribe.

In what was considered a largely symbolic gesture, the court sentenced them to 264 separate death sentences, along with life imprisonment.

“I am satisfied with the court’s verdict as it has awarded them very appropriate sentences,” public prosecutor Sajid Mehboob Sheikh said.

— AFP

■ BENGALURU

INDIA TRIALS FOR COVID VACCINE TO BEGIN SOON

Dr Reddy’s Laboratories Ltd could begin late-stage Indian clinical trials of Russia’s potential coronavirus vaccine in the next few weeks, an executive at the Indian drug maker said on Tuesday.

Indian trials of the Sputnik-V vaccine candidate, being developed by Russia’s sovereign wealth fund, will enrol 1,000-2,000 participants and be conducted at multiple government and private hospitals across the country, Deepak Sapra, CEO for API and pharmaceutical services at Dr Reddy’s, said.

China sentences Xi critic to 18 years for graft

BEIJING: China sentenced a former property executive who once called President Xi Jinping “a clown” to 18 years in prison for graft, a court said on Tuesday, in what some critics called an especially harsh sentence amid an ongoing clampdown on dissent.

Ren Zhejiang, the former chairman of Huayuan, a state-owned real estate group, was convicted for illegal gains totalling 112 million yuan (\$16.5 million), according to a notice on the website of Beijing No 2 Intermediate Court.

Nicknamed “Cannon Ren” for his outspoken views posted on social media, Ren, 69, was detained in March after referring to Xi as “a clown stripped who insisted on continuing being emperor” after a speech the Chinese president made in February about government efforts to battle the coronavirus.

Ren was later investigated for a “serious disciplinary violation”, expelled from the ruling Communist Party and charged in a Beijing district court for economic crimes such as using official funds on golf expenses and using office and residential spaces provided for free by businessmen.

In Tuesday’s judgment following a September 11 trial, the court said Ren



Ren Zhejiang

Ren was investigated for a ‘serious disciplinary violation’, expelled from the ruling Communist Party and charged in a Beijing district court for economic crimes

had paid back all monies unlawfully gained, “voluntarily confessed to all charges”, accepted the sentence and will not appeal.

In addition to the prison sentence, Ren was fined 4.2 million yuan. Zhang Ming, a retired political science professor at Renmin University,



Police officers stand guard at an entrance where Huayuan Real Estate Group former chairman Ren Zhejiang faces corruption trial in Beijing. — Reuters

slammed the sentence as especially harsh. “This just goes to show how anyone who dares speak against the regime will be hammered,” Zhang said.

During Xi’s tenure, China has clamped down on dissent and undertaken an aggressive campaign against corruption.

Earlier this month, Geng Xiaonan, a publisher who had been vocal in supporting dissenting voices such as Ren and former law professor Xu Zhangrun, was detained by Beijing

police for an alleged illegal business operation, her lawyer Shang Baojun said on Tuesday.

The police did not immediately reply to a request for comment on her case on Tuesday.

Xu, who had taught at Tsinghua University and had criticised Xi in May for trying to bring the Cultural Revolution back to China, was detained for nearly a week by Beijing police in early July after being accused of soliciting last December.

Tsinghua fired him and revoked

his teaching licence.

The son of a former commerce minister, Ren was known for his outspokenness, which earned him the nickname “Big Cannon” — in his essay criticising Xi, he called the president a “clown”.

Jailing him this week for 18 years for corruption, bribery and stealing public funds, a Beijing court said Ren embezzled money and accepted bribes while chairman of a state-owned property developer.

— Agencies

■ CIVIL STAFF TAKE COVID TEST



State civil employee candidates wearing face masks and shields as a precautionary measure against the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus take a test in Surabaya. — AFP

Australian rescuers rush to save stranded whales

SYDNEY: A third of the 270 pilot whales stranded along the west coast of Australia’s Tasmania were confirmed dead on Tuesday, as rescuers freed 25 others on day one of a huge effort to save the remaining animals. The whales became stranded on Monday across three locations at Macquarie Harbour, near the town of Strahan.

Many of the deaths occurred before rescue efforts began on Tuesday morning, with a team of around 60 people and several boats trying to save the remaining herd. While rescuers were expecting to free more whales as they worked into the evening, they also anticipated more deaths overnight.

“We accept that we are going to lose some animals. Any whale we can save is a real win,” Marine Conservation Programme biologist Kris Carlyon told reporters.

An infra-red camera will be used from the air on Wednesday to confirm the number of deaths. The morning was spent with the team chest-deep in water attempting to refloat and relocate several of the whales using slings attached to boats.

Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Services incident controller Nic Dekka said rescuers trialled many methods

Rescue efforts to save whales stranded on a sandbar take place at Macquarie Harbour, near Strahan, Tasmania. — Reuters



throughout the day and they landed on a method “that’s giving us the best chance of success.”

Pilot whales are a very social species with strong group behaviour, leading to concerns that whales could

try to return to the herd despite having been rescued. One case of a whale becoming re-stranded was confirmed on Tuesday. The whales could be heard calling to each other, Carlyon said, adding that the rescue can become

emotionally exhausting. The biologist said that most of the whales were inaccessible by boat and the rescuers would continue to focus their efforts on the whales “with the best chance.”

“In terms of mass strandings in

While rescuers were expecting to free more whales as they worked into the evening, they also anticipated more deaths overnight

Tasmania, this is up there with the trickiest we’ve had to deal with,” he added.

Around 200 whales are stranded on a sandbar off the Macquarie Heads boat ramp, with another pod several hundred metres further out, and about 30 more along Ocean Beach. The rescue is likely to take days, but Carlyon said that long-finned pilot whales were a robust species and if the conditions stay cool they could survive for quite a few days.

“Given that they’re wet, they’re cool, we’ve got some really suitable weather actually... It’s pretty ugly out there for people on the ground but as far as whales go it’s ideal,” he said. Mass strandings are not uncommon off the island state of Tasmania, but there has not been an incident involving more than 150 animals for over a decade.

— dpa



Germany pushes for EU solidarity

BERLIN/BRUSSELS: German’s Angela Merkel embarks this week on her third bold attempt to reshape European migration, but she faces an uphill task convincing other EU leaders to host refugees, even if her plan contains generous incentives.

Having taken in a million refugees in 2015 and struck a deal with Turkey to cut Mediterranean arrivals a year later, Merkel is the driving force behind a new European Union migration pact to be unveiled on Wednesday.

It seeks to share the task of accepting the hundreds and sometimes thousands of refugees arriving by boat every week - an idea that one EU official said Germany’s

veteran chancellor is hoping will serve as a cornerstone of her political legacy. But the same states that, five years ago, rejected an EU quota system for refugees from Syria’s war remain firmly opposed to accepting those who continue to flee conflict or poverty in parts of the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

“It’s a strong proposal in support of Angela Merkel’s call for EU solidarity. It’s Merkel’s legacy exercise,” the official said. “But it won’t fly.” Asked about the official’s remarks, a German government spokesman said: “We will comment on the European Commission’s proposals once the Commission has published them.” — AFP

UN warns against ‘new Cold War’

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday urged the world to prevent a Cold War between the United States and China and halt conflicts so it can focus on the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We must do everything to avoid a new Cold War,” Guterres said in an address as he opened an almost entirely virtual UN General Assembly.

“We are moving in a very dangerous direction. Our world cannot afford a future where the two largest economies split the globe in a Great Fracture — each with its own trade and financial rules and Internet and artificial intelligence capacities,” he said, without saying the United States and China by name.

Tensions have soared between the United States and China in recent months, with President Donald Trump blaming Beijing for the COVID-19 pandemic that has claimed some 950,000 lives around the world and cast a shadow over his reelection bid.

Guterres has campaigned for an end to all violent conflicts as the world instead focuses on stopping the disease.

He pointed to some partial successes including ceasefires declared in Cameroon, Colombia and Cameroon.

He pressed for a universal ceasefire by the end of the year.

“I appeal for a stepped-up international effort — led by the Security Council — to achieve a global ceasefire by the end of this year,” Guterres said.

“We have 100 days. The clock is ticking.” Guterres also offered open criticism of right-wing movements in the face of the coronavirus.



A UN police officer stands at an empty entrance at the United Nations during the the 75th General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. — AFP

US Supreme Court: potential nominees

President Donald Trump says he will announce his nominee at the end of the week

AMY CONEY BARRETT



Aged 48

- Law degree from Notre Dame University
- Federal appeals court judge based in Chicago, appointed by Trump in 2017
- Former law clerk to conservative justice Antonin Scalia at the beginning of her legal career
- Fervently anti-abortion Catholic
- Praised for her finely honed legal arguments but has limited experience in the courtroom

BARBARA LAGO



Aged 52

- Juris Doctor from Columbia University School of Law
- Federal judge from Florida
- First Cuban American woman and first Latina appointed to the Supreme Court of Florida in 2019
- Analysts say she could help Trump win votes in the key battleground state

Source: AFP Photo/Florida Supreme Court/Handout/ University of Notre Dame/Julian Velasco



Britain imposes six-month curbs against second wave

LONDON: The British government announced fresh steps Tuesday to try and stop a coronavirus surge in England, as the World Health Organization warned that new cases worldwide soared to almost two million last week in a grim new record.

The pandemic is showing no signs of abating — more than 31.3 million infections have been detected globally, with 965,000 deaths — and nations are scrambling to contain new outbreaks.

The World Health Organization said 1,998,897 new COVID-19 cases were registered around the world last week — a six-per cent increase over a week earlier.

It was “the highest number of reported cases in a single week since the beginning of the epidemic,” the UN health agency said.

However the number of deaths declined by 10 per cent over the previous week to 37,700.

The ramped-up response in Britain follows warnings that the country could see up to 50,000 cases a day by mid-October, and a month later exceed 200 deaths every day.

The ramped-up response in Britain follows warnings that the country could see up to 50,000 cases a day by mid-October

Britain also put on hold plans to allow the phased return of fans to sporting venues in England from October 1.

