

Sultanate's oil and gas industry is set to grow at a compound rate of 14 per cent during the period from 2020 to 2027, a fresh report prepared by the CMFE Insights Research Foundation said. The report added that the Asia-Pacific market is expected to see the fastest growth in terms of imports from the Omani oil and gas market during the forecast period, after analysing global opportunities available in global regions, such as North America, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and India. **DETAILS ON P13**



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MANE BRACE
HIGHLIGHTS
LIVERPOOL
CLASS



P15

BAILOUT WILL
KEEP AIR
FRANCE-KLM
AFLOAT: CEO



P17

WITH NO TOURISTS,
EGYPT'S RESORTS
AND ANCIENT SITES
FACE TOUGH WINTER



OMAN

Crude prices at \$41.80 a barrel

MUSCAT: Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) said that Oman oil price for November delivery reached \$41.80. The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil on Monday declined \$1.19 from the price of last Friday, which was \$42.99. The average price of Oman oil for October delivery has stabilised at \$44.32, thus 70 cents per barrel higher than September delivery. Global oil prices fell, with Brent crude down 1.8 per cent at \$42.39 a barrel. Gold prices edge higher, with spot gold at \$1,950.93 per ounce.

WORLD

UN marks 75th anniversary

NEW YORK: The United Nations was on Monday marked its 75th anniversary with a largely online event, with US President Donald Trump failing to address the commemoration despite being scheduled to do so. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for more international cooperation in the face of global challenges in opening the event. "Today we have a surplus of multilateral challenges and a deficit of multilateral solutions," he said. "Climate calamity looms; biodiversity is collapsing; poverty is again rising; hatred is spreading; geopolitical tensions are escalating... the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the world's fragilities. We can only address them together."

INSIDE



TAJ MAHAL GETS VISITORS
AS VIRUS INFECTIONS CLIMB

P7



VIRUS SPARKS OVERHAUL OF
BRITAIN'S RAILWAY SECTOR

P9

WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT
MAX: 39°C
MIN: 27°C

SALALAH
MAX: 30°C
MIN: 26°C

NIZWA
MAX: 40°C
MIN: 25°C

SUNRISE 05.56 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR: 04:40
DHUHR: 12:05
ASR: 15:30
MAGHRIB: 18:09
ISHA: 19:19



OPENING DOORS TO ANOTHER TIME!

The Al Dakhiliyah oasis of Izki can cast its origins back as far as 2,660 years, to the Mesopotamian ruler King Assurbanipal's plaques of Ishtar, and Oman can cast its beginnings back, almost certainly, to the Yemeni, Malik bin Fahm al Azdi, all of 1,800 years ago as he led the Azdi from Yemen, seeking new beginnings, and to prevent the spread of the Persian empire. His deeds, and his historic links to trade and commerce in the region are perpetuated in the enchanting ruins of the walled city of Harat al Yemen, on the edge of the bustling the town of Izki. **DETAILS ON P19**

COVID-19 VACCINE
FOR FRONTLINE STAFF BY DECEMBER

COVAX TO PROVIDE 10 PER CENT OF DOSES BY THE END OF 2020

VINOD NAIR/ ONA
@vinot_nair

Oman will give COVID-19 vaccine first to frontline health staff and personnel of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and Royal Oman Police (ROP) by the end of this year, according to a statement by a top official of the Health Ministry on Monday. COVAX alliance will provide 10 per cent of Sultanate's COVID-19 demand, while 10 per cent will come from other global vaccine makers. Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosani, Health Affairs Under-Secretary at the



Ministry of Health, said Oman is in touch with the vaccine makers, who expressed their willingness to supply the Sultanate with globally-licensed vaccines.

"None of them are available so far. We hope to receive 20 per cent of the needs of the Sultanate's population by the end of this year."

The under-secretary made the statement after the members of the Supreme Committee visited the COVID-19 Field Hospital at old Muscat Airport premises to review the final preparations.

SEE ALSO P2

Be extra cautious... while working online

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

At a time when most of the businesses are happening online, experts are calling the users for an 'extra cautious' approach to avoid being victims of cybercrime.

While cautioning the Internet users to avoid being cybercrime victims they urged professionals, students, teachers and others to explore the benefits of the Internet to make pace with the big cyber community, which is becoming bigger and bigger every single minute.

In one of his recent researches, Dr Hafedh al Shuhi, senior faculty at Sultan Qaboos University, found interesting data suggesting how fast the Internet community is becoming bigger and bigger.

"Every minute we generate 1.8 million Facebook likes, upload 200,000 photos, send 204 million emails, post 278,000 tweets, and upload 100 hours of video on YouTube," he said.

Even though the data is a couple of years old, it speaks the volume of enormity the cyber community holds.

In his research, he gave a perspective to understand the vastness of content generated online. "It will take around 15 years to watch all the videos that are uploaded to YouTube in a single day. Data centres occupy an area of land equal in size to almost 6,000 football fields and companies monitoring 'sentiments' in Twitter analyse 12 terabytes of tweets every day and every single minute, 570 new websites come into existence."

TURN TO P3

In SUVs and on planes, richest 1% drive emissions

LONDON: Prone to frequent flying, a passion for SUVs and big spending, the richest one per cent of the world's population produced twice as many planet-heating emissions as the poorest half of humanity over the last quarter-century, researchers said on Monday. That excessive consumption has left little room in the world's "carbon budget" for poorer countries to grow without pushing the planet into increasingly dangerous climate impacts, from worsening storms to water shortages, scientists said.

And it suggests that keeping global climate change under control will require not just helping poorer countries to develop cleanly, but putting in place tough measures to curb over-consumption by the world's rich, they said in a new study. Tim Gore, head of climate policy for anti-poverty charity Oxfam and lead author of the report, said change would not come from individuals voluntarily acting alone. "That will never add up. This has to be driven by governments," he said.



A climate activist outside Brussels Royal Palace during negotiations to form a government, in Brussels, Belgium. — Reuters

The research, carried out with the Stockholm Environment Institute, found that over the 25 years between 1990 and 2015, the richest 1 per cent of people drove 15 per cent of climate-changing emissions — more than twice the 7 per cent emitted by the poorest half. The richest 10 per cent accounted for 52 per cent of emissions over that period, the study said. The growing popularity of fuel-guzzling SUVs was a particular problem, with the vehicles emerging as the second biggest driver of global

growth in carbon emissions between 2010 and 2018, it said. As countries now look to recover from economic downturns linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, which have hit the poor hardest, revamping economic incentives to discourage excessive consumption could play a role, officials said. "Our current economic model has been an enabler of catastrophic climate change and equally catastrophic inequality," said former United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki-moon. — Reuters



Supreme Committee inspects new field hospital

312-field hospital will begin operation by end of September or early October

MUSCAT: Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal bin Said al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Chairman of the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19), and members of the committee on Monday went on tour of the COVID-19 Field Hospital set up at the premises of old Muscat International Airport.

Sayyid Hamoud and the panel members inspected equipment of the hospital and its different components and listened to a detailed account about ways to deal with COVID-19 patients.

Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, Health Affairs Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Health, hoped that the 312-field hospital will begin its tasks by the end of September or early October.

In a press statement, Dr Mohammed said that the hospital will start functioning with 100 beds, noting that the facility includes a shelter furnished with 23-24 beds. If deemed necessary, the facility will be converted into a standard hospital.

Dr Mohammed explained that the hospital, now under construction, is dedicated to COVID-19 patients to ease pressure on referral hospitals of



Muscat and adjoining governorates.

The field hospital will not directly receive COVID-19 patients, but patients whose condition calls for admission will be transferred here, only for medium-level care. Serious cases that may develop at the field hospital will be transferred to referral hospitals by ambulance, Dr Mohammed added.

In other comments, Dr Mohammed pointed out that the Ministry of Health is in touch with COVID-19 vaccine producing companies, which expressed their willingness to supply the Sultanate with globally-licensed vaccines, but, he explained, "None of them are available so far. We hope to receive 20 per cent of the needs of the Sultanate's population by the end of this year."

Dr Mohammed al Hosni explained that the Ministry of Health's plan in

Frontline health workers and personnel of the Sultan's Armed Forces and Royal Oman Police will be the first to receive the vaccine

using the vaccine is based on priority so that front line health workers and personnel of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and Royal Oman Police (ROP) will be the first to receive the vaccine.

The Sultanate joined the Global Alliance of Vaccines which will provide the Sultanate 10 per cent of COVID-19 vaccine by the end of 2020 while the other 10 per cent will be collected from other producing firms, said Dr Mohammed.



Built on an area of 6,100 square metres, the field hospital will help restore the operational capacity of basic health services, besides keeping risks posed to hospital health workers at bay.

The field hospital will operate with a team from Health Ministry consisting of 30 doctors, 115 nurses, 7 technicians, 7 assistant pharmacists and 7 ex-ray technicians. The adjoining shelter is set up on an area of 10,000 square metres with capacity to accommodate 384 beds.

The facility's establishment is a fruitful outcome of cooperation between government and private parties, including the Ministry of Health, the Civil Aviation Authority, Oman Airport Company, Petroleum Development Oman, Royal Court Affairs, Royal Oman Police and other parties concerned. — ONA



Blood donation campaign held in Nizwa

AMAL AL RIYAMI
@amal92alriyami

A blood donation campaign themed "Thank you ... you saved a life" was held in Nizwa Central Market last week.

The campaign was organised by the Nizwa club Rover and the Nizwa Healthy Lifestyle, in cooperation with Blood Bank in Nizwa Hospital, and sponsored by Halwa Al Saifi in Nizwa souq. It witnessed a large turnout of volunteers.

The campaign was conducted to support the Blood Bank in Nizwa Hospital which has a shortage of blood due to COVID-19.

All precautionary methods were taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Chairs were spaced out to keep everyone safe. All blood donors were subjected to blood pressure and sugar checks to ensure



their safety before giving blood.

Mohammed al Busaidy, representing Halwa Al Saifi, said: "Supporting such humanitarian projects is a great pride and a must-do. In this way, we are helping our

needy family and friends."

Dr Zahir al Anquodi, head of the Nizwa Healthy Lifestyle, said: "We were pleased with the high level of participation. It will help to save many lives."

Smart City initiative wins ITU innovation competition

MUSCAT: The Smart City Ambassadors, one of the initiatives of the Smart City Platform, has achieved a global achievement for the Sultanate by winning in the 'Ecosystem Best Practice' category in the 2020 ITU Innovation Challenges competition.

Laila Al Hadhramiyah, a member of the executive team of the Smart City Platform, maintained that the platform team is currently working on documenting the initiative of the Smart City Ambassadors in scientific research in cooperation with the e-government office of the United Nations University in order to be adopted as a global practice in the field of digital transformation.

The Smart City Platform is considered as one of the initiatives of the Ministry of Higher Education,



Research and Innovation in partnership with the Supreme Council of Planning (formerly), Muscat Municipality and the Information Technology Authority (formerly), with the founding partners being Omantel, Omran and Nama Holding. The objectives of the platform focuses on facilitating and enabling smart city innovations through funding research and carrying out innovation competitions

as well as creating awareness on the importance of smart city solutions and best practices.

As for the newly-formed Smart City Ambassadors initiative, it aims to create knowledge societies in the governorates and wilayats. With the goal of spreading knowledge and awareness of different aspects of the smart city sector and its various solutions, the initiative attracted the registration of more than 700 ambassadors from various governorates of the Sultanate. The Smart Cities Ambassadors also launched a professional community of practice, which aims to create a professional platform for smart city ambassadors in order to exchange knowledge, transfer expertise and work on various projects in smart cities.

Nominal GDP drops to RO 4.6 bn in first quarter

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttty

Even as the first four months of the current year registered a modest RO 134.2 million fiscal surplus, the Sultanate's nominal GDP saw a drop of 3.9 per cent compared to the same three-month period of last year.

GDP at current prices fell 3.9 per cent, down from RO 7 billion in the first quarter of 2019 to RO 6.75 billion in 2020.

The decline, according to the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI), is mainly due to decrease in the total value of non-oil activities from RO 4.9 billion in the first quarter of 2019 to RO 4.6 billion during the same period this year.

"The nominal contraction in the economy was driven by a 6.2 per cent decline in the non-hydrocarbon sector, in addition to drop in non-petroleum industrial activities and services sector

that decreased by 11.5 per cent and 5.2 per cent," said a report by the Central Bank of Oman using NCSI figures.

Financial data of government monthly accounts until the end of April 2020 showed that government total revenues stood at RO 3.82 billion, less by RO 47 million from the figures of the corresponding period in 2019.

Reports from the Ministry of Economy indicate that "the stability of government revenues during the first four months this year was due to crude sale prices, which averaged \$63.36 by the end of April 2020".

At the same time, due to cuts in spending contributed to a surplus of RO 134.2 million in the period from January to last April, from a deficit of RO 133.2 million a year ago.

The Ministry of Economy had instructed government agencies to implement many cuts to their operating and development budgets



The decline is mainly due to a decrease in the total value of non-oil activities from RO 4.9 billion in the first quarter of 2019 to RO 4.6 billion during the same period this year

following drop in oil prices due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Figures show that spending on defence and security from January to April has narrowed down by more than 17 per cent year on year to RO 838.8 million, and development spending of civil ministries during the same period about 48 per cent to RO 171.2 million.

Be extra cautious... while working online



FROM PAGE 1

This gives a background for the number of players active online and some of them are so active and inquisitive that it doesn't take even minutes for them to reach your computer or any other smart device that involves the use of the Internet.

Dr R Venkateswaran, an expert in

networking and information security, echoed the same view by telling that privacy has become a thing of the past for the current generation.

To avoid being a victim of cybercrime he suggested being careful not only against phishing, fake websites, fake calls, spam mails, ransomware attacks, and Wi-Fi spoofing, but put stress on getting the

Be vigilant of fake calls and responses, no click on unknown websites, careful in handling spam mails, and top of all, do not register your credit and debit card details on any unknown websites

DR R VENKATESWARAN
Networking expert

right training, equipment, and apps.

His list of advice to avoid being victims of cybercrime includes, "Be vigilant of fake calls and responses, no click on unknown websites, careful in handling spam mails, and top of all, do not register your credit and debit card details on any unknown websites."

People do not have any other option but to work online most of the time during the pandemic. They need to apply some degree of security to avoid the fraudsters who look mainly for personal data platforms people use for their financial transactions.

PATIENT SAFETY DAY



The Ministry of Health represented by the Directorate General of Quality Assurance Center recently organised a virtual conference on Patient Safety to mark the Third National and Second World Patient Safety Day held under the theme "Health Worker Safety: A Priority for Patient Safety". The two-day virtual meeting covered spectrum of topics related to patient health and health workers' safety by means of lectures and workshops.

222,300 EXPATS LOST JOBS

MUSCAT: A total of 222,300 expatriates working in public, private and family sectors were terminated till August this year. Of which, 10,700 were employees in the government, 181,200 in the private and 30,400 in the family sector, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total expat workforce has generally dropped by

14.3 per cent in the Sultanate. The government sector witnessed a decline of 19.9 per cent, the private sector a decrease of 14.9 per cent, and 10.4 per cent in the family sector.

The figures released by the NCSI revealed that the majority of terminated workers were Bangladeshis followed by Indians and Pakistanis.

Izki souq project work reviewed



AMAL AL RIYAMI
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Al Dakhiliyah Governor Shaikh Hilal bin Said bin Hamdan al Hajri reviewed the Izki Souq project recently.

Shaikh Mohammad bin Abdullah bin Ali al Busaidi, Wali of Izki, Salim bin Hamid al Shibli, Director-General of Al Dakhiliyah Municipality, and Director of the Municipality Department in Izki, accompanied

the governor. The governor toured the various halls and facilities of the market. He was briefed by the representatives of the company which handles the project.

The project includes thirty-six shops as well as a mall over 2,000 square metres. The market also includes a number of service facilities and public parking. It was aesthetically designed in harmony with the surrounding

environment in the commercial district of the wilayat, inspired by the Omani architecture.

The governor stressed the importance of expediting the project and cooperating with the company in facilitating all procedures.

The market will contribute to stimulating commercial activity in the state and boost the tourism sector in the governorate.

