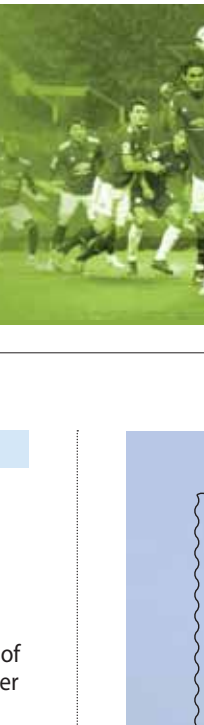


P9

UNITED, CHELSEA MATCH HIGHLIGHTS VAR CONTROVERSY



P11

DIVING DEEP INTO THE HEART OF THE OLDEST AND DEEPEST LAKE IN THE WORLD



P14

LEE KUN-HEE, WHO MADE SOUTH KOREA'S SAMSUNG A GLOBAL POWERHOUSE, DIES AT 78



OMAN

HM greetings to Austria President

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Alexander Van der Bellen of the Republic of Austria, on the occasion of his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of continuous health and happiness to President Bellen and the Austrian friendly people further progress and prosperity.

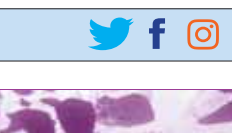
Talks on Yemen developments

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received here on Sunday Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Yemen. The two sides discussed the latest developments in Yemen and the UN efforts with all parties to find a peaceful settlement to the Yemeni cause. The meeting was attended by a number of senior officials at the Foreign Ministry and the delegation accompanying the guest.

PHOTO ON P3

Observer News On Your WhatsApp

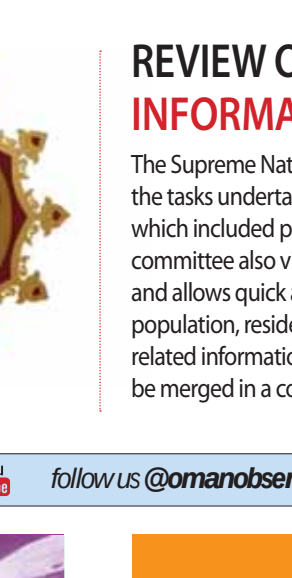
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INSIDE

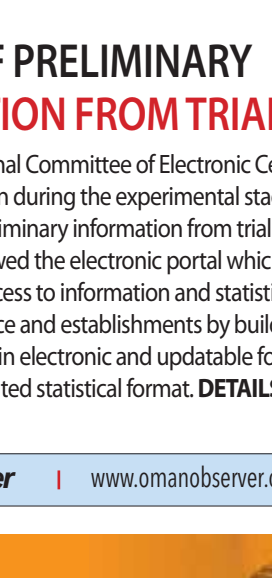
THOUSANDS FLEE HOMES IN PHILIPPINES AS MOLAVE INTENSIFIES

P6



AS DISASTER TRAIN GATHERS SPEED, EFFORTS GEAR UP TO CLEAR TRACK

P7



WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT MAX: 31°C MIN: 21°C

SALALAH MAX: 29°C MIN: 18°C

NIZWA MAX: 33°C MIN: 18°C

SUNRISE 06.09 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR: 04:53

DHUHR: 11:56

ASR: 15:12

MAGHRIB: 17:37

ISHA: 18:48



MARITIME SECURITY

To sustain the high readiness of the Maritime Security Centre in carrying out its national tasks and duties, the centre on Sunday implemented the Maritime Security Exercise (1/2020) with the participation of a number of military, security and civil authorities, and in cooperation with Masirah Oil Company Ltd.



Applications to be received from November 1

BENEFITS UNDER JOB SECURITY SYSTEM

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

The committee on Job Security System (JSS) called upon private sector employees entitled to JSS benefits, whose services were terminated beyond their will, to apply for the benefits via the portal of the Ministry of Labour, the Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) and the website of the General Federation of Oman Trade Unions.

The applications will be received from November 1 and the benefits will be given out on dates of monthly pensions, said the Ministry of Labour.

The benefits will be disbursed to those who are entitled on monthly basis, the committee confirmed, emphasising on the importance of applying the conditions of disbursement to the entitled persons. Aiming at facilitating the process,



an electronic system has been designed to help the applicants know their entitlement without the need to go to the headquarters of the authorities concerned, abiding by the precautionary measures in the light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The authorities represented by the Ministry of Labour and

PASI worked to develop practical frameworks to ensure the achievement of goals and contribute in supporting this initiative. They designed the system to ensure the availability of job security for workers in various sectors, especially with the increasing impact of the economic crises in general and the effects of the pandemic on the labour market in particular. The system contributes in ensuring the necessary and appropriate care for those who lost their jobs for any reason and to guarantee a decent life to them and their families, as well as training and assisting them in finding another job opportunity.

Stemming from the principle of complementarity of roles in activating this national project, the authorities concerned with the implementation of the system have been identified as per the nature of their tasks.

Treaty banning nuclear weapons to enter into force



UNITED NATIONS: An international treaty banning nuclear weapons has been ratified by a 50th country, the UN said, allowing the "historic" text to enter into force after 90 days. While nuclear powers have not signed up to the treaty, activists who have pushed for its enactment hold out hope that it will nonetheless prove to be more than symbolic and have a gradual deterrent effect.

Honduras became the 50th country to ratify. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called it "the culmination of a worldwide movement to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons", according to a statement from his spokesman.

"It represents a meaningful commitment towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which remains the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations."

NGOs also welcomed the news, including the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a coalition that won the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for its key role in bringing the treaty to fruition. "Honduras just ratified the Treaty as the 50th state, triggering entry into force and making history," ICAN said in a tweet.

SEE ALSO P5

REVIEW OF PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FROM TRIAL E-CENSUS

The Supreme National Committee of Electronic Census 2020 discussed the tasks undertaken during the experimental stage of the E-census, which included preliminary information from trial E-census. The committee also viewed the electronic portal which hosts the E-census and allows quick access to information and statistical indicators of population, residence and establishments by building a database of all related information in electronic and updatable format where data can be merged in a collated statistical format. **DETAILS ON P3**



EXPAT NUMBERS DROP BY 16.4% IN 9 MONTHS

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkutyyp

Even as the Ministry of Labour has been pressing ahead with more jobs for nationals, the number of expatriate dropped by 16.4 per cent during the first nine months of this year.

According to the October bulletin of the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), a total of 263,392 workers of different nationalities left the Sultanate during the period from January to September this year.

Figures from NCSI show that 1,449,406 expats were working in different sectors in the Sultanate till the end of September 2020 against 1,712,798 at the end of 2019.

The Ministry of Labour has initiated several steps to ensure jobs for the national workforce in private as well as government sector. At the end of last week, the Ministry of Labour has asked the government companies "to expedite the replacement of expat workforce with nationals at all levels in general, and the specialists and technicians in particular".

The meeting, chaired by Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Baowain, Minister of Labour, while seeking support for the government's efforts to provide employment to the national workforce, called for the importance of training and

qualifying the national workforce on the jobs.

According to the NCSI data, there has been an almost 22.4 per cent decline in the foreign workers in the government sector and 17.1 per cent in the private sector during the first nine months of this year. The figures show that there have been 42,989 foreign workers in various government sectors against 54,687 and 1,148,177 in the private sector against 1,363,955 at the end of 2019. Family and dependents registered a drop of 12.1 per cent to reach 258,240 against 294,156 during the same period.

Bangladeshis continue the largest expat community in Oman with a total of 550,471 workers and their dependents, despite a fall of 13.9 per cent.

While Indians accounted for the highest decline of 20.5 per cent to reach 499,431 till the end of September, Pakistanis dropped by 15.7 per cent to 176,550 and Filipinos by 8.2 per cent to 45,038 and Egyptians 8.4 per cent to reach 31,513 during the period.

The Governorate of Muscat, which is home to the maximum number of expat population, witnessed a fall of 17.3 per cent followed by Dhofar with 17.1 per cent during the nine-month period.

STAMP COMMEMORATES UN'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

The Foreign Ministry on Sunday launched a postal stamp issued by Oman Post and a silver commemorative coin issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. The celebration was held under the auspices of Mohammed bin Nasser al Wahaibi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs. This stems from the Sultanate's belief in the active role of the United Nations in achieving international peace and security and contributing to find solutions to international conflicts and areas of sustainable development. **DETAILS ON P12**



Under the patronage of
H.E. Dr. Nasser Rashid Abdullah Al Mawali
Undersecretary to The Ministry of Economy, Sultanate of Oman.

INAUGURATION TODAY

LULU HYPERMARKET

Markaz Al Bahja, Seeb, Sultanate of Oman

Monday, 26th October 2020
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Enjoy a wide variety of high-quality products at most affordable prices



Location: 23.6142° N, 58.2468° E

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DEPARTMENT STORES.



ROYAL OFFICE MINISTER RECEIVES UK CHIEF OF AIR STAFF



Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigson, British Chief of Air Staff, in Muscat on Sunday. The British Chief of Air Staff praised the strength of the permanent cooperation and coordination between the Sultanate and the UK, especially in the military fields, to achieve the desired goals. He stressed the continuation of the UK's approach to developing relations between the two friendly countries. The Minister of the Royal Office affirmed the Sultanate's firm commitment to developing aspects of the historic relations binding the two friendly countries. The meeting was attended by Air Vice Marshal Matar bin Ali al Obaidani, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), and the UK ambassador to the Sultanate. — ONA

BADR RECEIVES UN'S YEMEN ENVOY



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, with Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Yemen, in Muscat on Sunday.

Shortage of laptops over surge in online learning

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Many of the parents of the students are worried over the shortage of laptops in the market due to a sudden jump in the demand with schools and other educational institutions offering classes online.

"There is a serious shortage of basic models of laptops in the country and I found it really difficult to get a piece after visiting three major retail outlets in town," said an Omani father of three children.

With the Supreme Committee announcement of a mix of online and classroom learning from November 1, hypermarkets and shops are witnessing huge demand for laptops since the last few days.

"There is global shortage in all brands of laptops as production of the same has been affected since March this year. Added to it is the sudden surge in the demand," purchaser of a leading brand of hypermarkets and malls said, adding that they received just 25 units of laptops against a requirement 500 units recently.

Vivek, a sales person with a leading regional brand said they are left with just one piece of a high end brand at a price of RO 339. "Although such a high-end model is not needed for online classes, a customer insisted that he'd go for it for his 8th standard boy,"



said Vivek. "I bought two laptops for my children two weeks ago expecting that I was not going to send my kids to schools any time soon and that was a good decision," Habiba al Harthiyah a saleswoman with a leading automotive company, said.

Conversely, the demand for tablets increased only slightly as parents were not really keen to get a tablet for their children mainly due to fear of it being used for gaming.

"The demand is universal as the usage as well as production have increased globally. We have a few high end models coming and that too is in demand. We sold 15 pieces in less than 20 hours," another representative of a retail chain said. "No laptops below RO 300 are

available. It will take time to resume regular flow of laptops in the market." Majority expat schools began online classes from April onwards and a few expatriate parents said that they have already secured laptops and tablets earlier. Besides, each school had a free laptop programme aiming at financially backward parents, thanks to the good Samaritans in the society.