France and Spain are battling similar surges. Spain’s health minister on Tuesday called on Madrid residents to limit their movements and social contacts to the “essential”.

Under new rules to come into force on Thursday, English pubs, bars and other hospitality venues will be required to close at 10 pm. Food and drink outlets will also be restricted to table service only.

Many nations in Europe were easing restrictions after largely overcoming initial outbreaks, but the resurgence of the virus has forced them to tighten curbs again.

The Nobel award ceremony in



Customers sit at tables outside a restaurant, near a sign reminding members of the public to ‘Observe Soical Distancing’ to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, in Covent Garden, London. — AFP

Stockholm has been cancelled for the first time since 1944 and will be replaced by a televised event, the Nobel Foundation said.

Rather than receiving their medals and diplomas from the king of

Sweden in person, the laureates will receive their medals and diplomas in their home countries.

This year’s laureates, in the fields of medicine, physics, chemistry, literature, peace and economics, will

be announced between October 5 and 12.

The Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in December will also be scaled back this year, the head of the Nobel Institute said.

This year’s ceremony will not be held as usual in the main room of Oslo’s City Hall, which can accommodate 1,000 guests, but in the auditorium of Oslo University, which can host a tenth of that number.

The banquet usually held in honour of the laureate the same evening has been cancelled outright.

The number of deaths in the United States was closing in on 200,000 on Tuesday, with infections in the world’s worst-hit nation approaching seven million.

Overall, the US accounts for four percent of the world’s population and 20 per cent of its coronavirus deaths.

President Donald Trump has faced intense criticism of his handling of the crisis ahead of the November election.

Trump insisted Monday that the United States was “rounding the corner with or without a vaccine”.

But US Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell will warn Tuesday that a full recovery in the world’s biggest economy “is likely to come only when people are confident that it is safe to reengage in a broad range of activities,” according to prepared remarks. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

DOUALA

Cameroon police use tear gas to break up protest

Police on Tuesday used tear gas and water cannon to break up a protest by hundreds of people in Cameroon’s economic capital Douala calling for an end to bloodshed in the country’s anglophone regions.

Several parties, including that of opposition leader Maurice Kamto, had called for “peaceful marches” against President Paul Biya, 87, who has ruled the central African country with an iron fist for nearly 40 years.

The marchers called for a ceasefire and negotiations to end a long-running conflict between anglophone separatists and security



forces that has claimed more than 3,000 lives.

The protesters also sought a reform to the electoral system.

They converged at a major

intersection in a working-class district of Douala, shouting slogans such as “Enough Is Enough” and “Paul Biya Must Go” before police dispersed them, making some arrests. — AFP

GENEVA

Airline industry wants virus tests for all passengers

All international travellers should be able to take a rapid COVID-19 test before their flights, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) proposed on Tuesday.

Passengers would then no longer need to quarantine upon arrival, said Alexandre de Juniac, the head of the aviation industry group. The hope is that this step would entice would-be travellers to book tickets again.

IATA has been looking for ways to rescue its airlines, which have seen a catastrophic fall in business due to the pandemic. Global passenger numbers in July were only 8 per



cent of what they were one year ago. IATA is in talks with governments and the UN aviation agency ICAO on pre-boarding tests.

The airline industry’s proposal

is based on the assumption that so-called rapid antigen tests that cost less than \$11 each will be available in October. IATA expects that the tests, which do not require medical personnel, will yield results with 99-per-cent accuracy within 15 minutes.

Passengers who refuse to be tested should not be able to board their flights, de Juniac told a press conference. Antigen tests are at their most reliable when they are used to detect patients before they start showing symptoms or in the early stage of COVID-19.

Ensure equitable, affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines

The Sultanate is among countries in the world which are clamouring for COVID-19 vaccines. In addition to joining the Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunisation (COVAX), the Ministry of Health has also formed a working group to choose the appropriate vaccine from specialised companies.

Indications are that Oman will have 20 per cent of the vaccines before the end of this year and will be given to frontline workers in its fight against the pandemic.

Even though the drug manufacturing giants like the United States going it alone and Russia deciding against joining, and China has yet to commit, a total of 172 countries, including Australia, have signed up to the initiative so far and they have to start paying into a fund to support the vaccine research by October 9.

Reports indicate that the US, through a government initiative called Operation Warp Speed, has already spent more than \$5 billion to get drug makers to manufacture vaccines on its soil. China has a portfolio of its own candidates and has ramped up investment in bio-manufacturing.

Definitely, COVAX is a step in the right direction and “the fastest way to end this pandemic” as suggested by WHO



Samuel Kutty
samkuttyobserver@gmail.com

COVAX DOES NOT PREVENT COUNTRIES SIGNING INDEPENDENT DEALS WITH MANUFACTURERS

Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. The initiative is the best of its kind in the commitment for vaccines to fight a common global enemy as it has outstripped any deal countries could make independently. At the same time, challenges are also mounting at the same pace at which the race towards the success of developing the vaccine is progressing and will be available in the health centres in the next few months.

Instead of working together to craft and implement a global strategy, a growing number of countries are taking a “my nation first” approach to developing and distributing potential vaccines or other pharmaceutical treatments. This approach deprives countries with lesser wealth their right of access to the medicine.

This ‘vaccine nationalism’, as pointed out by a recent report in Havard Business Review, “is not only morally reprehensible, it is the wrong way to reduce transmission globally”.

The COVAX does not prevent countries signing their own independent deals with manufacturers, as the UK, Canada and recently Australia have done. This could place additional strain on what are expected to be already limited supplies.

Vaccine nationalism is spurring concerns as it involves governments

signing agreements with pharmaceutical manufacturers to supply their own populations with vaccines at the exclusion of others. This, according to experts, will make the initial few vaccines unaffordable and inaccessible to everyone.

If countries with a large number of coronavirus cases lag in obtaining the vaccine and other medicines, the disease will continue to disrupt global supply chains and, as a result, economies around the world.

Another challenge arising from the deals is that they can further drive up prices, potentially making them even more unaffordable for many countries in the Third World. While some manufacturers have pledged to make the vaccines available on a not-for-profit basis, others have not.

A nationalistic stance toward the pandemic will prolong this global health and economic crisis. A vaccine must be allocated on the basis of the best evidence of what will stop transmission and protect the most vulnerable groups — no matter in which nation they reside.

I hope, the allocation of vaccines, once licensed and approved, will be guided and monitored by a trusted governance system on the principles of fair and equitable access, ensuring no country will be left behind.

WATER DEBT

Why has 1944 water pact with US sparked Mexico unrest?

NATALIA CANO

Protests over a decades-old water-sharing treaty have shaken northern Mexico, where farmers seized a dam to try to prevent the country from supplying the neighbouring United States.

Demonstrators have occupied the La Boquilla dam in the border state of Chihuahua since September 8, saying they fear a drought will ruin their crops.

Seventeen soldiers were detained for investigation after a woman was shot dead in the unrest. The National Guard called her death an “unfortunate accident.”

The government says that the hydroelectric dam has suffered damage amounting to \$4.7 million.

Under the pact dating back to 1944 the neighbouring countries share water from two major rivers flowing from the southwestern United States to Mexico.

The agreement obliges the United States to deliver 1.85 billion cubic meters of water a year from the Colorado River.



Mexico has already delivered 82 per cent of its obligation and will supply the remainder on time. I don't think there's a better deal

ANDRES MANUEL LOPEZ OBRADOR
Mexican President

In return Mexico must supply an average of 432 million cubic meters annually over a five-year cycle from the Rio Grande, which forms part of the border between the two countries. The United States complains that its neighbour owes almost a year's worth of water that it must supply by October 24.

Authorities in the US state of Texas say the water is vital for crop irrigation, municipal water supplies and industry.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott has written to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to ask him to intervene to ensure Mexico complies with its side of the deal.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador says that his country has already delivered 82 per cent of its obligation and will supply the remainder on time.

He has ruled out trying to renegotiate the pact, saying: “I don't think there's a better deal”

Although Lopez Obrador has warned that Washington could raise tariffs if the agreement is broken, geographer Gonzalo Hatch Kuri does not expect any such retaliation.

“The United States has never waged war on us for not paying it” in the past, said the professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

“It has not gone beyond diplomatic friction.”

But the water debt is becoming a political issue in the United States as Abbott presses Pompeo.

“Mexico needs to end the cycle without a debt. Mexico ended the last cycle, as well as several previous cycles, in a debt. This trend cannot continue,” he wrote in a letter dated September 15.

With US President Donald Trump seeking re-election on November 3, Hatch Kuri does not rule out the possibility of water becoming a campaign issue.

But as Lopez Obrador has sought to maintain cordial relations with Trump, the Mexican leader is anxious to meet its obligations under the pact, he added. — **AFP**

SHIFTING MONEY

Cities promise to divest from fossil fuels to boost green recovery

MEGAN ROWLING

The mayors of 12 big cities in North America, Europe and Africa pledged on Tuesday to shift their money out of fossil fuels and into green energy, buildings, transport and other investments to help them recover from the pandemic and tackle climate change.

The group of cities, which signed up to a declaration committing them to divest from coal, oil and gas, are home to more than 36 million residents and hold over \$295 billion in assets.

Led by London and New York City, they agreed to take all possible steps to divest from fossil fuel companies the assets that they control directly, while also calling on pension funds managing their money to do the same.

“It's time for cities to ditch fossil fuel investments and accelerate green investments that drive low-carbon jobs,” said London Mayor Sadiq Khan. “In London, we have demonstrated that divestment is possible and indeed essential for our future,” he added in a statement.

Khan committed in 2016 to work with the London Pension Fund Authority (LPFA) — the city's largest local government pension provider — to move its assets out of fossil fuel firms. The authority has since reduced its holdings in companies including ExxonMobil, Shell, BP and Coal India.