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#Living_with_COVID19



EXERCISE AND READING SHOULD BE PART OF A DAILY ROUTINE BECAUSE IT KEEPS THE BODY FIT AND ALSO TIRED ENOUGH FOR GOOD NIGHT SLEEP

OPPORTUNITY TO START AFRESH



Do not worry about savings when you are on a zero business or job for three to four months, no amount of money saved will be enough. So it should be only about starting fresh, whether now or in a few months or years

MARK SNELL
Motivational speaker

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

No calendar year would have dramatically changed the course of the world or the way, we do things like 2020.

While the pandemic has been challenging for members of the family staying under one roof for months and hours without going out or without work, it also gives a scope to find ways to stay positive or happy.

It led to many calling for a reset to 2019, which in no way was an exceptional period or being fast-tracked to 2021.

While some of the changes that took place are to be welcomed, the sudden turn of events would have created discomfort, especially at the individual level. It took a virus to fast-track work from home, online shopping and remote education, which we never would have fully embraced.

As we shift work from office to homes , the major challenges are self-discipline and time management. "It is not difficult to follow the same level of discipline working from home. After initial hiccups, people started adjusting to working full-time with family members around or children attending online classes with parents following them closely. The same thing can be said of teachers who are often conscious of parents following their students at home," said Lisa, a parent and teacher.

According to Mark Snell, a motivational

speaker, and expert, "Rather than thinking too much about the possible consequences, it gives time to think positively and have a Plan B that will be different from what you are doing now. It gives a chance for a fresh start because the change is inevitable irrespective of the age."

He said, "Do not worry about savings when you are on a zero business or job for three to four months, no amount of money saved will be enough. So it should be only about starting fresh, whether now or in a few months or years."

What has been observed generally across the world is about homemakers and students and artists taking to YouTube and social media for promoting their amateur songs or talking about healthy tips.

Exercise and reading should be part of a daily routine because it keeps the body fit and also tired enough for good night sleep.

"The other good idea is to have a reunion with old friends online because there are fewer chances of talking grievances as the focus will be always on the lighter moments of the past," Murali Raghavan, 70-year-old, who was stuck in the Middle East for nearly four months.



ANNOUNCEMENT



Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority

RECALL CAMPAIGN

2009 (DH) Dodge RAM 2500 Pickup, 2009 (D1) Dodge RAM 3500 Pickup, 2009-2010 (DC) Dodge RAM 3500 Cab Chassis, 2009-2010 (DM) Dodge RAM 4500/5500 Cab Chassis, 2009 (HB) Dodge Durango, 2009 (HG) Chrysler Aspen, 2009-2013 (JK) Jeep, Wrangler, 2009-2013 (J8) Jeep, Wrangler, 2010-2013 (J3) Jeep, Wrangler, 2009-2010 (LX) Dodge Charger, 2009-2013 (LX) Chrysler 300, 300c, 2012-2013 (LX) Lancia Thema, 2009-2013 (LC) Dodge Challenger, 2011-2013 (LD) Dodge Charger, 2009-2011 (ND) Dodge Dakota

Starting Date of Campaign: **22.09.2020**
Recall Segment: **Electrical**
Recall Type: **Safety**
Recall Code: **U03**



Product Description:

MODEL AND MODEL YEAR	CHASSIS RANGE	NUMBER OF UNITS AFFECTED
2009 (DH) Dodge RAM 2500 Pickup 2009 (D1) Dodge RAM 3500 Pickup 2009-2010 (DC) Dodge RAM 3500 Cab Chassis, 2009-2010 (DM) Dodge RAM 4500/5500 Cab Chassis 2009 (HB) Dodge Durango 2009 (HG) Chrysler Aspen 2009-2013 (JK) Jeep, Wrangler 2009-2013 (J8) Jeep, Wrangler 2010-2013 (J3) Jeep, Wrangler 2009-2010 (LX) Dodge Charger 2009-2013 (LX) Chrysler 300, 300c 2012-2013 (LX) Lancia Thema 2009-2013 (LC) Dodge Challenger 2011-2013 (LD) Dodge Charger 2009-2011 (ND) Dodge Dakota	From 1C4BJWAG0DL521244 To 2C3CDYJCXJDH615942	975

Note: This recall only applies to the above vehicles built.

Description of Recall:

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, through its endeavor to deliver continuous quality improvement, have informed the market that a batch of 975 vehicles were sold in Oman. The front passenger airbag inflator (PAB) of the above vehicles may contain propellant that degraded after prolonged exposure to high absolute humidity, high temperatures and high temperature cycling. Activation of an inflator with a degraded propellant in a vehicle crash where the PAB is designed to deploy may result in an inflator explosion. An inflator explosion may cause metal fragments to pass through the air bag and into the vehicle interior at a high speed, which may result in injury to the vehicle occupants.

Rectification Procedure:

The front passenger airbag inflator (PAB) must be replaced.

Parts Number	Description
See Recall	Passenger Airbag Inflator

Service Procedure:

Should your vehicle fall in the range mentioned above, please contact our Customer Centre at Dhofar Automotive on 24584530 to make an appointment for your vehicle to be repaired if required.

Contact Details:
Telephone No: +968 2458 4530

E-Mail:
info@da-oman.com



Wattayah, Sohar, Nizwa, Salalah, Mabela
For more information 245 845 30 | info@da-oman.com | www.dhofarautomotive.com



People want better basic services and global solidarity: UN survey

NEW YORK: A global survey conducted by the United Nations to mark its 75th anniversary found that the immediate priority for most people was better basic services in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

“Amid the current COVID-19 crisis, the immediate priority for most respondents is improved access to basic services – healthcare, safe water, sanitation and education, followed by greater international solidarity and increased support to those hardest hit,” the UN said.

Respondents were also concerned about the climate crisis and the destruction of the natural environment.

More than a million people from around the world participated in the survey since it was launched in January.

The results were released on Monday as the UN was marking the 75th anniversary of its founding.

Another survey by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) showed that some 77 per cent of people displaced by conflicts have lost a job or revenue since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

A record 79.5 million people worldwide, or 1 per cent of humanity, were displaced at the end of 2019 after fleeing wars or persecution,

according to the United Nations. The NRC, a non-governmental organisation, polled 1,431 refugees and internally displaced people across 14 countries including Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Uganda and Venezuela.

Some 70 per cent of those surveyed said they had to cut the number of meals for their households and 73 per cent said they were less likely to send their children to school due to economic problems.

“The price of food has doubled. We have to collect scraps to feed our children,” said Shayista Gul, 60, who lives in a two-room makeshift home together with 15 others outside Kabul in Afghanistan. “If the coronavirus does not kill us, hunger definitely will,” she is quoted as saying by the NRC in its report.

The pandemic has led to an economic downturn affecting the most vulnerable populations, including refugees and internally displaced people, pushing them into a “dangerous downward spiral”, the NRC said. “Already forced from their homes by violence, often with limited rights to work or access to government services, the economic impact of the pandemic is pushing them to catastrophe,” Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the NRC, said in a statement. — **dpa/Reuters**

Lufthansa to mothball A380 superjumbos



FRANKFURT: Lufthansa is to cut at least 150 planes from its fleet of 760, mothball its A380 superjumbos and slash even more full-time jobs than the 22,000 already announced, the Frankfurt-based airline announced on Monday.

The airline, which has had to surrender two seats on its supervisory board to German government appointees after receiving a bailout worth 9 billion euros (\$10.6 billion) from the state, had previously said it would cut just 100 planes.

Continuing travel restrictions over the rest of the year would lead to the airline offering only up to 30 per cent of the services it offered last year, Lufthansa said. It had earlier hoped to have half its planes in the air by the end of the year.

Planes from the A340-600 series

will remain grounded or be removed entirely from the fleet, leading to a book adjustment of 1.1 billion euros over the current quarter.

Lufthansa’s lucrative long-haul routes have been particularly badly hit by the novel coronavirus pandemic, with flights still at a small fraction of last year’s.

By contrast, its cargo operations have held up.

Complex and ever-changing restrictions on travellers have badly impacted the airline, along with its subsidiaries Eurowings, Swiss, Austrian and Brussels.

According to the latest figures, of the more than 138,000 employees at the start of the year, 128,000 still have jobs. Staff abroad are feeling the brunt of the cuts, while there is as yet no agreement with the unions on redundancies in Germany. — **dpa**

Russia sees minimal chance to extend New START nuke pact



A view shows the Moscow International Business Centre, also known as ‘Moskva-City’. Russia said it is not ready to extend the New START treaty with the United States – the last major Nuclear arms pact between the two countries. — **Reuters**

MOSCOW: Russia sees minimal chances of extending the New START treaty with the United States — their last major nuclear arms pact — as it does not accept conditions set out by Washington, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov was quoted as saying on Monday.

He spoke after Marshall Billingslea, the US Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control, told a Russian newspaper that Moscow must accept a joint agreement with Washington on extending the treaty before the US presidential election in November.

“I suspect that after President Trump wins re-election, if Russia has not taken up our offer, that the price of admission, as we would say in the US, goes up,” Billingslea told *Kommersant* newspaper in an

I suspect that after President Trump wins re-election, if Russia has not taken up our offer, that the price of admission, as we would say in the US, goes up

BILLINGSLEA

US Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control

interview.

Ryabkov said that position constituted an ultimatum and lowered the chances of reaching any

kind of agreement to extend the deal, which expires in February next year.

“We cannot talk in this manner,” TASS news agency quoted Ryabkov as saying. Another news agency, RIA, quoted him as saying the chances of a treaty extension were “minimal”.

The New START accord, signed in 2010, limits the number of strategic nuclear warheads that Russia and the United States can deploy.

Failure to extend it would remove the main pillar maintaining the balance of nuclear arms between the two countries, adding yet another element of tension to their already fraught relationship.

DISAGREEMENT ON CHINA

Billingslea said the US side was looking for a framework political accord on extending New START.

This framework, which would not have to be ratified by the US Senate, would stipulate that a successor to New START must be multilateral and include China, he told *Kommersant*.

Ryabkov called that a “deliberate distortion of our position.” He said China’s decision on whether to take part in the talks was exclusively Beijing’s to make.

“We have not taken and do not intend to take any steps to bring China into these talks, something we have told our American colleagues on multiple occasions,” TASS quoted Ryabkov as saying.

New START is a successor to the original Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) signed in 1991 between the then-Soviet Union and the United States. — **Reuters**

250 whales stranded on sandbar off Tasmania



A pod of whales, believed to be pilot whales, is seen stranded on a sandbar at Macquarie Harbour. — **Reuters**

SYDNEY: At least twenty-five whales have died and scientists are trying to rescue 250 more that are stranded in a remote bay on the Australian island of Tasmania, officials said on Monday.

Tasmania’s environment department said the whales had become stuck on a sandbar in Macquarie Harbour, on the island’s rugged and sparsely populated west coast. Nic Dekka, who is managing the incident response, said two large pods were stranded on sandbars a few hundred metres apart inside the harbour.

“They are in water but it’s very difficult to see how many of those whales are deceased or what condition

they’re in,” he told reporters in the nearby town of Strahan.

They are believed to be pilot whales

but the environment department is yet to confirm the species.

Police are on site and marine

experts are assessing the situation ahead of plans to launch a rescue mission early on Tuesday morning.

“In terms of the tides, when we start making an effort tomorrow it will be with an outgoing tide, so that’ll be in our favour, but obviously tides go up and come down so we’ll be aiming to make the most of the windows that we have,” Dekka said.

Mass whale stranding occur relatively often in Tasmania, but the large numbers involved present a daunting rescue prospect.

Authorities may call on a network of local volunteers to assist but have cordoned off the area to the general public. — **AFP**

UK plans law to safeguard London’s global standing

LONDON: Britain plans to buttress the City of London’s global competitiveness and openness once it moves outside the European Union with new financial services sector legislation.

Although Britain left the EU in January, its unfettered access to the bloc for banks and other financial firms does not end until December, when transition arrangements expire.

John Glen, Britain’s financial services minister, said on Monday that new Financial Services Bill would create a modern, flexible and robust system of financial regulation.

“(It) will underpin the continued

global competitiveness of the UK financial services sector by enhancing its world leading prudential standards, promoting openness to international markets and maintaining the effectiveness of financial services regulatory framework and sound capital markets,” Glen said.

The reference to world leading prudential standards will reassure regulators in Britain who have cautioned about being given a formal remit to maintain the competitiveness of London as a global financial centre when writing new rules, fearing it would weaken standards.



A woman makes her way, amid the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in Brixton, London. — **Reuters**

Christopher Woolard, due to stand down as interim CEO of the Financial Conduct Authority, said the highest international standards and doing what is right for markets were not mutually exclusive.

“Maintaining a strong and robust regulatory and supervisory system, and our commitment to achieving the highest international standards, go hand in hand with the UK’s position as a global financial centre,” Woolard told City Week.

The EU, the City of London’s biggest customer, has said it will give UK clearing houses temporary access but

will not allow banks in London to offer services directly to customers in the bloc, forcing them to shift activities to new EU hubs.

Glen, speaking at a City Week online event, declined to elaborate on Britain’s negotiations with the EU on financial market access, but noted that a sector that pays 75 billion pounds in tax each year was at the centre of the government’s efforts to secure trade deals with countries across the world. Britain is reviewing how it sets financial rules, that for decades were written in Brussels, in order to make the most of leaving the EU, Glen said. — **Reuters**



In brief

■ WASHINGTON

US ANNOUNCES NEW
IRAN SANCTIONS

The Trump administration is set to announce on Monday new sanctions on people and entities involved in Iran’s nuclear, missile and conventional arms programmes, to support its assertion that all UN sanctions against Tehran are now resumed, a move key allies such as the Europeans dispute.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is scheduled to hold a news conference along with National Security Adviser Robert O’Brien and several top cabinet members. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, Defence Secretary Mark Esper, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross as well as US Ambassador to United Nations will be joining Pompeo.

■ KHARTOUM

SUDAN TO DISCUSS
US TERROR LIST

Sudanese officials will discuss the removal of their country from a US list of state sponsors of terror with US officials during a visit to the UAE this week, the ruling council said on Sunday.

Sudan’s transitional government, in charge since the toppling of Omar al Bashir last year, has been pushing to get off the US list, which hinders its ability to access foreign loans to tackle an economic crisis. In August, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo raised the issue of Sudan establishing ties with Israel during a visit. Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok told him he had no mandate to do so. The same month, the UAE and Bahrain normalised ties with Israel.

■ ISTANBUL

ERDOGAN SUES
GREEK NEWSPAPER

Turkey’s president sued an extreme-right-wing Greek newspaper that published a front-page headline laced with expletives against him, state news agency Anadolu reported on Monday.

A complaint was lodged with the Ankara prosecutor’s office against the author of the article and three editors at *Dimokratia* newspaper, which published the piece on Friday. The headline, in Turkish, read: “Siktir Git Mr Erdogan.”

“Considering the silence of the Greek public, it is understood that this moral collapse is not limited to marginal segments,” read the complaint.

■ ALGIERS

ALGERIA TO HOLD
EARLY POLLS

Algeria will hold early legislative elections after a referendum on a new constitution planned for November 1, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune said. Elected last December, Tebboune has pledged to carry out political and economic reforms to meet demands raised during mass protests that forced the resignation of veteran president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in April 2019. Algerians will vote in November on a new constitution that includes giving the parliament and prime minister a greater role and providing more freedoms.

— Agencies

France presses Lebanon leaders to rescue country from crisis

BEIRUT: President Michel Aoun warned on Monday Lebanon was going “to hell” if a new government was not formed, and said agreeing one could need a miracle after positions had hardened between rival factions.

His televised address underlined the severe challenges facing French efforts to get Lebanon’s fractious leaders to form a new government and rescue the country from financial meltdown. The crisis, exacerbated by the devastating August explosion at Beirut port, marks the worst threat to Lebanon’s stability since the 1975-90 civil war.

A deadline agreed with Paris for forming the government passed last week. The process hit a logjam over the demand of Lebanon’s two dominant parties, Hizbullah and its ally the Amal Movement, to name ministers including the finance minister.

