

P12

KVITOVA RETURNS TO QUARTERS AFTER 8 YEARS



P13

SINGAPORE'S ECONOMY RECOVERING FROM LOCKDOWNS



P19

GROWING INTEREST ON SKINCARE IN OMAN



OMAN

HM greetings to Egypt President

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt, on the occasion of the 6th of October Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Sisi and the brotherly people of Egypt further welfare and prosperity.

Flights to India from Thursday

MUSCAT: Two airlines from Oman have announced flights to India under the new air transportation agreement between two countries. Oman Air will start flights to India from October 8 with two flights a week connecting Muscat with Delhi, Mumbai and Kochi. SalamAir will operate flights twice a week to Kozhikode, Chennai, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, and Thiruvananthapuram till the end of November. SalamAir flight tickets are open for sale through the website, call centres, and appointed travel agents.

DETAILS ON P3

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INSIDE



NEW ZEALAND PM SAYS 'WE BEAT THE VIRUS AGAIN'

P7



LEBANON'S HOSPITALS ON THE BRINK AS COVID CASES SURGE

P9

WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT
MAX: 38°C
MIN: 26°C

SALALAH
MAX: 30°C
MIN: 23°C

NIZWA
MAX: 38°C
MIN: 24°C

SUNRISE 06.00 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR: 04:45

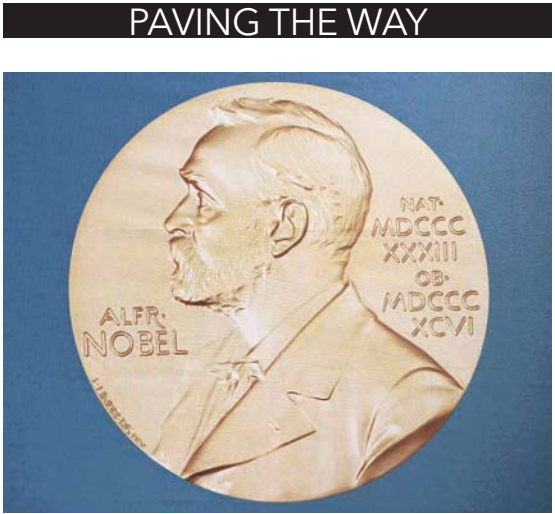
DHUHR: 12:00

ASR: 15:23

MAGHRIB: 17:55

ISHA: 19:05





Trio win Nobel Medicine for Hepatitis C discovery

STOCKHOLM: Americans Harvey Alter and Charles Rice together with Briton Michael Houghton won the Nobel Medicine Prize on Monday for the discovery of the Hepatitis C virus, paving the way for a cure, the Nobel jury said.

The three were honoured for their “decisive contribution to the fight against blood-borne hepatitis, a major global health problem that causes cirrhosis and liver cancer in people around the world,” the jury said.

The World Health Organization estimates there are around 70 million Hepatitis C infections globally, causing around 400,000 deaths each year. It is characterised by poor appetite, vomiting, fatigue and jaundice.

Thanks to the trio's discovery, highly sensitive blood tests for the virus are now available and these have “essentially eliminated post-transfusion hepatitis in many parts of the world, greatly improving global health”, the Nobel committee said.

Their discoveries allowed the rapid development of antiviral drugs directed at Hepatitis C.

“For the first time in history, the disease can now be cured, raising hopes of eradicating Hepatitis C virus from the world population,” the jury said. Alter, 85, told the Nobel Foundation he was stunned to receive an early-morning call from the committee, saying he didn't answer the first two times.

“The third time I got up angrily to answer it... and it was Stockholm,” he said, adding that he was “in shock.”

“To see so many people get cured, and nobody getting post-transfusion hepatitis, that's astounding (and) nothing I've ever thought would happen,” he said.

— AFP

HOSPITALS NEARING CAPACITY AS CASES SURGE

FIRST PHASE OF FIELD HOSPITAL FOR COVID-19 CASES OPENS



VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Intensive care units of hospitals in Muscat are nearing capacity due to a surge in COVID-19 cases, said Minister of Health Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi. “Whether we like it or not, the pandemic situation still prevails in society. We exceeded 100,000 cases in the Sultanate on Sunday, and reported 42 deaths in just three days, including the weekend.”

Dr Al Saeedi said that unfortunately some citizens and residents are not following safety procedures during weddings, gatherings and funerals, which only add to the sorrow of the people.

The minister was speaking on the sidelines of the opening of COVID-19 field hospital on Monday. Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, inaugurated the first phase of the hospital for mild cases at the old Muscat Airport premises in the presence of Dr Al Saeedi and officials.

REDUCING BURDEN

“This hospital will play a role in reducing the burden on the hospitals across the governorate,

and accordingly, these hospitals will be able to treat normal patients,” Al Busaidy said.

Dr Al Saeedi said the government has provided and will continue to provide all means to combat this pandemic, which is our responsibility as individuals, institutions, families, community and stakeholders.

He added that it is very sad to see 210 COVID-19 cases in the ICUs and 45 deaths during the past days. The total number of cases in the Sultanate stand at 101,814, while the number of recoveries are at 90,600. The total number of coronavirus deaths stood at 985.

Over the past 24 hours, 64 patients were hospitalised taking the total number of admitted patients to 535.

VACCINE TRIALS

Touching on COVID-19 vaccine, the health minister said a number of manufacturers have reached phase 3 trials, but they are yet to start manufacturing the vaccine commercially. The ministry is in constant contact with all these firms and it will not use any medicine or vaccine unless proved safe and effective.

TURN TO P2

700 million have caught COVID-19, says WHO

GENEVA: Hundreds of millions of people may have already been infected with the novel coronavirus, far more than the current tally of around 35 million, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

“Our current best estimates tell us that about 10 per cent of the global population may have been infected by this virus,” WHO emergency operations chief Mike Ryan told the UN health agency's executive board on Monday in Geneva.

There are currently 7.8 billion people in the world, according to UN statistics. The share of people with COVID-19 varies among countries, between cities and urban areas, and between social groups, Ryan said.

Even though the true number of cases is likely far higher than the reported numbers, the WHO estimate means that the vast majority of people have no antibodies and remain at risk of contracting COVID-19, the senior WHO official stressed.

Ryan said that COVID-19 continues to surge in South-East Asia and is rising in Europe and the Middle East. In contrast, the situation on Africa and the Western Pacific region was more positive, he said.

Looking at the rising case numbers and at the upcoming influenza season on the northern half of the globe, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged countries to invest in the WHO-led programme on COVID-19 vaccines and medicines. The programme to speed up research and to distribute products fairly to poorer countries is still \$34 billion short of its funding target, Tedros said. “This is not charity,” he said. — dpa



Lebanon president blocks dismissal of detained blast officials

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun will not sign decrees dismissing three officials charged in a probe into the August 4 Beirut port blast without a formal cabinet vote, his office said on Monday.

The director of land and maritime transport, Abdel Hafiz Kaissi, the port's director-general Hassan Koraytem and customs chief Badri Daher, who is close to the president, are already in custody over the blast that killed more than 190 people and wounded at least 6,500 others.

But the president will not give his signature to a decree dismissing them without an official decision from cabinet supported by the majority of ministers, his office said in a statement posted on Twitter.

Former justice minister Ibrahim Najjar said that the president's decision “will be very badly perceived by the public and will appear as a rebuff” that is designed to protect the suspects.

The investigation has so far found that the blame rests mostly on Daher



Lebanons President Michel Aoun

regarding a shipment of ammonium nitrate fertiliser that authorities say caught fire and led to the port explosion, a judicial source said.

Daher was aware that the chemical substance was stored at a port warehouse for years and is to blame for the delay in its disposal, according to investigations, the source said.

The investigation also found that Daher was aware that some of the fertiliser had been extracted from the port warehouse before the explosion, the source said, without specifying the amounts removed or the party responsible for taking it.

A dismissal decree signed by the president, the premier and relevant ministers is usually sufficient for an official to be removed from their post, a judicial source said.

Outgoing premier Hassan Diab, caretaker finance minister Ghazi Wazni and caretaker public works minister Michael Najjar have already approved the decrees, the same source added.

— AFP



100 beds for mild COVID-19 patients



FROM PAGE 1

The hospital will start receiving patients within the next days after all medical and technical equipment along with doctors, nurses, pharmacists, lab technicians, and radiologists are in place.

The hospital will admit 100 patients in the first phase. The number of beds in the hospital will reach 312 beds in the next stages. A shelter centre will be attached to the field hospital

with an area of 10000 m2 and a capacity of 384 beds. The shelter will be turned to a hospital, if necessary.

The aim of establishing a field hospital is to relieve the pressure on the Sultanate's hospitals, resume essential services that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to maintain the health of the health workers and change the general atmosphere for the COVID-19 patients during admission.

The COVID-19 field hospital spread over 6,100 m2 has a temporary care section, a pharmacy, a laboratory for COVID-19 cases and a radiology section. It will be run by a medical team from the Ministry of Health, comprising 30 doctors, 115 male and female nurses, 7 lab technicians, 7 pharmacist assistants and 7 radiologists.

The field hospital will essentially cater to patients from Governorates of Muscat, South &

North Al Batinah, Al Dakhiliyah, and North Al Sharqiyah. Other governorates will be covered, if necessary, in future.

Moreover, the establishment of the field hospital came in collaboration with a number of government and private authorities including the Ministry of Health, Civil Aviation Authority, Oman Airports, PDO, Royal Court Affairs and Royal Oman Police along with related authorities.