The share of the LPFA's assets invested in climate-polluting businesses has dropped from 1 per cent or £43.6 million (\$56 million), to



▶ Smoke billows from a fire in an area of the Amazon jungle near Porto Velho, Rondonia State, Brazil. – Reuters

MAYORS OF 12 BIG CITIES PLEDGED TO SHIFT THEIR MONEY OUT OF FOSSIL FUELS AND INTO GREEN ENERGY

about 0.2 per cent now, according to the Greater London Authority.

Meanwhile, the LPFA has increased its green investments from £93 million to about £135 million, representing close to 3 per cent of its assets today, city hall officials said. Shirley Rodrigues, London's deputy mayor for environment and energy, said the aim was to divest 100 per cent of the

city's pension funds from fossil fuels. But she noted that many cities, like London, have limited control over the management of their assets and cannot achieve a transformation overnight.

“The key thing is understanding where your portfolio is and where you can act, and then taking those steps (to divest),” she said.

— **Thomson Reuters Foundation**

TOUR DE FRANCE 2020

Final standings

Sunday September 20

GENERAL

6

T. Pogacar

(SVN/UAE Team Emirates)

87h20:05

2

P. Roglic

(SVN/Jumbo-Visma)

at 0:59

3

R. Porte

(AUS/Trek-Segafredo)

at 3:30

4

M. Landa

(ESP/Bahrain-McLaren)

at 5:58

5

E. Mas

(ESP/Movistar)

at 6:07

6

M. A. Lopez

(COL/Astana)

at 6:47

7

T. Dumoulin

(NED/Jumbo-Visma)

at 7:48

8

R. Uran

(COL/EF Pro Cycling)

at 8:02

9

A. Yates

(GBR/Mitchelton-Scott)

at 9:25

10

D. Caruso

(ITA/Bahrain-McLaren)

at 14:03

POINTS

1

S. Bennett

(IRL/Deceuninck)

380 pts

2

P. Sagan

(SVK/Bora-Hansgrohe)

284 pts

3

M. Trentin

(ITA/CCC Team)

260 pts

MOUNTAIN

1

T. Pogacar

(SVN/UAE Team Emirates)

82 pts

2

R. Carapaz

(ECU/Ineos)

74 pts

3

P. Roglic

(SVN/Jumbo-Visma)

67 pts

Source: ASO

AFP

Team UAE Emirates rider Slovenia's Tadej Pogacar wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey rides on the Champs Elysees avenue during the 21st and last stage of the 107th edition of the Tour de France race, 122 km between Mantes-la-Jolie and Champs Elysees Paris, on September 20. — AFP

POGACAR

RISES ABOVE TOUR DOUBTERS

PARIS: As Tadej Pogacar celebrated his 22nd birthday on Monday, a day after becoming the youngest winner of the Tour de France in more than a century, two members of his UAE Team Emirates backroom staff could warn him how easily cycling careers become tarnished with suspicion.

UAE, supported by the Emirates airline, is one of the wealthiest teams in the peloton but was collectively outgunned by Jumbo-Visma's all-star lineup until Pogacar could go one-on-one with his fellow Slovenian Primoz Roglic on the time trial on the penultimate stage.

During the 12 days that Roglic led the Tour he faced questions about doping and replied that he had nothing to hide.

Both Roglic and Pogacar

produced consistently impressive performances throughout the Tour and after the younger rider beat his compatriot by two minutes on Saturday, attention turned to him.

Two of the men who built the UAE squad, Mauro Gianetti, a former world road race silver medalist, and Joxean 'Matxin' Fernandez, have been involved as riders and coaches for more than three decades and they have learned from experience how quickly a failed drugs test can destroy a team.

At the 2008 Tour, Italian Gianetti and Spaniard Matxin were in charge of the Saunier Duval team whose Italian rider Riccardo Ricco tested positive for a blood booster.

Ricco was thrown off the race in dramatic fashion, spent a

TDF 2020 :
TADEJ POGACAR
WINNER

Team

UAE Team Emirates

Slovenia

aged 21

66 Kg

1.76 m

Best performances

2020

4th Critérium du Dauphine

2nd UAE Tour

2019

3rd Vuelta a España

1st Tour of California

2018

1st Tour de l'Avenir

Sources: procyclingstats.com, Photo AFP

AFP

night in a prison cell, and the side sponsored by the French heating and energy company pulled out.

Ricco was banned, admitted that suspended Italian doctor Carlo Santucci had supplied him with the blood-boosting substance erythropoietin (EPO) and was given a two-year delayed prison sentence by a Toulouse court. Matxin moved on to Italian team Lampre, which was accused of doping by the Italian sporting media but cleared. That team evolved into UAE.

SWARM OF BEES

Pogacar, like the other leaders of the UAE squad, has not failed a drugs test.

UAE's Norwegian sprinter Alexander Kristoff won the first stage but after that they rode in the shadow of Roglic and Jumbo-Visma.

Jumbo's stellar squad, which included former Giro d'Italia winner Tom Dumoulin, German veteran Tony Martin and Strade Bianche champion Wout Van Aert, controlled the peloton like a swarm of bees in their yellow and black livery. They finished with four riders in the top 20 of the overall standings.

Behind Pogacar, who was making just his second Grand Tour appearance after winning three stages at last year's Vuelta a España, UAE's next best finisher was fellow Slovenian Jan Polanc in 40th. Fabio Aru, who with six stage wins was the team's most successful rider in major tours, dropped out on stage nine. That stage ended with Pogacar winning to leap from ninth to second as Roglic took the overall lead.

— AFP

Jordan buys Nascar team, Wallace to be driver



Historically, Nascar has struggled with diversity and there have been few black owners

MICHAEL JORDAN,
Basketball icon

LOS ANGELES: Basketball icon Michael Jordan announced on Monday he has purchased a Nascar Cup series charter team and recruited trailblazing black driver Bubba Wallace to race for the new outfit next season.

Jordan, widely regarded to be the greatest player in NBA history with an estimated net worth of \$1.6 billion, will be the majority owner in the new franchise with veteran racer Denny Hamlin as minority partner.

"Growing up in North Carolina, my parents would take my brothers, sisters and me to races, and I've been a Nascar fan my whole life," Jordan said in a statement. "The opportunity to own my own racing team in partnership with my friend Denny Hamlin, and to have Bubba Wallace driving for us is very exciting for me."

Jordan, who also owns the Charlotte Hornets NBA team, said he hoped his ownership could bring new audiences to the white-dominated world of Nascar and boost involvement of minorities. "Historically, Nascar has struggled with diversity and there have been few black owners," Jordan said.

"The timing seemed perfect as Nascar is evolving and embracing social change more and more. In addition to the recent commitment and donations I have made to combat systemic racism, I see this as a chance to educate a new audience and open more opportunities for black people in racing."

Wallace, the only black driver in Nascar, will spearhead the team behind the wheel. The 26-year-old had confirmed earlier this month that he would not race again for Richard Petty Motorsports.

Wallace has spoken out against racism repeatedly this year in the wake of George Floyd's killing in Minneapolis, and in June called on Nascar chiefs to ban the Confederate flag from racetracks used on the circuit.

The flag has long been a staple at Nascar tracks in the sport's southern US heartlands, but it remains a symbol of slavery and racism for many. Nascar later banned displays of the flag at its races. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

MUSCAT

OAA to hold assessment course

The Oman Olympic Academy (OAA) will organise a psychological and physiological assessment course for 28 coaches before they returning to training sessions.

The assessment course will be organised by the OAA 'remotely' within its approved agenda for 2020, in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University.

The importance of this course is to ensure the player's psychological and physical readiness before returning to training, especially after stopping training for long time due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The course aims to talk about the psychological and mental preparation of the player to



return to training and deal with precautionary measures.

Dr Majid bin Saeed al Busafi (Senior Lecturer) from the Department of Physical Education at Sultan Qaboos University and Dr Radwan al Sassi and Dr Ali al Yaarubi (associate lecturers) from the same department will lecture in the course.

TOKYO

Tokyo Olympics firm under cloud

A consulting firm hired by Tokyo's Olympic bid committee paid some \$370,000 to the son of an International Olympic Committee member before and after Japan was picked to host the Games, reports said on Monday.

The claims come as French authorities probe an alleged vote-buying scandal, centring around \$2 million paid by the Tokyo bid committee to Black Tidings, a Singapore-based firm linked to Senegalese national Papa Massata Diack. Diack is the son of the former head of the International Association of Athletics Federations, (IAAF) — now renamed World Athletics — Lamine Diack.

Lamine Diack was also a member of the IOC and said to have influence over African votes at the time of the Tokyo bid in September 2013 to host the 2020 Games, Japan's Kyodo News said.

According to Kyodo, the now-defunct Black Tidings had transferred more than \$150,000 to the personal account of Papa Massata Diack and wired \$217,000 to a company run by him by January 2014.

In an interview with Kyodo, Papa Massata denied the allegations, saying the money he received was related to a "sponsorship deal made in China. There is nothing to do with the Tokyo Olympics." — AFP

MARSEILLE

Two in custody in Tour doping probe

French police detained two people on Monday as part of an investigation into suspected doping at this year's Tour de France in the Arkea-Samsic team, prosecutors announced.

In a statement, prosecutor Dominique Laurens in the southern city of Marseille said that an investigation was being carried out into a "small part" of Arkea-Samsic, without specifying who had been placed in custody.

Laurens added that the two people had "many health products including drugs in their personal belongings, but also and above all a method that can be qualified as doping".

The general manager of the French team, Emmanuel Hubert, said he was



supporting his riders.

A source familiar with the matter said that the searches had targeted several riders including Colombia's Dayer Quintana, brother of team leader and former Giro d'Italia winner Nairo Quintana, as well as members of the medical team. — AFP

BEAUMONT STARS AS ENGLAND WOMEN BEAT WINDIES

Tammy Beaumont hit a half-century as England Women clinched a 47-run win over the West Indies in the first match of their Twenty20 series in London on Monday.



PLANS TO ALLOW FANS 'PAUSED'

Plans to allow the phased return of fans to sporting venues in England from October 1 will be put on hold due to the sharp rise in coronavirus cases, ministers said on Tuesday.