Aoun, a Hizbullah ally, said his proposals for compromise had not been accepted. He depicted the problem as a standoff between the parties on the one hand and Prime Minister-designate Mustapha Adib along with former prime ministers who support him on the other.

When asked where Lebanon was headed if there was no agreement, Aoun said “of course, to hell”. Asked by reporters if his comments meant there was no hope of a new government, he said: “No, there might be a miracle.” “We are today facing a government formation crisis which should not have happened because the events that await Lebanon do not allow a minute to be wasted,” said the president, a Maronite Christian under the country’s sectarian power-sharing



A poster of Lebanon's President Michel Aoun is seen in Hadath, Lebanon. — Reuters

system.

Aoun said the premier did not want to consult parliamentary blocs, which should not be excluded. At the same time, he added, it was not permissible for one party to impose ministers and the constitution did not allocate any ministry to any specific sect.

“With the hardening of positions there does not appear to be any solution on the horizon because all the

We are today facing a govt formation crisis which should not have happened because the events that await Lebanon do not allow a minute to be wasted

proposed solutions amount to a ‘victor and a vanquished,’ he said.

Adib called earlier for all sides to cooperate to form a government and secure the immediate success of French efforts. Last week, reports suggested Adib may step down. He had proposed switching control of ministries, some of which have been held by the same factions for years.

French President Emmanuel

Macron had called Lebanese politicians as Paris tried pressing them to name a cabinet swiftly and embark on reforms. “The French initiative is the only hope left. The alternative is continuing the descent into the abyss,” said Alain Aoun, a member of the FPM party founded by the president, his uncle. The economy is collapsing after decades of state waste, graft and mounting debt. — Reuters

EU clears violators of UN Libya arms embargo

BRUSSELS: EU foreign ministers have agreed to sanction violators of the UN embargo on arms flowing into Libya, EU sources said on Monday.

The measures target three companies from Turkey, Jordan and Kazakhstan, as well as two individuals from Libya, that provided ships, planes or other logistics for the transport of combat equipment to Libya, according to the sources.

In 2011, the Nato-backed overthrow of ruler Muammar Gaddafi plunged the country into turmoil and it has since become a battleground for

rival proxy forces. That same year, the United Nations imposed an embargo on arms exports to Libya that has often been flouted.

The oil-rich country has two competing administrations: the GNA in Tripoli and a government based in the eastern city of Tobruk, which is allied with commander Khalifa Haftar, leader of the self-styled Libyan National Army. Haftar has been laying siege to Tripoli in a bid to seize it from the GNA since April 2019.

A UN-recognised government in Tripoli, backed by Turkey and

Qatar, has been fighting since last year against Haftar, who has had the support of Russia, Egypt and the UAE.

At a summit in Berlin in January, almost all countries involved in the Libyan conflict pledged to stop supplying the warring factions with weapons and fighters.

These promises were not kept, prompting the threat of EU sanctions. European countries are keen to see the conflict resolved, not least because chaos in Libya has provided ideal conditions for

people-smugglers to operate in the Mediterranean Sea, bringing migrants from North Africa to Europe. The European Union has a naval patrol mission in the Mediterranean Sea aimed at intercepting shipments of weapons into Libya.

Operation Irini boarded a ship earlier this month that carried jet fuel, which the EU mission said was likely to be used for military purposes in Libya. The vessel departed from the UAE.

More than 217,000 people have been internally displaced in Libya,

according to the UN refugee agency. Around 1.3 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance due to shortages of medicine, food and shelter. In recent months, Libyans have increasingly suffered from frequent power outages and short water supplies.

Last week, Fayez al Serraj, the premier of the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), said he wants to hand over power by the end of October, amid international efforts to restart talks to resolve the conflict. — dpa

MUSIC NO BARRIER FOR VIRUS



A Palestinian shop worker, mask-clad due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, cleans and re-arranges musical instruments at a musical shop in Gaza City. — AFP

Egypt discovers 27 sarcophagi more than 2,500 years old

CAIRO: Archaeologists in Egypt have discovered 27 coffins at the ancient necropolis of Saqqara, a burial ground that is also home to one of the world’s oldest pyramids, the ministry of tourism and antiquities said.

The wooden sarcophagi are ornately painted and covered in hieroglyphs, and were found stacked in two burial shafts, the ministry said in a statement.

They have not yet been opened, the ministry said. Saqqara is a Unesco world heritage site.

In March, Egypt reopened at the Saqqara site the Djoser’s Step Pyramid, the first pyramid ever built, after a 14-year restoration costing nearly \$6.6 million.

In July, Egypt restarted international flights and reopened major tourist attractions including the Great Pyramids of Giza after months of closure due to the coronavirus



Mostafa al Waziri, secretary-general of Egypt’s Supreme Council of Antiquities looks at one of the 2500-year-old coffins discovered in a burial shaft in the desert near Saqqara necropolis in Egypt. — Reuters

pandemic.

Yet despite reopenings and continued safety reassurances to international tourists, many concede that the key winter season starting in October is going to be tough, further straining the economy. — Reuters



Delegates attend talks between the Afghan government and Taliban insurgents in Doha. — Reuters File Photo

53 killed as violence soars in Afghanistan

KABUL: At least 53 members of the Afghan security forces were killed in overnight attacks by the Taliban in five provinces, officials said on Monday.

A further 51 were wounded in the clashes that occurred in the Afghan provinces of Uruzgan, Takhar, Kapisa, Maidan Wardak and Balkh, according to the officials.

The deadliest incident was in southern Uruzgan province, where more than two dozen Afghan security forces were killed, according to local media reports and a provincial councillor who spoke said.

Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry said that 98 civilians were killed and 230 others had been injured by violence throughout Afghanistan in the past two weeks.

The surge in attacks comes despite peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government in Qatar, and as the world observes International Day of Peace. The US envoy for Afghan reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, who orchestrated

the talks, called the escalation regrettable. “Over the last few days, there has been a clear rise in violence in Afghanistan,” Khalilzad tweeted.

The Chairman of Afghanistan’s High Council for National Reconciliation, Abdullah Abdullah, called on the Taliban to accept a ceasefire. “Our homeland has been burning in war and conflict for more than forty years and many lives have been lost in this endless war,” Abdullah said in a statement.

There is no doubt that people hate and are tired of the ongoing war and conflict in the country, he added. Historic peace talks started on September 12 in Doha, bringing together delegations from the warring sides the first time in 19 years. Despite this, however, people in Afghanistan are killed everyday.

Meanwhile, the Afghan government and Taliban fighters remain far apart on even the most basic issues a week into talks meant to end two decades of war that has killed tens of thousands of people.

— Agencies

Thai protesters vow to fight after ‘people’s plaque’ removed

BANGKOK: A “People’s Plaque” installed by protesters near Bangkok’s Royal Palace was “planted in the hearts of the Thai people”, activists said on Monday, vowing its removal marked only the beginning of their battle to reform the monarchy.

Some 30,000 demonstrators turned out over the weekend, the largest show of force since near-daily student-led rallies began two months ago.

They demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, a former army chief who masterminded a 2014 coup, and some also called for the monarchy to stay out of politics.

The most symbolic action was the installation of a “People’s Plaque” — a brass plater the size of a manhole cover — in historic Sanam Luang park near Bangkok’s Grand Palace, meant to replicate one installed decades ago that mysteriously vanished two years ago.

By Monday the new plaque had also vanished, with police later telling reporters they had removed it to “use as evidence”.

But demonstrators remained unbowed.

The plaque was “planted in the hearts of the Thai people”, prominent activist Parit Chiwarak, told reporters, vowing that protesters would make replicas and install them across the city.

“Our fight in the past two days is historic. The plaque is just the beginning of the fight for the monarchy to be reformed.”

The new plaque read: “The people have expressed the intention that this country belongs to the people, and not the king.”



An art professor from the Silpakorn University makes a stencil over an empty space in Bangkok where a commemorative plaque had been placed by pro-democracy protest leaders. — AFP

The plaque was ‘planted in the hearts of the Thai people’, says prominent activist Parit Chiwarak

It commemorated the end of royal absolutism in 1932 after a revolution that transitioned the kingdom into a constitutional monarchy.

But it disappeared in 2017 after King Maha Vajiralongkorn took power following the death of his father,

and was replaced with one bearing a reminder for Thais to remain loyal to the “nation, religion, king”.

Charges have been filed against the protesters for “making alterations to an archaeological area without permission”, confirmed Sataporn Tiengdham, from the Archaeology of Fine Arts, an accusation denied by Parit.

“We just entered the park and left. We didn’t cause any damage.”

Still, if convicted, the protesters could face up to three years in jail.

— AFP

Taj Mahal gets first visitors as coronavirus infections climb

AGRA: India reopened the Taj Mahal after six months on Monday, with the first visitors trickling into the famous monument as authorities reported 86,961 new coronavirus infections across the country, with no signs of a peak yet.

The white marble tomb in the city of Agra, built by a 17th-century Mughal emperor for his wife, was opened to the public at sunrise, and a Chinese national and a visitor from Delhi were among the first to enter.

Daily visitor numbers have been capped at 5,000, versus an average of 20,000 before the pandemic. Tickets are only being sold online, with fewer than 300 bought on the first day. Visitors will have their temperatures taken and must adhere to advice to keep a safe distance from each other.

Aditya Diksha, one of the early visitors at the Taj, said he and his friends drove 12 hours from central India and stopped in Agra on their way to the mountains in the north.

India’s coronavirus tally of 5.49 m infections is second only to the United States with 6.79 m, a figure the South Asian nation could overtake in the next few weeks

“It is the first time in six months we have been out, so it feels good,” he said. Workers at the Taj were sanitising the handrails while paramilitary police shouted at tourists not to touch any of the surfaces. “We are following all COVID-19 protocols,” said Vasant Swarnkar, superintendent of the Archaeological Survey of India, which oversees the Taj among other monuments.

India’s coronavirus tally of 5.49 million infections is second only to the United States with 6.79 million, a figure the South Asian nation could overtake



Tourists have their pictures taken at the Taj Mahal in Agra. — AFP

in the next few weeks at its current rate of increase. The death toll of 87,882 was up 1,130 from the previous day, health ministry figures showed. But as a proportion of its population, India’s

toll is still small compared to countries such as the United States, Brazil and Britain.

Faced with the deepest economic contraction in decades, the

government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is pushing to free up virus curbs so that jobs and businesses can resume.

“We can survive for another

four to six months: after that we will have to take some serious calls,” said Abid Naqvi, who saw bookings at his boutique hotel in Agra drop to zero overnight after India’s abrupt lockdown in March. Until then, the 13-room Ekaa Villa, which opened last year at a cost of almost \$1 million, had been operating at close to capacity. Tourism contributed about \$240 billion, or 9.2 per cent of India’s gross domestic product in 2018, employing more than 42 million people, World Travel and Tourism Council data show.

However, foreign tourists were unlikely to return until at least April, said Manu PV, secretary of the Association of Tourism Trade Organisations India, a month that traditionally signals the end of the tourist season. And a confusing system of regional lockdowns and quarantine rules is deterring domestic tourists. “People don’t want to go on holiday,” Manu said. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

INDIA

Eight Indian MPs suspended

NEW DELHI: Eight Indian lawmakers were suspended from parliament on Monday for “unruly behaviour” after opposition to contentious new farming legislation sparked some of the most chaotic scenes in recent years.

MPs in the upper house had on Sunday torn up copies of the legislation, broke microphones, hurled copies of the parliamentary rule book and staged a sit-in protest once proceedings were adjourned after a tumultuous day.

The eight — all members of parties opposing the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — were suspended from the legislature for a week and will likely miss the



Police personnel try to control Communist Party of India members during a protest against the new agricultural bills in Chennai. — AFP

remainder of the monsoon session.

Parliament under the previous Congress-led government was routinely paralysed, with shouting, jeering and protests frequently forcing adjournments.

— AFP

PHILIPPINES

Duterte eases overseas travel ban on health workers

MANILA: The Philippines’ president has eased an overseas travel ban on Filipino nurses and other medical workers to allow more to take jobs abroad, his spokesman said on Monday, as his government believes it has its coronavirus outbreak under control. Thousands of health workers, who call themselves “priso-nurses”, had appealed to the government to let them travel, Reuters reported last week.

The nurses say they feel underpaid, under-appreciated and unprotected in the Philippines. President Rodrigo Duterte approved the proposal of the labour ministry to expand exemptions

from the ban to those who had overseas contracts and complete documents as of August 31, spokesman Harry Roque told a regular briefing.

So far only those with contracts as of March 8 have been allowed to travel. Roque said the president’s decision would benefit 1,500 health personnel. “These are nurses who already spent a lot (of money) processing their papers. They are not that many so we allowed them to leave,” Roque said. Healthcare workers from the Philippines are on the front lines of the pandemic at hospitals in the United States, Europe and the Middle East as well as at home. — Reuters

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan resumes polio vaccination drive



A health worker administers polio vaccine drops to a child during a polio vaccination campaign in Karachi. — Reuters

ISLAMABAD: ens of thousands of health workers across Pakistan started the first polio vaccination drive in several months, amid a continuing fall in coronavirus cases, officials said on Monday.

Around 40 million children are to be vaccinated for the crippling disease, which has been eradicated

around the world aside from in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where it remains prevalent. The drive, which is part of a UN-funded campaign, is due to run for a week and targets all children under the age of five, said Safdar Rana, the doctor who heads Pakistan’s anti-polio programme.

— dpa



HOPE FOR SHELTERED ANIMALS



Head of French far-right party Rassemblement National (RN) Marine Le Pen listens to Nicolas Demajeau, owner of the 'Ranch of Hope', which shelters horses and mutilated animals in Villefranche-Saint-Phal, as she visits the ranch where a horse was mutilated three weeks ago. – AFP

Italians vote for smaller parliament

ROME: Italy's far-right opposition leader Matteo Salvini failed to conquer Tuscany, the biggest prize in Italy's regional polls, according to early projections on Monday.

There were elections in seven regions in total, but eyes were focused on Tuscany, a historic leftist bastion where a League win could have triggered a minor political earthquake.

According to the SWG institute, Tuscan centre-left candidate Eugenio Giani won 46.5 per cent of the vote against 42.3 per cent for the League's Susanna Ceccardi.

SWG's projections, as shown by

the La7 TV channel, were based on a 4-per-cent sample of counted votes, and had a margin of error of just under 2 per cent.

Defeat in Tuscany would have thrown into turmoil the Democratic Party(PD), the main backer of Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's government along with the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S).

The Tuscany result - if confirmed by final scores - would be a repeat of what happened in Emilia-Romagna, another leftist stronghold which the League failed to snatch from the PD in January.

Meanwhile, some 69 per cent of Italians voted "yes" in a constitutional referendum on reducing the size of the national parliament, according to data from 75 per cent of polling stations. Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, a leading member of the M5S, hailed it as a "historic result."

The M5S was the chief sponsor of the reform, which reduces the size of the Chamber of Deputies, the lower chamber, from 630 to 400 lawmakers, and of the Senate from 315 to 200 members. Voting took place from 7 am to 11 pm on Sunday and from 7 am to 3 pm on Monday. — dpa

Belarus oppn appeal fails to unblock sanctions

BRUSSELS: European Union foreign ministers failed to overcome a diplomatic standoff over Belarus on Monday despite an appeal by the country's main opposition leader to approve sanctions on officials accused of rigging the election last month.

Belarus opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya travelled to Brussels to try to convince the EU to follow through on its threat to impose sanctions on some 40 Belarusian officials over the disputed August 9 vote.

A sixth straight weekend of protests against President Alexander Lukashenko 26-year rule was not enough to sway the EU, however, even as Tsikhanouskaya asked ministers to show courage.

"Although there is a clear will to adopt the sanctions, the required unanimity was not reached," the EU's top diplomat Josep Borrell, who chaired the meeting of foreign ministers, told reporters, referring to EU rules that all 27 states must agree.