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AIRLINES ANNOUNCE FLIGHTS TO INDIA

OmanAir to fly to Delhi, Mumbai, Kochi; SalamAir to fly to Kozhikode, Chennai, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Thiruvananthapuram

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 5

Airlines of Oman have announced flights to India under the new air bubble agreement between two countries.

National airline Oman Air will start flights to India on October 8 with two flights per week connecting Muscat with Delhi, Mumbai, and Kochi.

Budget carrier SalamAir will operate flights twice a week to Kozhikode, Chennai, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, and Thiruvananthapuram till the end of November.

"Flights to and from Delhi will depart and arrive in each city

on Mondays and Wednesdays. Flights to and from Mumbai will connect on Sundays and Thursdays. Flights connecting Muscat and Kochi will depart and arrive in each city on Sundays and Thursdays. These schedules are valid from October 8 to October 24," the national airline said.

SalamAir tickets are open for sale through the website, call centres, and appointed travel agents.

Captain Mohamed Ahmed CEO of SalamAir said, "We are happy that we are part of this bilateral air bubble arrangement between India and Oman. While

this arrangement is temporary, we are confident and looking forward to launching India as one of our destinations. India is one of the most important markets for all airlines operating in the Middle East due to the size of its population, number of tourists from the country, and expatriate residents. SalamAir has operated nearly 700 chartered flights to overseas destinations over the last three months, with many of them flying to India."

India has extended the ban on normal international passenger flights till October 31 in wake of an unrelenting rise in coronavirus cases.



■ ENVOY PRESENTS CREDENTIALS



THE HAGUE: Fernando Arias, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on Monday received the credentials of Ambassador Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Salim al Harthi as the permanent representative of the Sultanate to the organisation. The director-general of the organisation valued the Sultanate's efforts and policies in support of peace and stability as well as its contribution to the success of the organisation in the region and the whole world.

Crude output falls 7.5 per cent in August

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's oil production, including condensates, stood at 233.57 million barrels until the end of August, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Of the total production, crude oil production fell by 7.5 per cent at 190.91 million barrels while condensates production rose by 45.2 per cent to touch 42.66 million barrels.

Oman recorded a daily average crude oil production of 957,300 barrels at the end of August 2020, against 970,500 barrels over the same period of 2019, the NCSI report added.

The average price of Oman Crude

fell by 26.3 per cent to reach \$47.7 per barrel till the end of August 2020, from \$64.7 per barrel in the same period of 2019. The Sultanate exported 193.63 million barrels of crude oil till the end of August 2020, against 196.59 million barrels for the same period of 2019, falling by 1.5 per cent.

China retained its position as top importer of Sultanate's crude oil exports in August with the country buying 171.06 million barrels. This was followed by India (6.67 million), South Korea (4.99 million) and Japan (1.60 million).

Oman produced 354.3 million barrels of oil and exported 310.3 million barrels in 2019. Besides, the country's daily oil production stood

at 970,900 barrels last year.

Natural gas production and imports fell 1.3 per cent to 30,348 million cubic metres (MNCM) in August compared to 30,737 MNCM for the same period of 2019.

Of this, non-associated gas and imports rose by 1.3 per cent to 25,587 MNCM and associated gas production fell 13 per cent to 4,760 MNCM, added the NCSI report.

The use of natural gas in industrial projects fell by 6 per cent to reach 18,095 MNCM at the end of August 2020, against 19,251 MNCM for the same period of 2019. As much as 7,158 MNCM of natural gas was used in oil fields, against 6,229 MNCM units consumed for the same period of 2019. — ONA

Qatar Airways resumes Muscat flights

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 5

Qatar Airways resumed two weekly flights to Muscat and another two weekly flights in codeshare agreement with Oman Air. The first service touched down at Muscat International Airport on October 1.

Qatar Airways' Acting Vice-President for Middle

East, Levant and Caucasus region, Bennet Stephens, said: "We are excited to resume scheduled services to Muscat, setting a new milestone in the gradual rebuilding of our regional network. During the COVID-19 crisis, Qatar Airways has been committed to bringing people home and reuniting family and friends with their loved

ones. Passengers travelling from Muscat can now enjoy enhanced connectivity to many key global destinations across our expanding network including London, New York, Houston and Montreal via our award-winning hub, Hamad International Airport."

The national carrier of Qatar has been flying to

Oman since 2000, when it first began direct services to the Omani capital, Muscat. A codeshare agreement between Qatar Airways and Oman Air allows passengers from Oman to benefit from more options and enhanced connectivity to the most popular destinations in Europe and the US via Hamad International Airport.

Poor oral hygiene may lead to mask mouth

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Bad breath is not uncommon but mask-wearing has made it more prevalent. It also leads to cavities, tooth decay, and inflamed gum tissue. Even people with no history of any dental problem are facing the problem of inflammation and cavities.

Some dentists call it mask mouth. But other dentists say it occurs due to bad teeth and gums rather than the use of masks. One must take care of oral hygiene as masks are going to be with us for some time.

"The bad breath syndrome is due to prolonged use of face masks as it increases dryness of the mouth and a buildup of bad bacteria," says Dr Viresh Chopra, senior lecturer at the



Oman Dental College.

Mask mouth is triggered by covering the mouth for longer periods of time which increases the dryness of the mouth. Also, there is an increased incidence of mouth breathing when

using a mask. Mouth breathing causes surface dehydration and reduced flow of saliva.

Dr Nupur Satija says once a mask is tightly worn, people tend to breathe through their mouth instead of their

nose. "When we wear the mask, our nose is partially blocked and we breathe partially through the mouth. It also results in Halitosis or bad breath and gum diseases," she said.

"The mouth breathing is causing the dry mouth, which leads to a decrease in saliva and saliva is what fights the bacteria and cleanses your teeth," another dental expert adds.

However, a few precautionary steps taken while wearing the mask can keep these oral issues away, according to Dr Satija.

"Dirty masks lead to oral issues and sore throat. Reduce the intake of tea, coffee and processed foods. Drink lots of water. Also, maintain your oral hygiene, brush twice a day, use a good alcohol free mouthwash. Visit your dentist regularly," she said.

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BONDED WITH FRESH BREW

Coffee or Qahwa is the essence of Omani hospitality. Preparing it may differ from one place to another, but the presence of cardamom, cloves, saffron, or rose water of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is a must in every cup



ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@ZAINABALNASSERI

In Oman love of coffee is a legacy passed from generations to generations. Coffee or Qahwa is considered a symbol of Omani originality and generosity. Omani coffee has its own taste, rules, and style. Preparing it may differ from one place to another, but the presence of cardamom, cloves, saffron, or rose water of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is a must in every cup.

Whether a resident or visitor, you haven't experienced Oman until the moment you taste your first cup of Qahwa. An integral part of the Omani culture, Qahwa is the perfect representation of the famously known Omani hospitality — a complete

course that reflects the exceptional, warm and welcoming essence of the Omani heritage.

Preparing it may differ from one place to another, but cardamom, cloves, saffron, or rose water of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is a must in every cup.

Qahwa is usually served with dates, fresh and dried fruits, halwa along with other baked and fried goodies. The offering of Qahwa is almost ritualistic and a direct representation of the warmth and welcoming nature of the Omani people.

The coffee industry in the Sultanate has evolved with the introduction of modern devices and tools. Instead of grinding the coffee beans and adding ingredients, instant coffee powder is readily available in shops. But the

customs associated with Omani coffee or Qahwa and the art of making it have remained the same for centuries.

Omanis and European merchants bought their coffee from the Yemeni port of Mocha in the early modern period. Omanis played a key role in the coffee trade through Omani coffee fleet, which was historically known as “coffee boats”.

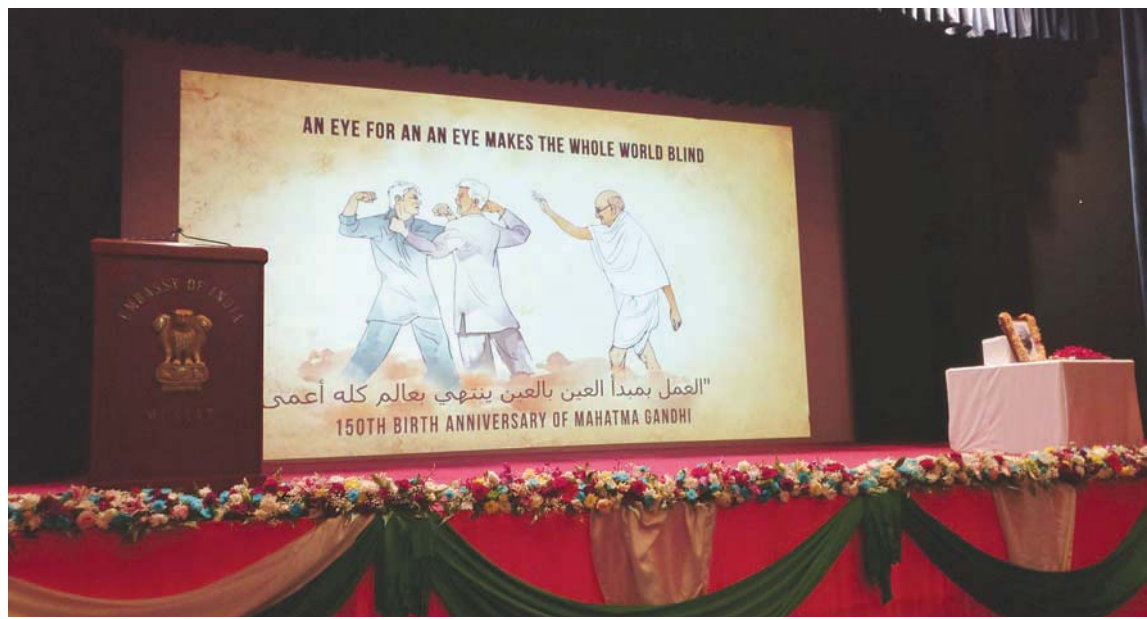
Coffee, as a commercial commodity, achieved great economic importance for Oman in the 17th and 18th centuries. Ports of Sur and Muscat played a key role in linking the coffee plantations of Yemen with the Gulf, the Levant, Egypt, Istanbul, and Europe.