However, the traders say shortage of laptops won't last as companies have expedited production.

"We are getting the feedback that all the major vendors have expedited their production, smoothened their logistics and the current scarcity of laptops would be addressed in a few days time," a computer seller told the Observer.

Panel reviews e-census preparedness

MUSCAT: The Supreme National Committee of Electronic Census 2020 held a meeting under the chairmanship of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, on Sunday. The committee discussed tasks undertaken during the trial of the E-census. The committee also viewed the electronic

portal which hosts the E-census and allows quick access to information and statistical indicators of population, residence and establishments by building a database of all related information in electronic and updatable format where data can be merged in a collated statistical format. The committee commended the efforts exerted in executing the programme within scheduled time frame and to activate electronic linkage between the electronic census system and the departments dealing with the project. So far, connectivity has been established between the portal and databases of a number of government departments, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the Civil Status Directorate-General. — ONA



Drill sharpens maritime security prowess

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 25

The Maritime Security Centre on Sunday carried out the (Maritime Security Exercise 1/2020) with the participation of a number of military, security and civil entities in cooperation with Masirah Oil Ltd.

The exercise is aimed at raising awareness about the maritime pollution, medical evacuation, search

and rescue operations, firefighting, security operations for ports, installations and the Omani coast against maritime hazards. It is also aimed at reviewing relevant authorities' preparedness and response, unifying and coordinating efforts with the aim of sustaining operational efficiency of the national authorities concerned with maritime security.

Commenting on the exercise, Dr

Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), said: "Today we witnessed the successful exercise carried out by the Maritime Security Centre in cooperation with the Port of Duqm, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones plus a number of military, security and civil bodies.

Tender Notice

Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI), announces following E-Tender for 2020:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Deadline for Specifications Request	Deadline for tender bids	Tender Price
27/2020	General Maintenance Works for PASI Buildings in Muscat	3-Nov-2020	17-Nov-2020	25 OMR

Interested companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender document from the E.Tendering website: <http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> The Tenderer should enclose scanned copy of bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (2%) of the Tender value validity for (120) days from the deadline for the tender bids and addressed to Public Authority for Social Insurance. And original document of the same should be submitted later directly to the Administration Department - Purchase and General Services Section / Third Floor, PASI Head Office in Bawshar.

CORRESPONDANCE:

1. Tender inquiry : All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at E-Tendering system (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
1. E-Tendering system inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering system technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: Tel : +968 24166670 , E-mail : etenderhd@ita.gov.om

PASI is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender that may be received

PASI
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www.pasi.gov.om | TaminatOman | Contact us 800 77 600 | 91777060





KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

With companies, especially those in the IT sector, adopting WFH (Work From Home) strategy , a question of paramount is if the work culture will remain the same or not.

While the majority of Oman’s companies have adopted a mix of half of work in office and the rest at homes, experts advise that it is critical for organisations to learn from and incorporate the lessons from the pandemic.

“COVID-19 is an eye opener for many corporates on how to reshape their work culture and embrace the new normal,” says Abdul Razaq, a management expert.

“This present scenario is offering an unprecedented opportunity for organisations to recalibrate their work culture, benchmarking practices that serve as the pillars of better human relations resulting in corporate success.”

Dr Raaji Narayanankutty believes that work culture will certainly change in the long run with most of the employees opting for work from home.

A report prepared by Oliver Wyman and a team of leading behavioural science experts, titled ‘Shaping the New Normal: Changing Working Practices for Good’ says that at least five working practices have been either formed or altered in the past 6 months in response to COVID-19.

According to the report, five areas of working life that have been disrupted by COVID-19 that companies might want to maintain include:

Work will never be the same

COVID-19 IS AN
OPPORTUNITY FOR
COMPANIES AND
ORGANISATIONS TO
RESHAPE WORK
CULTURE AND
IMPROVE LABOUR
PRODUCTIVITY

- 1) Most of the communication will be virtual
- 2) Business meetings: less physical, more online
- 3) Better hygiene compliance
- 4) Better Focus on employee well-being,
- and 5) Spike in demand for e-cash transactions

“In order to maintain the new, positive organisational behaviours that have emerged as a response to the COVID-19 crisis, management needs to implement routine and rewards and ensure the repetition of activities are embedded over a sustained period of time, and continually updating their findings as their employees adapt over time,” the report further suggested.

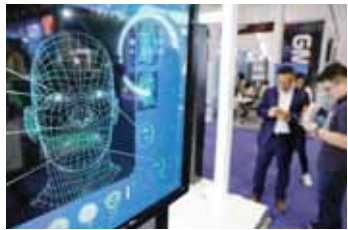
These practices in the organisations may sustain or they may seek to preserve and promote even during the post COVID-19 era. However, it will be the new era that will decide the ‘Survival of the Fittest’, according to the experts.

With most of the workforce operating on a remote basis, meetings taking place on virtual platforms, transactions being carried out and deals signed online, the workspace will definitely be affected either for good or bad. Many physical shops remain temporarily closed while online sales and e-payments soar high. Newer online sellers mushroomed capitalising on the trend. These indicate a new lifestyle which the human race was not very much used to resulting in a proportionate change in the work culture as well.



In brief

■ DUBAI



FACIAL RECOGNITION ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Dubai is introducing a facial recognition system on public transport, officials said on Sunday, as the emirate prepares to host the global Expo exhibition.

“This technology has proven its effectiveness to identify suspicious and wanted people,” said Obaid al Hathboor, director of Dubai’s Transport Security Department. The emirate already operates a biometric system using facial recognition at its international airport.

Dubai, which sees itself as a leading “smart city” in the Middle East, has ambitions to become a hub for technology and artificial intelligence. Both sectors will be on show when it opens the multi-billion-dollar Expo fair.

■ KIEV



UKRAINIANS VOTE IN LOCAL ELECTIONS

Ukrainians were voting on Sunday in local elections seen as a test for President Volodymyr Zelensky, whose popularity has suffered in the year and a half since he came unexpectedly to power.

Zelensky, a former comedian with no political experience, won a landslide victory in a 2019 presidential election promising to root out corruption and end a war with Russian-backed separatists in the east.

His newly created Servant of the People party won an outright majority in a parliament election last year, a record win in the former Soviet republic of around 40 million people.

■ VATICAN CITY



POPE NAMES 13 NEW CARDINALS

Pope Francis, leaving his mark on the Roman Catholic Church into the future, named 13 cardinals from eight countries on Sunday, including nine who are eligible to enter a conclave to elect his successor after his death or resignation.

The nine new cardinal electors, whom the pope listed in a surprise announcement while addressing pilgrims from his window overlooking St Peter’s Square, include Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Washington D C Gregory, who will become the first African-American to hold the rank, has become a national figure in recent months.

The 13 new cardinals will be elevated to the high rank at a ceremony known as a consistory at the Vatican on November 28.

Nuclear weapons ban treaty to enter into force in Jan

UNITED STATES: An international treaty banning nuclear weapons has been ratified by a 50th country, the UN said, allowing the “historic” text to enter into force after 90 days.

While nuclear powers have not signed up to the treaty, activists who have pushed for its enactment hold out hope that it will nonetheless prove to be more than symbolic and have a gradual deterrent effect.

Honduras became the 50th country to ratify.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called it “the culmination of a worldwide movement to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons,” according to a statement from his spokesman.

“It represents a meaningful commitment towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which remains the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations.”

NGOs also welcomed the news, including the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a coalition that won the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for its key role in bringing the treaty to fruition.

“Honduras just ratified the Treaty as the 50th state, triggering entry into force and making history,” ICAN said in a tweet.

Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said in a statement: “Today is a victory for humanity, and a promise of a safer future.”

The 75th anniversary of the nuclear attacks on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, marked in August, saw a wave of countries ratify the treaty, which will now to enter into force on January 22, 2021, the UN said.

‘A NEW CHAPTER’

The Treaty on the Prohibition of



Russia’s Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin takes a tour of the nuclear-powered icebreaker Arktika. The United States, Britain, France, China and Russia have not signed the treaty. — Reuters

Nuclear Weapons — which bans the use, development, production, testing, stationing, stockpiling and threat of use of such weapons — was adopted by the UN General Assembly in July 2017 with the approval of 122 countries. Eighty-four states have since signed it, though not all have ratified the text.

The clutch of nuclear-armed states, including the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia, have not signed the treaty.

Japan, the only country to have been attacked with atomic weapons, ruled out any immediate plans to sign.

“We can’t help but question the effectiveness of the treaty, which nuclear powers can’t join,” Defence

Minister Nobuo Kishi told reporters on Sunday.

But atom bomb survivor Sunao Tsuboi told public broadcaster NHK: “We have no doubt that it is a great step toward materialising the ban and abolition of nuclear weapons.”

“We really want the Japanese government to join the treaty in consideration of the wish of atomic bomb survivors.”

Campaigners hope that it coming into force will have the same impact as previous international treaties on landmines and cluster munitions, bringing a stigma to their stockpiling and use, and thereby a change in behaviour even in countries that did

not sign up.

ICAN said it expects “companies to stop producing nuclear weapons and financial institutions to stop investing in nuclear weapon producing companies.”

The coalition’s executive director Beatrice Fihn called it “a new chapter for nuclear disarmament.”

“Decades of activism have achieved what many said was impossible: nuclear weapons are banned.”

Nuclear-armed states argue their arsenals serve as a deterrent and say they remain committed to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which seeks to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. — AFP

UK plans to reduce quarantine period

LONDON: Britain’s government is looking at how long those exposed to COVID-19 need to quarantine, Northern Ireland minister Brandon Lewis told Sky News on Sunday, commenting on reports that the self-isolation period could be reduced from 14 days.

Like many other European countries, the UK is facing a surge in infections. It has so far reported 884,457 coronavirus cases with 44,795 deaths.

The government has ordered those in England identified as being exposed to the virus to stay at home for 14 days, or face fines of up to £10,000 (\$13,043).

“Teams are looking at what we can do around those isolation periods, this will be scientifically led,” Lewis said when asked about reports the period could be reduced to 10 or seven days.

“We’re not ready to make a final decision or announcement on that yet, but we want to make sure we’re moving with the science, and indeed again, allowing people to live and work within this virus as best as we can.”

Lewis denied a report in the *Sunday Times* that some city workers and company bosses could be exempt from the quarantine period. He said any changes to the rules would apply to everybody.

— Reuters

German COVID control agency attacked

BERLIN: Attackers hurled several incendiary bottles at a building housing the offices of Germany’s national disease control agency early on Sunday, police in Berlin said.

A security guard at the Robert Koch Institute extinguished the flames but the attackers were able to escape. A window was broken, police said.

Because a “political motivation” is suspected, the attempted arson case has been handed over to state criminal investigators, police said. Several people are believed to have been involved in the attack.

The Robert Koch Institute is Germany’s main public health institute. It keeps track of coronavirus cases in the country and helps advise the government on the strategy to contain the spread.

According to the police, the office that was attacked is located in the southern district of Tempelhof-Schoeneberg, not the main building in the north-west of the German capital.

While most Germans approve of the government’s handling of the coronavirus crisis, there have been large rallies against the restrictions imposed on businesses and public life, sometimes bringing tens of thousands of people into the streets.