Cyprus has said it can only agree to the Belarusian sanctions when the EU also imposes sanctions on its neighbour, Turkey, in a separate row that has raised tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Approval is still possible by EU leaders at a summit on Thursday and Borrell said that by the next time foreign ministers meet on October 12, the sanctions would be agreed. But he also acknowledged the paralysis was damaging for the EU's image. "If we are not able to (approve Belarus sanctions), then our credibility is at



Belarus opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya holds up a photograph as she addresses members of the EU parliament at the EU headquarters in Brussels. – AFP

A sixth straight weekend of protests against President Lukashenko's rule was not enough to sway the EU, however, even as oppn leader asked ministers to show courage

stake," Borrell told a news conference.

The EU said in late August it would impose asset freezes and travel bans on Belarusian officials. Cyprus says it supports sanctions on Belarus but wants the bloc to act over Turkey as well. "Our reaction to any kind of violation of our core, basic values

and principles cannot be a la carte. It needs to be consistent," Foreign Minister Nikos Christodoulides said.

Tsikhanouskaya also took her appeal to the European Parliament on Monday, winning support from EU lawmakers, who last week said they would not recognise Lukashenko's legitimacy when his term ends in November. The presidents of Lithuania, Poland and Romania also said on Monday they will ask EU leaders at this week's summit to offer an economic support package for Belarus if it holds a democratic election.

That would include a favourable trade regime with the EU, visa-free travel and support as a candidate for the World Trade Organization. — Reuters

Resignation and anger greet new Madrid lockdown

MADRID: Fresh lockdown restrictions came into force Monday in parts of Madrid and surrounding areas, drawing outrage despite a surge in COVID-19 infections.

The curbs, which will be in place for two weeks, affect 850,000 people in mainly densely-populated, low-income neighbourhoods.

Residents are now only allowed to leave their zone for going to work, school or to seek medical care.

Public parks are closed in the districts and cafes and restaurants must shut by 10 pm.

"It makes no sense because what difference will it make? The virus is in the air, it will be there," said 65-year-old pensioner Maritere Vazquez.

The regional government says the affected areas have all counted more than COVID-19 cases per 100,000 inhabitants — around five times the national average, which in itself is the highest in the European Union.

"If it's the case that right here there are more outbreaks, something had to be done, measures had to be taken," Gustavo Ojeda, 56, said at the exit of a metro station in Puente de Vallecas, a working class neighbourhood in

southern Madrid as he returned home after working overnight at a warehouse on the outskirts of the Spanish capital.

- Police checks - In Puente de Vallecas, which was born out of a slum and was heavily bombed during Spain's 1936-39 civil war, there are 1,241 cases per 100,000 inhabitants.

"Facts are facts, there is a source of infection on this side of Madrid," said Ojeda, wearing a face mask.

He said when he went to work in recent days he would see people inside a bar without masks or "walking with their mask on their elbow, on their forehead."

The metro station is on a main avenue that marks the border between Puente de Vallecas and another area which has escaped the restrictions.

Police were not checking pedestrians but several patrol cars stopped vehicles at random to see if the passengers had proof that they had an acceptable reason to travel.

A policeman said officers were only reminding drivers of the new curbs but would start fining rulebreakers from Wednesday.



Medical residents protest against their working conditions in front of the regional health department on the first day of a strike called by the collective in Barcelona amid a coronavirus surge in the country. – AFP

Andres Vieco, a 37-year-old jobless man, was stopped by the officer while on his way home after babysitting for a friend and was told he would not be allowed through in the future.

"We will see how we can work around it," Vieco said.

Some 200 municipal police will

be deployed at around 60 such checkpoints across Madrid to enforce the virus restrictions.

In the adjoining side streets several people questioned why the restrictions were not put in place in the entire Madrid region, which is home to 6.6 million people and is the epicentre of the virus outbreak in Spain.

Alejandro Campos, a 30-year-old travel agent who has been working from home since March, said it will be hard to stop people from travelling between the different areas.

"You can't close one part of a neighbourhood and not another one, one street yes, and one street no. So, either you close everything, which will be catastrophic, or you close nothing," he said as he took his two dogs for a walk.

Many people in southern Madrid neighbourhoods such as Puente de Vallecas work in service sector jobs and can't telecommute.

"Unfortunately the people who are going to work in restaurants and bars are from here, people will have to move all the time, many people here are hospitality workers," he said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

CHINA

Hollywood clips spotted in China video

BEIJING: A high-octane PR video for China's airforce crash-landed on social media after users questioned why the world's second-largest military power spliced clips from Hollywood blockbusters "Transformers" and "The Rock" into its own propaganda material.

The video, with 4.72 million views on Weibo and crafted by the Propaganda and Culture Centre of the PLA's Air Force, parades its medium- and long-range H-6 bomber.

With a soaring score and high-



altitude action shots, the chest-thumping video shows Chinese airmen launching an attack on an island base — strongly resembling US facilities in Diego Garcia and Guam — then returning from the successful sortie. — AFP

COLOMBIA

Protests in Colombia amid concern over violence

BOGOTA: Colombians around the country were preparing to demonstrate on Monday against police brutality, massacres and labour policies amid concern that the rallies could turn violent.

Protesters started to gather in several parts of Bogota, City TV reported. Trade unions, student and civil society organisations had called for marches or car caravans also in half a dozen other cities. The rallies followed three days of violent protests in the second week of September, after two police officers were accused

of killing a man in Bogota.

The officers accused law student Javier Ordonez of violating coronavirus restrictions, shocked him with a stun pistol and took him to a police station, where he was allegedly beaten to death.

The subsequent rioting reportedly claimed 13 lives amid accusations that police had fired indiscriminately at demonstrators. Thousands of police were deployed in Bogota to prevent further unrest on Monday, but police chief Oscar Atehortua said police would no longer use firearms. — dpa

UNITED KINGDOM

Meghan, Harry 'did not collaborate' with book

LONDON: Lawyers for Meghan Markle on Monday denied she and her husband Prince Harry collaborated with the authors of a recent book about their life together. The denial came as sought to amend its defence against claims it breached her privacy and copyright by publishing extracts of a letter she wrote to her father.

Former actress Markle became the Duchess of Sussex when she married Prince Harry in 2018. The couple earlier this year left frontline royal duties and moved to the United



States.

At a hearing in the case at the High Court in London, Associated, which publishes the Mail on Sunday weekly and Mail Online website, applied to amend its defence. — AFP

Positive thoughts can boost immunity to fight COVID-19

As a journalist I have also been, like numerous counterparts, following up on the pandemic status nationally and internationally.

We have been looking at figures and of positive cases and studies on vaccines and the rush for it. Then there are others who have been telling me about how coronavirus is just another virus. We have also been told of all the precautions to be taken.



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All of this is satisfactory except when it comes to the state of mind of the relatives of COVID-19 patients. The anxiety and worry they go through have not yet been brought into focus and we have to remember this is also being experienced collectively as the world unanimously continues to go through the pandemic period.

In some countries it is the second wave while others are still going through the first wave. Countries observed there is no other way but open up and move out of lockdowns at least for economic reasons. Even people have been waiting to move forward and have been in a hurry to go back to what it used to be like. Isolation is not bearable so we can imagine what the patients are going through as being a COVID-19 patient

WE NEED TO
FIND HAPPINESS
IN OURSELVES
THAT COULD
ALLOW US TO
EXPERIENCE
BLISS

unlike other health problems. This adds fuel to the anxiety for the relatives.

Wish there was a way to read the stress level of the world due to the pandemic. Now more than ever there is a need for volunteers — especially psychiatrists and psychologists and mental health workers. And the support would have to be through online platforms and via phone calls. We have the means, so why not? While we focus on physical well-being we continue to overlook mental health.

While Oman has been seeing success in convalescent plasma therapy, the way forward to use this therapy requires blood donors who have recovered from the coronavirus infection to transfuse the antibodies to the patients to build up their immune system.

But the relatives in their anxiety may not be able to comprehend the various aspects of the treatment as their mind is under the influence of fear.

Fear is an emotion and the thoughts are often unfounded and could be just an imagination because of our thoughts rush from one point to another. It is in the back of our mind constantly and just when we think we need to detach ourselves from the topic of COVID-19 someone you know has a relative diagnosed positive. And the same

thoughts come again, which overwhelm rational thinking.

This is exceptionally true when one does not have relatives with them. Can we collectively become aware and think about mental health as much as we are aware about the new norm of wearing masks while being in public and maintaining two metre distance. The virus does not discriminate between 'the haves and the have nots' and the fact is the treatment of COVID-19 is expensive. All this goes on to prove that prevention is the best measure to be taken during this period.

No matter how bored and tired we are of staying indoors and away from everything we used to do before March 2020, we need to continuously strive to try breaking the chain.

Dr Hamed al Sinawi, Senior Consultant, Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, says negative emotions affect our immunity level. So I suppose what we really need to invest in is happiness for wellness.

We need to find happiness in ourselves that could allow us to experience bliss. Fine one has had to go through the pandemic but how you come out of it is in our hands. While doctors and health workers do their part to heal, the mind is our business.

A TOUGH CONCESSION

No more Morias? EU to unveil asylum plan

ANNE-LAURE MONDESERT

The failure of the European Union's migration policy could not have been laid out more starkly — an already miserable camp burned and thousands of refugees homeless.

On Wednesday, two weeks after the destruction of the Moria camp on the Greek Island of Lesbos, Brussels will launch its latest proposal for EU asylum policy.

Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson wants the 27 member states to share the burden of handling asylum claims from the migrants arrived on the bloc's shores.

And this time, the proposed system won't be voluntary — a tough concession for many member capitals to swallow.

"It's obvious to everybody that ad hoc solidarity or voluntary solidarity is not enough. That has been proven for many years now," she said.

"It has to be mandatory, all member states have to help when there is a situation when a member state is under pressure and a lot of people that need protection."

Alongside a way to distribute would-be refugees away from the coasts of Italy and



It will have common structures on asylum and return and it will have a new strong solidarity mechanism

URSULA VON DER LEYEN
European Commission chief

Greece there will be tougher rules on sending home those whose claims are refused.

But, five years after the 2015 migration crisis and with annual "irregular arrivals" down to 140,000 a year, EU members are still deeply divided on the issue.

An emergency EU plan during that crisis to redistribute arrivals, pushed by Germany, was

opposed and then ignored by Hungary and Poland, which took in zero asylum-seekers.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said last week the proposal would replace the "Dublin Regulation" with "a new European migration governance system".

"It will have common structures on asylum and return and it will have a new strong solidarity mechanism," she said, surprising some sceptical capitals.

The Dublin Regulation — which governs which member state handles a new arrival's asylum claim — was established in 1990 and was reformed most recently in 2013.

It states migrant asylum claims should be handled in the EU country where the applicant first enters the system, to prevent undocumented migrants flowing around the bloc.

Johansson did not give AFP full details of the alternative scheme the Commission will unveil on Wednesday, but stressed that the key would be solidarity.

This does not necessarily mean, however, that recalcitrant anti-immigration regimes like that in Hungary would be obliged to resettle refugees.

"It's not only relocation, it could also be other situations like, for example, helping with returns," she said.

This would imply that countries that believe they can cope with welcoming more migrants would take some of the strain off the Greeks and Italians. Europe's plan has been a long time coming and will be hard to sell to EU leaders, who meet for a summit in Brussels on Thursday focused on foreign affairs. — AFP

VIRUS DERAILS DEMAND

Coronavirus sparks overhaul of Britain's historic railway sector

ROLAND JACKSON

Britain's privatised railway sector that drove the Industrial Revolution and was rescued by the state in March owing to coronavirus-ravaged demand, faces a major overhaul under government plans unveiled on Monday.

While UK train services will continue to be run mainly by private companies, the franchising system will be replaced by Emergency Recovery Management Agreements (ERMA) as the virus derails demand, the government said.

The Department for Transport said it would continue to cover losses suffered by private rail operators over the next 18 months, extending a system begun following the start of the virus outbreak in Britain.

"Ministers today ended rail franchising after 24 years as the first step in bringing Britain's fragmented network back together," the DfT said in a statement.

"The new system will create a simpler, more effective structure and will take shape over the coming months."

The franchising system has been long-criticised by passenger groups, who accuse private companies of charging excessive fares for regularly-delayed train services despite earning large state-subsidies.

Despite long-standing government help, the taxpayer has in recent years been forced to take over several



▶ The pandemic has forced a reckoning for Britain on how to manage its long-suffering rail service. — AFP

THE UK
GOVERNMENT
HAS ALREADY
PAID OUT A
REPORTED £3.5
BILLION TO
SUPPORT PRIVATE
RAIL OPERATORS

franchises that ran into financial trouble, such as Northern Trains and London North Eastern Railway.

With COVID-19 decimating passenger demand, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government has already paid out a reported £3.5 billion (\$4.5 billion) to support private rail operators.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps

indicated on Monday that the privatised rail model was not working in the current climate, as many commuters choose to work at home and travellers cancel their plans. "The model of privatisation adopted 25 years ago has seen significant rises in passenger numbers, but this pandemic has proven that it is no longer working," Shapps said. — AFP



Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis (3) and Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray (27) go for the ball during the fourth quarter in game two of the Western Conference Finals of the 2020 NBA Play-offs at AdventHealth Arena. – USA Today Sports

Davis’s buzzer beater lifts Lakers over Nuggets

LOS ANGELES: Anthony Davis drained a three-pointer as time expired to seal the Los Angeles Lakers’ 105-103 victory over the Denver Nuggets on Sunday for a 2-0 lead in the NBA Western Conference finals.

“People talk about (I’ve) never been in this moment before, pressure, am I ready for it,” Davis said. “I want to take those shots.”

Davis scored 31 points and pulled down nine rebounds, and LeBron James added 11 rebounds as the Lakers turned back the determined Nuggets — who had taken a 103-102 lead on Nikola Jokic’s driving basket with 20.8 seconds remaining.

Jokic scored 11 straight points for the Nuggets down the stretch, finishing with 30 points, six rebounds and nine assists to lead Denver.

Jamal Murray added 25 points, and the Nuggets battled in a furious fourth quarter but finally came up short.

Davis and Jokic traded baskets down the stretch, Jokic tipping in a miss from team-mate Murray to put

The Lakers pushed the lead to as many as 16 points in the second quarter, but the Nuggets never surrendered

the Nuggets up 101-100 with 31.8 seconds left, only for Davis to answer at the other end.

After Jokic scored to put the Nuggets ahead by one again, the Lakers’ Alex Caruso missed a three-pointer, and Murray blocked a shot by Danny Green, giving the Lakers a chance to inbound the ball.

Rajon Rondo found Davis, and the All-Star forward drained the game-winner over Jokic.

The Lakers will try to take a 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven series on Tuesday in the NBA’s quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida.

James powered the Lakers early, scoring Los Angeles’ first 12 points.

But the rest of the Lakers warmed up and Los Angeles put together an 18-3 scoring run that included a galvanising dunk from Caruso.

The Lakers pushed the lead to as many as 16 points in the second quarter, but the Nuggets never surrendered.

SPECIAL MOMENT FOR DAVIS

Murray scored nine of his 25 points in a Nuggets surge that spanned the third and fourth quarters.

His reverse lay-up gave Denver an 87-86 lead with 7:26 left in the fourth quarter — the Nuggets’ first lead since the first quarter.

“We put the effort, we put the fight,” Jokic said. “Maybe we lost the game, but I think we played well.

“Most of the game we were down, but we came back again, so we’re going to keep our heads up and (go) on to the next one.”

For Davis, the game-winner was a career moment for a player who sought a trade from the New Orleans

Pelicans so he would have a chance to challenge for an NBA title. “Special moment for a special player,” James said. “It’s not about making the shot, it’s about having the belief of just taking it, and living with the result.

“You’re not going to make them all. Tonight was his moment — Rondo was able to find him and he knocked it down — big-time play.”

The only thing that might have made it better, both James and Davis said, was if the big shot had come at Staples Center before a packed house of Lakers fans instead of in the bubble where only some friends and family of players are in attendance.

“I wish we were playing at Staples,” James said. “I miss our fans so much. I would have loved for him to have that moment.” — AFP

NBA Play-off result
(all series best-of-seven):
Western Conference Finals
LA Lakers bt Denver 105-103 (Lakers lead 2-0)

DeChambeau captures first major victory



Bryson DeChambeau celebrates with the trophy after winning the US Open golf tournament at Winged Foot Golf Club. – USA Today Sports

NEW YORK: Bryson DeChambeau captured his first major golf title on Sunday, firing a three-under-par 67 to win the 120th US Open and humble a relentless Winged Foot layout.