ROMA HANDED 3-0 SERIE A LOSS

An Italian disciplinary hearing punished Roma for fielding an unregistered player in Serie A by changing their goalless draw at Verona to a 3-0 defeat. Roma fielded Amadou Diawara, who turned 23 on July 17, without adding in their list.



DJOKOVIC BACK ON TRACK WITH FIFTH ROME TITLE

ROME: Novak Djokovic picked up where he left off before his US Open default two weeks ago, winning a fifth Italian Open title on Monday, days before the start of Roland Garros.

The world number one lifted a record 36th Masters crown, one more than great rival Rafael Nadal, after beating Diego Schwartzman 7-5, 6-3 in the final at the Foro Italico in Rome.

"Turning to Paris, I couldn't ask for a better tournament here in Rome. Another big title and I'm super pleased," said Djokovic.

"I don't think I played my best tennis throughout the entire week, but I think I found my best tennis when I needed it in the decisive moments."

Djokovic extended his record to 31 wins from 32 matches this year, with his only loss the US Open disqualification for accidentally hitting a line judge with a ball.

Schwartzman had shocked nine-time tournament winner Rafael Nadal in the quarterfinals.

But he ran out of steam in a final played under light drizzle, having also spent more than three hours on the court in Sunday's semifinals.

Despite a great start, with two breaks to lead 3-0, Schwartzman could not keep the momentum going against the 17-time Grand Slam winner, who notched up his fifth win over the Argentinian.

For Djokovic it was a fifth victory in 10 finals in Rome, but the first since 2015, having finished runner-up three times since including last year to Nadal.

"It's been a good week, even if I haven't played my best tennis. I'm satisfied," said Djokovic.

Top women's seed Simona Halep lifted her first trophy in Rome, a confidence booster ahead of the French Open, after defending champion Karolina Pliskova retired injured

while trailing 6-0, 2-1 in the final.

World number two Halep was competing in her third Rome WTA final, having finished runner-up in 2017 and 2018.

'WITHOUT PRESSURE'

Halep said she was approaching Roland Garros "without pressure, smiling," despite the 2018 winner now being among the favourites.

"It's just another tournament. I'm not going to put pressure on myself," the Wimbledon champion insisted.

"I played really well this year. I have three titles already. I played so much on clay. I feel confident.

"I just try to be happy, to take the positives from this tournament, and to go there smiling."

Pliskova's title defence was hampered due to pain in her left thigh.

"It was growing worse and worse with every day," she said.

"This morning I even wondered if I was going to play, but you still want to try," said the Czech, who "hopes" to recover in time for Roland Garros.

Swept aside 6-0 in the first set, she seemed to recover in the second and had just won her first game when she headed for Halep to call time on her match.

For Halep it was a third tournament win this year after Dubai in February and Prague last month, to extend her winning streak to 14 consecutive matches.

The 28-year-old Romanian did not compete in the US Open because of coronavirus fears, but said she had felt safe in the Italian capital.

"I want to thank everyone because the tournament went well, and in these conditions it's not easy," she said.

"We felt really safe and really good on and off the courts, even though we stayed often in our hotel rooms. We accepted it, because we like to play tournaments." — AFP

De Villiers shines as Bangalore trump Hyderabad

DUBAI: South African veteran AB de Villiers struck a brisk half-century as Royal Challengers Bangalore opened their Indian Premier League Twenty20 campaign with a win over Sunrisers Hyderabad on Monday.

De Villiers smashed 51 off 30 deliveries to guide last year's wooden spooners Bangalore, captained by Virat Kohli, to 163 for five and a 10-run victory in Dubai.

Bangalore, led by leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, bowled out Hyderabad for 153 despite a valiant 61 by Jonny Bairstow.

"It's amazing and last year we were on the other side of the results," a delighted Kohli said in the post-match presentation.

"We kept our composure tonight. Yuzi (Chahal) came in and changed the game for us."

The David Warner-led Hyderabad collapsed from a comfortable 121 for two to be packed off in 19.4 overs with Kohli taking a good outfield catch off Dale Steyn to close out the game.

De Villiers struck his 34th fifty in the IPL after losing Kohli for 14

and innings top-scorer Devdutt Padikkal, who scored 56 on IPL debut.

De Villiers, 36, smashed fours boundaries and two sixes to take his count of hits over the fence to 201 for Bangalore, who are still searching for their maiden IPL title.

"It's a nice change to get on the right side of a close game early on in the season. We worked very hard for the win," said de Villiers.

"It's a great start for us and hopefully a good sign of things to come. I surprised myself to be honest"

Chahal returned impressive figures of 3-18 from his four overs of leg spin while fast bowlers Navdeep Saini and Shivam Dube claimed two wickets each.

Hyderabad's Australian paceman Mitchell Marsh injured his ankle while bowling his first over and limped off the ground after sending down just four deliveries.

Warner said Marsh's injury does not look good as the all-rounder is unable to "put any weight on his leg". — AFP



AB de Villiers of Royal Challengers Bangalore hits a shot against Sunrisers Hyderabad in Dubai. — BCCI

SCOREBOARD

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE	
Devidutt Padikkal b Vijay Shankar	56
Aaron Finch lbw Abhishek Sharma	29
Virat Kohli c Rashid Khan b T Natarajan ...	14
AB de Villiers run out (Manish Pandey) ...	51
Shivam Dube run out (Jonny Bairstow)	7
Josh Philippe not out	1
Extras (Ob 1lb 2nb Open 2w)	5
Total (20.0 overs) 163-5	
Fall of Wickets: 1-90, 2-90, 3-123, 4-162, 5-163	
Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-25-0, Sandeep Sharma 4-0-36-0, T Natarajan 4-0-34-1, Mitchell Marsh 0-4-0-6-0, Vijay Shankar 1-2-0-14-1, Rashid Khan 4-0-31-0, Abhishek Sharma 2-0-16-1	
SUNRISERS HYDERABAD	
David Warner run out (Umesh Yadav)	6
Jonny Bairstow b Yuzvendra Chahal	61
Manish Pandey c N Saini b Y Chahal	34
Priyam Garg b Shivam Dube	12
Vijay Shankar b Chahal	0
Abhishek run out (Umesh Yadav)	7
Rashid Khan b Navdeep Saini	6
Bhuvneshwar b Navdeep Saini	0
Sandeep Sharma c Kohli b Steyn	9
Mitchell Marsh c Kohli b Shivam Dube	0
T Natarajan not out	3
Extras (5b 2lb 0nb Open 8w)	15
Total (19.4 overs) 153 all out	
Fall of Wickets: 1-18, 2-89, 3-121, 4-121, 5-129, 6-135, 7-141, 8-142, 9-143	
Bowling: Dale Steyn 3-4-0-33-1, Umesh Yadav 4-0-48-0, Navdeep Saini 4-0-25-2, Washington Sundar 1-0-7-0, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-18-3, Shivam Dube 3-0-15-2	

SPORT



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OFA ANNOUNCES SCHEDULE FOR NEW SEASON

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

The Oman Football Association (OFA) has announced the schedule for new season 2020-2021.

The top tier Omantel League will start from December 3, 2020, and conclude on April 30, 2021.

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

OFA Assistant General Secretary Shabib al Hosni said the OFA has fully arranged the medical protocol needed for the start of the matches at the stadiums.

"We had already arranged the full medical protocol instructed by the Ministry of Health and the Supreme Committee at the stadiums. All the matches will be held in full compliance with the COVID-19 precautionary measures," Shabib told *Oman Observer*.

The remaining three round matches of the Omantel League 2019-20 will be played on October 16, October 28 and November 1. There will be seven matches a day as the league had entered the final stage.

"All the seven matches on each matchday will start at the same time to avoid any chance of fixing the results," the OFA official said.

"We are using several stadiums for this purpose and many venues without proper sporting action will benefit from this," Shabib said.

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.

HM CUP SEMIS

In the HM Cup 2019-20, the second leg of the semifinal between Al Nahda and Dhofar will be played



OFA Assistant General Secretary
Shabib al Hosni

at Al Sada Complex on November 6, 2020.

The second leg of the semifinal between Ibri and Al Oruba will be held at the Sur Complex on November 7. Both matches will kick off at 7 pm.

Ibri beat Al Oruba 2-1 in the first leg of the semifinal while the match between Al Nahdha and Dhofar ended in a 1-1 draw.

Meanwhile, the first division league will resume on December 3, 2020, and continue till April 28, 2021.

The first division league 2019-20 had reached the second stage of group matches when the sports activities were stopped due to the pandemic.

Junior leagues like Under-21, Under-19, Under-17 and Under-15 will kick off on December 1, 2020. Concluding dates will be decided later.

NEW FORMAT

Omantel League for next season will be played in a round-robin format in the first and second rounds.

The 14 teams will play home and away matches against each other in the first round and according to their points position, the clubs will be placed in Group A and B in the second round.

The top two teams from each group will qualify to the semifinals after the second round as the league will employ knockout format for semifinals and final.



business

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3,626.77



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Oman to study pricing of health care offerings under Dhamani scheme

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Capital Market Authority (CMA), which regulates the insurance sector as well in the Sultanate, is committed to putting in place a framework of tariff ranges governing the pricing of products and services offered under the Unified Health Insurance Scheme (Dhamani) which is due to be implemented in a series of phases.

The move is designed to limit the potential for fraud, malpractice, and abuse by service providers, insurers, and patients alike when the Dhamani scheme is eventually introduced.

To this end, the regulator – which is spearheading the roll-out of the mandatory health insurance scheme – has floated a tender for the selection of a consultant to undertake a study of tariff structures for a various medical, hospital, and diagnostic products and services offered to patients covered by the Dhamani policy.

“The aim of the tender is to conduct a scientific study in order to build a framework for costing and pricing of health care services reimbursed on evidence-based standards. The outcome of this initiative will reflect industry best practice reimbursement standards, ensuring fairness and sustainability,” according to officials closely associated with the Dhamani initiative.