According to the latest statistics of the National Center for Statistics and Information, the Sultanate imported

coffee worth RO 3 million in the second quarter of 2020. The imports registered a 6.1 per cent decrease compared to the same period in 2019 due to coronavirus this year.

Omani coffee is served with specific rituals that all Omanis know. When it is served to the guest, it must be hot and clear. The one who serves the coffee to the guest should be one of the host's children or relatives, one who is experienced in hospitality rituals. He must know where to stand in front of the guest. He must hold the coffee container with his left hand and the cups with his right. He must keep serving the guest until the guest says enough or shakes the cup with his right hand. When pouring coffee make sure that it isn't filled to the brim but filled quarter or half full.

EMBASSY MARKS GANDHI @ 150 AND UN DAY OF NON-VIOLENCE



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 5

An online celebration was organised by Embassy of India in association with Raja Yoga Center for Self-Development, to celebrate 151st Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and United Nations international day of non-violence on Monday. This was the grand finale event of two-year long Gandhi @ 150 celebrations organised by Government of India. The event could not be held on October 2 due to the official mourning declared by the Oman government on passing away of Shaikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait.

The event started with a welcome address by Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, Munu Mahawar, where he spoke about universal relevance of ideas of Mahatma Gandhi, such as peace and non-violence. Ambassador paid tributes to great statesman and peacemaker, Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and stated that Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, continues to move forward on the path of peace and harmony. Ambassador also mentioned various events organised by the Embassy under Gandhi @ 150 celebrations and thanked people & government of Oman, expatriates and Indian community for their



wholehearted support.

Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Issa al Harthy, Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs, Foreign Ministry of Sultanate of Oman, extended his warmest greeting via a video message and stated that violence cannot resolve any conflict. He expressed peaceful resolution of conflicts in the world is an inherent principle of Oman's foreign policy and stated that Oman and India share strong relationship marked by mutual respect and trust. In addition, messages and greetings from other Omani dignitaries, Ambassadors and Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awardees from Indian diaspora were also played.

A short video showcasing glimpses of all the activities

that were carried out in Oman, under Gandhi @ 150 was screened during the event. The Embassy in the run up to 151st Birth Anniversary Mahatma Gandhi, organised various events this year. The internationally acclaimed motivational speaker, Sister B K Jayanti Kirpalani delivered the keynote address on the theme of 'Sailing through Turbulent Times' and mesmerised the audience as she spoke on sailing together through non-violence and compassion to navigate these uncertain times. The participation of large number of people in the online celebration attested to the global relevance and popularity of Mahatma Gandhi's message of Peace, humanity and non-violence.

■ QUARANTINE CENTRE OPENED IN SUHAR



An institutional quarantine centre was opened in Suhar for COVID-19 patients on Monday. The centre was inaugurated by Shaikh Saif bin Hamyar al Shihi, Governor of North Al Batinah. The centre was funded by Vale Oman Company, which equipped the centre with medical devices.

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

THE MAZOOON ELECTRICITY COMPANY (MZEC) INVITES THE FOLLOWING TENDERS:

TENDER NO	DESCRIPTION	LAST DATE OF PURCHASING	LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSION	TENDER BOARD GRADE	TYPE OF PARTICIPATION	TENDER PRICE R.O
RE-TENDER 14/MZEC/2020	CUSTOMER SELF-SERVICE MOBILE APP PROJECT	12/10/2020	10/11/2020	SPECIALIST	INTERNATIONAL	120
TENDER NO	DESCRIPTION	LAST DATE OF PURCHASING	LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSION	DCRP GRADE	TYPE OF PARTICIPATION	TENDER PRICE R.O
RE-TENDER 21/MZEC/2020	CONVERSION OF EXISTING ELECTRICAL O/H LINES TO U/G CABLES (LV 0.415 KV) AT SOUQ IBRA IN SHARQIYAH NORTH GOVERNORATE	12/10/2020	10/11/2020	D	LOCAL	85
	THE SITE VISIT WILL BE ON 14/10/2020 AT 9:00 AM IN IBRA OFFICE					
24/MZEC/2020	CONSTRUCTION OF 33KV & 11KV FEEDERS OF (FANJA-2) PRIMARY SUBSTATION IN AL DAKHILIYAH GOVERNORATE	12/10/2020	10/11/2020	B	LOCAL	125
	SITE VISIT WILL BE ON 13/10/2020 AT 8:30 AM IN MZEC MAIN OFFICE BUILDING NO(2)					
25/MZEC/2020	REFURBISHMENT OF LT OH LINE, SERVICE CONNECTION OH LINE & DISMANTLING OF EXISTING LV LINE ALL NETWORK IN SUWEYAH AREA AT SHARQIYAH SOUTH GOVERNORATE	12/10/2020	27/10/2020	D	LOCAL	180
	THE SITE VISIT WILL BE ON 15/10/2020 AT 9:30 AM IN MZEC JALAN BANI BU ALI OFFICE					

- Interested companies registered with DCRP and Tender Board and having a valid Registrations may obtain tenders documents through scm.tenders@mzec.co.om.
- Value of each tender document copy is non-refundable.
- The offers and related documents should be submitted in a sealed with red wax envelope addressed to the chairman of the (Internal Tender Committee).
- On the top of the envelopes bidder should write the tender number and the subject only and no other marks or any reference thereto should be written outside the envelopes.
- The tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of tender price valid (90) days as a bid bond and addressed to the chairperson of the (Internal Tender Committee) of Mazoon Electricity Company S.A.O.C and any offer is not including the bond will be rejected immediately.
- The completed tenders should be deposited in the tender box at main head office building in Al Saih Al Hmer - BidBid before 10:00 am on the assigned closing date for submission of the tender.
- The priority of the awarding will be given to those bidders who assure recruitment of the maximum numbers of Omani staff and utilizing Omani products.
- The related parties only are invited to attend the tender opining meeting based on the assigned date.
- All Clarifications are to be sent to the email address: MZEC-Clarification@mzec.co.om and the Last date for receiving vendor's clarifications for tender no. MZEC/25/2020 on 22/10/2020 and for tender no. MZEC/14, 21, 24/2020 on 28/10/2020.
- Mazoon Electricity Company S.A.O.C. is not bound to accept the lowest tender.

(WE LIGHT...WE CARE)

TENDERS & CONTRACTS SECTION : (+968) 25371366 / 25371067 / 25371070

Sultanate of Oman MINISTRY OF HEALTH

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH (AL RUSTAQ HOSPITAL) INVITES SPECIALIZED COMPANIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOLLOWING TENDER: -

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of tender Documents	Closing Time/ Day/Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
203/2020	Provision of Loading and Unloading Services for Al-Rustaq Hospital	11/October /2020	Before 10 Am on Thursday 12/November/2020	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Tenders should be submitted on line on the given website signed and sealed. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee or a certified Cheque issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee before one day of date submission.
- The Original Bank Guarantee should be submitted to the office of financial department (Tenders and contracts) at Al-Rustaq Hospital one day before the submission date for all Tenders.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Any Clarification, you may contact via

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Diplomats make new push for Libya peace

BERLIN: Diplomats meet on Monday for a digital follow-up to this year's Berlin conference on Libya, with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas set to attend the talks.

Representatives of the 16 states and international organisations that took part in the summit in the German capital in January will meet online at 1330 GMT in a fresh push to get Libya on the path to peace.

At the talks nine months ago, the powers involved had pledged to bring about a lasting ceasefire, implement a UN arms embargo and end foreign interference in the war that erupted in 2011.

Since then, the peace process in the North African country has faltered while the fighting continues. Earlier this year UN Libya envoy Stephanie Williams described the arms embargo as a poorly enforced "joke."

Libya has been in turmoil since the 2011 and has become a battleground for rival proxy forces that has drawn in foreign powers.

The oil-rich country has two main competing administrations: the UN-backed Government of National Accord in Tripoli and a government based in the eastern city of Tobruk, allied with military strongman Khalifa Haftar, who leads forces in the country's east.

Representatives of the rivals held political talks in the Egyptian Red Sea city of Hurghada last month. Other meetings have recently been held in Morocco and Switzerland.

Monday's talks are co-hosted by Germany and the United Nations. European countries have been trying to mediate a solution as chaos in Libya has provided ideal conditions for people-smugglers to operate in the Mediterranean Sea.

— dpa

Syria benefits from Russian bases in country: Assad

CRUCIAL ROLE: Syrian President says Russian bases counter Washington's dominance in region



A US fighting armoured vehicle takes part in a patrol near the Rumaylan oil fields in Syria's Kurdish-controlled northeastern Hasakeh province on Monday. Syrian President Bashar al Assad has been able with Moscow's massive aerial power and militias' support to regain most of the territory he lost in a decade long conflict. — AFP

AMMAN — Syrian President Bashar al Assad said the continued presence of Russia's major naval and air bases in his country help counter the influence of Western powers in the region as the battle to crush insurgents was winding down.