The 27-year-old American, who bulked up during the coronavirus lockdown in a bid to add power to his game, eagled the par-5 ninth from just inside 40 feet and rolled to a six-stroke victory over 21-year-old countryman Matthew Wolff.

“Oh my gosh. I can’t believe it,” said DeChambeau, renowned for his scientific approach to the sport. “It has been a lot of hard work.”

DeChambeau hit only 23 fairways for the week but finished 72 holes on six-under par 274 thanks to Sunday’s only sub-par round at the formidable Mamaroneck, New York, layout.

DeChambeau became the first player since 1955 to win with the only sub-par score in the final round, and just the fourth ever to do it, completing a dominating performance.

Typical deep US Open rough could not stop DeChambeau, whose exercise and protein shakes delivered powerful drives while his calculations and precise readings produced solid shotmaking on a layout that crushed rivals.

“I just kept thinking throughout the back nine, ‘We have to keep focused. I have to execute every shot the best I can.’ And that’s what I did,” he said.

DeChambeau’s 325 yards off the tee was a driving distance record by a US Open champion, defying convention by attacking without fear, taking swing speed length to outweigh drawbacks of finding the rough.

“Oh my gosh. I can’t believe it. It has been a lot of hard work.”

BRYSON DECHAMBEAU
US golfer

“I worked my whole life for this,” DeChambeau said. “I wasn’t that afraid of going off line. I gained the confidence I needed for the week.”

The scientist found a major-winning formula. On Saturday night, he was the last player to leave Winged Foot, working into the dark with his driver.

“Sure enough it paid off,” he said. “I’m in shock right now. It’s amazing.”

South African Louis Oosthuizen, the 2010 British Open winner, was a distant third on 282, one stroke ahead of American Harris English after both fired 73 on Sunday.

Wolff led last-duo partner DeChambeau by two strokes when the day began but, in his US Open debut, failed to become the youngest US Open winner since Bobby Jones in 1923 and youngest major winner since Tiger Woods at the 1997 Masters.

DeChambeau, who spent a three-month coronavirus pandemic layoff building his physique, uses same-length clubs and a chart book for judging putts, bringing some slow-play complaints but also six prior PGA Tour victories. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

OMAN

‘Falaj al Shera’h’ team green yard project on track

Al Rustaq’s local team ‘Falaj al Shera’h’ is one of the active football teams belonging to the club. The development and grassing works of the football green yard are under way since February.

The project is progressing steadily as the land is levelled and compacted. The fencing materials had been installed and the installation of water tank is done as well. Haya Company supported the team with the appropriate organic compost. Mazoon electricity Company had arranged all the electricity connections to the nearest point in the green yard with implementation of all the HSE high standards.

The construction process of the



‘Falaj al Shera’h’ green yard is part of the community collaboration and supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Al Rustaq club and the government sector. The team took the benefit of non-sporting action period due to the ongoing pandemic to complete the execution of the project.

STRASBOURG

Cornet ‘concerned’ over French Open



French tennis player Alize Cornet on Sunday conveyed her coronavirus fears for Roland Garros after lamenting the presence of “too many” fans at the WTA event in Strasbourg. The rescheduled French Open later this month will be limited to 5,000 spectators daily.

“Here in Strasbourg there are too many fans... The fact that there is a crowd in the stands is not necessarily bad but these people are in the walkways with us, they ask for a lot of photos and autographs from the players and it’s hard to refuse,” Cornet said. — AFP

SYDNEY

Tennis star Barty clinches golf title

Multi-talented Ashleigh Barty has conquered tennis, been a professional cricketer and has now added another string to her sporting bow by winning a golf tournament.

The world number one Australian would ordinarily be in Europe preparing to defend her French Open crown on the Roland Garros clay. But she pulled out over coronavirus fears, having also missed the US Open, and instead of swinging a racquet picked up her golf clubs. The 24-year-old proved she has what it takes on a course designed by Greg Norman, claiming the Brookwater Golf Club women’s title near Brisbane with a commanding 7 and 5 triumph in the matchplay final. “Champions,”



she wrote on Instagram on Monday accompanying a picture of herself holding a trophy alongside men’s winner Louis Dobbelaar.

“Is there anything you can’t do?,” asked one social media user, while another equally in awe wrote: “Wait... what? Tennis-Cricket-Tennis-Golf? @ashbarty — you beauty!” — AFP



Marcus Stoinis of Delhi Capitals celebrates the wicket of Chris Jordan of Kings XI Punjab during the Indian Premier League match in Dubai. – BCCI

Stoinis stars in Delhi's super-over win



NEW DELHI: Australia's Marcus Stoinis smashed a whirlwind half-century as Delhi Capitals edged out Kings XI Punjab in a super-over thriller after the second match of the Indian Premier League ended in a tie on Sunday.

Stoinis proved his worth for Delhi, who brought the all-rounder in the December auction, with his 21-ball 53 to lift the side to 157 for eight after being put into bat in Dubai.

Mayank Agarwal nearly trumped the

batting blitz with his 89 off 60 balls as Punjab closed in on their target but Stoinis claimed two wickets on successive balls in the final over to take the match into a super over.

"It's a weird game, sometimes the luck goes your way, but it's easy to become the villain from the hero. So it's important to enjoy the good days," said Stoinis.

"It's nice that the IPL has gotten going again, and tonight has been great entertainment." Delhi's South African quick Kagiso Rabada struck twice in the super

SCOREBOARD	
DELHI CAPITALS Prithvi Shaw c Chris Jordan b M Shami 5 Shikhar Dhawan run out (Lokesh Rahul) 0 S Hetmyer c Mayank Agarwal b Shami 7 Shreyas Iyer c Chris Jordan b Shami 39 Rishabh Pant b Ravi Bishnoi 31 Marcus Stoinis run out (Nicholas Pooran) 53 Axar Patel c Lokesh Rahul b Sheldon Cottrell 6 R Ashwin c Shami b Sheldon Cottrell 4 Anrich Nortje not out 3 Extras (1b 0lb 2nb Open 6w) 9 Total (20 overs) 157-8 Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-9, 3-13, 4-86, 5-87, 6-96, 7-127, 8-154 Bowling: Sheldon Cottrell 4-0-24-2, Mohammed Shami 4-0-15-3, Chris Jordan 4-0-56-0, Krishnappa Gowtham 4-0-39-0, Ravi Bishnoi 4-0-22-1	Glenn Maxwell c S Iyer b Kagiso Rabada 1 Sarfaraz Khan c Prithvi Shaw b Axar Patel 12 Krishnappa Gowtham c Pant b Rabada 20 Chris Jordan c Rabada b Stoinis 5 Extras (0b 6lb 1nb Open 1w) 8 Total (20 overs) 157-8 Fall of wickets: 1-30, 2-33, 3-34, 4-35, 5-55, 6-101, 7-157, 8-157 Bowling: Anrich Nortje 4-0-33-0, Mohit Sharma 4-0-45-1, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-28-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 1-0-2-2, Axar Patel 4-0-14-1, Marcus Stoinis 3-0-29-2
KINGS XI PUNJAB Lokesh Rahul b Mohit Sharma 21 M Agarwal c S Hetmyer b Marcus Stoinis 89 Karun Nair c Prithvi Shaw b R Ashwin 1 Nicholas Pooran b R Ashwin 0	DELHI CAPITALS Lokesh Rahul c Axar Patel b Rabada 2 Nicholas Pooran b Kagiso Rabada 0 Total (0.3 overs) 2-2 Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-2 Bowling: Kagiso Rabada 0.3-0-2-2 DELHI CAPITALS Rishabh Pant not out 2 Extras (1w) 1 Total (0.2 overs) 3-0 Bowling: Mohammed Shami 0.2-0-3-0

over to limit Punjab to just two runs as the loss of two wickets in the over ended the team's one-over innings.

Earlier, Delhi were reeling at 87 for five after the departure of captain Shreyas Iyer when Stoinis walked in to demolish the opposition bowling, getting 57 runs for the batting side in the last 18 balls.

Stoinis punished England paceman Chris Jordan, who gave away 30 runs from the final over with the Australian slamming a 20-ball half-century before being run out

on the penultimate ball of the innings.

Indian paceman Mohammed Shami returned figures of 3-15 from his four overs for Punjab.

Punjab were struggling when Delhi off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin took two wickets in his first and only over before retiring hurt with an injured shoulder.

The world's richest Twenty20 league is being played in the United Arab Emirates after being shifted out of India due to rising coronavirus cases. — AFP

Kings XI Punjab appeal over 'short run' error



DUBAI: Kings XI Punjab lodged a formal complaint on Monday over an umpiring error which proved critical in their narrow Indian Premier League loss to the Delhi Capitals.

The second match of the world's richest Twenty20 tournament ended in a tie on Sunday before Punjab lost out in a super over.

But in the 19th over of Punjab's chase, square-leg umpire Nitin Menon had signalled Chris Jordan for a short run — not grounding his bat inside the crease when running between the wickets.

TV replays showed Jordan's bat was in the crease. But nothing could be done as the third umpire does not have the authority to overturn an on-field call, unless it is referred for review.

"We have appealed against the decision which could have been corrected had technology been brought into play," a senior Kings XI official said.

"This one run could prove costly at the business end of the tournament when teams battle for a play-off berth."

Appeals are made to the match referee, who in this case was India's Javagal Srinath. However, there is no provision for overturning an on-field decision after a match.

In the super over, South African quick Kagiso Rabada struck twice to limit Punjab to two runs, a total that Delhi overhauled in just three balls.

As social media erupted over the short-run decision, former India opener Virender Sehwag tweeted: "I don't agree with the man of the match choice. The umpire who gave this short run should have been man of the match."

Cricketer-turned-commentator Aakash Chopra posted: "One short that wasn't. Technology must take over in these cases... What if #KXIP don't make it to the final four by 2 points?"

Umpiring standards also came into question in last year's IPL, during which India captain Virat Kohli tersely commented: "We are not playing club cricket."

Kohli's team Royal Challengers Bangalore were denied a win when the umpires missed a clear no-ball by the Mumbai Indians' Lasith Malinga on the final delivery.

The IPL is being played in the United Arab Emirates after being shifted out of India due to rising coronavirus cases. — AFP

Hall holds off Buhai in play-off for Portland title



Hall made her five-foot par putt to pile the pressure on Buhai, who missed her short-range effort

LOS ANGELES: England's Georgia Hall won the Portland Classic with a par at the second play-off hole, denying South African Ashleigh Buhai a first US LPGA title.

Both players found the fairway at the second play-off hole, the par-four first that was the second-toughest on the Columbia Edgewater course on the day.

Both saw their approach shots land in the rough behind the green and had to pitch on. Hall made her five-foot par putt to pile the pressure on Buhai, who missed her short-range effort.

England's Hall, who added a second victory to the British Women's Open title she claimed in 2018, had a one-stroke lead going into the 72nd hole, but bogeyed the last

to fall into the play-off.

Buhai, a three-time winner on the Ladies European Tour, had stormed home, making four of her eight birdies in the last five holes in a seven-under-par 65.

That included a birdie at the 72nd hole to cap a seven-under par 65 that saw her in the clubhouse on 12-under 204.

Hall was 13-under heading to 18 thanks to two three-birdie bursts at the fifth, sixth and seventh and the 10th, 11th and 12th.

But she dropped a shot at the 72nd hole and the pair returned to the 18th tee to start the play-off.

Hall found the fairway at the first play-off hole, where Buhai was in the rough and put her shot out on the fringe.

Hall two-putted from about 12 feet and Buhai matched her par.

It was an emotional win for Hall, who said she didn't realise where she stood at the final

LPGA PORTLAND CLASSIC SCORES	
Final round (x-won at 2nd playoff hole. USA unless noted, par-72): 204 - x-Georgia Hall (ENG) 70-66-68, Ashleigh Buhai (RSA) 71-68-65 205 - Moriya Jutanugarn (THA) 70-68-67, Yealimi Noh 67-69-69 206 - Robynn Ree 71-69-66, Park In-bee (KOR) 70-70-66, Caroline Masson (GER) 67-73-66, Mariah Stackhouse 69-70-67, Cheyenne Knight 69-69-68, Jasmine	Suwannapura (THA) 68-70-68, Mel Reid (ENG) 67-65-74 207 - Danielle Kang 72-70-65, Liu Yu (CHN) 69-71-67, Lizette Salas 69-70-68, Amy Yang (KOR) 69-66-72, Hannah Green (AUS) 66-68-73 208 - Angela Stanford 71-68-69, Angel Yin 70-68-70, Chella Choi (KOR) 69-68-71, Celine Boutier (FRA) 69-67-72, Amy Olson 67-68-73

hole of regulation because the scoreboards that normally dot the course haven't been put up with no fans in attendance because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I bogeyed the last hole, I was quite upset about that," said the 24-year-old, who nevertheless regrouped admirably.

Thailand's Moriya Jutanugarn and American Yealimi Noh shared third place on 205. Jutanugarn carded a 67 and Noh had a 69.

South Korean star Park In-bee closed with a 66 to head a group on

206 that also included overnight leader Mel Reid of England — who took a two-stroke lead over defending champion Hannah Green into the final round in search of her first LPGA title but carded a two-over par 74 to drop back.

Green's defence ended with a one-over 73 and a tie for 12th on 207.

The tournament was reduced to 54 holes because of poor air quality in Portland earlier in the week due to wildfires in the US West. — AFP



Liverpool's Sadio Mane scores their first goal against Chelsea. – Reuters

MANE BRACE HIGHLIGHTS LIVERPOOL CLASS



Liverpool's Sadio Mane celebrates scoring their second goal against Chelsea. – Reuters



ANDY JALIL

From this performance it's difficult to see how Liverpool could be deposed from their position of champions of the Premier League. Their 2-0 win away to Chelsea emphasised their class and underlined the strength in the squad.

It was a "perfect day" for Liverpool manager, Jurgen Klopp who said: "I liked our game a lot. It was a really good game for both teams. They were the dominant side without goals but

then a massive game-changer (the red card) in the last seconds of the first half, which was good for us." He added: "The second half was a different game. The mistake which happens most in football is judging a situation in the wrong way – but we didn't. We kept the ball rolling and scored the goals."

Chelsea have a dismal record against Liverpool winning just once in the last 12 Premier League meetings and that was in 2018. Chelsea's apparent game-plan to strike on the counter during the first half didn't quite work. Liverpool's threat gradually grew stronger in the last 15 minutes of the first half. And after

Christensen was sent off on the stroke of half time, the outcome of this game had an inevitability.

The incident came after a deep ball from the defence by Jordan Henderson which Christensen failed to read. Sadio Mane set off losing the Chelsea man by half a yard. Christensen in desperation brought Mane down with his arms around the neck and was shown a yellow card immediately. The VAR was then used and the red card was confirmed.

Liverpool took full advantage of the opposition a man short and just five minutes after the break took the lead. It was a beautiful move, the ball was

threaded over to Roberto Firmino and the Brazilian's cross was superbly met and headed in by Mane.

Just four minutes later came the second goal – a self-inflicted wound. Mane had lost the ball to Fikayo Tomori – on as a substitute – who back passed to goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga who, with all the time he had, attempted to pass the ball casually to Reece James. But Mane intercepted and drove the ball into the net. It seemed a never-ending of nightmare errors from the Chelsea goalkeeper.

Chelsea manager, Frank Lampard said: "It was a clear mistake. He (Kepa) has reflected in that way, so we have to keep working. Individually players need support, particularly from myself and I give that to all the players. Nobody tries to make mistakes in football, but it's the nature of the game."

To make matters worse for the home side, Chelsea missed a penalty when Alisson saved from Jorginho after new signing Timo Werner was brought down by Thiago Alcantara with 17 minutes remaining. That finally summed up Chelsea's day.

Lampard added: "We showed moments in the counter-attack when we were dangerous in the first half. My team talk was 'be more confident on the ball', then the red card changes the whole team talk." On the sending off of Christensen, he reflected: "Once the yellow is the first decision, you feel it needs to be absolutely certain that it's then a red. I am not sure it was. It was one I felt could be given or not."