Several hundred people gathered on Berlin’s central Alexanderplatz square on Sunday



A general view of the Robert Koch Institute. — Reuters

to protest the measures as police reminded participants to wear face masks and keep 1.5 metres apart.

Another larger demonstration was planned in the afternoon in Berlin’s Tiergarten park.

In August, an attempt by extremists to storm the German parliament building sent shock waves through the political establishment, with ministers decrying what they saw as attacks on democracy.

The infection rate still remains lower in Germany than many other European countries, but alarm is growing over a steep rise in cases that began with the onset of cooler weather. That has led

to a tightening of restrictions in some parts of Germany, including Berlin.

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) confirmed on Sunday 11,176 new cases over the past 24 hours. The number is often lower on weekends as fewer tests are carried out.

A total of 429,181 people in Germany have been infected with the virus since the beginning of the pandemic. On Sunday, the death toll rose by 29 to a new total of 10,032.

The reproduction value, which measures how fast the virus is spreading, stood on Saturday at 1.36 across Germany, the RKI said. — dpa

Looters raid Nigeria food warehouses

LAGOS: Nigerian authorities struggled to halt looting across the country on Sunday as crowds defied curfew orders to ransack government warehouses in the latest in a wave of unrest sweeping Africa’s most populous nation.

The country’s police chief on Saturday ordered

the immediate mobilisation of all “operational assets” as he sought to curb turmoil sparked by widespread protests.

Governors have slapped round-the-clock curfews on a string of states as residents have pillaged stocks that were meant for distribution during

coronavirus lockdowns.

Locals raided agricultural supplies in the central city of Jos on Sunday a day after thousands had emptied a vast government warehouse. Fresh looting of food supplies was also reported in Taraba and Adamawa states.

— AFP



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Muscat Clearing & Depository

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POST BOX 952, CODE 112, RUWI, MUSCAT, SULTANATE OF OMAN

hereby gives Notice of following Tender:

Tender No	Description	Eligibility	Participation Charges	Sale of Documents	Bid Submission Date
IT/2020/1001	Supply & Installation, Configuration of Severs, Network Devices & Software	Local Gold Partners specialized in this field	R.O 5 /=	26-10-2020 to 04-11-2020	18-11-2020

Tender Documents shall be obtained from Administration & Finance Department, Muscat Clearing & Depository, First Floor, MBD, RUWI, Sultanate of Oman (Tel.: +968-24822207) during office hours after paying the non-refundable amount mentioned above for the Tender Documents.

All Companies that are bidding must provide a bank guarantee or a certified cheque from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (2%) of the tender value on behalf of MUSCAT CLEARING & DEPOSITORY.

MCD ‘s Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract Agreement shall be applicable.

Tenderers are requested to submit their Tender in **Electronic copies with Password Protection** addressed to the ‘Administration & Finance Manager’, MCD and shall be emailed to ‘Yahya Al Salmi’ alsalmi@mcd.gov.om with Administration & Finance Department on or before Tender submission date.

MCD is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Tender.



Tropical storm Molave is expected to bring widespread rains over two regions on the southern part of the main island of Luzon. — AFP

Thousands flee homes as Philippines braces for year's 17th typhoon

MANILA: Nearly 9,000 people fled their homes in the Philippines as Typhoon Molave made landfall while traversing provinces on the southern part of the main Luzon island on Sunday, bringing heavy rain and strong winds, officials said.

The disaster monitoring agency said it had received reports of damaged roads and bridges, flooding and landslide incidents in some areas, but there were no casualties so far.

Packing top sustained winds of 130 kilometres per hour Molave

intensified into a typhoon as it moved westward and made landfall over San Miguel Island in Albay province on Sunday evening. It made a second landfall on Malinao municipality also in Albay, the weather bureau said.

Some 5,518 people were evacuated to safer grounds, while 3,421 people took shelter with their relatives in areas outside danger zones, the disaster monitoring agency said.

Molave is the 17th tropical cyclone to hit the Philippines this year. The country is battered by an average of 20

cyclones every year.

Molave follows Saudel, which last week caused widespread flooding in Quezon province in the Calabarzon region, southeast of the capital Manila.

The weather bureau warned of storm surges as high as 2 metres in coastal areas in northern Samar province, the Bicol region and the central and southern portions of Quezon province.

Tropical cyclone wind alerts were issued for several provinces in the Bicol and Calabarzon regions, and several provinces in central Philippines, as well as for Metro Manila and central Luzon provinces of Bulacan, Pampanga, Bataan and Zambales.

Sea travel operations were cancelled in danger zones, with 569 people stranded at ports due to strong winds, according to the disaster monitoring agency. After crossing the Philippine archipelago, Molave was expected to continue intensifying over the South China Sea, the weather bureau said.

— Reuters

High alert after virus outbreak in Xinjiang

BEIJING: Authorities in the western Chinese region of Xinjiang on Sunday triggered the highest-level public health emergency response after 137 people tested positive for the coronavirus.

All of the cases detected in the remote western city of Kashgar are asymptomatic, with none of those who tested positive presenting with a cough or a fever, according to government broadcaster CCTV. The 137 people are under quarantine and medical supervision in hospital. All the cases had some connection to the city's Sancun Factory, the deputy director of the regional health commission said.

A 17-year-old girl whose parents work at the factory also tested positive earlier this week. China's National Health Commission has dispatched a working group to the region to lead the response, state media Xinhua reported.

Most flights at Kashgar's airport were cancelled over the weekend, according to Chinese news portal Headline Daily. Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, experienced an outbreak of the coronavirus in July that triggered strict lockdown measures confining residents to their homes and isolating the city from the rest of the country. — dpa



A little girl wearing a protective face covering walks with her father in Shanghai. — Reuters

■ METRO SERVICE IN PAKISTAN



Pakistan's first-ever metro train service, the Orange Line, started its commercial operation Sunday in the country's historical city of Lahore opening a new stage for the South Asian country in the public transportation sector. — AFP

Thai protesters return to streets after PM snub

BANGKOK: Hundreds gathered on Sunday at a major Bangkok intersection to renew calls for Premier Prayut Chan-O-Cha to resign, after he ignored a deadline to step down set by protesters who have issued unprecedented challenges to the regime.

The former military chief is facing pressure from a student-led movement that has organised massive demonstrations for months calling for his resignation.

They regard his hold on power — renewed after last year's widely disputed elections — as illegitimate and on Wednesday gave him three days to step down.

But the deadline came and went on Saturday night, spurring hundreds to gather Sunday at downtown Bangkok's Ratchaprasong intersection, surrounded by gleaming shopping

malls and watched on by traffic police.

"Today is open for everyone who wants to talk about their dissatisfaction about Prayut's government," said organiser Jatupat "Pai" Boonpattaraksa, who had called for the protest the night before.

He reaffirmed the movement's core three demands — for Prayut to step down, a rewrite to the 2017 military-scripted constitution, and for authorities to "stop harassing" political opponents.

"If Prayut insists not to quit, we will keep insisting on coming out to oust him," Pai said.

The gathering saw a diverse crowd — young people in hard hats ready for a police crackdown and older protesters worried about Thailand's freefalling economy.

"I want Prayut to think as a citizen



Thousands of people protested in Bangkok on Sunday in the first demonstration since Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha ignored their Saturday night deadline to resign. — AFP

rather than as a prime minister," said 43-year-old Nuch. "The economy is really bad — since he cannot solve the problem, he should resign and let someone else do it." Prayut remained resolute on Saturday while attending a prayer ceremony for the country at a historic Bangkok temple, saying "all problems can be solved" through compromise.

He also told reporters he "won't quit".

The movement is largely leaderless though the different groups are united when it comes to their demands for an overhaul to Prayut's government.

Prayut had initially imposed emergency measures banning gatherings of more than four, but lifted them a week later when they failed to stop tens of thousands showing up to guerrilla demonstrations across the capital. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

KABUL

Key Al Qaeda leader killed

Afghan forces have killed a top Al Qaeda militant wanted by the United States, as the government on Sunday accused the Taliban of still keeping close ties with the militant group.

Abu Muhsin al Masri, believed to be the group's number two in the Indian sub-continent, was targeted in eastern Ghazni province, Afghanistan's intelligence agency said in a statement. Masri's killing was an indication of the relationship between the Taliban and Al Qaeda, Afghanistan's Interior Minister Masoud Andarabi claimed on Sunday.

"The killing of one of the key Al



Qaeda member, Al Masri by the National Directorate of Security demonstrates close ties of the Taliban with the terrorist groups that are operating against the Afghan government and its people," he tweeted. — AFP

KUALA LUMPUR

Emergency rule call rejected

Malaysia's King Al Sultan Abdullah rejected on Sunday a request by Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin for him to declare a state of emergency in response to the coronavirus crisis, saying that he did not see the need.

The king's rejection is a major setback for Muhyiddin, who is facing a leadership challenge from opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim and infighting within his ruling coalition.

Critics have denounced his proposal for emergency rule as an attempt to maintain his grip on power as it would help him avoid a potential showdown in parliament. A resurgence in coronavirus cases and a pandemic-battered economy has also added to his woes.

"Al Sultan Abdullah is of the opinion that there is no need at the moment for His Majesty to declare an emergency in the country or in any part of the country of Malaysia," the palace said in a statement.

"His Majesty is confident in the ability of the government under the leadership of the prime minister to continue to implement policies and enforcement efforts to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic." — Reuters

VICTORIA

Priest wins Seychelles presidential vote

Opposition leader Wavel Ramkalawan has won the presidential election in the Seychelles, the island nation's electoral commission said on Sunday.

The 59-year-old Anglican priest received 54.9 per cent of the vote, ousting his main rival, incumbent Danny Faure, from office.

Faure won 43.5 per cent of the vote, the commission said.

In a brief speech after the results were announced, Ramkalawan called Faure, 58, his "friend," promising to appoint him as an adviser to help build the nation. Ramkalawan's



Seychelles Democratic Alliance party won 25 of 35 seats, thereby gaining an absolute majority in parliament.

Faure's United Seychelles party — which had been in power since a June 1977 coup — only received 10 seats. — dpa

Building confidence in youth...

An utmost priority of the nation-building mission goes to sustaining nation's comprehensive development covering all spheres of life and empowering its youth as its backbone. Every country carries out this mission in a different way as focus differs based on governments' priorities and interests. That's why the development speed scale undoubtedly varies from one nation to another.

Though, when shedding the light on the Sultanate's experience in this regard, the case is completely different and unique. Oman's nation-building mission is focused on building people as the most precious resource of the nation. Since the beginning of the Blessed Renaissance, started by late Sultan Qaboos, top significance in nation-building mission has been dedicated to the development of Omani people first. His Majesty believed in developing people as the cornerstone for building new Oman.

Nevertheless, directing the same significance to Omani people still continues with the reign of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Reflecting on His Majesty's belief in youth, they have always been empowered to be capable of pushing the wheel of national development ahead. Prior to coming to throne, His Majesty



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
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OMAN'S NATION-BUILDING MISSION IS FOCUSED ON BUILDING PEOPLE AS THE MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCE OF THE NATION

was heading the main committee of Oman Vision-2040, in which attention was dedicated to youth, to develop their abilities and involve them in the decision-making process.