In an interview with Russia's Ministry of Defence TV channel Zvezda on the fifth anniversary of Moscow's intervention in Syria that tipped the conflict in his favour, Assad said Russia's two main bases were important to counter the West's military presence in the region.

"This global military balance needs Russia's role... this needs (military) bases... we benefit from this," Assad said adding Syria needed such a presence that his military commanders say countered Washington's dominance in the region.

Alongside the Hmeimim base, from which Russia launches air strikes in support of Assad, Moscow also controls the Tartus naval facility in Syria, its only naval foothold in the Mediterranean, in use since the days of the Soviet Union.

Russia launched air strikes in Syria

in 2015 and began cementing its permanent military presence in 2017, following a deal with the government in Damascus.

A Russian government document published last August showed that Syrian authorities have agreed to give Russia additional land and coastal waters in order to expand its military air base at Hmeimim.

Assad said his army, before Moscow's military intervention, had been facing a "dangerous situation" with an armed opposition who had seized main cities and towns.

Assad has been able with Moscow's massive aerial power and militias' support to regain most of the territory he lost in a decade long conflict.

Washington and backers of the Syrian opposition say the Russian and Syrian bombing of opposition-held areas amounted to war crimes and were responsible for the displacement of millions and the death of thousands of civilians.

Moscow and Damascus deny indiscriminate bombing of civilians and say they are fighting to rid the country of militants. — Reuters

A Russian government document published last August showed that Syrian authorities have agreed to give Russia additional land and coastal waters in order to expand its military air base at Hmeimim

Two rockets fall in Baghdad



People are seen through a hole of a house damaged by a rocket attack in Iraq. — Reuters

BAGHDAD: Iraq's military said in a statement on Monday that two Katyusha rockets had fallen late on Sunday in Baghdad's Jadiriya area, near the heavily fortified Green Zone, without causing any casualties.

One of the rockets landed near the Babylon hotel, which is used by Iraqi travellers and sometimes for government meetings, the military said in the statement.

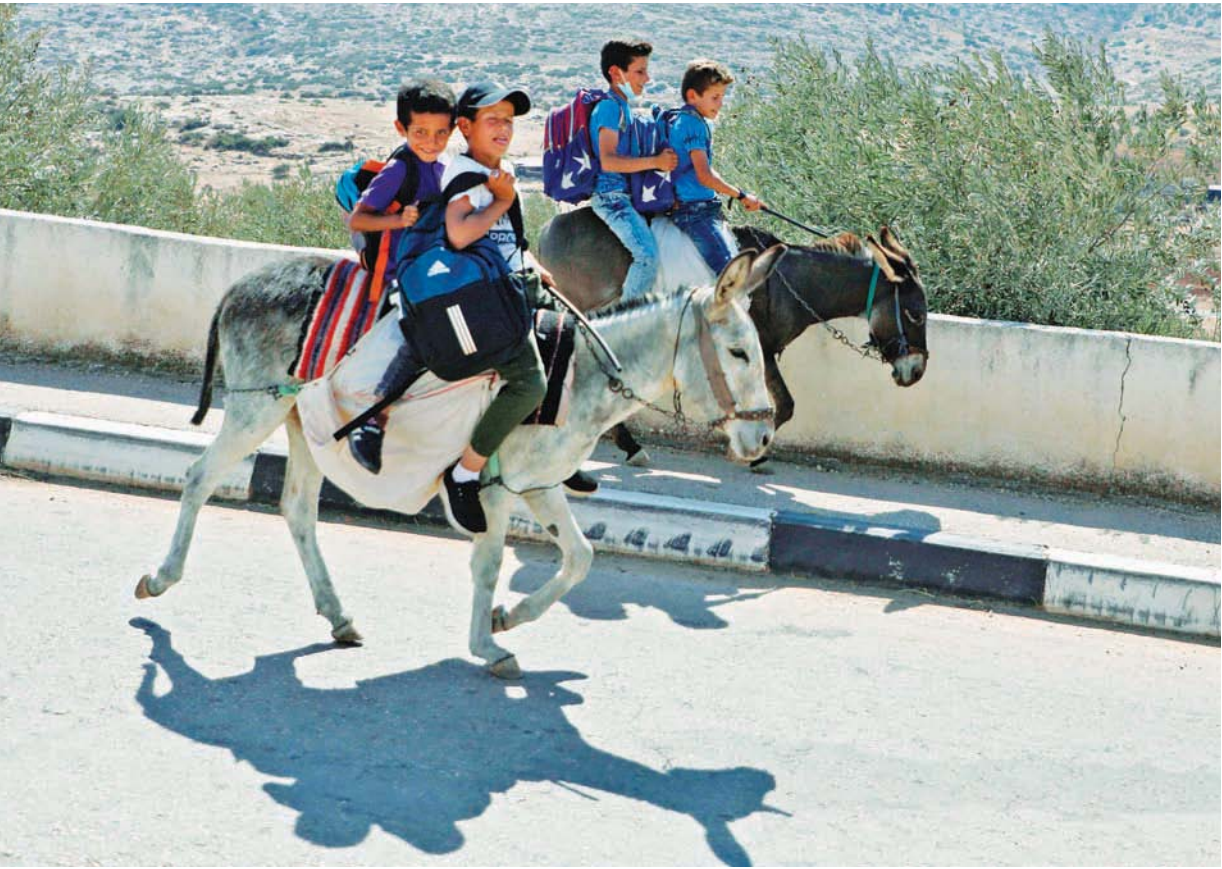
The Iraqi military blamed "terrorist groups" for the attack and said the rockets were fired from an area in the western part of the capital.

Rockets regularly fly across the Tigris towards the heavily fortified Green Zone, which houses government buildings and foreign missions including the US Embassy.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi pledged in a meeting with top diplomats to protect foreign missions and limit the possession of weapons to state forces following a US threat to shut down its embassy in the city.

Washington blames such attacks on militia groups. — Reuters

RIDE TO SCHOOL



Palestinian students ride on a donkey in the village of Al Qaba in the Jordan Valley as they head to school about five kilometres away from their homes. — AFP

Turkish drill ship leaves area southwest of Cyprus

ISTANBUL: The Turkish drill ship *Yavuz* has left the area where it was operating southwest of Cyprus and reached the Turkish coast, Refinitiv Eikon shipping data showed on Monday, in a move that may help ease tensions in the eastern Mediterranean.

Cyprus' internationally recognised Greek Cypriot government has long been at odds with Turkey, which began drilling for oil and gas near Cyprus last year. The *Yavuz* vessel first began operations east of Cyprus in July 2019. Its latest operations to the southwest of the island, were most recently extended until October 12 in a move which Greece described as provocative. The ship tracking data showed *Yavuz* as being near the port of Tasucu in Turkey's Mersin province on



Yavuz heads back to Turkey from area where it was operating southwest of Cyprus, a move that may help ease tensions in eastern Mediterranean. — Reuters

Monday, having departed on Sunday from an area southwest of Cyprus. On Friday, EU leaders assured Cyprus the bloc would punish Turkey if it continues drilling in disputed Mediterranean areas, after resisting Cypriot calls to

impose sanctions on Ankara. Regional tensions have simmered since Turkish and Greek frigates collided at sea in August near a Turkish exploration vessel, but cooled after Turkey and Greece agreed to resume "exploratory talks" that ended in 2016.

SHORT TAKES

ADDIS ABABA

Ethiopia bans flights over grand dam

Ethiopia has banned all flights over its giant new hydropower dam on the Blue Nile for security reasons, the head of its civil aviation authority said on Monday, as the president pledged the dam would begin generating power in the next 12 months.

The move could worsen Ethiopia's dispute with Egypt and Sudan over its \$4 billion Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which Cairo has said could threaten its main supply of water.

"All flights have been banned to secure the dam," the Director-



General of the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority, Wesenyeleh Hunegnaw, said by phone. He declined to give more details on the reasons. — Reuters

BEIRUT

Army blocks migrants risking sea crossing

Lebanon's army said it had prevented a boat carrying 37 mainly Syrian passengers from leaving the country by sea, the latest attempt to make the perilous Mediterranean crossing.

The boat was stopped night near an island close to Lebanon's northern port of Tripoli.

Those on board included 34 Syrians, two Lebanese and a Palestinian, with seven children among them. A Lebanese man was arrested for organising the operation, the statement added.

Lebanon, which hosts nearly 1.5

million people displaced by the war in neighbouring Syria, was struggling from a severe economic crisis and political instability even before the coronavirus pandemic struck.

That was exacerbated by the massive August 4 explosion at Beirut's port, which laid waste to whole neighbourhoods of the capital and killed over 190 people.

In recent weeks, dozens of Lebanese and Syrians have tried to make the sea journey from Lebanon to Cyprus, authorities on both sides say. — AFP

MARIB

Thousands displaced by conflict at risk

In Yemen's gas-rich region of Marib, fighters loyal to government launched a hail of mortar and machine gun fire towards rocky mountains, in a desperate bid to push back rebels.

The commanding officer peered through his binoculars at the dust and plumes of black smoke thrown up by the firing, aimed at a group of elusive enemy Ansar Allah snipers.

A few dozen kilometres away, hundreds of displaced civilians in makeshift camps waited for water, food and medicine from



humanitarian groups — a further sign that despite United Nations peace efforts, the near six-year-old war grinds on. — AFP

In brief

■ JAKARTA



ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS OVER INDONESIA JOBS BILL

Global investors managing \$4.1 trillion in assets have warned Indonesia's government that a contentious job creation bill passed by parliament on Monday could pose new risks to the country's tropical forests.