Halep claims first Italian Open as Pliskova retires

ROME: Top seed Simona Halep won her first Italian Open title on Monday after defending champion Karolina Pliskova retired injured while trailing 6-0, 2-1 in the final.

World number two Halep, 28, was competing in her third Rome WTA final, having finished runner-up in 2017 and 2018 on the clay at the Foro Italico.

"Finally after two finals I could win this title," the Romanian said.

"I love this tournament and I'm really happy to have this beautiful trophy in my hand."

"In 2013, here I started to go in the top in world tennis. I really enjoyed and was happy on court that I could play the semifinals back then. Since then I have started to play really well."

Pliskova, the second seed, was playing with her left thigh heavily

bandaged. The Czech struggled with her serve from the outset, falling behind to a double break, handing Halep a 3-0 advantage with a double fault.

Halep saved three break points against her on her next service game before conquering a first one-sided round in 20 minutes.

Pliskova had treatment on her lower back and upper leg before the second set, but pushed on with a break for 1-1 after half an hour.

But the 28-year-old called time in the third game, heading towards Halep to signify the end of the match after 32 minutes.

In total, Halep converted five of seven break point opportunities for her eighth win in 13 meetings with Pliskova, who converted one of four.

Wimbledon champion Halep's



Romania's Simona Halep celebrates winning the Italian Open final with the trophy after Czech Republic's Karolina Pliskova retired from the match after sustaining an injury at Foro Italico, Rome. – Reuters

In 2013, here I started to go in the top in world tennis. I really enjoyed and was happy on court that I could play the semifinals back then. Since then I have started to play really well

SIMONA HALEP
World No 2

22nd career title comes just a week before the start of the French Open which she won in 2018.

Halep extended her winning streak this season to 14 consecutive victories.

She won the Dubai title in February, before the coronavirus lockdown, coming back to claim victory in Prague last month having skipped the US Open.

Former world number one Pliskova, now ranked four, had been having a successful week on clay after her disappointing second round exit in the US Open where she was the top seed. In the men's final, world number one Novak Djokovic will bid for a record 36th Masters title later Monday against Argentine Diego Schwartzman.

The Serbian, a four-time winner, is currently tied on 35 Masters crowns with Rafael Nadal, who fell in the quarterfinals this week to Schwartzman. — AFP

business

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Oman’s oil,
gas sector
projected to
grow 14%
until 2027



MUSCAT: The Sultanate’s oil and gas industry is anticipated to grow at a compound rate of 14 per cent during the period from 2020 to 2027, according to a new report prepared by the CMFE Insights Research Foundation.

The Asia-Pacific market, the report notes, is expected to see the fastest growth in terms of imports from the Omani oil and gas market during the forecast period, after analysing global opportunities available in global regions, such as North America, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and India.

As the demand for new innovative solutions increases and more start-ups emerge in the area that will lead to growth and excessive demand for the Oman’s oil and gas market in the forecast period. The report indicated that this market study provides vital information and facts about the market and offers an overall statistical study of this market on the basis of market drivers, restraints, and its future prospects. — ONA

Oman’s Liwa Plastics mega project set for commercial launch in Q4

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 21

The Sultanate’s biggest petrochemicals investment to date — the giant Liwa Plastics Industrial Complex (LPIC) — is on track to commence commercial production later this year, according to a high-level official associated with this signature project.

Ahmed Saleh al Jahdhami, Chief Executive Officer (Downstream) at OQ, the Sultanate’s integrated energy group (formerly Oman Oil and Orpic Group), said the massive venture set up with an investment of \$6.7 billion, will optimise value generation from Oman’s hydrocarbon resources.

“We are establishing a state-of-the-art, integrated refinery and petrochemical facility combination”, said Al Jahdhami. “With LPIC coming online, we are one step closer to realising our vision for diversifying our Downstream portfolio in Oman. This transformational project will firmly put the Sultanate on the global petrochemicals map and enhance OQ contribution to the national GDP”, he added in an interview published by the Anglo-Omani Society (AOS), a UK-based charitable organisation committed to sustaining close ties between the Sultanate and Britain.

The article, titled ‘Oman British Business Council (OBBC) Spotlight on Oman’s Mega Petrochem Project’, highlights the significance of the venture to the Sultanate’s aspirations as a world-scale petrochemicals player.

The mammoth scheme, divided between two locations 300 kilometres apart, commenced trial operations in May this year, heralding a new era in petrochemicals production with the potential to catapult the Sultanate into the ranks of the world’s leading producers.

While the centrepiece of the project is located within the industrial port at Suhar, a Natural Gas Extraction (NGL) facility has



been set up 300 km upstream at Fahud. Rich gas pumped from Fahud via pipeline is processed by a huge steam cracker built at the downstream end, along with light ends produced by OQ-owned plants at Suhar.

The steam cracker will enable the production of polyethylene (PE) for the first time in Oman, as well as strengthen the company’s polypropylene capabilities.

At full capacity, Liwa Plastics will boost OQ’s production of polyethylene and polypropylene to 1.4 million tons.

The product portfolio will include linear Low-Density Polyethylene (LLDPE), High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) and Polypropylene (PP) — part of a product portfolio that will enable OQ to meet the growing global demand for polymers.

Significantly, the LPIC plant



This transformational project will firmly put the Sultanate on the global petrochemicals map and enhance OQ contribution to the national GDP

AHMED SALEH AL JAHDHAMI
CEO (Downstream), OQ

has begun manufacturing a resin sample of polypropylene for the first time based on new technology provided by Rotterdam-based LyondellBassell. A leading licensor

of polyethylene and polypropylene technologies, LyondellBassell was selected by OQ to provide its proprietary Spheripol process technology for the 300,000

tons per annum (TPA) capacity polypropylene plant that forms part of the integrated Liwa Plastics complex.

Commenting on the importance of the LPIC investment to Oman’s petrochemicals industry and the national economy, OQ added: “With the global market for plastics growing, LPIC will enable Oman, for the first time, to produce polyethylene, the form of plastic that rates highest in terms of global demand, as well as increase the current production of polypropylene.

OQ has also ensured the future-readiness of LPIC by implementing the latest technological advancements at every stage of its construction. Built in accordance with the highest international standards and implemented with best available technology, LPIC sets an industrial benchmark for projects around the world.”

KEY

ENABLER

TIR global transit system to accelerate cross-border trade



(Picture credit: IRU)

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 21

Cross-border trade between Oman and its neighbours, notably Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, is anticipated to surge the Sultanate’s recent decision to operationalize its commitments under TIR, the global transit system.

Last week, the first shipment under the ‘TIR’ label made its way from Saudi Arabia to Oman via the United Arab Emirates in 20 hours, a far cry from the three-day-long road journey that it typically entails. The dramatic reduction in journey times was made possible by TIR’s electronic pre-declaration (EPD) to accelerate customs procedures.

TIR’S ELECTRONIC
PRE-DECLARATION
(EPD) SPEEDS UP
CUSTOMS
PROCEDURES
THEREBY REDUCING
JOURNEY TIMES

TIR — a global treaty — enables goods to be shipped from a country of origin, through transit countries, to a country of destination in sealed load compartments that are controlled by customs via a multilateral, mutually recognised system. It is the easiest, safest and

most reliable way to move goods across multiple international borders, saving time and money for transport operators and customs authorities.

Recently, the Sultanate became the latest country in the GCC region to operationalise TIR operational, thereby unlocking its regional and international trade potential. The timely activation of the convention, coming against the backdrop of a 19 per cent decline in turnover for operators across the Middle East — stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic — is opportune for Omani road freight operators, according to the IRU, the world’s road transport organisation representing bus, coach, truck and

taxi operators globally.

The maiden TIR-labelled shipment from Saudi Arabia, representing a consignment of around 20 tonnes of dairy products, was handled by Almajdouie Logistics.

“This was the first TIR shipment handled by Oman Customs following the country’s accession to TIR. The landmark operation was completed with the support of IRU members in Oman, ASYAD and TIR issuing and guaranteeing association Sinyar, as well as the Saudi Automobile and Touring Association and the Automobile Touring Club of the UAE,” said IRU in a statement.

TURN TO PAGE 14



Oman to attend WIPO's general assembly meetings



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 21

The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, is participating in the 61th World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) General Assembly meetings of the Member States, which will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, until

September 25, 2020.

The director of the Sultanate's office at the World Trade Organisation in Geneva, and the General Directorate of Trade represented by the Intellectual Property Department, will participate in the meetings. The five-day meetings will discuss administrative and organisational



issues.

The meetings will also focus on the Director General's proposal to add two items to the agenda related to the Paris system and the Madrid system dealing with rights holders in a period of crisis such as the current COVID-19 crisis.

The rights-holders were unable to pay fees according to the specified

periods due to the closure of intellectual property offices as well as the closure of post offices, which resulted in the inability to pay fees or send invoices and documents.

Therefore, WIPO will add non-binding guidelines for member states to guide them on how to deal with the Organisation's requirements in times of crisis.

Capital shares of new Duqm projects earmarked for local community firms

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 21

Oman Company for Development of Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Tatweer) and Iskan Oman Investment Company SAOC announced their plan to allocate capital shares of their new projects in Duqm to local community companies.

Eng Yahya bin Khamis al Zadjali, In-Charge of Managing Operations of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), held a meeting with a number of local companies and representatives of Tatweer and Iskan companies.

During the meeting, several projects were discussed some of which is the accommodation project for employees who are working in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD). Accordingly, about 20 per cent of the big projects' capital, which are providing

ABOUT 20 PER CENT OF THE BIG PROJECTS' CAPITAL, WHICH ARE PROVIDING HOUSING SOLUTIONS IN DUQM, WILL BE ALLOCATED FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY COMPANIES.

housing solutions in Duqm, will be allocated for the local community companies.

This comes to promote the provision of long-term usufruct for 90 years as a gesture introduced by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones to encourage Omani youth to work and live in Duqm.

TIR global transit system to accelerate cross-border trade

FROM PAGE 13

"In the current pandemic context, this historic acceleration in border crossing times will enable the GCC to play its role as a global trade hub," it further noted.

The Sultanate had committed to becoming TIR operational at the 2018 IRU World Congress held in Muscat. Since then, IRU, Oman Customs and IRU members Asyad and Sinyar (the integrated brand of Mwasalat Oman and National Ferries) have collaborated closely to successfully implement TIR in Oman.

Further affirming its strategy to evolve into a logistics hub in the region, the Omani government recently ratified its accession to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Good by Road (CMR) and the Additional Protocol on the Electronic Consignment Note (e-CMR). This follows the promulgation of Royal Decree 114/2020.

Accession to e-CMR advances Oman's adoption of globally accepted digital transport and logistics systems – including customs transit. e-CMR supports the efficiency of logistics supply chain, enabling a streamlined and a more secure flow of goods.

According to Asyad Group, Oman's accession to CMR will not only see a rapid reduction in TIR costs and related guarantees but will also regulate carriers' liability for total or partial loss of goods or late delivery; ensuring easier, safer and more reliable processes. By joining e-CMR, Oman's accelerated digitalisation will improve work performance and quality; cutting costs and saving time.

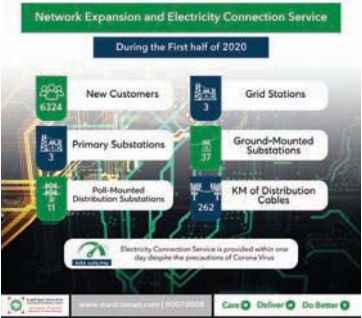
MEDC boosts network capacity

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 21

Muscat Electricity Distribution Company, a Member of Nama Group, successfully carried on its operational and administrative work despite the exceptional circumstances caused by COVID-19.

The company had increased its network capacity in the Muscat Governorate by 122 mega-volt-ampere during the first half of 2020 reaching a total network capacity in Muscat to 6,704 mega-volt-ampere.

This expansion contributed in keeping up with the increased demand in the Muscat Governorate



serving a total of 6,324 new subscribers. Additionally, the company launched the operation of three primary substations, 37 of ground mounted type distribution stations and 11 of poll mounted

type; the distribution cables used amounted to a total distance of 262 km in the Muscat Governorate.

Through the adoption of new technologies, MEDC managed to optimise its processes, reduce the turnaround time for such services as application submission, as well as better organise the distributing of work shifts and the follow through.

Moreover, MEDC has extended its coordination with local authorities such as online bridging between the Company and Muscat Municipality to provide the needed information before the construction work starts.



Italy sees GDP down 9% this year, rising more than 5% in 2021

ROME: Italy expects its coronavirus-hit economy to grow by more than 5 per cent next year after shrinking 9 per cent in 2020, two government sources said on Sunday.

In April, the government of the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement and the centre-left PD party forecast a fall in gross domestic product of 8 per cent this year and a 2021 rebound of 4.7 per cent.

The new forecasts, along with public finance projections, will be published next week, providing the framework for the 2021 budget



A man wears mask as he sells seafood products in a market in Milan. — Reuters

which must be presented to the European Commission in mid-October. The euro zone's third-largest economy has not seen annual growth of 5 per cent for more than 40 years.

The new forecasts, which still need to be finalised, are based on an unchanged policy scenario. This means they do not incorporate planned expansionary measures to be financed by the European Union's Recovery Fund, the sources said.

The government estimates it will get some 209 billion euros (\$247 billion) in cheap loans and grants by 2023 from the fund, designed to

help the EU nations hardest hit by COVID-19.

Rome aims to present its so-called National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which will front-load the spending of up to 10 per cent of this total, to the European Commission early next year, Economy Minister Roberto Gualtieri said last week.

Among a raft of projects under discussion, the government wants to create a national ultra-fast broadband network, upgrade its rail lines and spend more than 30 billion euros in six years to strengthen its healthcare system. — Reuters

Oil refiners struggle with weak demand, inventory glut

NEW YORK: Global oil refiners reeling from months of lackluster demand and an abundance of inventories are cutting fuel production into the autumn because the recovery in demand from the impact of coronavirus has stalled, according to executives, refinery workers and industry analysts.

Refiners cut output by as much as 35 per cent in spring as coronavirus lockdowns destroyed the need for travel. As lockdowns eased, refiners increased output slowly through late August. But in top fuel consumer the United States and elsewhere, refiners have been decreasing rates for the last several weeks in response to increased inventories, a sustained lack of demand and in response to



The general view of oil tanks and the Bayway Refinery of Phillips 66 is pictured in Linden, New Jersey, in this file photo. — Reuters

natural disasters.

The hit to capacity has been most notable in China. The second largest fuel consumer led the world in oil demand recovery after taming its outbreak of coronavirus.

But its refiners also export fuel, and those shipments have been weak due to the virus's effect on fuel demand in other Asian nations. Chinese refineries are expected to cut runs in September, led by PetroChina with a 5-10 per cent reduction versus August, as Chinese refiners grapple with high fuel inventories and poor export margins, analysts said.

"The impacts of COVID-19... are putting extreme pressures on the refining business that we have

not experienced before and are not sustainable over the longer term," Scott Wyatt, chief executive at Australian fuel supplier Viva Energy Group Ltd, said earlier this month. Inventories of distillates, which include diesel, jet fuel and heating oil, which usually start building ahead of winter, are brimming this year, leading to a poor outlook for refinery margins for the coming months.

US fuel demand has fallen 13 per cent year-on-year, according to the US Energy Information Administration. Autumn is typically when use of heating oil and diesel rises, but with more than 179 million barrels in storage, nearly a record, refiners have no incentive to keep

units running.

The Paris-based International Energy Agency cut its forecast for global oil demand for 2020 for the second time in two months last week due to the faltering recovery.

The energy watchdog forecast global consumption of petroleum and liquid fuels will average 91.7 million barrels per day for all of 2020, a reduction in its previous forecast of 200,000 bpd and down 8.4 million bpd from 2019's 100.1 million bpd level.