In an article published in the latest edition of Middle-East Insurance Review, senior CMA officials Ahmed al Maamari, Vice-



President (Insurance Sector), and Dr Mohammed Ghazaly, Expert Advisor, said the study is part of efforts to support the implementation of the “initial phase” of the Dhamani scheme.

That effort is being pursued in close collaboration with all concerned stakeholders, including Oman Medical Association (representing the private health care providers), Ministry of Health, Oman Insurance Association (representing the insurance companies), and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, they noted.

Meanwhile, the roll-out of the Dhamani platform is making headway, according to the Authority.

Following a competitive tender floated by the Authority, a contract for an e-Health System, which includes an e-Claims Exchange, has already been awarded.

Explaining the progress made thus far in the establishment of the Dhamani platform, the officials said: “Development work has been initiated aiming at deploying the first phase by 2H2021. This phase will include the implementation of the e-claims cycle comprising complete digitalisation, automation, and standardisation of health insurance claims. All stakeholders will follow the end-to-end e-claims cycle from submission to payment of claims in electronic format using the Dhamani

electronic platform. Some additional features include member eligibility verification, prior authorisation, and basic reporting and analysis of utilisation data.”

In the second phase of the platform's development, the focus will be on integrating processes such as e-prescription (and pharmacy benefits management), e-referrals (for consultation, laboratory, and radiology), payment gateways, enhancement of data analysis through data warehousing, and the introduction of utilisation monitoring systems to ensure sustainability, the officials stated.

“The third phase will introduce enhanced business intelligence

**ACCENT ON
TRANSPARENCY:**
The Capital Market Authority has floated a tender for a scientific study that aims to build a framework for costing and pricing of health care services reimbursed on evidence-based standards

and advanced analytics for quality management, member profiling, advanced monitoring (of fraud, abuse, and waste) and the introduction of member engagement portals, as well as a digital health insurance marketplace,” they added.

Significantly, as many as 490,000 private sector workers and their families — Omani and expatriates — are currently covered by health insurance — a figure that is projected to grow exponentially once the Dhamani scheme is introduced in stages. The number is expected to surge to two million workers and their families when the insurance scheme is fully implemented.

France opposes return to pre-virus EU deficit rules

BRUSSELS: France opposes a return to the EU's current but suspended rules on deficits and public debt after the coronavirus crisis, European Affairs Minister Clement Beaune said on Tuesday.

“We cannot imagine putting the same pact back in place,” Beaune told said, referring to EU limits on overspending by member states.

The rules are currently suspended, giving governments free rein to stimulate their economies with major spending programmes to fight a historic recession.

The rules theoretically limit a government's annual deficit at three per cent of gross domestic product, and debt at 60 per cent, though the ceilings are frequently violated.

Governments are very reluctant to decide on a date that the rules should fall back into place, given the economic uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Member states have often discussed the importance of reforming the rules, but this has yet to gain traction given the opposition of northern countries and their fears of public overspending by France, Spain and Italy.

“When the crisis is over, we will have deficit levels, but even more debt levels, which will be very different from the world we experienced a few years ago throughout Europe,” Beaune said.

At a meeting this month of EU finance ministers, the European commissioner for the economy, Paolo Gentiloni, refrained from giving an exact date for a return to normality.

A reform of the rules would take years given the strong views on the matter, especially from fiscally conservative Germany and the Netherlands. — Reuters

Alizz Islamic Bank completes merger with Al Yusr Islamic

BUSINESS REPOTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

Alizz Islamic Bank has successfully completed all processes related to the integration of Al Yusr Islamic Banking. This includes the integration and transferring of customers, services, employees, assets, and liabilities from the Al Yusr Islamic Banking window to Alizz Islamic Bank's operating system.

This merger, which is the first of its kind in the local banking sector has led to the formation of a larger Islamic banking entity that can effectively compete in the market and meet the various financial services needs of the customers.

The merger has received the unanimous support and endorsement from the boards of directors, and Sharia supervisory bodies of both banks.

The success of the merger between the two institutions has



The merger will help us branch out faster and increase the customer base of Alizz Islamic Bank and will provide us with the strong shareholders' support

SULAIMAN AL
HARTHI

CEO, Alizz Islamic Bank

resulted in the formation of a new financial entity that will be more competitive, both locally and regionally, and in a position to promote the development of the financial sector in the Sultanate in line with the latest international standards. The merger brings together several synergies as the banks currently have complementary products, systems, technologies, and customer segments.

Alizz Islamic Bank now has a wider network of 17 branches in various governorates of the Sultanate. In addition to expanding the digital services network to complete banking transactions with ease, customers will have access to an award-winning mobile banking application which is considered one of the best applications in the local banking sector.

Additionally, Relationship managers are available for individual and corporate

services. The bank also offers various financial advice through its 24/7 call centre.

Commenting on the successful completion of the merger stages, Sulaiman al Harthi, Chief Executive Officer of Alizz Islamic Bank said: “We believe that this merger between Alizz Islamic Bank and Al Yusr Islamic Banking has created a favourable platform to expand the scope of our service infrastructure as well as enabling us to be accessible to more customers via our expanded network.

The merger will help us branch out faster and increase the customer base of Alizz Islamic Bank and will provide us with the strong shareholders' support which will enable facets related to financing and investment processes. It has also resulted in the bank having a wider geographical spread to operate on a larger scale.”

RO 200 million sovereign sukuk issued

MUSCAT: The Omani government has successfully completed the issuance of local sovereign sukuk worth RO 200 million as part of the government's plan to finance the 2020 State Budget.

In a statement, the Ministry of Finance said the latest sukuk, which was listed on

the local bourse on Monday, is available for trading and comes with a dividend rate of 5.25 per cent for a period of six years. The Islamic bond was open for subscription by banks, local Islamic windows, commercial companies and individual investors looking to invest their funds.

Ministry of Commerce and Industry
Announcement No. 6/2020

The Ministry announces the commencement of the annual industrial survey for the data of 2019 since July 14, 2020. The industrial enterprises have been addressed via e-mail.

The Ministry calls upon all industrial enterprises which have industrial licenses and are located within or outside industrial zones, ports and free zones to submit the required data through Invest Easy portal <https://www.business.gov.om/statsurvey> or the ministry's website: www.moci.gov.om.

For more inquiries, please contact the following numbers:
(24828721/24828721/24828742/ 92488125)

Please note that data submitting deadline is on October 22, 2020.

Your cooperation is appreciated for the public interest.

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Production grows as recovery continues

As the Eurozone showed signs of gradually recovering from the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic, its businesses became more confident about the economy in August. The closely watched Eurozone economic sentiment indicator rose 5.3 points to 87.7 in last month, the European Commission said.

The bloc's factories fared slightly better in July than economists had expected, with industrial production growing 4.1 per cent as the recovery continued. July's expansion compared to growth of 9.5 per cent in June. Economists say the Eurozone's recovery is set to slow after an initial release of pent-up demand and as rising coronavirus cases will require further lockdowns.

Nonetheless, economic growth continued in August. Compared with a year earlier, industrial

production was down 7.7 per cent. That was an improvement on the 12 per cent gap seen in June. The single currency area's economic recovery since its record 11.8 per cent second-quarter contraction has been solid, with consumer confidence picking up and businesses reopening.

But the bloc has also suffered a rise in coronavirus cases which threatens to derail the rebound. Economists predict that the Eurozone's economic growth will slow towards the end of the year. They say it would be hit especially hard if wide-ranging lockdowns are reinstated.

In July though, the production of capital goods climbed 5.3 per cent and durable consumer goods by 4.7 per cent. This suggested solid demand from companies and consumers. The highest increases were seen in Portugal (11.9 per cent), Spain (9.4 per cent) and Ireland (8.3 per cent). However, Daniela Ordóñez, European economist at



ANDY JALIL

andyjalil@aol.com

The single currency area's economic recovery since its record 11.8 per cent Q2 contraction has been solid, with consumer confidence picking up and businesses reopening

Oxford Economics, said last week that the recovery was "already flattening out".

She said: "Slower growth in the GDP sub-components (consumption, production) partly explain this trend." Yet she said it is "the recent deterioration in the health situation – which has also led to lower mobility – that represents

the main risk to the near-term outlook".

The Eurozone manufacturing sector saw "modest growth" for the second month running in August, according to a new survey. However, the factory sectors in Spain and France stagnated while Greek manufacturing declined for the sixth month in a row.

The IHS Markit Eurozone manufacturing purchasing managers' index – a gauge of the sector's health – came in at 51.7 in August, virtually unchanged from 51.8 in July. It was "further encouraging evidence that production will rebound sharply in the third quarter after the collapse seen at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in the second quarter," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at data firm IHS Markit.

All three areas – consumer, intermediate and investment goods – grew in August. Output climbed for the second month in a row and hit its highest level in over two years, survey respondents said. New orders also grew for the second consecutive month. IHS Markit said domestic orders rose quickest, with export orders climbing at a relatively modest pace.

However, the sector was far from its pre-coronavirus health and there

were pockets of weakness in August. Manufacturing firms continued to slash jobs, laying off workers for the 16th month in a row. German factories cut jobs at the quickest rate.

Meanwhile, Spain and France's factory sectors flatlined as coronavirus cases rose. In Greece, which has been hit hard by the pandemic economically despite having fewer cases, the sector contracted. IHS Markit said Italian manufacturers were the most optimistic about their future, while French firms were the least confident.

"Manufacturing is currently being buoyed by a wave of pent up demand, but capacity is being scaled back," said Williamson. "Job losses remained amongst the most prevalent since the global financial crisis." He added: "The next few months' data will be all-important in assessing the sustainability of the upturn." *(The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK).*

Oman Air resumes flights to Duqm

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, is now operating 6 flights per week connecting Muscat with Duqm.

Flights to the fast-growing hub of trade and investment will depart and arrive in both cities on everyday of the week with the exception of Fridays.

These flights, which were restored on September 20, are a significant step forward in the nation's economic development and a reflection of the airline's commitment to serving the Sultanate. This step supports development of this increasingly important city. As a Special Economic Zone, Duqm plays a vital role in Oman's economic growth. Oman Air's service helps facilitate business growth in the area and attract further investment.