In a letter, 35 investors expressed their concerns, including Aviva Investors, Legal & General Investment Management, the Church of England Pensions Board, Netherlands-based asset manager Robeco and Japan's largest asset manager, Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Asset Management. — Reuters

■ WELLINGTON



WILDFIRES RAZE DOZENS OF HOMES

Wildfires have destroyed up to 50 homes in New Zealand, authorities announced Monday, saying it was a miracle no one was hurt as "a wall of orange" razed most of a remote South Island village.

The blaze began in a mountain forest on Sunday and, fanned by strong winds, swept through the village of Lake Ohau, forcing residents to flee for their lives.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) said the unpredictable winds made fighting the fire "challenging" and by Monday afternoon it had razed 4,600 hectares of land. — AFP

■ LAHORE



SHARIF, DAUGHTER FACE SEDITION CHARGES

Pakistani police filed sedition charges on Monday against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam Nawaz and dozens of his party leaders over comments he made criticising the interference of the military in national politics.

Last month, Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League and eight other opposition parties came together to accuse the military of meddling in politics and of rigging elections in 2018 that brought Prime Minister Imran Khan to power. Sharif left Pakistan last November to get medical treatment after being granted bail from a seven-year jail sentence for corruption. — Reuters

Malaysian premier quarantines after minister tests positive

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin on Monday said he will self-quarantine for 14 days after a minister who attended a high-level government meeting to discuss coronavirus developments on Saturday tested positive for COVID-19.

The Southeast Asian country has seen a steady climb in cases in the past week in the aftermath of an election in the state of Sabah in Borneo on September 26.

Authorities in Malaysia have warned that coronavirus restrictions may have to be reimposed if the trend continues, amid popular anger towards politicians who have been blamed for the spike.

In a statement, Muhyiddin confirmed that Religious Affairs Minister Zulkifli Mohamad al Bakri had tested positive, and that those identified as close contacts at Saturday's National Security Council meeting to discuss COVID-19 had been issued a 14-day home surveillance order starting October 3.



Malaysia's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin wearing a protective mask arrives at a mosque for prayers in Putrajaya. -- Reuters

"Pursuant to that, I will undergo self-quarantine at my home for 14 days as advised by the health ministry," Muhyiddin said.

"However, this will not interrupt government business.

I will continue to work from home and use video conferencing to

conduct meetings as necessary."

In an earlier statement, the health ministry said contact tracing had been carried out, including symptom screening and collection of swabs to detect COVID-19 infections.

In a Facebook post on Monday, Zulkifli confirmed that he had tested

FISHING IN BANGLADESH



Fishermen pull their boat as they return after catching fish from the Bay of Bengal in Cox's Bazar. -- AFP

DELHI RACES TO CUT AIR POLLUTION

NEW DELHI: New Delhi unveiled a slew of plans on Monday aimed at reducing the Indian capital's annual toxic smog, as authorities warned the severe pollution could worsen the coronavirus epidemic.

Air in the metropolis — home to 20 million people — becomes a noxious cocktail of dust and smoke each winter, caused by vehicle fumes, industrial emissions and smoke from agricultural burning.

The haze regularly sees the city

ranked as one of the world's most polluted.

In a virtual news conference Monday, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said authorities would introduce a series of initiatives — including setting up a "war room" to deal with hot spots when they arise, and trialling new technology to deal with old problems.

For starters, authorities will test a so-called bio-decomposer process, which would turn crop stubble into

fertiliser, Kejriwal said.

The fermented liquid, made with a type of cane sugar and flour, is meant to slowly decompose the straw.

Smoke from burning stubble — particularly from neighbouring states — is blamed for nearly half the air pollution in New Delhi, even though it is officially outlawed.

Air quality will be monitored in a new war room, and there will be checks on construction sites.

Authorities will also introduce

a phone app for people to report polluters.

Delhi's measurements of PM2.5 — tiny particles that get into the bloodstream and vital organs — often soar to almost 40 times the World Health Organization's recommended safe level of 25.

Pollution levels plunged earlier this year when the months-long nationwide lockdown against coronavirus halted much industrial production. — AFP

positive for COVID-19 and was now undergoing treatment.

In a separate statement, Malaysia's health ministry reported 432 new daily cases on Monday, setting a new record since the country started tracking the pandemic.

— Reuters

Duterte scores record high rating

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's approval rating has hit a record high, an opinion poll showed on Monday, despite a stubborn coronavirus crisis that has ravaged the economy and caused millions of job losses.

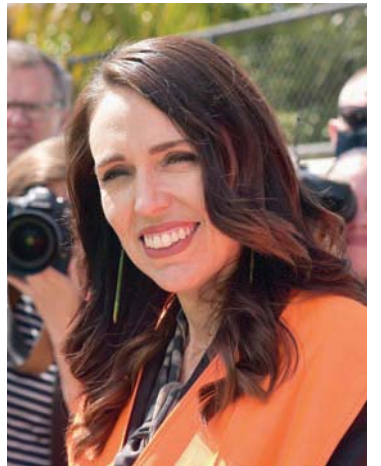
The Pulse Asia survey, conducted last month with in-person interviews with 1,200 adult Filipinos, found 91 percent of respondents approved of both his performance and his personality, up from 87 percent and 83 percent, respectively, in December.

The Philippines, for years among the world's fastest-growing economies, is forecast to see a 6.9 percent economic contraction this year, the World Bank has said.

Ronnie Holmes, president of Pulse Asia, said during a television interview that the overwhelming thumbs-up for Duterte showed the public blamed the decline on the impact of COVID-19 rather than government mishandling.

— Reuters

We beat the virus again, says Ardern



Jacinda Ardern said all coronavirus restrictions in the country's largest city Auckland will be lifted on Wednesday. — Reuters

WELLINGTON: Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern declared on Monday New Zealand "beat the virus again" and announced restrictions in the country's largest city would be eased, after a second COVID-19 wave was contained.

The virus was believed to have been eradicated in late May after a strict national lockdown led to New Zealanders enjoying 102 days without community transmission.

But a new cluster emerged in Auckland in August, forcing the city of 1.5 million into lockdown for almost three weeks.

With no new confirmed cases in Auckland for 12 days, Ardern said Monday the virus was now under control and congratulated residents for enduring the second lockdown.

"It felt longer and dragged on in what was already starting to feel like a very long year," she said.

"But despite this, Aucklanders and New Zealanders stuck to the plan that has worked twice now, and beat the virus again." Ardern said from late Wednesday Auckland would join the rest of New Zealand on level one, the lowest rating on the government's four-tier virus alert system.

Under the change, there are no restrictions on social gatherings, allowing the second Bledisloe Cup Test in Auckland on October 18 to be played in front of a full stadium at Eden Park.

"This is positive news that (Auckland fans) will be able to enjoy Test match rugby," New Zealand Rugby said in a statement.

New Zealand has recorded just 25 COVID-19 deaths in a population of five million, with 40 active cases in the country on Monday.

But Ardern, who faces a general election on October 17, warned success could not be taken for granted.

She pointed to a decline in the use of the official COVID-19 tracing app and falling virus test numbers.

"A resurgence of the virus is not our only worry, resurgence of complacency is right up there too," Ardern said. — AFP

Japan mourns fashion designer who died of COVID-19

TAKADA: Japanese fashion lovers, politicians and friends of Kenzo Takada paid tribute to the designer on Monday after he died in Paris aged 81 having contracted coronavirus.

Junko Koshino, who went to fashion school with Takada in Tokyo, told local media she could not believe the news of his death.

"I won't be able to see him even if I go to Paris. I miss him," said Koshino, who last visited her friend in February in the French capital.

"I called him afterwards and said, 'Please take care. Don't go out.' And he said, 'Don't worry, I won't. I'll be careful (about the virus).'" Takada, the founder of the global Kenzo brand, was the first Japanese designer to decamp to Paris, and was renowned



Japan's most famous fashion designer Kenzo Takada died in Paris after contracting coronavirus. — AFP

for his signature floral prints.

"I'm truly shocked... I was inspired by the colours," said one fan on

Twitter. "I hate the coronavirus. It takes away so many things."

"I loved his floral prints and

perfumes. Thank you for teaching me so many wonderful things. Damn coronavirus!" wrote another.

Japan's top government spokesman expressed "sincere condolences" following the death of Takada, who "imparted our nation's arts and culture to the world".

"It is very sad. As a Japanese designer with global reach, he was very successful and well recognised," Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told reporters.

STAR STUDENT

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike also paid homage to the designer on Twitter, saying she wanted "to express my respect for his wonderful talent".

Bunka Gakuen college, the fashion school Takada graduated from in

the 1960s, said in a statement he had helped nurture and inspire younger talent.

Born in 1939 into a family of hoteliers, Takada chose to study art and became a star student before moving to Paris in 1965.

Known for an eclectic mix of colour, loud prints and folksy embroidery, Kenzo boutiques opened all over the world from the early 1980s.

Takada announced in January, aged 80, that he was shifting to interior design from fashion.