Calling upon all Omani youth to contribute in developing the future vision of Oman, His Majesty stated, "I salute every young man and woman with ideas and who would like to be heard, and I invite them to put those ideas forward because when the future vision is discussed, it is the future of their children. We don't differentiate between our youth at home and abroad".

In view of that, more than one-third of the participants who have attended the planning and development phases for Oman Vision-2040 was youth, indicating the government's keenness to include the next generation in planning the growth of the Sultanate and achieving its vision. As a key segment in the society, youth were given the biggest share in building the vision and sharing their concerns and future demands. They have been given the opportunity to contribute in the decision-making process while drawing the new vision.

Throughout the vision-making phases, youth have marked a commendable presence, starting with the preparation and diagnosis phase of the current status, identification of

the key issues and ending up to the declaration of the initial document of Vision-2040. Furthermore, about 35-40 per cent out of 41,000 participants in all vision development phases were youth. The bright minds and aspirations of Omani youth are a source of continuing pride in the journey of Vision-2040. They are the energy of the present and leaders of the future.

Earlier, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, stressed on the value of youth in building the nation. In his second speech to the people of Oman, His Majesty addressed: "Youth are the wealth of a nation, its inexhaustible resource and the arms that build it. They are its present and future. We will always listen to them, and sense their needs, interests and aspirations which will definitely be accorded the attention that they deserve".

This Royal confidence of His Majesty on Omani youth gets even stronger through the years as they have proven their capability to play a key role in shaping Oman's future. Thousands of national, regional and international achievements have been marked by youth, making Oman proud of them. Worldwide records have witnessed the excellence of Omani youth in different fields, thanks to the government's ongoing empowerment of youth.

A CLOSER RACE

Trump goes on an offensive against Biden

STEVE HOLLAND

President Donald Trump will go on the offensive against Democratic rival Joe Biden with a campaign trip to New Hampshire, a state he narrowly lost in 2016 but is trying to reclaim in this year's White House race.

With nine days left until the November 3 US elections, the Republican president is storming his way through top battleground states in a late push to make up ground against Biden, who leads in national opinion polls.

Opinion polls in many of the most vital swing states that will decide the election show a closer race. New Hampshire, which Trump lost to Democrat Hillary Clinton by about 3,000 votes in 2016, has not been considered a top-tier battleground, and most polls show Biden with a comfortable edge in the New England state. But Trump is running out of time and opportunities to change minds and shift the race in his favour.

More than 56.5 million Americans have already voted in person or by mail, a pace of early voting that could lead to the highest voter turnout rate in more than a century, according to data from the US Elections Project. After voting early in his home state of Florida on Saturday, Trump raced through rallies in three

We are doing well and I am not worried about the public opinion polls. We have 10 days, and nothing worries me
DONALD TRUMP
US President

states — North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin — where he promised the end of the coronavirus pandemic was in sight and said Biden would threaten jobs by pushing for more COVID-19 restrictions. In Ohio, Trump said his campaign was

doing well and he was not worried about the public opinion polls. "We have 10 days, and nothing worries me," he said.

On his visit to New Hampshire, Trump will hold a rally in Manchester. He has suggested he might hold five rallies a day down the final stretch before the election. Biden, who made two campaign stops in Pennsylvania on Saturday, has no public schedule for Sunday, although the former vice president often makes a trip to church. During his swing through Pennsylvania, Biden renewed his criticism of Trump for not taking the health crisis seriously enough and warned of a resurgence during the winter months of the virus, which has killed more than 224,000 Americans and is on the rise in several battleground states. "It's going to be a dark winter ahead unless we change our ways," he said of Trump's attempts to contain the coronavirus.

The United States set a single-day record of more than 84,000 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, according to a Reuters tally, with the spike in infections hitting election swing states Ohio, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Late on Saturday a spokesman for Vice President Mike Pence disclosed that Marc Short, Pence's chief of staff, had tested positive for the new coronavirus.

Pence and his wife tested negative earlier in the day and the vice president will not alter his schedule, the spokesman said. Concern about the health risks of voting in crowded polling places on Election Day has helped drive the stampede to vote, as many states have increased early voting and vote-by-mail opportunities.

In New York state, voters jammed polling places and stood in line for hours to cast ballots on the state's first day of early voting on Saturday. Long lines formed before polls opened across New York City and Long Island, videos on social media showed. — **Reuters**

CASH PAYMENTS

As disaster train gathers speed, efforts gear up to clear the track

MEGAN ROWLING

When forecasts of severe flooding on Bangladesh's Jamuna River came through in early July, UN aid officials did not just wait and hope for the best, as they might have done in the past.

Drawing on \$5.2 million released by the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), they started making cash payments of just over \$50 to about 30,000 households expected to be in harm's way. The money aimed to allow families to spend on whatever they believed would protect them most from the impending flood waters, from food and medicine to transport and clothing.

Thousands of farmers also were given sealable drums in which to safely store their seeds and farming tools, as well as feed for their animals at evacuation centres. About 15,000 women, girls and transgender people were provided with kits to support their health, including flash-cards with COVID-19 precautionary measures and helpline numbers to report violence and receive advice.

"Acting early is cheaper, more effective and more humane," UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock told an event last week on a push to provide aid ahead of disasters, which has garnered growing interest and funding from governments in the last couple of years.

Such a shift away from simply responding after a disaster occurs — which is far more common and costly — could help fraying aid budgets go further and assist more people as



Boatmen ferry passengers on boats across the Buringanga River as rain falls in Dhaka last Friday. — **AFP**

THOUSANDS OF FARMERS WERE GIVEN SEALABLE DRUMS IN WHICH TO SAFELY STORE THEIR SEEDS AND FARMING TOOLS

climate change fuels more frequent and damaging disasters globally.

The allocation of money before the floods hit in Bangladesh, affecting more than 5 million people, was the first time the CERF had been used for this kind of "forecast-based financing" — but is unlikely to be the last.

"There are very few problems humanitarian organisations deal with that you don't get some notice of," except for earthquakes, when alerts come only seconds ahead, Lowcock

said. For most weather and climate threats that can cause humanitarian disasters, including droughts, storms and floods, modern forecasting systems can now give advance warning of at least a few days or weeks in many parts of the world. But simply having a forecast in hand at a national meteorological office is not enough, unless government officials and others can alert citizens and keep them safe.

— **Thomson Reuters Foundation**

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ZVEREV SETS UP COLOGNE FINAL WITH SCHWARTZMAN

BERLIN: Alexander Zverev remains on course to win his second ATP title in Cologne within a week after sealing a straight sets win over Italian teenager Jannik Sinner in Saturday's semifinal.

Zverev, 23, avenged his defeat earlier this month in the last 16 of the French Open against 19-year-old Sinner by claiming a 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 win over the wildcard entry.

The hip injury which hampered Zverev, ranked seventh in the world, against France's Adrian Mannarino in Friday's quarterfinal was not an issue as the German saw off Sinner in one hour and 48 minutes.

"I had a scan this morning," revealed Zverev, who was determined to face Sinner to make amends for his defeat in Paris.

"I was playing a player I just lost to at Roland Garros. That was still in the back of my head. I was not going to lose today."

Zverev proved his fitness by converting his first match point with a blistering serve.

However, he was full of praise for Sinner, who he predicts will soon build on his ranking of 46th.

"He is an up-and-coming



superstar. I think he is going to be Top 10 very shortly. I think he is going to be competing for the biggest tournaments in the world," Zverev added.

In Sunday's final, Zverev will face Argentine second seed Diego Schwartzman who defeated last weekend's Cologne runner-up Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 5-7, 6-4.

Schwartzman is still in the running for the ATP Finals in London next month.

HUMBERT IN ANTWERP FINAL

France's world number 38 Ugo Humbert saved four match points to beat Britain's Dan Evans 4-6, 7-6 (9/7), 6-4 and reach the final of the European Open on Saturday.

Humbert had been 3/6 and 6/7 down in the second set tie-break before going on to secure victory in three hours and 14 minutes.

Left-handed Humbert, who captured his first ATP Tour title in Auckland in January, will face fourth-seeded Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov or eighth seed Alex de Minaur of Australia for the title on Sunday.

— AFP

Azarenka, Sabalenka set up all-Belarusian final at Ostrava

PRAGUE: Victoria Azarenka and Aryna Sabalenka set up an all-Belarusian final at the Ostrava Open after winning their semifinals on Saturday.

Former world number one Azarenka strolled past Maria Sakkari of Greece 6-1, 6-3 and Sabalenka then beat Jennifer Brady of the United States 6-4, 6-4.

Azarenka, the world number 14 and the tournament's fourth seed, fought off four break points in the opening game but then eased through the first set, leaning on a superb first serve.

Her magic waned slightly when she was 4-0 up in the second as she let the 23rd-ranked Greek snatch a break and come within a game.

But Azarenka, this year's US Open finalist, managed to hold on to her serve in a tight eighth game and then converted her first match point on Sakkari's serve.

"I was able to handle the



“She started to play more freely and go for really, really big shots and that dynamic switched a bit in the second set so I’m happy that I was able to turn that around

VICTORIA AZARENKA

momentum shift well,” Azarenka said.

“She started to play more freely and go for really, really big shots and that dynamic switched a bit in the second set so I’m happy that I was able to turn that around.”

“The important thing was to stay strong and finish the match,” added

the 31-year-old.

Third seed Sabalenka took no risks against Brady after having to come back from a set down in her previous two matches.

The big-hitting world number 12 could rely on her serve and fierce groundstrokes, cruising to an easy first set.

Sabalenka saved two break points in game eight of the second set and then held serve, which was all she needed to make the final.

“I’m so happy with this win because she played really well. She’s a really aggressive player and her forehand and her serve are really dangerous,” said Sabalenka.

Looking at Sunday's final, Sabalenka said the chances were 50-50.

“She’s fighting for each point and it’s going to be really interesting,” she said.

“It will all depend on our mental game. We’ll see, I’m ready.” — AFP



No more Eriksen talk, says Conte

GENOA, Italy: Inter Milan coach Antonio Conte is tired of talking about midfielder Christian Eriksen, he said on Saturday after the Dane gave another indifferent performance in the 2-0 win at Genoa.



Lukaku gets Inter back winning

MILAN: Romelu Lukaku and Danilo D'Ambrosio's second half goals got Inter Milan back winning 2-0 at Genoa on Saturday to move third in Serie A ahead of Atalanta who fell 3-1 to Sampdoria.



KKR coach McCullum expects more

ABU DHABI: Kolkata Knight Riders coach Brendon McCullum said his batsmen will have to address their lack of intent after managing only 84 runs from 20 overs on Wednesday.



Manchester United's Edinson Cavani in action. – Reuters

United, Chelsea match highlights VAR controversy

ANDY JALIL

LONDON: A clash between two of the Premier League's heavyweights failed to produce a result with both teams apparently intent on avoiding defeat rather than focusing on an outright win. The match was drab and deadlocked but both managers will take some comfort from it.