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



Labour Under-Secretary visits Masar centre

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

Shaikh Nasr bin Amer al Hosni, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Labour, visited yesterday the Rusayl-based Masar Service Centre, which is part of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn). Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, Chief Executive Officer of Madayn, welcomed Al Hosni and briefed him on Masar and its variety of services.

The CEO of Madayn stated that Masar presents a unified and integrated system that facilitates and streamlines the procedures for the investors to be able to obtain approvals, permits and licenses that are required for their projects under one roof and during specific



time period. "In fact, Masar aims at providing a system of integrated services that the investor needs to contribute in enhancing an ideal

investment environment in the Sultanate," said Al Hasani.

Ibtisam al Farooji, Director of Masar Service Centre project,

informed that Masar Service Centres at Al Rusayl and Suhar Industrial Cities have resumed receiving clients effective from last Sunday after a hiatus of more than five months caused by the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). During that period, Masar was processing the enquiries and transactions using electronic services as possible.

Al Farooji explained that the centre features services of a number of bodies that include Madayn and its Oman Investment and Development Holding Company (Mubadrah), Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), and Sanad Service Centre.

Renewables appetite continues despite pandemic

CLAUDIA CARPENTER & DANIA SAADI

MUSCAT: Despite an abundance of fossil fuels and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, countries in the Middle East are still forging ahead with international and local renewables projects.

The oil-rich Gulf region is among the areas benefiting most from the global appetite for these projects. The UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman are the four countries in the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council that have developed renewables projects over the last few years.

Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, is expected to lead the push in the Middle East in the next few years, having launched several renewables projects, including its first wind farm, to free up crude burned in power plants for export.

The country's third renewables round to add 1.2 GW of solar capacity is advancing after 49 companies pre-qualified for lead roles. The kingdom announced it would "very soon" announce a solar energy project with the lowest electricity cost per kilowatt-hour in the world.

Record-low tariffs and plans to reduce dependence on crude oil and natural gas as feedstock for power and energy-intensive water desalination plants are the main factors behind the rapid development of renewables in the region.

But growth would be even faster if regulatory barriers to new market entrants outside of auctions were removed, according to the International Energy Agency.

Examples include the world's



Claudia Carpenter

first large-scale chemical production site to be run entirely on renewable power pioneered by Saudi Basic Industries Corp., majority-owned by Saudi Aramco.

However, both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have delayed renewables programmes raising questions about their respective renewable goals, according to S&P Global Platts Analytics.

Even before the pandemic, Saudi Arabia had put on hold a \$200 billion solar project with Japan's

Softbank Group.

Although there are risks from the pandemic, most renewables projects haven't been rolled back or cancelled, potentially showing how environmental, social and governance concerns have become more central to oil-exporting countries.

Saudi Arabia has set a target of 27.3 GW of renewables by 2024. "Even if Saudi Arabia continues to lag behind in terms of installed capacity and projects, we think the country will catch up within the next few years to become the largest player for renewables in the region next to UAE," according to Bruno Brunetti, head of global power planning at Platts Analytics.

S&P Global Platts Analytics expect renewables capacity in the Middle East to more than double within the next five years, building on almost 7 GW of utility-scale solar and 1.5 GW of wind projects in



Dania Saadi

development.

Solar and wind accounted for about 1 per cent of power production in the Middle East in 2019, according to the S&P Global Platts World Energy Demand Model.

It is expected to be slightly higher at around 1.3 per cent or roughly 8 TWh in 2020, and about 3 per cent of the total almost 35 TWh by 2025.

The UAE targets 50 per cent clean energy by 2050, including nuclear power, with renewables playing a lead role. It has conducted

several large-scale competitive solar auctions that yielded low prices, and Abu Dhabi's 2-GW tender in April drew close to global record-low solar bid of \$13.50/MWh, submitted by TAQA, France's EDF and China's Jinko Solar for a 30-year contract. It will be the largest solar farm in the world, joining plants in China, India and Egypt with capacity of over 1 GW.

Further, the Dubai Electricity & Water Authority (DEWA) this year awarded Saudi Arabia's ACWA Power the 900-MW fifth phase of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park, a project that aims to have 5 GW of solar power by 2030 at a cost of Dirham 50 billion (\$13.6 billion).

Oman this year began operations of its first utility-scale solar power plant, which will free up 95.5 million cubic metres a year of natural gas for export.

In July, ACWA Power, the Saudi future city of NEOM and the US's Air Products, signed a \$5 billion deal to build a green hydrogen-based ammonia production facility powered by renewable energy.

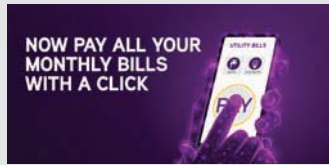
According to a survey published in May by UK-based law firm Ashurst, only 18 per cent of executives in the Middle East expect to see growing opportunities to invest in the energy transition in the next 12 months, the lowest percentage globally.

The jury is still out on whether the coronavirus will slow future renewables plans in the region. While many projects are already in the later stages of development, the low oil prices currently could limit support available for renewables. *(The authors are part of Middle East Oil Team, S&P Global Platts)*

BUSINESS ALERT

MUSCAT

BANK NIZWA
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IN line with its commitment towards digital transformation and innovation, Bank Nizwa has further enhanced user experience by adding features to its mobile banking application. Aimed at providing a better customer experience, the Bank has been leading the way in digitising Islamic banking, by enabling them to bank from the comfort of their homes. The recently revamped mobile app will now allow users to make bill payments for utilities such as electricity and water; pay fees for schools, universities, PASI and more.

"We are delighted to provide greater benefits to our customers and include them in the age of digital banking in Oman. Our mobile application has been designed to make banking hassle-free with minimum personal interface during these times of physical distancing. The newly added features are a testament to our promise of modern banking, and are not just simple to execute, but also safe & secure," said Arif al Zaabi, Retail Banking AGM at Bank Nizwa.

Global banks seek to contain damage over \$2 trillion of suspicious transfers

HONG KONG: Global banks faced a fresh scandal about dirty money on Monday as they sought to limit the fallout from a cache of leaked documents showing they transferred more than \$2 trillion in suspect funds over nearly two decades.

Britain-based HSBC Holdings Plc, Standard Chartered Plc and Barclays Plc, Germany's Deutsche Bank AG and Commerzbank AG, and US-headquartered JPMorgan Chase & Co and Bank of New York Mellon Corp were among the lenders named in the report by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and based on leaked documents obtained by BuzzFeed News.

The report was based on 2,100 leaked suspicious activity reports (SARs), covering transactions between 1999 and 2017, filed by banks and other financial firms with the US Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN). Banks are required to file an SAR whenever handling funds that cause grounds for suspicion of criminal activity. While some banks said many of the transactions happened a long time ago, and they had since put robust checks in place, the reports revealed broader problems with the monitoring system at the heart of global policing of money laundering and other criminal activity.

The reports drew calls from some industry groups and activists for reforms. Investors worried about the potential fallout for global banks, many of which have faced hefty fines in the past for lapses in controls and spent billions to bolster compliance.

"It confirms what we already knew: that there are huge amounts of



People walk past a branch of Deutsche Bank in Berlin, in this file photo. — Reuters

Deutsche Bank to close 20 per cent of German branches

FRANKFURT: Deutsche Bank plans to shutter one in five branches in Germany as it seeks to save costs and capitalise on the changing habits of customers during the coronavirus pandemic, an executive said. Philipp Gossow, who oversees the retail banking business in Germany, said that the reduction to some 400 branches from around 500 currently would occur primarily in urban locations and take place "as quickly as possible".

The cull comes as Deutsche Bank undergoes a broad overhaul of its global operations that began in 2019 after years of losses. German banks traditionally operate large numbers of branches compared with those in

the Netherlands or Britain, where customers are more comfortable with digital banking.

Banks throughout Europe are rethinking their branch strategies in the wake of the coronavirus crisis. Deutsche's rival Commerzbank recently opted to shut 200 of its 1,000 branches and is considering closing hundreds more. "Coronavirus has further changed the demands placed on advisory services and the branch business," Gossow said.

"Even customers who were previously not very familiar with online banking are now doing many simple banking transactions from home on their computer or iPad," he said. — Reuters

The reports drew calls from some industry groups and activists for reforms.

SARs being filed with relatively low numbers of cases brought through to prosecution," said Etelka Bogardi, a Hong Kong-based financial services partner at Norton Rose Fulbright. "It also brings out the point that managing financial crime risk goes beyond making SARs," Bogardi said.

The Institute of International Finance, an industry group, called for reforms. "There is a balance to be struck between managing financial crime risk and ensuring access to the financial system for legitimate customers," the IIF said.

Policymakers, regulators and banks have long acknowledged fundamental flaws in the anti-money laundering system. The rules around what is deemed "suspicious" can be vague, which leads some banks to send too many reports and others to send too few. And the enforcement group is understaffed to handle the millions of SARs that need to be analysed to determine whether a crime has been committed.

HSBC and StanChart shares touched their lowest level in as much as 25 years, although they fared little worse than their peers amid a wider sell-off in global stocks. JPMorgan and Bank of New York Mellon, which were also in the top five banks mentioned most frequently in the SARs, fell more than 3 per cent each during trading in New York.

Shares of Deutsche Bank, which was involved in the largest number of SARs in BuzzFeed's dossier, were down more than 8 per cent at one point on Monday morning following the reports. Several analysts, however, played down the scale of problems.

"Unless there are more substantive allegations of fact, we expect that this article will not have lasting impacts on the industry or stock prices," Chris Kotowski, analyst at Oppenheimer, wrote in a note. Bank shares were also pressured on Monday by other news, including worries about the resurgence of the coronavirus in Europe. — Reuters

Libya's oil production to rise as it seeks to revive oil industry



The National Oil Corporation of Libya building is pictured in the capital Tripoli. — AFP

LONDON: Libya's National Oil Company said it expected oil production to rise to 260,000 barrels per day (bpd) next week, as the OPEC member looks to revive its oil industry, crippled by a blockade since January.