"Our ideal interior is one of comfort which tempts you to stay inside. I like something soft and poetic, not aggressive. I like dreaming," he had said in an interview. — AFP



QUEEN EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR MAINSTREAM MEDIA



LONDON: Britain's Queen Elizabeth gave a ringing endorsement of traditional media in a message to journalists on Monday, saying they were providing a vital public service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At a time when established newspapers and television channels are routinely vilified and accused of producing "fake news" by US President Donald Trump and other world leaders, the 94-year-old monarch's message was a rare tribute.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has once again demonstrated what an important public service the established news media provides, both nationally and regionally," she said in a message to members of Britain's News Media Association.

"As our world has changed dramatically, having trusted, reliable sources of information, particularly at a time when there are so many sources competing for our attention, is vital," the queen wrote.

The impact of social media on

democracy, and particularly of the colossal flows of misinformation circulating among users, are the subjects of heated and unresolved debates in several major Western countries, especially the United States.

Under Britain's unwritten constitution, the monarch does not usually speak on political matters. The queen's decision to send a public message of support to the news media suggests she considers the subject to be uncontroversial. — **Reuters**

Awaiting hospital release, Trump fires off election tweetstorm



Trump drove past supporters outside the hospital where he was being treated for COVID-19, after announcing on Twitter a 'surprise visit' to his backers. — **AFP**



A single Biden, Harris, supporter holds a sign as supporters of US President Donald Trump rally outside of Walter Reed Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. — **AFP**

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump's doctors were to decide on Monday whether he is recovered enough to leave hospital and continue COVID-19 treatment at the White House, as the president signalled his determination to return to the election campaign with an early morning tweetstorm.

Conflicting official updates since Trump's hospitalisation on Friday have created confusion over his health, but his chief of staff said the 74-year-old's condition had improved overnight, raising hopes he could be discharged during the day.

"We are still optimistic that based on his unbelievable progress and — how strong he has been in terms of his fight against this COVID-19 disease, that he will be released," Mark

Meadows told Fox News.

"But that decision won't be made until late on Monday," Trump's COVID-19 diagnosis has upended the White House race less than a month from polling day — and cast a harsh spotlight on the president's much criticised management of the pandemic which has claimed over 200,000 American lives.

Eager to portray himself as in charge despite his sickness, Trump sent 15 block-capital tweets in 30 minutes, appealing to voters by claiming a

record of successes in his first term including tax cuts and stock market highs, and protecting gun rights and religious liberties.

The tweetstorm came after the president sparked an angry backlash with a protocol-breaking visit to supporters outside the hospital where he is being treated.

He was masked as he waved from inside his bulletproof vehicle during the short trip outside Walter Reed military medical center near Washington on Sunday evening.

Trump, who has been repeatedly rebuked for flouting public health advice and spreading misinformation on the pandemic, said in a video on Twitter just before his outing that he had "learned a lot about COVID" by undergoing treatment.

But experts complained he had broken his own government's guidelines requiring patients to isolate while they are in treatment and still shedding virus — and had also endangered his Secret Service protection. — **AFP**

Hundreds evacuated as French villages dig out from flooding

ROQUEBILLIÈRE: Rescue workers evacuated hundreds of people on Monday from villages hammered by flash flooding in southeast France over the weekend, with the death toll expected to rise as searches continue for survivors.

Two people died after storms dumped huge amounts of rain that turned streams into churning torrents that swept away cars, houses and bridges in the French Alps north of Nice.

But the authorities said eight people had disappeared, in many cases after witnesses reported seeing them carried away by the floodwaters, while 13 others have not been heard from since Friday.

Italian authorities also said two people died, including a volunteer firefighter on a rescue operation on Saturday. Meteorologist Luca Mercalli told the *Fatto Quotidiano* daily on Monday that in Limone Piemonte and the Roya Valley "some 600 millimetres of rain fell in fewer than 24 hours. Half the annual average rainfall in just one day." "I've lost everything. My house, 25 metres long (80 feet), was engulfed by the Vesubie river," said Alain Brucy, 63, as trucks carrying water, baby food, toilet paper and other essentials arrived in Roquebilliere, a French village near the Italian border.

"The priority is to evacuate those



Aerial view shows the damage in Roquebilliere. — **AFP**

who want to leave this war zone they've been living in for the past two days," the government's top regional official, Bernard Gonzalez, said, saying some areas looked as if they had been "bombarded." Around 400 people have been evacuated by helicopter so far, he said.

Gonzalez also said four bodies found on a beach in Liguria, Italy, on Sunday most likely came from cemeteries swept away when rivers overran their banks.

"These are not recent deaths... but old corpses," he said.

Officials have declared the region a natural disaster zone, and President Emmanuel Macron is expected to tour the area this week. — **AFP**

Paris cafes to shut as Europe confronts second virus wave

PARIS: Paris cafes will shut for two weeks as the city and its region were placed on maximum alert on Monday, with Europe facing a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

France reported nearly 17,000 new coronavirus cases on Saturday alone, the highest daily number since the country began widespread testing.

Tuesday's shuttering of cafes — seen by many as the essence of Parisian life — were "braking measures because the epidemic is moving too fast," Paris police chief Didier Lallement told journalists, adding that restaurants will remain open provided they respect new safety measures.

These will include providing sanitising hand gel, limiting patrons to six a table with at least a metre (about a yard) between seats, and allowing diners to remove their masks

only for eating.

"It's not going to work for small restaurants," said the owner of a tiny Paris eatery that also operates as a cafe — depending on the time of day — as well as a tobacconist.

"Everybody is going have to crunch numbers: Is it worth staying open or not?" the owner who gave his name only as Michel said.

Meanwhile two prominent Europeans announced on Monday going into self-quarantine after coming into contact with individuals who have tested positive for the virus.

Ursula von der Leyen, the 62-year-old head of the European Commission, said she would self-isolate for a day.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius, 59, also started a week of self-isolation after meeting with a COVID-positive French embassy staffer during a visit by President



A waiter wearing a protective face mask serves at the Cafe de Flore in Paris. — **Reuters**

Emmanuel Macron.

Linkevicius himself has tested negative for the virus, foreign ministry Rasa Jakilaitiene said.

Europe, which has recorded 235,553 deaths, is approaching a caseload of six million out of the more than 35.2 million cases officially

diagnosed across the world.

That figure, the World Health Organization said on Monday, is a fraction of the likely actual count, which the UN health body estimated at one in 10 of the world's 7.8 billion people.

"Our current best estimate tells us that about 10 per cent of the global population may have been infected by this virus," WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan said.

The virus has killed at least 1,037,971 people worldwide according to the latest tally based on official sources.

IRELAND, RUSSIA HESITATE

Britain remains the worst-hit European country, passing its latest milestone of 500,000 confirmed coronavirus infections on Sunday.

Neighbouring Ireland for its part is mulling a nationwide lockdown after a

surge of new cases.

The National Public Health Emergency Team recommended that the entire country reprise the highest level of COVID-19 restrictions imposed during the original lockdown in March.

Russia recorded 10,888 new cases on Sunday — close to a peak reached in May — but stopped short of reimposing a new lockdown.

Spain has decided partial lockdowns for two more cities, Leon and Palencia, after residents of Madrid and nine nearby towns were barred from leaving city limits for any reason other than work, school or medical and legal appointments.

While Madrid's regional authorities have criticised the two weeks of restrictions as too stringent, healthcare experts have said they do not go far enough. — **AFP**

KARABAKH

Fears grow for civilians as fighting rages

Clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces were raging on Monday over the Nagorno-Karabakh region as fears grew for civilians after the two sides began shelling major cities.

Separatist forces in Karabakh reported firefights along the frontline and that the regional capital Stepanakert again came under artillery fire.

Azerbaijan's defence ministry said Armenian forces were shelling several towns, including the country's second-largest city Ganja which was first hit on Sunday.



Increasing artillery fire on urban areas has raised concerns of mass civilian casualties if the fierce fighting, which has already killed at least 260 people, continues to escalate. — **AFP**

BAMAKO

Over 100 militants swapped for hostage

Insurgency-hit Mali has freed over 100 alleged or convicted militants to secure the release of a top politician and a French charity worker, sources close to the talks said on Monday.

This is a rare mass release of prisoners in the fragile West African country, which is struggling with an eight-year-old militant insurgency that has claimed thousands of lives.

Soumaila Cisse, a former opposition leader and three-time presidential candidate, was abducted on March 25 while campaigning in his home region of Niafounke ahead of legislative

elections.

Sophie Petronin, a French charity worker, was abducted by gunmen on December 24, 2016, in the northern city of Gao. She is presently the last French national held hostage in the world.

The last video in which Petronin appeared was received in June 2018. She seemed tired and emaciated, and appealed to French President Emmanuel Macron.

In another video, in November 2018, in which she did not appear, her kidnappers said her health had deteriorated. — **AFP**

HONG KONG

Rare flawless diamond fetches \$15.7 million

An exceedingly rare 102-carat flawless white diamond sold for \$15.7 million at an online auction in Hong Kong on Monday evening.

Described as "completely flawless" by auctioneer Sotheby's, the 102.39-carat stone went to an unnamed telephone bidder for HK\$ 122 million in an auction held online because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The buyer of this diamond has bagged a bargain," said Tobias Kormind, managing director of online jeweller 77 Diamonds.

During a time of economic



uncertainty, he said, "savvy investors are currently falling over themselves to acquire alternative safe haven assets like diamonds, property and gold". — **AFP**

Rising above the storm...

Could the eagle's point of view be our status of mind while controlling a crisis? The biggest challenge is to break away from our mindset to understand the situation from others' point of view. In such occasions, if not for all, would it not be great to have the ability to have a vision of a big picture? Most of the time we are so involved in the situation that we are unable to detach ourselves even for few seconds to think from someone else's point of view.