For Manchester United, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer will be relieved that his team avoided the ignominy of a third successive home defeat and are without a win in five league home games — their worst run in nearly three decades. There was some relief for the Chelsea manager, Frank Lampard, too, to have seen his side keep a clean sheet in two successive matches. His defence has had a poor record during his reign of 43 matches in which 63 goals have been conceded.

Solskjaer said: "The boys started a bit slowly, but after the first 20 minutes we were the only team that was going to win. It was two good teams out there and there weren't too many chances. But their keeper made two good saves from Marcus (Rashford), and overall I'm happy with the players." There was only one shot on target in the entire second half — Rashford's effort, in stoppage time, that was saved by Edouard Mendy, Chelsea's new signing, keeping a clean sheet in his first two games.

United missed a fine chance to take the lead in the second half when their new signing, 33-year-old, Uruguayan, Edinson Cavani, having been brought on as substitute in the 58th minute, improvised a brilliant flick which found the side netting. Chelsea too missed a chance in the same half when

Christian Pulisic beat his marker but drilled his shot straight into the goalkeeper. Moments later Pulisic pounced on a mistake by Fred, made good ground, but dragged his shot wide.

The controversial incident of the match came in the first half when Harry Maguire blatantly gripped Cesar Azpilicueta in a headlock as a corner was taken. It prevented the Chelsea captain from jumping but the referee did not penalise Maguire. It was a clear case for the VAR to have properly reviewed the incident which should have resulted in a penalty and that was also the view of television pundits and several former players.

Chelsea were rightly aggrieved and Lampard said: "It was a clear penalty. They (VAR) should have taken time and invited the referee to watch the

monitor. If he had watched he had to give the penalty. When you see the headlock he is in, it is surprising." Azpilicueta agreed saying: "It was a penalty because I was in front of him and I felt both his arms around my neck and shoulders. The referee can make the decision, the VAR is there so why not take 20 seconds to review it?"

There has been much criticism recently of the VAR particularly in the ruling of offsides. The management of Premier League are planning a renewed attempt to persuade Fifa to allow a 'margin of error' on tight offsides that continue to plague the game.

The VAR should be used to clear up all incidents that occur where there is a doubt, or if a referee needs to clarify on a foul which may appear blatant to some and not to others.



Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes in action. – Reuters

Jota caps Liverpool fightback to sink Sheffield United

LIVERPOOL: Jurgen Klopp praised Liverpool's ability to cope with "injustice" as the Premier League champions survived a scare to beat Sheffield United 2-1 on Saturday.

Klopp's side trailed to Sander Berge's controversial first half penalty at Anfield, with the Reds frustrated that VAR gave the spot-kick despite Fabinho's foul appearing to take place outside the area.

But Roberto Firmino equalised before the break and Portugal forward Diogo Jota completed the escape act with his second goal since signing from Wolves in September.

After losing Virgil van Dijk to a



Liverpool's Diogo Jota celebrates scoring their second goal with Roberto Firmino and Trent Alexander-Arnold. – Reuters

serious knee injury in last weekend's Merseyside derby draw at Everton, the Reds have proved they can survive without their influential Dutch centre-back.

"The penalty was not even a foul. During a season there are so many different periods, we have had an injustice and we have had to go again", Klopp said.

"I love these games. You have to work hard. You earn the easier games when it all goes your way on nights like this."

A gritty 1-0 Champions League win against Ajax in midweek set the tone and Liverpool again dug deep to

earn their first win in three Premier League games.

"We struggled with (Oli) McBurnie in the first half but we changed our positioning and won the second balls. We were dominating at 2-1 and had some really good football but then they came back", Klopp said.

"They never give up, I respect that so much. They go and go and go. Chris (Wilder, Sheffield United coach) is doing a wonderful job."

Second placed Liverpool are level on points with leaders Everton, who have a superior goal difference and play their game in hand at Southampton on Sunday.

ANXIETY EASED

Liverpool came out firing and almost went ahead inside the first minute when Sadio Mane flicked the ball past United keeper Aaron Ramsdale before John Egan hacked clear. Trent Alexander-Arnold tried his luck with an audacious free-kick from the halfway line that Ramsdale had to tip over. But despite that lively opening it was United who took a shock lead in the 13th minute. When Fabinho tripped McBurnie right on the edge of the Liverpool area, Mike Dean gave a free-kick but VAR intervened to review the challenge and ruled it had taken place just inside the box. — AFP



Barcelona’s Ansu Fati (right) challenges Real Madrid’s Sergio Ramos during the Spanish league match at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona. — AFP

REAL MADRID

ease pressure on Zidane with rousing victory over Barca

BARCELONA: Real Madrid averted a crisis in the best way possible on Saturday by beating Barcelona 3-1 in the first empty Clasico, landing an early blow in La Liga’s title race.

Barca had the chance to inflict a third consecutive defeat on their rivals and increase the pressure on Zinedine Zidane. Instead, Madrid’s win earns them a six-point lead over the Catalans, having played one game more.

“They are only three points but we have to enjoy them, especially after everything that has been said about the squad,” said Zidane.

Sergio Ramos’ penalty and a late Luka Modric goal finished Barcelona off after Federico Valverde and Ansu Fati had traded early strikes in a compelling game that defied those expecting further evidence of two heavyweights in decline.

“You always have bad spells in a season and hopefully this one only lasted a week,” said Ramos. “To win

in the home of your oldest rivals is always satisfying.”

Atletico Madrid took advantage by beating Real Betis 2-0 to move up to second in the table but Sevilla missed out, slipping to a surprise 1-0 loss at home to Eibar.

Barcelona might feel hard done by, especially as Ramos’ penalty was awarded after a check by VAR and a hugely exaggerated fall by Madrid’s captain after Clement Lenglet tugged his shirt.

“Maybe one day you can explain how VAR works here in Spain,” said Ronald Koeman. “We’ve had five games in the league and VAR has only intervened against Barca.”

But aside from an impressive spell in the first half, when Lionel Messi threatened to win the game on his own, Madrid were dominant for longer spells and pulled away when it mattered.

This was Koeman’s first Clasico

as Barcelona coach and some of the pressure Zidane would have felt from a loss is now transferred to the Dutchman, who has overseen only three wins from his first six games in charge.

Barcelona face Juventus on Wednesday in the Champions League, without the suspended Gerard Pique.

Every Barca set-back now reflects on the future of Messi, for whom this could even have been the last Clasico at Camp Nou. The Argentinian, who failed in his attempt to leave last summer, has still to score from open play this season.

SUAREZ ON TARGET

Mundo Deportivo had declared the match “The least Clasico of Clasicos” on its front page on Saturday morning.

The coronavirus pandemic meant the biggest football stadium in Europe was silent for the game that La Liga president Javier Tebas had claimed

is “still the biggest football match in the world”. In the previous week, Real Madrid had lost to Shakhtar Donetsk and promoted Cadiz, while Barcelona were beaten by Getafe.

Yet a dip in quality does not have to mean a drop in drama and any doubts about the thrill of this fixture were answered in eight minutes, as both teams had scored.

Madrid made the start they dreamed of when Karim Benzema drifted deep into the right channel and was allowed to turn, with the sprinting Valverde going beyond him.

Valverde pierced the gap before lifting a curved shot past Neto and into the far corner.

But within three minutes, Barcelona were level. Messi, from almost left-back, chipped a ball over the top freeing Jordi Alba, who fired into the front post where Fati had nipped ahead of Ramos and turned in. — AFP

Chakravarthy five-for keeps Kolkata in IPL play-off race



DUBAI: Spinner Varun Chakravarthy claimed this Indian Premier League season’s first five-wicket haul as Kolkata Knight Riders gave their play-off hopes a boost with a 59-run win over Delhi Capitals on Saturday.

In the second match of the day, England’s Chris Jordan led a disciplined bowling with figures of 3-17 as Kings XI Punjab trumped Sunrisers Hyderabad by 12 runs to register their fourth successive win.

Chakravarthy’s 5-20 from his four overs helped Eoin Morgan’s KKR restrict Delhi to 135 for nine in their chase of 195 in Abu Dhabi.

Nitish Rana, who top-scored with 81, and returning all-rounder Sunil Narine, who hit a 32-ball 64, put on a key 115-run fourth-wicket stand to guide Kolkata to 194 for six after being put in to bat.

Morgan was all praise for Narine, who played his first game after being cleared of having a suspect bowling action.

It was his team’s sixth win in 11 games to stay fourth in the eight-team table.

“Great of Sunil to come back and play as a proper all-rounder. And Nitish Rana and him adding all the runs,” said Morgan.

“The decision to bat Narine there (at number five) is all the coach (Brendon McCullum). He likes to play his cards. It is all Brendon.”

On Chakravarthy’s mystery spin, Morgan told reporters: “He has been one of the positive stories out of our campaign so far.

“Up until today we felt we haven’t played our best cricket but today I think we were close to that.”

The 29-year-old Chakravarthy ran through high-flying Delhi, who stay on 14 points, behind table-toppers Mumbai Indians on net run-rate, despite a threatening 63-run partnership between skipper Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh Pant.

Chakravarthy broke the stand

with the wicket of Pant, for 27, in his first over and then struck twice in successive deliveries to send back Shimron Hetmyer and Iyer, for 47, to dent Delhi’s chase.

Kolkata’s pace spearhead Pat Cummins dismissed Ajinkya Rahane with the first ball of the innings.

Cummins — the most expensive foreign player for the 2020 season with a \$2.17 million fee — returned figures of 3-17.

It was an impressive bounce-back victory for KKR, after struggling to 84-8 in an eight-wicket thrashing by Royal Challengers Bangalore on Wednesday.

Narine bowled four overs after being taken off the warning list for suspect bowlers following his action being reported in a game on October 10. He conceded 37 runs without taking a wicket.

‘WINNING IS A HABIT’

There was drama in Dubai when Punjab bowlers made Hyderabad choke in their of chase 127 after being bowled out for 114 in 19.5 overs.

A 56-run opening stand between skipper David Warner and Jonny Bairstow went in vain as Punjab came from behind to take the fifth spot with five wins from 11 games.

Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi got Warner’s key scalp to send the left-handed Australian back to the pavilion for 35 and the Hyderabad batting fell apart.

With Punjab needing 17 off the final two overs, man of the match Jordan bowled an excellent 19th over as he took two wickets on two balls and gave away just three runs.

Left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh was also on a hat-trick in the final over and the Hyderabad innings packed off with a run out of Khaleel Ahmed.

“Winning is a habit, which we didn’t find in the first half. Honestly, I’m speechless,” said skipper KL Rahul who made 27 in his team’s 126 for seven.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

ABU DHABI

Cummins justifies IPL price, loss upsets Warner

Pat Cummins justified his \$2.1 million price tag, boosting Kolkata Knight Riders’ playoff hopes in the process, but his Australia team-mate David Warner was disappointed by Sunrisers Hyderabad’s struggles in the Indian Premier League (IPL). Cummins, the league’s most expensive player this season, had gone wicketless in the six of his last seven games but the 27-year-old roared back into form on Saturday just as the tournament’s playoff race begins to intensify. The right-arm pacer struck with his very first delivery and went on to claim 3-17 as Kolkata thumped second-placed Delhi Capitals by 59 runs to remain on course for a playoff slot.