"From our perspective, we see that pre-COVID demand will probably not be back until 2023," said Molly Morris, senior vice president in crude, products and liquids at Equinor. — Reuters

HSBC, StanChart shares fall to 22-year lows

HONG KONG: HSBC's shares in Hong Kong and Standard Chartered's in London fell on Monday to their lowest since at least 1998 after media reports that they and other banks, including Barclays and Deutsche Bank, moved large sums of allegedly illicit funds over nearly two decades despite red flags about the origins of the money.

The BuzzFeed and other media articles were based on leaked suspicious activity reports (SARs) filed by banks and other financial firms with the US Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCen).

HSBC shares in London fell as much as 5 per cent to 288 pence, their lowest intraday level since 2009, after the lender's Hong Kong shares earlier touched a 25-year low. The stock has now nearly halved since the start of the year.

StanChart dropped as much as 4.6 per cent in London to its lowest since 1998, against the backdrop of a broader selloff in the market with the STOXX

European banks index down 4.8 per cent.

More than 2,100 SARs, which are in themselves not necessarily proof of wrongdoing, were obtained by BuzzFeed News and shared with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and other media organisations.

In a statement, HSBC said "all of the information provided by the ICIJ is historical." The bank said that as of 2012 it had embarked on a "multi-year journey to overhaul its ability to combat financial crime."

StanChart said it took its "responsibility to fight financial crime extremely seriously and have invested substantially in our compliance programmes". Barclays said it believes it has complied with "all its legal and regulatory obligations, including in relation to US sanctions." The most number of SARs in the cache related to Deutsche Bank, whose shares fell 5.2 per cent on Monday. Deutsche Bank said the ICIJ had "reported on a number of historic issues." — **Reuters**



A woman uses a cash point machine at a HSBC bank in the City of London, in this file photo. — **Reuters**

'FinCEN' documents show banks moved illicit funds

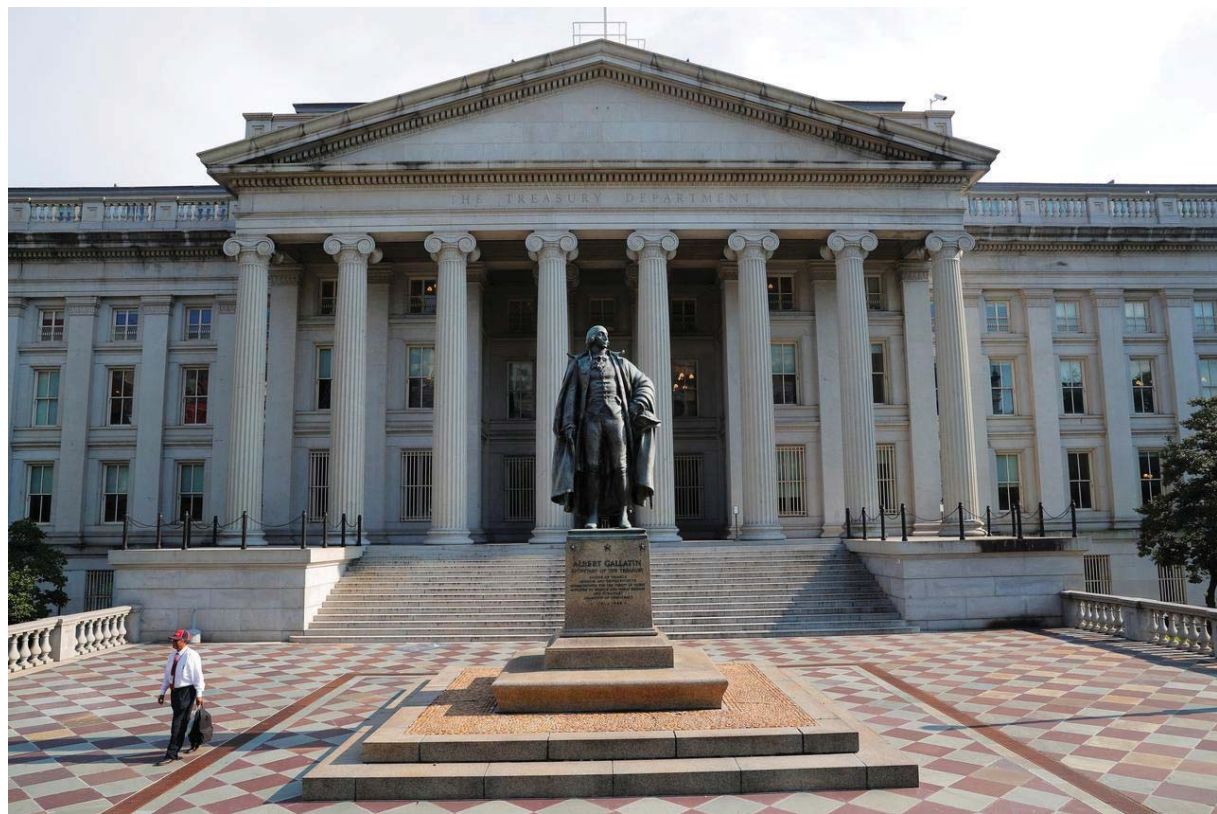
WASHINGTON: Several global banks moved large sums of allegedly illicit funds over a period of nearly two decades, despite red flags about the origins of the money, BuzzFeed and other media reported on Sunday, citing confidential documents submitted by banks to the US government.

The media reports were based on leaked suspicious activity reports (SARs) filed by banks and other financial firms with the US Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCen).

The SARs, which the reports said numbered more than 2,100, were obtained by BuzzFeed News and shared with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and other media organisations.

In all, the ICIJ reported that the files contained information about more than \$2 trillion worth of transactions between 1999 and 2017, which were flagged by internal compliance departments of financial institutions as suspicious. The SARs are in themselves not necessarily proof of wrongdoing, and the ICIJ reported the leaked documents were a tiny fraction of the reports filed with FinCen.

Five global banks appeared most often in the documents — HSBC Holdings Plc, JPMorgan Chase & Co, Deutsche Bank AG, Standard Chartered Plc and Bank of New York Mellon Corp, the ICIJ reported. The SARs provide key intelligence in global efforts to stop money laundering and other crimes. The media reports on Sunday painted a picture of a system that is both under-resourced and overwhelmed, allowing vast amounts of illicit funds to move through the banking



A man walks away from the US Treasury Department in Washington, in this file photo. — **Reuters**

Among the types of transactions highlighted by the report: funds processed by JPMorgan for potentially corrupt individuals and companies in Venezuela, Ukraine and Malaysia; money from a Ponzi scheme moving through HSBC; and money linked to a Ukrainian billionaire processed by Deutsche Bank.

system.

A bank has a maximum of 60 days to file SARs after the date of initial detection of a reportable transaction, according to the Treasury Department's Office of the Comptroller of the Currency. The ICIJ report said in some cases the banks failed to report suspect transactions until years after they

had processed them.

The SARs also showed that banks often moved funds for companies that were registered in offshore havens, such as the British Virgin Islands, and did not know the ultimate owner of the account, the report said. Staff at major banks often used Google searches to learn who was behind large transactions,

it said.

Among the types of transactions highlighted by the report: funds processed by JPMorgan for potentially corrupt individuals and companies in Venezuela, Ukraine and Malaysia; money from a Ponzi scheme moving through HSBC; and money linked to a Ukrainian billionaire processed by Deutsche Bank.

"I hope these findings spur urgent action from policymakers to enact needed reforms," said Tim Adams, chief executive of the trade group Institute of International Finance. "As noted in today's reports, the impacts of financial crime are felt beyond just the financial sector — it poses grave threats to society as a whole." — **Reuters**

Norway wealth fund may move \$50 billion into US stocks from Europe

OSLO: Norway's \$1.15 trillion sovereign wealth fund should shift more assets into the United States and Canada, while cutting its holdings in Europe, the country's minority government said.

The proposal to parliament follows an earlier recommendation by the Norwegian central bank, the fund's manager, and could add investments of \$50 billion in US stocks.

"The changes we are proposing will ensure the investments better represent the distribution of value creation in listed companies globally," Minister of Finance Jan Tore Sanner said in a statement.

The world's largest sovereign fund has historically given a higher weighting in its portfolio to European stock markets, focusing on countries that Norway does the most trade with, and a lower weighting to those of North America.

It will continue to favour Europe however, the proposal showed, but to a lesser degree than in the past. A move to full neutrality would have shifted well over \$100 billion out of Europe, according to finance data.

While the fund currently owns about 1.5 per cent of all stocks globally, its ownership in Europe amounts to 2.6 per cent of all listed shares while its holdings in the Americas is only just over 1 per cent. — **Reuters**

German economic recovery continues

FRANKFURT: The German economy has turned the corner following the crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, with growth continuing through July and into August, albeit at a slower pace, the central bank reported on Monday.

"Following the massive decline in gross domestic product [GDP] in the spring, by almost a tenth compared with the previous period in seasonally adjusted terms, a strong countertrend could follow in the third quarter of 2020," the Bundesbank said in its report for the month of September.

"At the same time, the pre-crisis level will not be attained in the summer. This applies equally to industry as to services as a whole," it added.



A worker assembles an engine at the Daimler Powertrain plant in Bad Cannstatt near Stuttgart, Germany. — **AFP**

GDP in Europe's largest economy fell 9.7 per cent in the second quarter, as compared with the first, in the sharpest fall since

quarterly figures were first kept by the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) in 1970. Recent Destatis figures also show a V-shaped recovery following the sharp fall, which was particularly steep in April. Provisional GDP figures for the third quarter are to be published on October 30.

Forecasts for the year as a whole have been less pessimistic than previously. "Over the rest of the year, the recovery could continue, but lose pace," the Bundesbank says in its report. But it was less optimistic on the banking sector. "Depending on the speed of overall economic recovery, loan default risks could materialise in the first instance, necessitating value corrections and write-offs," the Bundesbank said. — **dpa**

China outlines policy for new storage bases for energy, agri imports

SINGAPORE: China is directing authorities in East China's Zhejiang province to start planning to build stockpiling bases for energy and agricultural products, part of a push to develop regional free-trade zones (FTZs), a government document said on Monday.

The directives call for looking at building above-ground and underground facilities to stockpile oil, gas and chemicals in FTZs that encompass 120 square km (46 square miles), including in parts of provincial cities Ningbo, Hangzhou and Jinyi.

"(The government will) support experiments to build oil and gas reserves, to undertake greater tasks of government stockpiling and also boost corporate stockpiling," China's State Council, the country's Cabinet, said in the policy document.

— **Reuters**

Bailout will keep Air France-KLM afloat: CEO



faced steep drops in revenue that have claimed several carriers.

A number of countries stepped in with support, including France which provided 7 billion euros (\$8.2 billion) to Air France and the

“

One, three or five billion euros? It is too early to put a figure on a possible recapitalisation.

BENJAMIN SMITH
CEO, AIR FRANCE-KLM

Netherlands which received a 3.4-billion-euro package. "This support will permit us to hold on less than 12 months," said Smith.

The reason is that air traffic is picking up very slowly as many northern hemisphere countries are now fearing a second wave of infections.

"If we base it upon the past few weeks, it is clear that the recovery in traffic will be slower than expected," according to Smith, who said when the bailout was put together the airline was expecting a return to 2019 levels only in 2024.

Smith said discussions were

already under way with shareholders on shoring up the airline group, and steps would be taken before the next regular annual meeting in the second quarter of next year.

"One, three or five billion euros? It is too early to put a figure on a possible recapitalisation," he said.

The airline group had 14.2 billion euros in cash or available under credit lines.

Major shareholders include the French government with a 14.3 per cent stake, the Dutch government at 14 per cent, as well as Delta and China Eastern airlines which each hold an 8 per cent stake. — **AFP**



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FLAT for rent in Maabela 3 master rooms. **96088926.**

SUPPER flat. 273 sqm. Opposite Grand Mall near Ramez Shopping. Three rooms, servant room with toilet, laundry, spacious family lounge, sitting and dining.

Refurbished four bedroom flat. Separate family lounge, sitting and dining. Al Hail South near Balqis Pharmacy. **99207840.**

A **VILLA** with 3 bedrooms and 3 toilets, a sitting room and a kitchen is for rent in North Al Ghubrah, 18 November Street. Contact **92433668.**

2 BEDROOM flat Al Khuwair. **99322344.**

2-FLOOR villa in South Al Maabela, consists of 4 bedrooms, a sitting room, a toilet for every room, kitchen, store and air conditioners. It is located in a place opposite to industrial area and is served government water. **99700908.**

FOR rent in Salalah, north Auqadain. Call **91711118.**

FLAT'S for rent in Al Khuwair, Al Hail, Wadi Kabir, Al Falaj, MBD and Muttrah. **99119699/ 95250300/ 24813002.**

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

For Rent

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

NEW penthouse, N Ghubra — 2 bedroom + 3 toilets + 1 maid roomwith toilet and 1 big hall **99370300.**

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

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

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

APARTMENT for rent in Maabela 8 in Muscat. It's the highest one of the other two. 3 rooms with 3 toilets one family room, small store and air-condition. **71136222.**

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

FLAT'S for rent in Salalah European design, farm view, good situation in the centre near the sea, new flats. **92181524** WhatsApp.

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

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

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

For Rent

APARTMENTS for rent in Bausher Al Amin Mosque area 1) Apartments for rent and offices in the district Al Amin Mosque two rooms, hall, kitchen and two bathrooms system RO 250 negotiable equipped and divided offices for rent to companies an area of 600 metres 2). We have furnished and unfurnished apartment rooms for monthly rent all over Muscat to communicate. **96444111** or **96672277.**

FLAT for family for rent, Alaom Al Akhtar shop, behind Irani Bank, Abu Abdullah **99627724, Abu Abdulrahman 99315490.**

FAMILY flat, air-conditioner, middle Al Khuwair **93663380.**

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

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FLAT'S in Al Wadi Al Kabir near to the Al Kuwaiti Mosque. **99425958.**

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SMART Indian, excellent English, master-journalism & communication, finance, strong writing, research skills, 15+ years diversified Oman experience seeks admin/ HR, corporations, management, customer relations, credit, CSR. NOC **99283938**

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

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

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

PAKISTANI male driver, 8 years experience in Oman, knows Arabic, seeks job. **96551602.**

MECHANICAL engineer. 21, Indian male currently in Oman looking to work at any engineering field. Contact **96511338.** Email: rkdhanush11@gmail.com

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

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

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SUWEA Isa has lost Tanzanian passport No AB913259. Finder please handover to ROP.

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With tourists slow to return, Egypt's resorts and ancient sites face tough winter

At the Pyramids of Giza, just a handful of tourists walk among the ancient wonders. Twelve people showed up to admire Luxor's towering colonnades the day it reopened this month. At Egypt's Red Sea resorts, visitor numbers are well below previous years.

Even as international flights and tourist spots open up and Egypt's coronavirus cases remain in check, officials, hotel owners and tour guides concede that the key winter season starting in October is going to be tough.

That could be bad news for the economy. Tourism accounts for up to 15 per cent of Egypt's national output, and officials said it was losing around \$1 billion each month after the sector all but shut down from March as the coronavirus pandemic struck.

Egyptian officials say they are making every effort to reassure tourists about their safety and encourage them to visit in the hope that the sector revives gradually.

Egypt is not alone in seeing tourism slump, but it takes a heavy toll on a country that has tapped the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for \$8 billion in new loans this year.

"We used to see about 50 buses here. Now there are none," said Samir, a souvenir trader who has been working at the pyramids south of Cairo for more than 30 years and has been selling his possessions to pay his son's school fees.

"We only had one bus, a week ago, full of Russians. They took some photos and left."

A showpiece museum next to the pyramids is due to open next year, increasing the need for a



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rapid recovery in 2021.

Westerners typically flock to Egypt's historic sites and golden sands between October and May to avoid the cold at home and the excessive heat of Egypt's summer.

As the sector gears up, hotel resorts are operating at below half capacity and major sites remain virtually empty, tourist workers and official said.

Some 220,000 tourists have visited the Red Sea province and South Sinai - home to the Sharm el-Sheikh resort - since July 1, less than 10% of last year's levels, said Ghada Shalaby, a deputy minister at the ministry of tourism and antiquities.

NILE CRUISES

Shalaby said visitors were gradually returning to the coastal resorts, but people's safety took priority over boosting tourism numbers.