What we do not know falls in the category of fear just because we do not know what to expect. Why do we fear exams? If we are familiar with the subject and the matter that is required to take the test then there is really no need to fear but we do and we dread to look at the questions. The first glance invariably makes one panic and the second time around when we read the questions there is more clarity and we realise we do know the answers.

What does that indicate? The first time round our fear was even controlling what we see, by the time we read it again we were breathing easier and we were able to comprehend what was going on in the paper.

If we were to have reacted in the first round where we were under the influence of fear our responses would have been wrong. This goes on to prove that in life we need to buy time just to



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WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW FALLS IN THE CATEGORY OF FEAR JUST BECAUSE WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT

get back into control of ourselves before we jump into actions.

On the other hand, the world is currently on a fast pace from fast food to quick solutions. So would we miss out? In order to maintain the balance of being in a clear state of mind to respond well at the same time to keep up with the pace, I suppose we need to practice it daily — the art of staying calm. I was lucky to hear Didi Sudesh during the International Day of Peace organised by a foundation. "It is practice and preparation that keeps you in a state of calmness when a sudden crisis occurs," she had said.

Each time we are thrown into a difficult situation we are being polished but so often we feel we are weak and cannot go through anymore. But that is only until the next one comes our way.

How many times have we felt unable to carry on? These feelings are from the mind convincing us that this is it and no room to move forward. It is during these times we have to be stern with ourselves and do what is right. Not easy because this requires the ability to constantly check on the big picture. On the other hand it is easy. Have you ever noticed how a certain song suddenly gives you happiness, confidence or even generate the sense of nostalgia? So in other words, mind can be tricked with a distraction and all this means we have to be our own best friend. A friend who will not judge but will notice where the stream of

thoughts is coming from to make us feel the way we do.

Our mind seems to be an ocean with many currents and winds from all directions. It is not about controlling the thoughts or where the wind is originating from and the direction it is heading, but knowing the source is good because then we can distinguish when someone passes a comment whether it is constructive criticism or just a mean remark.

We cannot change others but we can change how we respond. The fact is if our reaction is not fun for them, most likely they will not feel encouraged to continue so.

If only we would think how we would feel if others spoke to others the way we do — the world would be a kinder place at least with words.

The world just celebrated the International Non-Violence Day and while there are various examples of violence we could do without, harsh words and comments are violent too especially for the young children who ought to be nourished and nurtured to reside and be future leaders in a beautiful world. Let us not break them even before they set foot in the real world.

The world is theirs and all children are equal. Maybe wealth may not be equally distributed but kind words can be. Let them be guided at a young age so they can rise above the storm with an instinct just like the eagles.

CLIMATE CHANGE

As Afghans count cost of deadly floods, worse to come

SHADI KHAN SAIF

Grocer Aziz Ullah took in his brother's three children after he was killed by devastating flash floods in late August which also destroyed Ullah's shop in the northern Afghan city of Charikar.

"These poor orphans have lost their parents and have nowhere to go," said the father-of-five, 59.

"How am I going to look after their needs? Only God knows."

In the once-bustling provincial capital of Parwan, where nearly 160 people died, residents are trying to repair their shattered properties, while still grieving for relatives.

The north and east of the country are struggling to recover from the effects of the heavy downpours that claimed more than 200 lives, mostly women and children, across 13 provinces, as officials warn climate change could bring more such disasters.

In August, torrential rains swept off the majestic Hindu Kush mountains and through

the valleys of Parwan, washing away hundreds of homes. When Afghan President Ashraf Ghani visited the area in early September, he noted that 80 per cent of natural floodwater channels had been turned into residential areas, increasing the loss of life.

He ordered Charikar's administration to clear the flood pathways, resettle

people now living there, and produce a new development master plan for the city. Thousands of hectares of farmland were also damaged and livestock perished in the floods that caught local communities off-guard.

Rohullah Amin, deputy head of the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA), set up in 2010, warned of far worse impacts from rising temperatures and erratic weather in the coming years if climate change "is not taken seriously locally and internationally".

"The developed world needs to take responsibility as we have barely contributed to climate change, but are losing so many lives due to it," he said. With very little industry of its own, Afghanistan accounts for far less than 1 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

In a report submitted to the United Nations in 2017, the NEPA said that since 1950, Afghanistan's mean annual temperature had increased significantly by 1.8 degrees Celsius, while spring rainfall — important for crops — had decreased by up to a third.

Amin called for greater support from wealthy, high-emitting countries for his war-ravaged nation that, despite its tiny role in heating up the planet, is on the receiving end of the wild weather being intensified by global warming. Afghanistan ranks among the countries most at risk of — and least prepared for — climate-linked threats ranging from food insecurity to disease outbreaks, according to an index compiled by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative.

UN agencies says droughts are likely to become the norm in Afghanistan by 2030, leading to land degradation and desertification.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation

A MATTER OF SURVIVAL

Lebanon's hospitals on the brink as COVID cases surge

RAYA JALABI

A drastic rise in COVID-19 infections has pushed Lebanon's hospitals to the edge, and experts warn they will soon be unable to cope as the country buckles under a succession of devastating crises.

Lebanon's healthcare system was already struggling before several hospitals were badly damaged by a massive explosion at the port of Beirut in early August.

Now medical supplies are dwindling thanks to a shortage of dollars due to an ongoing financial crisis, doctors are emigrating in droves, and fears are growing that subsidies on medicines might soon be lifted.

"At the moment, COVID-19 in Lebanon is not under control," said Firass Abiad, who runs Beirut's Rafik Hariri University hospital, the largest coronavirus facility in the country.

"We are seeing a high positivity rate relative to testing."

Lebanon registered a record 1,321 new daily infections over the weekend, bringing its cumulative total to more than 43,000 cases while the death toll stands at 398. The numbers are low by global standards, but intensive care units have reached a critical 82 per cent of capacity, according to the World Health Organization.

Meanwhile, the virus continues to spread in Lebanon's overcrowded prisons, public hospitals and densely packed cities, where mask-wearing remains lax. "If we continue with this exponential growth, I don't think we'll last more than a couple



A doctor handles a test for the coronavirus disease at Rafik Hariri University Hospital in Beirut. — Reuters

THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM WAS ALREADY STRUGGLING AS SEVERAL HOSPITALS WERE BADLY DAMAGED BY A MASSIVE EXPLOSION

of weeks," said Dr Eveline Hitti, chair of the emergency department at the American University in Beirut's Medical Center.

Lebanon was praised for containing the spread early in the pandemic, averaging fewer than 100 daily cases until August. But as the country's woes began to multiply, concerns over the coronavirus took a backseat.

Lebanon is facing its worst crisis since its 1975-1990 civil war. Its banking system has been paralysed since last year, its currency has crashed

by 80 per cent, and banks have severely restricted withdrawals. The financial meltdown was compounded by the explosion on August 4 that wrecked a swathe of Beirut, killing nearly 200 people and damaging several hospitals.

The government has for years owed hospitals millions in arrears. Their unpaid bills are mounting. Doctors said that patients at some hospitals were struggling to pay bills. Some hospitals have doubled prices to keep up with hyperinflation, while others have furloughed staff.

— Reuters



Oman Fencing Committee resumes national team training

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 5

After an absence of seven months, Oman Fencing Committee (OFC) resumed the fencing activities which stopped due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The internal hall at Seeb Stadium was the venue for the resumption of the national fencing team player's training sessions.

Restarting of the fencing activities was accompanied by the strict implementation of the medical precautionary measures as the safety of the players is the top priority for the committee. The committee ensured the implementation of all the instructions raised by the Supreme Committee, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Ministry of Health including the sanitisation of the venue, equipment and related tools of fencing.

Oman fencing head coach, Hisham Karshood, stated that it is great to return back to the normal sporting activity. "After an absence for more than half a year, we are delighted to resume the fencing activities. Definitely, the returning back to the physical training at this tough time will require a cautious resumption of the sporting activities. We believe the safety of the players is the top concern for us and in accordance with that we have implemented strict medical regulations and rules to ensure the safety of the players," he added.

The Tunisian coach explained the schedule of the national fencing team players.

"We have two phases for the resumption of the fencing training programmes. The first phase is the commencement of the training by the national fencing team players only while the rest of the players can join the training when the pandemic situation will be in a safe position and the number of cases drops down."

"We have grouped the national team players into three batches. The first group will begin training from 10 am until 12 noon and for five days weekly. The second batch starts from 4 pm to 6 pm and for three days weekly. The last batch training sessions kick off at 6 pm to 8 pm and it is scheduled for five

days. In each group, there are eight to twelve players only. We have tried to reduce the number of the players and distribute them into groups to avoid the big gatherings," the head coach pointed out.

Karshood affirmed that there is a daily-check up for the player's health condition prior to entrance to the training hall.

"A continuous follow-up will be done with the players' parents to ensure the health condition of the players. Many of the games protocol including handshakes will be avoided. The social distancing and keeping distance of two to four metres at least will be implemented as well. All the training sessions at this period are individual training sessions and the group training sessions will be suspended until further notice," he ended.

During the past few months, the fencing team players had trained remotely from home under at 'Stay Home' campaign. The Sultanate's fencing team medallist Israa al Siyabi was one of the fencing national team stars who took part in the campaign which was under the supervision of the head coach Hisham Karshood. The campaign was part of the committee's initiative to keep the players under right fitness and to adhere all the related decisions which raised by the Supreme Committee and inline to the Ministry of Sports Affairs instructions to stop doing any outdoor and group sports activities.