— Reuters



BERLIN

Lewandowski hits hat-trick as Bayern win

Robert Lewandowski took his Bundesliga tally to a record 10 goals in the first five games this season with a hat-trick as Bayern Munich thumped Eintracht Frankfurt 5-0 on Saturday, then issued a warning to the European champions’ future opponents.

“I hope that we will keep this form for a very long time — it doesn’t matter against who we play, we always want to show our best football, we always want to win,” Lewandowski told Sky.

Lewandowski has scored nine goals in his last three league games and wrapped up his treble within an hour at the Allianz Arena.



Defending champions Bayern have scored 22 goals this term — 10 more than league leaders RB Leipzig who stayed top with a 2-1 win over 10-man Hertha Berlin. — AFP

SYDNEY

Brisbane Heat thump Perth Scorchers

Brisbane Heat began their title defence by beating a fancied Perth Scorchers while Meg Lanning offered glimpses of her form in an abandoned match on a rain-marred opening day of Australia’s Women’s Big Bash League Twenty20 competition on Sunday. All-rounder Grace Harris smashed a 37-ball 53 to help Brisbane overwhelm their 133-run victory target with three overs to spare at North Sydney Oval. Australia opener Beth Mooney, who was signed to make up for Lanning’s departure to Melbourne Stars, top scored for the new-look Scorchers with a breezy 37 but it was not enough. Adelaide Strikers had it



even easier as they thumped Hobart Hurricanes by eight wickets with six overs to spare at the Hurstville Oval.

— Reuters

features

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Diving deep into the heart of the oldest and deepest lake in the world

BY STAFF REPORTER

Sitting on a thick clear slab of ice, with nothing but stretches of white in sight, she inhaled the stillness and the cool air of a Siberian lake in the dead of winter.

Embracing the warm beams of sunlight hitting her back one last time, Laila plopped into the water and thus, her journey of exploring the Baikal had truly finally begun.

She watched the purest water on earth sparkle while descending into the depths of the deepest lake on earth; 1642 metres deep at its deepest point. She knew that this would be the last sliver of light she will see in the next thirty minutes as she goes deeper underwater. She had no idea what to expect underneath.

Local Buryat shamanic legends claimed that Baikal is a living creature that can sense good and evil. It is said to show kindness to those who come with respect, while it seeks revenge upon those who do not respect it.

Laila's decision to dive into Lake Baikal was an ode to her love for nature, adventure and the baikal water she drank when she was a student in Russia.

As a geologist, witnessing and diving into the miracle that is Lake Baikal was nothing short of a dream. Lake Baikal, located in southern Siberia, is the largest source of freshwater on Earth, containing 23 per cent of the world's freshwater. It is also considered the clearest and geologically the oldest lake on the planet with its age estimated at 25-30 million years. It is also the deepest lake on Earth and is estimated to grow even deeper in the future as

Lake Baikal is located in an active continental rift zone that is widening at a rate of 2.5 cm per year. It is home to over two thousand various plant and animal species, many of which are endemic to the region and evolved over millions of years.

Laila's decision to dive into Lake Baikal was an ode to her love for nature, adventure and the baikal water she drank when she was a student in Russia. As a geologist, witnessing and diving into the miracle that is Lake Baikal was nothing short of a dream

Baikal is of unequivocal significance to its inhabitants, which is evident in the numerous legends surrounding the origin of the lake. The most common one describes a great earthquake that split the earth and caused a raging fire, when the people prayed and cried out in their native tongue: "Bay gal!" meaning "fire, stop!"

This lake is an ancient and sacred heritage not only to the Buryats but was even declared a World Heritage Site by Unesco in 1996.

Laila hopped on a flight to Irkutsk, a large city west of the lake, from which it was a two-hour car ride to the small diving centre that nature lovers from all over the world travel to, to experience diving in the world's clearest lake. There, she received the necessary psychological and physical preps for the upcoming one-of-a-kind adventure. The team of divers helped dress her into the special dry suit designed to insulate the heat and prevent water penetration. The drysuit, among other diving equipments, was an essential element to Laila's diving experience, as the average temperature in the region during January is as low as -20 degrees Celsius, and the water temperature is freezing near the surface, getting warmer deeper into the lake. Laila was instructed to remain calm, regulate her breath and relax her muscles, so as not to cramp up. Meditation, too, comprised a big part of her experience to help her economise oxygen usage.

Although the suit felt incredibly thick and heavy for Laila, that feeling gradually faded when she got into the water, as it hugged and squeezed her, creating a balance of pressure.

Plunging into the body of water, sun rays filtering through the square hole drilled in the thick ice, the clarity of the water preceded all of Laila's expectations.

She never expected the water of the most ancient lake to be this forgiving, where she could vividly watch various types of crustaceans, fish and other residents of the lake float by. This was Laila's reminder that Baikal was not merely a body of water, but an ancient living creature with a soul, containing endless life.

The oxygen bubbles were imprinted and carved in the frozen sheets of ice above her head. Coming up toward the surface, she said goodbye to the body that witnessed and nurtured thousands and millions of years of history and longed to feel the warmth fill her cheeks and palms again.

Having been engulfed deep down within a 30 million-year-old lake, surrounded by nothing but absolute stillness and quiet, in freezing cold water, Laila came out on the other side a different person. The sheer vastness of it all was humbling, and swimming alongside minuscule creatures served as a reminder that all life is connected.

Laila felt gratitude for having the opportunity to face something as grave as Lake Baikal, and for mustering the strength to emerge a

stronger woman. Most importantly, she felt indescribable joy for knowing that her story would impact generations of young girls and women to come, perhaps inspiring them to pursue their own dreams and aspirations.



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ART ATTACK

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Art galleries on the brink as pandemic lays waste to plans

This was to have been the year that an art gallery deep in the southern English countryside took the United States by storm with exhibitions of the extraordinary Lee Miller, a 1920s fashion model, surrealist and World War Two photographer.

Filming for a biopic starring Kate Winslet was also meant to have begun at Farleys House in Muddles Green, where the American-born Miller recovered from documenting the horrors of war and entertained guests including Pablo Picasso and fellow surrealist photographer and her former lover Man Ray.

COVID-19 has compounded the uncertainty created by Britain's departure from the European Union (EU). That has left galleries anxious about how complicated it might become to stage shows and transport artworks abroad.

Instead, the pandemic has put almost every plan on hold. "It's like a wasteland of tumbleweed," said Ami Bouhassane, Miller's granddaughter. She curates the Miller archive with her father, Antony Penrose, Miller's son with the surrealist artist Roland Penrose. COVID-19 has compounded the uncertainty created by Britain's departure from the European Union (EU), with a transition period ending on December 31. That has left galleries anxious about how complicated it might become to stage shows and transport artworks abroad. For more than a decade, Farleys House and Gallery has averaged four international exhibitions a year, loaned mostly around Europe, accounting for roughly a third of its revenue. Other

income comes from rights relating to the 60,000 negatives in the Miller archive and from visitors to Muddles Green. This year, it was planning on seven and to expand into the United States as part of a strategy to cope with Brexit. Two have gone ahead – one in Germany, traditionally one of its most important markets, and another in non-EU Switzerland. A third show, intended for Europe, is being shown instead to Farleys' trickle of socially-distanced visitors, while the other exhibitions are in storage. Such problems are shared to varying degrees by art institutions great and small as visitor numbers no longer justify large-scale exhibitions and planning is fraught. "The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the entirety of the arts and culture sector," said Arts Council England in an email. The body is helping to administer a government £1.57 billion (\$2.04 billion) Culture Recovery Fund. London's Wallace Collection, which includes works by Rubens, Van Dyck and Titian, has also seen a 90 per cent fall in visitors and has deferred exhibitions to next year. "Financially it doesn't make sense to do blockbuster shows at the moment," Xavier Bray, director of the museum, said. Commercial revenue from events, a shop and restaurant has dropped by £1.5 million and the museum faces "a massive deficit" this year, Bray said.

– Reuters

ANNIVERSARY

Oman Post commemorates 75th anniversary of the United Nations



OMAN POST, an Asyad Group member company, and in collaboration with the Foreign Ministry, released a commemorative stamp to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations (UN). The stamp features Oman's flag colours, the international organisation's 75th anniversary emblem, and the slogan 'Shaping our future together'. To mark this symbolic date, the UN has launched the 'UN75' initiative, which aims to promote deep reflection on international cooperation and the role the UN will play in the future. In this context, Oman is contributing to a huge global conversation that aims to involve people from all around the world to listen to their hopes and fears, and to learn from their experiences, in order to construct a global vision for 2045, the year that will mark the centenary of the United Nations. Abdulmalik al Balushi, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Post said, "The United Nations today remains true to its mission to bring nations and people together to preserve peace and security, and improve lives eve-

rywhere. These principles that are adopted by the UN are enshrined in Oman's coveted history when it comes to equality and dignity of people, while always advocating for peace and prosperity for the human race. This new stamp is our way of reflecting on what humanity has achieved and on what more can we do as a collective to ensure a better tomorrow." The new stamp was prepared in cooperation with the United Nations Postal Administration, which began issuing stamps in 1951 and marked the 10th anniversary of the UN on stamps. Photographs of the renovated UN headquarters in New York City are pictured on stamps issued in 2015 for the 70th anniversary, while countries from around the world are issuing commemorative stamps to celebrate this global milestone, 75th anniversary of the UN. The new stamp can now be reserved by emailing Oman Post on: philatelic@omanpost.om. Oman Post continues to launch commemorative stamps that cover both local and international causes.



China eyes more corn imports as shipments surge

A round of new import orders from China would make it the world's top importer of corn for the first time and likely drive up global prices of corn and other grains

BEIJING: China's government is discussing permits for millions of tonnes of additional corn imports over the next year, three industry sources said, amid a surge in animal feed demand and after storms and drought damage tightened domestic supplies.

A round of new import orders from China would make it the world's top importer of corn for the first time and likely drive up global prices of corn and other grains. That would amplify food inflation caused by disruptions to global supply chains due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Food security has emerged as a global theme during the pandemic, exacerbated in China by a disease that has devastated the hog herd over the past two years and left pork supply tight. China is the world's largest pork consumer and second-largest corn consumer.

Beijing previously held massive reserves but has almost emptied them at auctions, leading to grain buyers buying alternatives such as rice and wheat, as well as boosting corn imports. Domestic corn prices hit record highs this month on shortages after a typhoon, a drought



A woman lays out corn to dry in the sun after harvesting in Liaocheng, Shandong province, China. — Reuters

and a pest hit crops.

Two China-based sources and a Singapore-based trader with knowledge of import discussions said Beijing was considering issuing more lower-tariff quotas for buyers to ease the domestic shortage. These quotas encourage imports by exempting shipments from most of the 65 per cent tariffs that would

otherwise be levied by Chinese customs.

“(The government) will review the market supply-demand situation, and might issue more quotas later that could go into the state reserves,” said one of the sources familiar with the government plan.

The people with knowledge of the deals declined to be identified

because they are not authorised to speak to media.

China's state planner, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), which sets import quotas, did not immediately respond to faxes seeking comment on future additional imports. COFCO, China's top grain trader, and state stockpiler Sinograin did

not respond to faxed requests for comment.