Oil prices fell around 5 per cent on Monday, partly due to the potential return of Libyan barrels to a market that's already grappling with the prospect of collapsing demand from rising coronavirus cases. Libya produced around 1.2 million bpd — over 1 per cent of global

production — before the blockade, which slashed the OPEC member's output to around 100,000 bpd.

NOC, in a statement late on Monday, said it is preparing to resume exports from "secure ports" with oil tankers expected to begin arriving from Wednesday to load crude in storage over the next 72 hours. As an initial step, exports are set to resume from the Marsa El Hariga and Brega oil terminals, it said.

The Marlin Shikoku tanker is making its

way to Hariga where it is expected to load a cargo for trader Unipac, according to shipping data and traders. Eastern Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar said last week his forces would lift their eight-month blockade of oil exports.

NOC insists it will only resume oil operations at facilities devoid of military presence. Nearly a decade after rebel fighters backed by Nato air strikes overthrew dictator Muammar Gaddafi, Libya remains in chaos, with no central government. — Reuters

EU aims to cut aviation emissions by 10 per cent with more direct flights



A Ryanair Boeing 737 is seen at Luton Airport in Luton, Britain. — AFP

BRUSSELS: The European Commission hopes to cut carbon dioxide emissions from the aviation industry by up to 10 per cent by making flight paths more direct and reducing delays due to congested airspace.

"Planes are sometimes zig-zagging between different blocks of airspace, increasing delays and fuel consumed," European Commissioner for transport Adina Valean said on Tuesday.

In 2019, such routes and delays cost the bloc 6 billion euros and pushed out 11.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, the Commission said.

Extraordinary measures in 2018 and 2019 during a capacity crisis also led to the re-routing of flights, meaning avoidable emissions could reach 10 per cent of the total. Aircraft pushed to lower altitudes also burn more fuel.

Valean told a news conference that an efficient air traffic management system with more direct routes would reduce emissions and cut costs for airlines. To achieve this, the Commission suggested air navigation charges should be based on the environmental impact of a flight and a greater role for network manager Eurocontrol. — Reuters

Less than half the gold sent to big refiners comes from mines

LONDON: Less than half the gold processed by major refiners in 2018 came from large industrial mines, the London Bullion Market Association said on Tuesday, publishing data revealing for the first time the origin of bullion moving through its system.

The LBMA said refiners it accredits, which dominate the industry and supply the world's biggest banks, jewellers and manufacturers, processed 4,836 tonnes of gold in 2018.

It said 2,127 tonnes came from large industrial mines, 26 tonnes was supplied by small and artisanal mines, and 2,683 tonnes was recycled gold such as jewellery, bars and coins returned to the market to be melted and refashioned.

The disclosure was part of LBMA's first annual report on the implementation of its responsible sourcing guidelines, which aim to stop gold whose production is linked to human rights abuses or crime from entering the supply chain. Artisanal and recycled gold is riskier than that from large mines because it often passes through many different hands and its origins can be difficult or impossible to trace. — Reuters

Oil rises on expectation demand can survive new lockdowns

LONDON: Oil prices rose on Tuesday as analysts took the view renewed lockdown restrictions would have only a limited impact on fuel demand, partly reversing a steep drop in prices the previous day.

Brent crude was up 54 cents, or 1.3 per cent, to \$41.98 per barrel at 1033 GMT.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for October, due to expire on Tuesday, rose 63 cents, or 1.6 per cent, to \$39.94. The more active November contract was up 45 cents, or 1.1 per cent, to \$39.99.

Markets were nervous about fuel demand in countries such as Britain, where the government will tell people to work from home again and will impose new curbs on pubs, bars and restaurants.

"As any new restrictions will likely be more localised, the oil demand recovery should still continue, although at a slower pace with the easiest demand gains behind us," UBS oil analyst Giovanni Staunovo



A pump attendant refuels a car at a gas station in Beijing. — Reuters

said.

Monday's price slump was spurred by concerns of an increase in coronavirus cases in major markets.

France saw its infections rate rising, Italy introduced more mandatory testing, Spain asked the army for help and Germany describe the situation as worrying.

"Losing \$2 a barrel yesterday is quite a steep drop, so the market today is adjusting the impact to a bit higher price levels," said Bjornar Tonhaugen, Rystad Energy's head of oil markets.

The easing of the oil blockade in Libya also pressured prices on Monday, but analysts expected the

market to remain undersupplied as Libyan exports were unlikely to quickly reach the levels seen before the conflict.

"The path towards a new normal on the oil market has become bumpier, but we still see demand topping supplies on the margin and the surplus slowly disappearing," said Norbert Rücker, analyst at Swiss bank Julius Baer.

Crude prices, which fell about 5 per cent on Monday, also won some respite as Texas refineries stayed open after a tropical storm was expected to keep losing strength, allaying worries about US refinery demand for feedstock.

Traders are awaiting the American Petroleum Institute's data on US oil inventories due later on Tuesday. US crude oil and gasoline stockpiles likely fell last week, while inventories of distillates, including diesel, were seen climbing, a preliminary Reuters poll showed.

— Reuters



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OMAN DAILY

Observer

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CHANGE OF NAME

I **Kausar Saheb** holder of Indian Passport No **U0085434** son of/daughter of **Nazeer Ahmed** having permanent residence in **Shahid Manzil, Madwanagar Moodabettu, Udupi, PIN, 576106, karnataka**, (complete postal address in India) and presently residing **P O Box: 618, PC 130 Athaiba, Sultanate of Oman** (complete postal address in Oman)intend to change my name from **Kausar Saheb** (old name) to **Kausar Ahmed** (new name) for all practical purpose. Any objection towards my name change may please be communicated to the Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, P Box No. 1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
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French butcher seeks to carve out Unesco distinction

Paris: Victor Dumas is convinced that his fellow French butchers wield their knives unlike any others, and is hoping the UN will agree they deserve pride of place at the global culinary table.

Dumas, 21, has been touring France for the past year in a campaign to win recognition of his skills from the Unesco cultural agency, which curates a list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

"There's a really distinct way of carving in France," he told AFP this week in Paris, where he met with chefs as well as fellow butchers known for their dedication to using everything from "nose to tail".

Travelling to Belfast for the World Butchers' Challenge in 2018, where he took third prize in the apprentice category, made him realise the French had elevated the age-old craft of carving up animals to art.

"In a beef carcass, we're going to come up with 40 different cuts... whereas others aren't going to make the most of the meat" and settle for just five or six pieces, Dumas said.

He wants French butchering to be honoured alongside Chinese calligraphy, Tinian marble-carving and Kazakh yurt construction on the Unesco list.

The distinction would bring a welcome boost as the number of French artisan butchers has been dwindling, in part reflecting a social shift towards eating less meat.

But Dumas does not think his profession is in danger.

"People will always need to eat, and more and more are seeking out quality -- we saw this during the virus lockdown," when getting dinner on the table every night suddenly became a preoccupation for millions.

- 'INCREDIBLY FESTIVE' -

Dumas says he knew his destiny when he was just five, recalling the "human contact and sharing" when neighbours would join his family-butchered animals at their farm in the rolling hills east of Lyon in southeast France.

His job was to crank the hand grinder for making sausages.

"When we would kill a pig, it was our annual party," he said. "It was incredibly festive, and in one day we would fill the entire larder."

He began his studies at 15 and is now apprenticing to learn the secrets of charcuterie and other pork delicacies in Aix-les-Bains in the French Alps.

These days, wearing his crisp white jacket embroidered with "Victor a l'Unesco", he can carve and mount a rack of lamb, the quintessential centrepiece of a fancy Sunday lunch, in under 10 minutes.

He is already preparing to compete in the world championships in California next year when he also aims to officially submit his Unesco application.

"Victor represents all the butchers who adapt according to tastes and seasons," said Mathieu Pecqueur, head of the Culture Viande industry body.