Hotels currently have capacity capped at 50 per cent in line with health regulations.

Occupancy at Sharm el-Sheikh is 30-35 per cent and in Egypt's Red Sea Governorate and the resort of Hurghada it is 35-45 per cent, a tourism ministry official said.

As sites in Luxor, across the River Nile from the Valley of the Kings, reopened on September 1, a

single group of 12 tourists showed up on a visit from Hurghada, said Tharwat Agamy, head of the regional branch of the Egyptian Travel Agents Association. A few more have visited the city daily since then.

Nile cruises are due to restart in October, but there is little expectation that bookings will pick up without a return of charter flights.

"We hope that next year tourism will be working," said Agamy.

The state has moved to protect the sector with emergency funding, and more than 9,000 registered tour guides will receive 500 pounds (\$32) monthly until the end of the year. Tourism firms are pleading for exemptions on some fees to be extended.

Mohamed Othman, who owns a Nile cruise boat and a hotel and markets cultural tourism in southern Egypt, said he was hopeful for some bookings in November, and reopening sent an important signal, even if "an influx won't happen overnight".

Officially recorded coronavirus cases have fallen to under 200 daily from highs of about 1,500 daily in mid-June.

Officials say tourist sites and hotels are subject to strict controls. Those entering the country are required to take PCR tests. But the European Union has not added Egypt to its safe travel list.

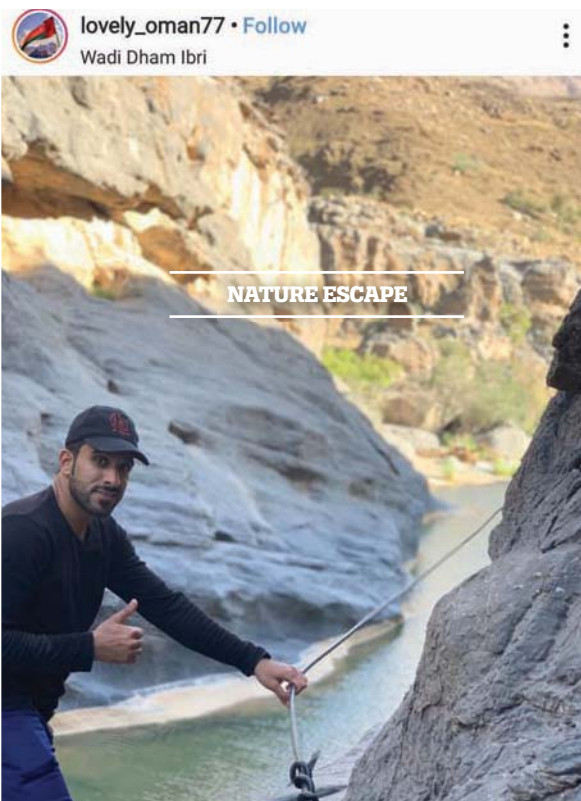
"We are sparing no effort to ensure that all measures are in place for the return of tourism to the maximum possible capacity and to spread reassurance to the tourists," said Shalaby.

At Cairo's Khan al Khalili market, a popular tourist shopping spot, many stores are shuttered.

"There is no one," said Sayed Abdel Khaleq, a silver shop owner. — Reuters



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ENTERTAINMENT

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‘Watchmen,’ ‘Schitt’s Creek’ rule at virtual Emmys with pandemic and political twists



LOS ANGELES: Media family saga “Succession,” dystopian drama “Watchmen” and feel-good comedy “Schitt’s Creek” dominated the Emmy Awards on Sunday in a show sprinkled with jokes about the coronavirus pandemic, political jibes and appeals for racial justice.

“Hello, and welcome to the PandEmmys!” said host Jimmy Kimmel, opening the show, where most celebrities took part remotely from their sofas and backyards dressed in a variety of gowns, hoodies and sleepwear.

“It seems frivolous and unnecessary to do this during a global pandemic,” Kimmel said as he opened the live show from Los Angeles.

“What’s happening tonight is not important. It’s not going to stop COVID. It’s not going to put out the fires, but it’s fun. And right now we need fun. ... This has been a miserable year. It’s been a year of division, injustice (and) disease,” he added.

HBO’s T.N “Succession,” the wickedly juicy tale of a fractious media family, was named best drama series, while Jeremy Strong won best actor for his role as a downtrodden son. “Succession’s” seven-Emmy haul included writing and directing.

In one of the most pointed acceptance speeches of the night, “Succession” creator Jesse Armstrong made a series of what he called “un-thank yous.”

“Un-thank you to the virus for keeping us all apart this year. Un-thank you to President Trump for his crummy and uncoordinated

response. Un-thank you to (British Prime Minister) Boris Johnson and his government for doing the same in my country. Un-thank you to all the nationalist and sort of quasi-nationalist governments in the world who are exactly the opposite of what we need right now,” said Armstrong.

HBO’s T.N alternative-reality show “Watchmen,” infused with racial themes, won for best limited series, while actress Regina King won for her lead perform-

ance as the show’s kick-ass police detective.

“Watchmen” was the night’s biggest winner with a total of 11 Emmys, including technical awards handed out last week. HBO was the biggest overall winner, with 30 Emmys, followed by Netflix with 21.

“Watchmen” creator Damon Lindelof dedicated his Emmy

work VIACAO about a wealthy family forced to live in a run-down motel, won a total of nine Emmys, including best comedy series as well as acting awards for Canadian stars Catherine O’Hara, Eugene Levy, his son Daniel Levy, and Annie Murphy.

The coronavirus pandemic meant no red carpet and no physical audience. Instead, producers sent camera kits and microphones to all the nominees, scattered in 125 places around the world, who chose how and where they wanted to be seen.

The “Schitt’s Creek” winners got their trophies delivered to them in a restaurant-style setup in Ontario, Canada, by a person dressed in a custom hazmat suit, designed to resemble a tuxedo. The biggest shock of the night came when former Disney Channel actress Zendaya, 24, was named best drama actress for playing a teen drug addict in HBO’s “Euphoria,” beating presumed favourites Laura Linney (“Ozark”) and Jennifer Aniston (“The Morning Show.”)

“Last Week Tonight with John Oliver” was named best variety talk series for the fifth successive year, and the British comedian accepted wearing a red Liverpool soccer shirt in honour of his favourite British team. — Reuters

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HUMAN INTEREST

Ig Nobel science award: An alligator on helium sounds like...?



IF HUMANS SOUND like Minnie Mouse after inhaling helium, would an alligator squeak on the gas used to float balloons?

This profound puzzle challenged a global research team to record an alligator bellowing with normal air, and then breathing heliox, a helium-oxygen mixture.

The breakthrough garnered an Ig Nobel Prize for Acoustics on Thursday. The Ig Noble Prizes are an annual honour for accomplishments in science and humanities that are intended to make you laugh — then think.

“Our question was whether alligators have vocal tract resonances like human speech,” said biologist Tecumseh Fitch, a member of the research team, who came from Austria, Sweden, Japan,

the United States and Switzerland. “The hard part is getting an alligator to breathe helium.”

That was solved by getting a female Chinese alligator into an airtight chamber and pumping in helium, which makes sound travel faster.

Alligators bellow a lot during mating season, possibly as a way to signal body size and mojo, the researchers said. By raising the vocal frequency, helium made the reptile sound less of a hunk.

“Crocodilian vocalisations could thus provide an acoustic indication of body size,” said the winning research paper, originally published in the *Journal of Experimental Biology*.

The alligator on helium did not squeak, but let out a belch. — Reuters

Fifty metres up and two apart - Belgium’s dinner-in-the-sky relaunches

BRUSSELS: Belgians looking for a different culinary experience will once again be able to eat 50 metres (164 feet) above the ground as the dining-in-the-sky experience returns from COVID-19 lockdown with a new, socially distanced feel.

Belgium-based Dinner in the Sky, which has been set up in some 60 countries since its 2006 launch, involves diners strapped into seats at a table suspended from a crane while well-known chefs cook and serve from the centre.

Their original platform sat 22 people together

along the perimeter, but in the COVID-19 era, up to 32 diners will now reserve four-person private tables spaced apart from. The chefs and servers also have a little more space to roam.

“It means all the public are sitting in sort of a bubble,” said co-CEO Stefan Kerkhof at the crane base in the centre of the Belgian capital.

Dinner in the Sky offers three sittings — for lunch and two for dinner over the coming two weeks. The price is 295 euros (\$350) per head or 150 euros for weekend afternoon cocktails. — Reuters



Harat al Yemen: Enchanting ruins opening doorway to another time

BY STAFF REPORTER

The Dakhiliyah oasis of Izki can cast its origins back as far as 2,660 years, to the Mesopotamian ruler King Assurbanipal's plaques of Ishtar, and Oman can cast its beginnings back, almost certainly, to the Yemeni, Malik bin Fahm al Azdi, all of 1,800 years ago as he led the Azdi from Yemen, seeking new beginnings, and to prevent the spread of the Persian empire. His deeds, and his historic links to trade and commerce in the region are perpetuated in the enchanting ruins of the walled city of Harat al Yemen, on the edge of the bustling Dakhiliyah regional town of Izki.

Though the current old city was extensively rebuilt in the early 18th century, for many centuries before, the heavily fortified city, in its heyday, must have appeared impenetrable to its enemies, as its walls are four to five metres wide at their base, with a patrol path that was wide enough for mounted patrols, two metres wide throughout, and at least three metres tall. Its imposing fifteen metre towers on each corner, the Aamur Fort the tallest, and its heavily fortified gateways on its North, East and Western sides.

Local personality, Yousuf Abdullah al Saqri, explained that having lived in Harat Al Yemen in the time of the 13th Sultan, Said bin Taimour, he had seen the city at its most influential, when the Sultan would attend the regional Wali, or council, leaders meetings, under the auspices of Yemen's Mohammed bin Saif al Rawahi, but he and others had also known poverty and deprivation, and the need to travel to Bahrain to work, simply for his family to survive. "The renaissance", he said, "came just in time, and has saved a people, a country, and given a future to the young. For us now, rice is a staple food, but my generation can recall when it was a luxury."

He reminisced as he accompanied us on a walk around his birthplace and it's easy to see why there is a move to retain what is evident, as the town appears not only fortified, but uniquely laid out in a grid pattern with broad, wide avenues running East/West and North/South. Al Saqri, a sprightly seventy-something, explained that this was always to capture the cooling breezes, and to ensure the city's water reticulation system, in which was hauled from the depths by 'cattle-power', could effectively provide water to all houses inside the walls. Showing us the first of two deep wells, he chuckled as he recalled a woman falling down the well, but after a long rescue with the whole town involved, she lived to tell the tale.

Entry via the North Gate passes a Majlis area on the inside, refurbished for the use of the locals, who will enjoy coffee, dates, and chat, as they have done for centuries, and just beyond there is the birthplace of Dr Ahmed Khalfan al Rawahi, modest beginnings for the now Chancellor of the regional seat of learning, the University of Nizwa. To the right of the North Gate is what was once the home of the local ruler and

his family, Sheikh Mohammed bin Saif al Darmaki, the Sheikh, and a Judge, and his brother Sheikh Saad. The heavy wooden door of this building was, said al Saqri, the first door in the city, but the number of ornately carved lintels, above many entrances, are evidence that it was a 'statement' that was enthusiastically embraced.

The Jama Izki Mosque building, though in quite some disrepair, is remarkable, as with sand and stone, one metre round circular pillars rise from the floor to support massive archways, creating a memorable place of worship. It is a structure that inspires awe, and begs for renovation, as a symbol of all that is good in the Islamic way of Ibadism. We paused here too, to allow our guide to look out on his nearby farmland, a traditional grove of healthy-looking date palms, below the city.

We continued to the Abu Sabt Mosque, and the jailhouse adjacent to the Aamur Fort, where Al Saqri laughed, "They would put wrongdoers here for up to six days, because nobody ever did anything 'really bad.' Making our way to the East Gate, 'Bab A'sabah,' he also showed us that though the latest gate is of steel construction, it has the same pattern and functions as the original gate.

He also shared the story of a visiting Sheikh, Mohammed bin Hamed al Harthi, who sought entrance to the city at this gate, but the youthful guard would not relent until he had his leader's permission. Returning sometime later, the young guard expected to be punished for making the prominent visitor wait but was surprised when the visitor praised his diligence and rewarded the youth handsomely.

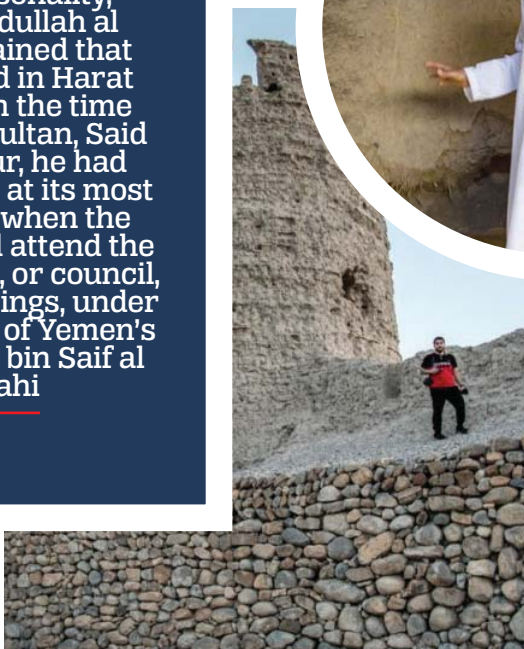
From there, we passed through the broad avenue from the gateway, on a wide avenue that now provides easy walking, but Al Saqri chuckled, "We can walk on this now, but back in time it was only fit for donkeys, and energetic people, as it was paved with round stones." But he became reflective as our last stop was in his own birthplace, and that of his family. "Maybe up to twenty-five people lived here," he recalled, "and until we started to move out into our current homes in the 70's, 80's and 90's, this was our home."

Yousuf Abdullah al Saqri is a proud, elegant, and gentle man, a proud husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. A compassionate man of enthusiasm, and of energy that belies his years, whose grand-daughter Rawaa Ishaq al Saqri, translated for us throughout a wonderful morning sojourn. Their community's desire to see Harat Al Yemen rebuilt is not to perpetuate their memories, but to provide that younger generation with tangible links to their past, and visitors with a doorway to another time, another life, another culture. This enchanting walled city can surely be all those things, and more.

PHOTOS BY ALI MOHAMMADI
AND LENA PETERSEN



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Harat al Yemen: Enchanting ruins opening doorway to another time

Its origin can be traced back as far as 2,660 years ago during the Mesopotamian rule of King Assurbanipal. It would be known today as Harat al Yemen and despite being fully abandoned, townsfolk in cooperation with relevant authorities are now taking the initiative to bring back a little of its old splendour as some portions of the walled city are restored. *Oman Daily Observer* shadowed one of its former inhabitants to understand what it was like living in this ancient neighbourhood... **P19**

DAILY PICKS

TRAVEL TALES



WITH TOURISTS SLOW TO RETURN, EGYPT'S RESORTS AND ANCIENT SITES FACE TOUGH WINTER

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ENTERTAINMENT



'WATCHMEN,' 'SCHITT'S CREEK' RULE AT VIRTUAL EMMYS WITH PANDEMIC AND POLITICAL TWISTS

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READ



WILD SYMPHONY

BY DAN BROWN.
ILLUSTRATED BY SUSAN BATORI

Through 20 poems, Maestro Mouse introduces us to his musical animal friends.

HUMAN INTEREST



FIFTY METRES UP AND TWO APART - BELGIUM'S DINNER-IN-THE-SKY RELAUNCHES

Belgians looking for a different culinary experience will once again be able to eat 50 metres (164 feet) above the ground as the dining-in-the-sky experience returns from COVID-19 lockdown with a new, socially distanced feel.... Story on **Page 18**

CELEBRATE



BUSINESS WOMEN'S DAY

A lot of the women today have already broken the glass ceiling but there are still many frontiers that they have to struggle with to finally attain equal footing with men. Business Women's Day is to celebrate the increasing role of women in society today. Celebrate today by giving a compliment to what a woman accomplishes at home or in the office.