China's emergence as the top importer as it moves away from a long-standing policy to encourage domestic self-sufficiency in corn will change global grain trade and encourage corn growers worldwide to plant more to meet Chinese demand.

After China began importing soy - another crop used for animal feed - in the 1990s it rapidly became the top buyer. Farmers in Argentina, Brazil and the United States responded by switching to soy crops.

“China over the next decade may change the landscape of the world corn balance sheet by becoming a major import player,” said Terry Reilly, senior analyst at Chicago brokerage Futures International.

Beijing routinely issues 7.2 million tonnes in annual low-tariff quotas for corn imports, and meets most of its 280 million tonnes of annual demand through domestic crops. China has never before used its full annual quota.

Analysts have estimated it may need more than four times that quota, or 30 million tonnes, in the 2020-2021 October to September crop year.

The US Department of Agriculture attache in Beijing said in a report issued earlier this month there was talk in China that state-owned companies were drafting a report to the NDRC recommending allocating an additional 20 million tonnes in lower-tariff quotas.

Even before further additional quotas are awarded, Chinese importers have ordered more than double the annual allowance. They have booked around 12 million tonnes of corn imports from the United States and around 5 million tonnes from elsewhere including Ukraine for the crop year, according to a source. — Reuters

Brazil soars to China's No 3 crude oil supplier in September

BEIJING: Brazil jumped to China's third-biggest crude oil supplier in September, import data showed on Sunday, as China's independent refiners scooped up cheap supplies of the South American exporter's relatively high-quality oil.

Imports from Brazil hit 4.49 million tonnes, up from 2.96 million tonnes a year earlier, data from China's General Administration of Customs showed. Brazil overtook Iraq, which fell to the fifth-biggest supplier.

China's January-September imports from Brazil were 33.69 million tonnes, up 15.6 per cent from a year earlier, according to Reuters calculations based on the data.

China makes up 70 per cent of Brazil's oil exports, the country's state oil firm Petrobras said in July.

Saudi Arabia regained the top spot in China's oil purchases last month after losing that rank to Russia for the previous two months, data showed.

Imports from the kingdom were 7.78 million tonnes, equivalent to 1.89 million barrels per day (bpd), up from August's 1.24 million bpd.

Russia supplied 7.48 million tonnes last month, or 1.82 million bpd, up 18.6 per cent from a year earlier and up 32.8 per cent from August, according to Reuters calculations.

For the first nine months of 2020, Russia remained the top seller with supplies totalling 64.62 million tonnes, 16 per cent above the year-ago level. Saudi Arabia trailed at 63.57 million tonnes, which was 6.5 per cent higher on year.

US shipments soared to 3.9 million tonnes in September, versus a year-earlier 517,982 tonnes.

China snapped up 13 per cent more crude in the first nine months than a year earlier, as refiners ramped up production to meet speedy demand recovery from the pandemic and stock up at record rates on cheap oil. — Reuters

Ant may raise up to \$17 bn in Shanghai IPO leg

HONG KONG: China's Ant Group could raise up to \$17.3 billion in the Shanghai leg of the likely \$35 billion dual listing, the world's largest ever, after some large investors submitted bids in the range of 68-69 yuan per share, people with knowledge of the matter said.

The simultaneous listing in Hong Kong and Shanghai of the Chinese financial technology giant, backed by e-commerce behemoth Alibaba BABA.N, would beat the previous largest IPO, Saudi Aramco's 2222.SE \$29.4 billion float last December.

The pricing for the Shanghai tranche of the initial public offering was decided on Friday, Alibaba founder Jack Ma said on Saturday,



Receptionists work at the front desk of Ant Financial office in Beijing. — Reuters without disclosing the price.

“It's the first time that the pricing of such a big listing - the largest in human history - has been determined outside New York City,” he told the Bund Summit in the eastern financial hub of Shanghai, referring to Ant's float as a “miracle”.

Later on Saturday, a source said many large Chinese fund managers had bid for Ant shares in the listing on the Nasdaq-style STAR Market in Shanghai at close to 69 yuan (\$10.32) apiece.

At 69 yuan per share, Ant could raise up to 115.3 billion yuan (\$17.3 billion) in the Shanghai tranche, valuing the company as a whole at up to 2.1 trillion yuan (\$314 billion), before a 15 per cent greenshoe or over-allotment option is exercised. — Reuters

■ BUSINESS MAGNATE

Lee Kun-hee, who made South Korea's Samsung a global powerhouse, dies at 78

SEOUL: Lee Kun-hee, who built Samsung Electronics into a global powerhouse in smartphones, semiconductors and televisions, died on Sunday after spending more than six years in hospital following a heart attack, the company said.

The charismatic leader of Samsung Group and the country's richest person, grew it into South Korea's biggest conglomerate. But he was also convicted of bribery and tax evasion, and he and the empire he built were vilified for wielding huge economic clout, and for opaque governance and dubious transfers of the family wealth.

“Lee is such a symbolic figure in South Korea's spectacular rise and how South Korea embraced globalisation, that his death will be remembered by so many Koreans,” said Chung Sun-sup, chief executive of corporate researcher firm Chaebul.com.

Samsung Group affiliates' 326.7 trillion won (\$289.6 billion) in 2019 revenue was worth 17 per cent of South Korea's gross domestic product, according to Fair Trade Commission data and a Reuters



Lee Kun-Hee is seen during a press conference in Seoul, in this file photo. — AFP

calculation.

Around 5 pm (0800 GMT), Lee's son Jay Y Lee, wearing a face mask, walked into the Samsung Medical Center where a memorial was being held. The area for the memorial was limited to 50 people, a sign said.

The funeral will be a small family affair, Samsung said. It did not say when or where the funeral would be.

Lee, who was 78, is the latest second-generation leader of a South Korean family-controlled

conglomerate, or chaebol, to die, leaving potentially thorny succession issues for the third generation.

Ruling party leader and former prime minister Lee Nak-yeon praised Lee's leadership, but said, “It can't be denied that he reinforced chaebol-led economic structure and failed to recognise labour unions.”

The death of Lee, with a net worth of \$20.9 billion according to Forbes, is set to prompt investor interest in a potential restructuring of the group

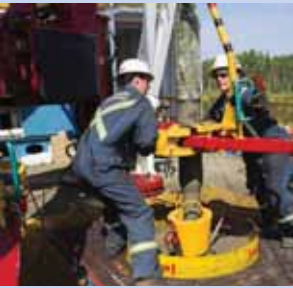
Samsung Group affiliates' **\$289.6 billion** in 2019 revenue was worth 17 per cent of South Korea's gross domestic product

involving his stakes in key Samsung companies such as Samsung Life Insurance and Samsung Electronics.

Lee owns 20.76 per cent of the insurance firm and is the biggest individual shareholder of Samsung Electronics with a 4.18 per cent stake.

Jay Y Lee has been embroiled in legal troubles linked to a merger of two Samsung affiliates that helped Lee assume greater control of the group's flagship Samsung Electronics. — Reuters

Cenovus Energy to buy Husky Energy for \$24 billion



Men work at an oil drilling site of Cenovus Energy in Alberta, Canada. — Reuters

OTTAWA: Canadian oil and gas producer Cenovus Energy Inc will buy peer Husky Energy Inc in an all-stock transaction valued at \$23.6 billion, inclusive of debt, the companies said in a joint statement on Sunday.

Husky shareholders will receive 0.7845 of a Cenovus share plus 0.0651 of a Cenovus share purchase warrant in exchange for each Husky common share, according to the statement.

The combined company is expected to generate annual synergies of \$1.2 billion and will operate as Cenovus Energy Inc with headquarters in Alberta, Canada, the statement said.

Cenovus CEO Alex Pourbaix will serve as chief executive of the merged company with Jeff Hart, currently Husky's finance chief, becoming a chief financial officer.

Cenovus said the combined company will be the third-largest Canadian oil and natural gas producer with a production of 750,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day of low-cost oil and natural gas. — Reuters

Mazoon Electricity modifies overhead service connections

MUSCAT: To develop safer electrical networks and mitigate risks, Mazoon Electricity, a member of Nama Group, has carried out modification work of the overhead service connection power lines above old houses in North Al Sharqiyah.

Securing its network to comply with the Authority of Public Services Regulation requirements, Mazoon Electricity repaired the overhead power connections by using insulated pipe and ensuring the lines in safe distance from the roof of the buildings. Four areas have been completed as part of first phase during 2020 and about 1,420 risky service connections have been modified.

The project aims to making networks safer and reduces the risk of electrocutions because of direct



contact with the overhead wires above homes.

Mazoon Electricity carries out periodic checks to ensure the safety and security of their networks. Necessary upgrades are made to raise safety level of our electrical networks and avoid accidents. Safety is an important obligation that the company is committed to.



Own the Toyota Yaris for sure with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: Toyota is offering fans of the peppy Yaris, a wonderful opportunity to own it and enjoy fun, dynamic and memorable driving experiences.

As part of Toyota's ongoing campaign, customers purchasing the Yaris can look forward to cash gift from RO 1,550, 2 years/20,000 kms service (whichever is earlier) and 1 year comprehensive insurance on 2019 and 2020 models.

Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year

and manufacturing year. Terms and conditions apply.

Visit the showroom for exact details, please.

The Yaris sedan has been meticulously crafted with state-of-the-art design both in the interior and on the exterior, coupled with a complete list of convenient options in the spacious and comfortable cabin.

Furthermore, the Yaris delivers optimal performance and fun driving experience while maintaining great fuel economy and intense driving pleasure.

GCC agri-nutrients feed 5 per cent of world's population

KEY CONTRIBUTION: Agri-nutrients produced and exported from the GCC region are estimated to have provided nutrition to 350 million people, equal to 5 per cent of the world's population

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 25

The GCC agri-nutrients industry supports the food supply of 5 per cent of the world's population, or 350 million people across the globe, according to a new report published by the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA).

This figure marks the rising importance of agri-nutrients in enhancing global food security in a rapidly changing world, where we will need to produce 70 per cent to 100 per cent more food by 2050 to feed our growing population.

The findings were highlighted in a new report entitled 'Role of Agri-Nutrients in Food Security' released on the occasion of World Food Day organised by the UN. The report further reveals that over the last five decades, a portion of the global population supported by agri-nutrients manufactured by GCC producers has increased 33 times, from about 9 million in 1970 to 350 million currently.

The GCC agri-nutrient industry supports about 12,100 direct jobs in the region, and almost three times as many indirect and induced jobs, which means that every person working in the sector supports enough food production to feed about 30,000 people worldwide, including people in the GCC.

Additionally, every person employed by the regional industry supports 17.7 tonnes of three main



Every person employed by the regional industry supports 17.7 tonnes of three main crops production per year (rice, wheat and maize), underlying the significance of the Arabian Gulf region in supporting global food security.

crops production per year (rice, wheat and maize), underlying the significance of the Arabian Gulf region in supporting global food security.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put food security and the nutrition of millions of people under threat, with many of the affected populations already suffering from malnutrition.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the number of people joining the ranks of those suffering from malnutrition post the pandemic may range from 14.4 million to 38.2, or even 80.3 million depending on the GDP contraction.