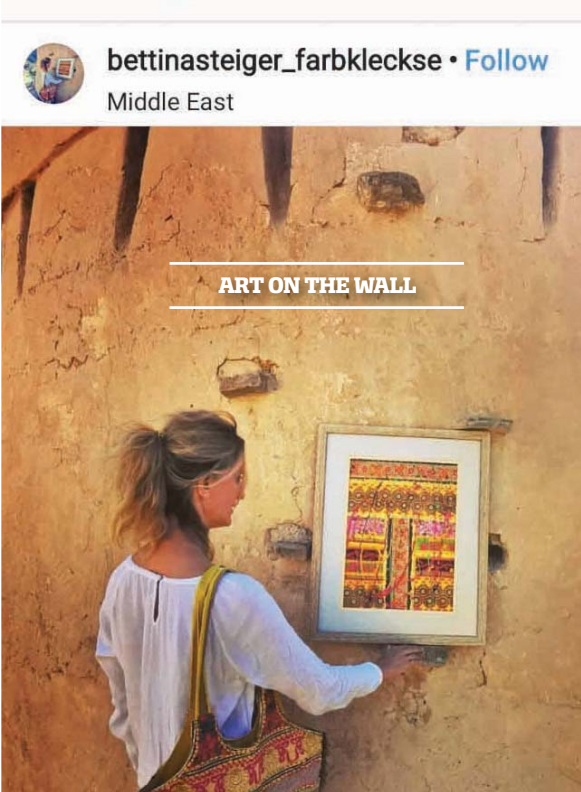
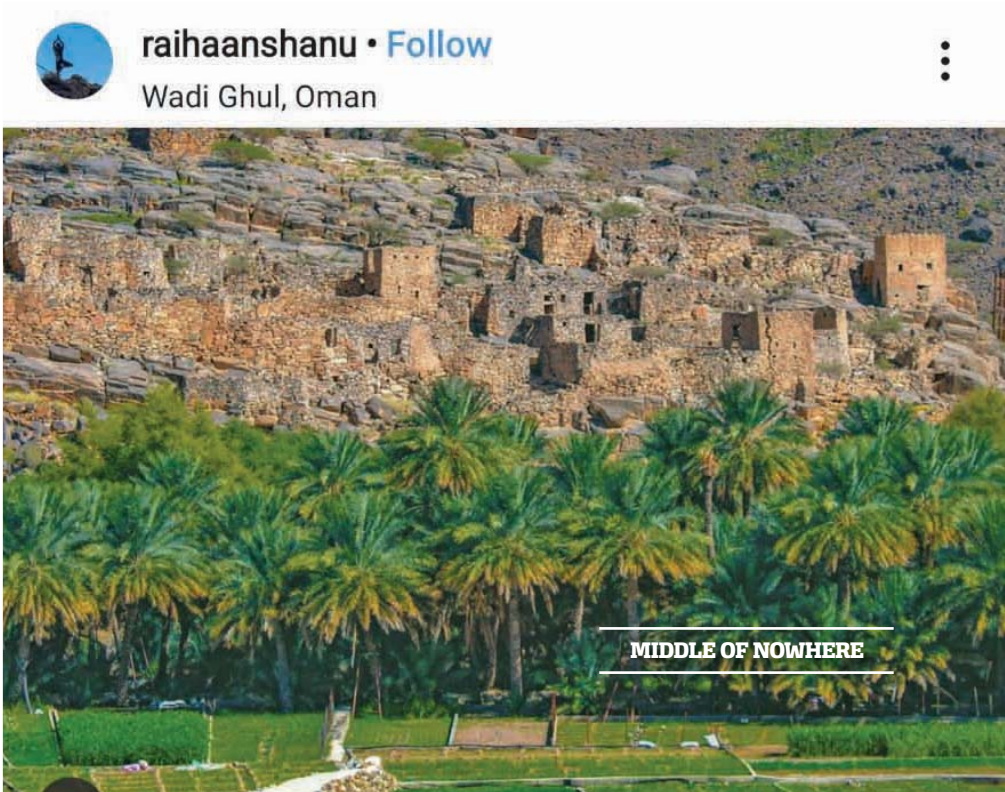
Dumas wants French butchering to be honoured alongside Chinese calligraphy, Tinian marble-carving and Kazakh yurt construction on the Unesco list

"The French art of preparing meat is recognised in countries worldwide," added Dominique Langlois, president of the Interbev meat and live-stock association.

"In China, where French beef has just entered the market, we're being asked to help train people," he said, referring to Beijing's recent lifting of a long-standing ban in the wake of the "mad cow" disease scare.

He hailed Dumas's campaign, vowing to support the Unesco bid "for the next several years if we have to." — **AFP**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



HUMAN INTEREST

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Meet the woman driving a motorbike taxi in eastern Congo



BENI, Democratic Republic of Congo: Wearing leather leggings under her dress, Imelda Mbambu weaves her motorcycle taxi through the city of Beni in north east Congo, a hand-bag slung across her side and a happy customer perched on the back.

Once a farmer, it was the death of Mbambu's husband ten years ago that forced her to find a new way to support her six children in a city where the majority of people live in extreme poverty on less than \$1.90 a day.

She sank her savings into a red motorbike, known locally as a "boda", and hit the road.

Decades of unrest, including a civil war that ended in 2003 and an ongoing Islamist insurgency, has made violence against women commonplace in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, ranked one of the 10 most dangerous countries to be a woman by a Thomson Reuters Foundation poll in 2018.

According to the United Nations, documented cases of sexual violence in the east of the country rose 34 per cent last year.

The novelty of a woman riding a motorbike taxi has won Mbambu loyal clients, but also saved her life.

"One time I was riding from the countryside when

Once a farmer, it was the death of Mbambu's husband ten years ago that forced her to find a new way to support her six children in a city where the majority of people live in extreme poverty on less than \$1.90 a day.

I was ambushed by bandits," Mbambu said.

"They were dressed in red blood-stained clothes and wanted to harm me, but when they noticed that I was a woman on a motorbike, they got very surprised and urged me to go on with my journey."

Since launching her business, Mbambu has picked up a number of regulars, with many women preferring her services to take them to and from the market.

Now her children never go to sleep hungry, she said.

"My mum's job helps us get food, education, clothes, medicine and a lot more," said her daughter Neema Mandefu. — Reuters

ENTERTAINMENT

Directors defend film against attacks



A group of international film makers on Tuesday defended the director of "Cuties" against attacks by Republicans who have pulled the French film into the US election fray.

Statements by Republican lawmakers and an online campaign have tapped into concern over molestation, making the film political leverage in the battle to re-elect Republican President Donald Trump.

Film maker Maimouna Doucoure was the subject of "unfounded, caricatural and despicable attacks" in the US where "Cuties" is available on Netflix, the film directors said in a statement received by AFP.

"This incredibly violent campaign, which has led to death threats against the

director, is being carried out by some Republican senators and ultra-conservative networks who use and manipulate this film for political purposes and as part of the US presidential campaign," the film makers said.

Signatories include "Gremlins" maker Joe Dante, "Tin Drum" director Volker Schlöndorff, Cristian Mungiu, who won the Cannes festival's top prize with "4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days", as well as Frenchman Bertrand Tavernier and Belgians Lucas Belvaux and Luc Dardenne.

"The controversy thus organised against this film has a name, which unfortunately punctuates the history of cinema: censorship!" they said.

ENTERTAINMENT

Oman Telugu community celebrates book on film actor



Chiru Mega Youth Force (CMYF), a voluntary organisation, celebrated the new book on film actor Chiranjeevi 'Megastar: The Legend' at the Central Blood Bank, Bausher.

The book was released on the occasion of Chiranjeevi's birthday and was also marked with a blood donation camp.

Mohsin bin Saif al Sharyani, Head of Donors Affairs at the Blood Bank, was present on the occasion. Sridevi, sister of late actor Uday Kiran, was also

present.

The book details the journey of actor Chiranjeevi. Chronicling his illustrious career, the book is written by cine journalist U Vinayaka Rao.

"The book runs into 500 pages and is a source of information related to the actor's career, films, struggles, speeches, etc. This one is a must-read for those who want to know about Chiranjeevi's journey and get inspired by him," said Chandaka Ramdas, CMYF president.



'I'm a Mrs, and I salvage'

BY TITASH CHAKRABORTY

The old-age adage: One man's trash is another man's treasure. Be it a plain Ikea find or a hand-me-down that has gotten a bit gnarly with age, don't fret! Mrs Salvages is here to remind us that all around our own homes are heirlooms and knick-knacks in need of a little TLC.

Upcycling represents a variety of processes by which "old" products get to be modified and get a second life as they are turned into a "new" product of higher value.

Dagmara Wintnerova aka Mrs Salvages originally from Slovakia said, "growing up, we were introduced to up-cycling quite young. I was always a person who loved being surrounded by colourful and cheery things and it wasn't easy to find such things around. So we turned to find knick-knacks that we could repaint and customise for ourselves, and turn something boring into something pretty."

"Before I knew it, it became a hobby. Once I moved to Oman, I started going to local markets with my products, to see if people liked what they saw. This was nearly 4 years ago, at the time not much was known about upcycling but slowly through the years, you could see that trend making its way into the region too and now, not only am I popular at the market but more and more people are interested in learning to upcycle themselves along with being interested in funkier, brighter items to display around themselves," she added.

A plain desk of Ikea or an old chair that has been scuffed up through the years is all pieces awaiting a bit of retouching in the eyes of Mrs Salvages herself. "Upcycling not only makes things look better but also adds value to them. I've upcycled tables that may not have been worth much, but after I was done with them— they sell for more than 3 or 4 times the original price and all it needs its a bit of colour, a few tiles or dots and voila! and not only are you adding value but in today's world of waste, you're doing your

part in not only reducing waste but taking something that might be waste and turning it into not only something beautiful but into something profitable," she said.

Other than the bright upcycled pieces, on her Instagram page, another product that stands out is her macrame. "It all started as a curiosity", she said, "I started macrame 2 years ago, I've always wanted to try it but to me, it was something that looked very difficult, but I really wanted to try it so one day I took the leap of faith and bought the supplies I would need and looked up how-tos on youtube and started and now I am hosting my own workshops and teaching others macrame which is something I never thought I would be doing, I

still do enjoy doing decoupage and mosaic but macrame is the front runner at the moment but this is the thing about me, in a year or so it could be something else completely. I love learning and finding out new ways to create and make things that are not only functional but also aesthetic."

Other than selling her own creations, Dagmara also teaches. As someone who learns to love new things and techniques herself, she realised that many of her clients not only wanted to own her creations but also learn for themselves how to create magic with their own hands and using their own creativity.

As we establish a new normal, all our lives changed including that of Mrs Slavages, she said, "as an artist,

who spends a lot of time at home working, not much changed for me. But eventually, I noticed that I was lacking inspiration because a lot of the times, I get inspired by what I see around me, whether its people, places or being out in nature and spending so much time indoors really affected me at first. But soon after, I realised that we within ourselves harness so much inspiration and this pandemic really pushed me to explore that and find inspiration within myself. It is amazing how much you can come up with you to spend time with yourself."

Her creations are endless, and to follow her journey on her Instagram @mrs.salvages as she upcycles, reuses and creates works of art from everyday things.



features

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‘I’m a Mrs, and I salvage’

Slovakian Dagmara Wintnerova aka Mrs Salvages is living by the adage that one man's trash is another man's treasure. One of Oman's prolific upcycling enthusiasts, she is transforming items that would have gone to trash but in her hands, they are given new life and more value... **P19**

DAILY PICKS

GASTRONOMY

FRENCH BUTCHER SEEKS TO CARVE OUT UNESCO DISTINCTION
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HUMAN INTEREST

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CELEBRATE

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SIGN LANGUAGES
All around the world, there are about 72 million deaf people according to the data of the World Federation of the Deaf. Today is a special celebration to give them credit and importance. To celebrate today, increase your awareness about how it is to be deaf and learn at least a few sign languages.