The role of agri-nutrients during

the pandemic has been essential in meeting the needs of billions of people across the globe and ensuring the uninterrupted supply of nutrition to the world's population.

In the midst of the coronavirus crisis, production of agricultural chemicals including fertilisers and crop protection chemicals declined by 5 per cent between January and May 2020 globally.

Furthermore, capacity utilisation reduced from 81.5 per cent in January to 75.1 per cent in May 2020.

Comparatively, in the GCC, fertiliser producers continued to produce essential fertilisers and supply their global customers without significant production and

supply chain disruptions.

Dr Abdulwahab al Sadoun, Secretary-General, GPCA, commented: "The GCC region is an important, global centre for the production and export of agri-nutrients, which have proven to be essential for enhancing global food security, particularly during the current crisis. The global community must work together to ensure open and free international trade and protect food supply chains by providing essential agri-nutrient inputs."

He added: "Furthermore, we must keep domestic supply chain functions operational to ensure the smooth export of fertilisers, all while taking the necessary precautions for the safety and well-being of our employees."

"International cooperation will be equally important for all countries and regions to have sufficient supply of all agricultural inputs and outputs."

SHORT TAKES

The Chedi Hotel receives key COVID-19 certification

MUSCAT: The 'COVID-19 Controls Checked by National Hospitality Institute (NHI) Certificate' has been awarded to The Chedi Muscat, a GHM hotel.

Morton Johnston, The Chedi Muscat, General Manager, Deepak Sharma, Director of Food and Beverage, and other members of the team received the certificate from Robert Maclean, NHI Principal, in advance of the hotel re-opening in September.

A '12-points to safety' COVID-19 Risk Assessment internal emergency action plan was developed by NHI. The document referenced the World Health Organization (WHO), Leading Hotels of the World (LHW) and international hotel and hospitality sector guidance and closely considered the Sultanate's Ministry



of Justice and Legal Affairs' controls for managing private sector establishments (Violations 1-20) to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

This also included increasing awareness, ability to contact, test, trace and isolate, minimising the risk of infection and complications for vulnerable persons, hand washing, Personal Protective Equipment

(PPE), staff living arrangements or travel arrangements, social or physical distancing, cleaning and disinfecting procedures, increased ventilation, food and allergen related illness or physical and chemical contaminants (pests), contracting Legionella from stagnated water systems and finally mental health and well-being.

Alizz Islamic showcases 50th National Day campaign and new mobile app

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank showcased its ongoing 50th National Day campaign, as well as a new mobile, at a virtual press conference held on Thursday. Present at the briefing were Moosa al Jadidi, Chief Operating Officer, Murtadha Jawad, AGM – Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications, and Mohammed al Ghassani, AGM – Head of Retail Distribution and Wealth Management.

Speaking about the campaign of Alizz Islamic Bank's 50th National Day campaign, Mohammed al Ghassani said: "During the month of November, the bank will hold a special prize draw for Bushra Prize savings account with a total prize value of RO 50,000 that will be distributed among 50 people with each winner receiving RO 1,000. All customers with a minimum amount balance of RO 100 are eligible for the draws."



During the same month, the bank will also hold the Bushra monthly draws for a cash prize of RO 50,000 for one winner as well as a cash prize draw of RO 25,000 for one winner.

In addition to a special monthly draw for women in which 10 female winners have a chance to win RO 1,000 each.



BANK MUSCAT'S THEMAAR SAVINGS PLAN, AN EXCELLENT OPTION FOR ACHIEVING FUTURE GOALS

Bank Muscat customers are responding very well to the bank's Themaar Savings Plan, which helps in meeting one's long-term financial goals.

The savings plans, which was launched earlier in 2020 in line with the bank's vision "To serve you better, everyday" is aimed at meeting the long-term savings needs of people in Oman.

It is important to note that the Themaar plan will have a positive impact on the Omani economy in the long term as it is contributing to financial stability and the long-term financial planning needs of people in the country.

An attractive part of the plan is that customers are offered guaranteed returns and full protection of their deposits. And best of all, they also get free life insurance coverage up to RO 50,000.

The Themaar Savings Plan allows customers to put aside a fixed amount every month for a fixed period of time. Customers can choose the amount that they plan to save and the period that they intend to save for according to their future financial goals.

NISSAN OMAN LAUNCHES SPECIAL OFFER 'RESTART YOUR JOURNEY WITH NISSAN'



Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA), has launched a special 'restart your journey with Nissan' promotion which provides customers with the chance to purchase popular Nissan models at affordable rates with exclusive benefits.

The special promotion will run till October 31, 2020.

As part of the special offer, Nissan Oman is offering free fuel card, periodic maintenance service, cash gift, free registration and free insurance. The offer has been designed in a way to enable buyers to purchase Nissan cars at attractive EMI rates. The offer varies across models and variants.

Customers of Nissan Kicks, X-Trail and Altima are entitled to a fuel card of RO 300 for model year 2020 and RO 500 for model year 2019. Nissan Maxima, Pathfinder, Patrol Falcon, Patrol Safari and Patrol customers are entitled for a free fuel card of RO 1,000 for model year 2019. Customers of Nissan Navara are entitled to a fuel card of RO 500 for model year 2018 and 2019. Nissan Micra customers will get a fuel card of RO 500 for model year 2020.

MIDDLE EAST COLLEGE TO HOLD 2ND TESOL CONFERENCE

Middle East College (MEC) is organising its 2nd Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) conference focusing on "Emerging Trends and Contemporary Issues in Language Learning: the EFL Context". The conference is scheduled on Wednesday, October 28, 2020, and it will be conducted online via Microsoft



Teams.

Two keynote speakers will deliver their keynote speeches at the conference: Prof Thomas Robb, Professor Emeritus, Kyoto Sangyo University, and Dr Ali al Issa, Associate Professor of English Language Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).

The conference aims to share the best practices in TESOL, enhance the methods followed in English language teaching and learning, and provide a platform for academics and researchers to showcase their innovative ideas and techniques.

TESOL instructors, General Foundation Programme students and second English language learners will be attending the conference.

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Oman imposes anti-dumping duty on tile imports from China, India

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 25

The Directorate General of Customs (Royal Oman Police) announced on Sunday that it has begun imposing anti-dumping duties on certain types of ceramic and porcelain tiles imported from China and India.

It said in a twitter post that the application of the duty will extend from October 20, 2020 until June 5, 2025.

Anti-dumping duties on the imports in question have also been imposed by a number of member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Oman’s largest cement plant to come up in Duqm with \$435 million investment

MEGA PROJECT: 3.5m tpa capacity integrated plant to be operational by Q 2023.

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 25

Construction work is set to begin on Oman’s largest integrated cement manufacturing facility with an investment of \$435 million in the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) at Duqm.

Duqm Cement Projects International LLC (DCPI) is developing the mega project plant with a capacity of 3.50 million tonnes per annum (equating to 10,000 tonnes per day) — an investment that is expected to give impetus to the development of downstream industries.

“The economies of scales resulting from the envisaged capacity of 10,000 Tons per Day coupled with the latest technology would help us in achieving our aim of becoming one of the most efficient cement producers in the region”, said DCPI in a press



(Picture for illustration only)

statement.

The project aims to contribute to the national objective of making Oman a hub for industrial excellence in the region by virtue of its abundant mineral resources, additives, world class ports, efficient economic zones and strategic location, it further noted.

Seven Seas Company LLC, the lead promoter, has announced the release of the EPC tender to world’s leading

equipment suppliers. The Usufruct Agreement has been signed with the SEZ. The results of prospecting for a quarry with limestone reserves allotted adjacent to the cement plant have been very encouraging. All the utility requirements for the project like power and water have been allotted and the environmental clearance for the plant and the quarry obtained, the company stated.

The project will conform to the latest and advanced specifications of environmental standards and is expected to be operational by Q1 2023. This new plant will help to meet local demand as well cater to the overseas markets of India, Sri Lanka and East Africa with the support of a well-equipped and dedicated port facility at the Port of Duqm.

To cater to the export demand, the promoters are planning to install an additional clinkerisation unit

once the operations are stabilised. Currently raw limestone is imported by India due to a shortage of limestone in the subcontinent. The project expects to bridge this gap by providing value added clinker, the company said.

“This project will substantially contribute to the twin national objectives of diversifying the economy and productively employing nationals. It is also expected to stimulate a series of downstream opportunities in the building materials sector. It will substantially add value to local resources which are otherwise exported in raw form. The project is also expected to generate 340 direct and 1,000 indirect employment opportunities. A sizable part of this will be nationals”, it further added.

The project is also expected to contribute to the development of the proposed Mineral Rail project by boosting its economic viability.

The promoters are in the advanced stages of tying-up with strategic investors and in achieving financial closure by the last quarter of 2020.

PROMISING PROJECT

Oman’s be’ah launches waste segregation and recycling initiative

NOVEL ENDEAVOUR: Pilot project rolled out in South Al Batinah Governorate to support collection of waste plastic, glass, paper and cardboard and aluminium cans.

CONRAD PRABHU
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solid waste recycling in support of the growth of a circular economy in the Sultanate, Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be’ah) has trialled the launch of a Mobile Recycling Unit that serves as a collection centre for four key waste streams: Plastic, Glass, Paper and Cardboard and Aluminium Cans.

The novel initiative is being piloted in parts of South Al Batinah Governorate, said the state-owned agency, which has the mandate to oversee Oman’s solid waste sector.



When eventually rolled out to cover Muscat and other governorates of the Sultanate, the project will go a long way in meeting the longstanding desire of a growing legion of environment-conscious individuals who have been appealing for the installation collection bins in which they can deposit their segregated, recyclable waste.

“To achieve the highest service standards and adopt the best environmental practices to reduce waste ending up in landfills, be’ah

has launched a new recycling service in South Al Batinah”, said the company in a twitter post.

A Mobile Recycling Unit unveiled in this regard will initially cater to Barka and Al Rustaq, and will be eventually expanded to cover Al Musannah and Nakhl in the future, it added. Each unit consists of four colour-coded compartments each earmarked for a specific type of waste: plastic, glass, paper and cardboard and aluminium cans. According to be’ah, the unit will

remain in place for a period of 10 days before it taken away to have its contents emptied out.

The move is part of a wider strategy to divert certain types of solid waste away from landfills and thereby support the growth of a recycling industry and a wider ecosystem around it.

One such waste stream that be’ah sees as particularly promising for segregation and recycling is plastic, chiefly polyethylene terephthalate (PET) based waste.

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PET based waste — representing around 50 per cent (190,000 metric tonnes per annum) of plastic waste — is proposed to be salvaged for recycling before it ends up in landfills.

be’ah envisions significant investment and employment generation opportunity linked to recycling and the circular economy in general. It is in the process of developing an integrated system for commercialising waste streams such as Construction and Demolition Waste (C&D), End of Life Tyres (ELT), Lead Acid Batteries (LAB), green waste, Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and End of Life Vehicles (ELV).

Furthermore, with support from corporates, be’ah plans to oversee the roll-out of a wide chain of reverse vending machines (RVMs) that will encourage eco-conscious individuals to deposit their PET bottles for recycling.