OFC, which was established in 2019, is a member at Fencing International Federation (FIE) since November 2019. Despite the recent formation of the committee, Oman national fencing team had impressed in different regional participations.

Oman's players had claimed the bronze medal at the Arab Fencing Championships which was held in Bahrain in January 2020. Oman's Ahmed Anwar was the champion at 'flore'e' competition in Kuwait friendly tournament which was part of the team's camp in February 2020 while his team-mate Asad al Maskari finished as the runner-up. At the 'elepee' competitions, Oman team representative Abdulhakeem al Shidani came in second, while Omar al Harthi claimed third place.

BUTLER BRINGS HEAT BACK IN CONTENTION

BUTLER SCORED 40 POINTS, PULLED DOWN 11 REBOUNDS AND HANDED OUT 13 ASSISTS



Miami Heat's Jimmy Butler (22) holds the ball while defended by Los Angeles Lakers' Markieff Morris (right) and LeBron James (top) during the game three of the 2020 NBA Finals at AdventHealth Arena. – USA Today Sports

MIAMI: The Miami Heat, fuelled by a 40-point triple-double from Jimmy Butler, clawed their way back into the NBA Finals with a 115-104 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Sunday.

The under-manned, under-sized, underdog Heat turned the tables on the Western Conference champions in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Orlando, cutting the deficit in the best-of-seven championship series to two games to one.

"I think we realised that we belong," Butler said. "They can be beat, as long as we do what we're supposed to do."

Butler scored 40 points, pulled down 11 rebounds and handed out 13 assists to power a Heat team missing injured Bam Adebayo and Goran Dragic for the second straight game.

The injuries to Adebayo and Dragic were a huge blow to the Eastern Conference fifth-seeded Heat's hopes of pulling off a title upset, but Miami, with Butler leading the way, declined to back down.

Superstar LeBron James led the Lakers with 25 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists.

But it was a tough night for Anthony Davis, who was in foul trouble early and finished with 15 points and just five rebounds in the defeat.

An 8-0 scoring run capped by Rajon Rondo's driving layup saw the Lakers take a 91-89 lead with 8:56 left in the game. The Heat responded with an 8-0 run of their own launched by Butler's fadeaway jumper under pressure in the paint.

After James was whistled for travelling, Butler cut through the Lakers defence and fired a pass to Kelly Olynyk on the perimeter for a three-pointer and the Heat were on their way.

"They continued to make shots," James said. "We had some turnovers, we didn't make shots. They came out and executed after we took the lead."

"Jimmy had his hand in all those plays, pretty much," added James, who said Butler was "phenomenal."

'BIG-TIME' BUTLER

"He did everything that they needed him to do tonight and he came through big-time in a big-time game," James said.

Butler added two blocks and two steals as he did a stellar job defending James, but said individual numbers are meaningless at this stage.

"Win," he said of his total focus in game three, a mission no doubt sharpened by the knowledge that no NBA team has rallied from an 0-3 deficit to win a best-of-seven playoff series. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

WASHINGTON

Garcia claims PGA Sanderson Farms title

Sergio Garcia made a tap-in birdie on the 72nd hole to win the Sanderson Farms Championship on Sunday, taking his first US PGA title since capturing the 2017 Masters.

The 40-year-old Spaniard dropped his approach inside 3 1/2 feet and eagled the par-5 14th to match US clubhouse leader Peter Malnati, then landed an 8-iron from 171 yards just 2 1/2 feet from the cup at 18 and made the winning putt.

"It's pretty sweet," Garcia said after a smile and fist pump in celebration. "It's great. Obviously a lot of hard work." Garcia fired a five-under par 67 to finish 72 holes at the Country Club of Jackson, Mississippi, on 19-under 269 and edge Malnati, who



was in the clubhouse with the lead for two hours, by a stroke.

"This game is my dream job," Malnati said. "I get to do it every day. It beats me up and it's tough. To have a day like today, what I did out there, just felt awesome. I feel like I won the tournament." — AFP



NEW YORK

Reid wins first title at ShopRite Classic

England's Mel Reid won her first LPGA title on Sunday, firing a four-under par 67 to capture the ShopRite Classic by two strokes over American Jennifer Kupcho.

The 33-year-old from Derby made bogey at the par-3 17th but closed with a birdie to finish 72 holes at the Seaview resort in Galloway, New Jersey, on 19-under 265.

"Relief. It's a huge relief," Reid said. "It's so emotional."

Kupcho was next on 267 after a final-day 68 with American Jennifer Song third on 268 and Japan's Nasa Hataoka fourth on 270 after closing 69s.

Together with compatriot



Georgia Hall, a winner two weeks ago at the Portland Classic, Reid's victory produced the first back-to-back LPGA triumphs by English women since Trish Johnson and Caroline Pierce in 1996.

— AFP

RAI FULFILLS DREAM WITH SCOTTISH OPEN WIN

Aaron Rai said he had fulfilled a dream in winning the EPGA Tour Scottish Open on Sunday beating Ryder Cup star and fellow Englishman Tommy Fleetwood in a play-off. Rai, 25, came into the tournament on the back of a runner-up finish in last week's Irish Open. "It's incredible, it's a dream a come true," said Rai.



DELHI'S MISHRA OUT OF IPL AFTER INJURY

India and Delhi Capitals' leg-spinner Amit Mishra has been ruled out for the remainder of the Indian Premier League season after injuring his finger against the Kolkata Knight Riders, his team said on Monday. The 37-year-old, who last played for India in a T20 against England in February 2017, has been one of the top performers in league cricket.

Watson, Du Plessis fire up Chennai

Watson, aged 39, struck form with an attacking 83 in an unbeaten 181-run opening stand with the 36-year-old Du Plessis, who plundered 87



Shane Watson (L) and Faf du Plessis of Chennai Super Kings greet Kings XI Punjab players after their win in the Indian Premier League match at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, Dubai. – BCCI

DUBAI: Veterans Shane Watson and Faf du Plessis rewarded Chennai Super Kings' faith in sticking with their old guard after leading their team to a thumping 10-wicket Indian Premier League win.

Watson, aged 39, struck form with an attacking 83 in an unbeaten 181-run opening stand with the 36-year-old Du Plessis, who plundered 87, as Chennai thrashed Kings XI Punjab on Sunday.

Led by 39-year-old Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the three-time Indian Premier League winners are labelled "Dad's Army" by the media and they ended a run of three consecutive defeats by keeping to a philosophy of backing their ageing players.

While South Africa's in-from Du Plessis struck his third half-century of the season, it was Australian Watson's return to form that enabled the team to bounce back. "It is something (selection consistency) that we bank on and

sometimes (Chennai coach Stephen Fleming doesn't get as much credit," Dhoni said after the win. "It's not that we don't have debates, but it's one plan, that's the relationship between us." Watson overcame put behind

him scores of four, 33, 14 and one to help Chennai to a franchise record opening stand. Fleming, the former New Zealand captain who has been with Chennai since the inaugural 2008 season of the cash-rich Twenty20 league, said it

was important to retain confidence in players during the lean periods. "You have to be very courageous when things don't go their way and positive as well," Fleming told reporters after the match. "Attitude you can control and all

SCOREBOARD

KINGS XI PUNJAB

L Rahul c MS Dhoni b S Thakur63
M Agarwal c S Curran b P Chawla26
M Singh c A Rayudu b R Jadeja27
N Pooran c R Jadeja b S Thakur33
G Maxwell not out11
S Khan not out14
Extras (Ob 1lb Onb Open 3w)4
Total (20 overs)178-4
Fall of wickets: 1-61, 2-94, 3-152, 4-152
Bowling: Deepak Chahar 3-0-17-0, Sam Curran 3-0-31-0, Shardul Thakur 4-0-39-2, Dwayne Bravo 4-0-38-0, Ravindra Jadeja 4-0-30-1, Piyush Chawla 2-0-22-1

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

Shane Watson not out83
Faf du Plessis not out87
Extras (Ob 0lb Onb Open 11w)11
Total (17.4 overs)181-0
Bowling: Sheldon Cottrell 3-0-30-0, Mohammed Shami 3-4-0-35-0, Harpreet Brar 4-0-41-0, Chris Jordan 3-0-42-0, Ravi Bishnoi 4-0-33-0

try do is provide some selection security with guys and then ask them to be as confident and positive as they feel. "If Shane had been struggling in the nets and looking out of touch then it may have been a selection issue," added Fleming. "But he has been nothing but solid." Du Plessis smashed 11 fours and a six in his 53-ball stay at the crease in Dubai and credited the team management for sticking with their players. "Credit to Dhoni and Fleming, it's obviously the CSK way," said Du Plessis. "They stick with players a bit longer than other teams might." — AFP



Trent Boult of Mumbai Indians celebrates the wicket of Kane Williamson of Sunrisers Hyderabad during the Indian Premier League match at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. – BCCI

Boult powers Mumbai to top

DUBAI: New Zealand quick Trent Boult returned figures of 2-28 as he overcame hot UAE weather to help holders Mumbai Indians reach top of the Indian Premier League table on Sunday.

Boult, a left-arm paceman, led a disciplined bowling attack with Australia's James Pattinson, who also took two wickets, as Mumbai outplayed Sunrisers Hyderabad by 34 runs in the afternoon match of the Twenty20 tournament.

South Africa's Quinton de Kock hit form with his 39-ball 67 to guide Mumbai to 208 for five, a total the bowlers defended by restricting Hyderabad to 174-7 at the short-boundary Sharjah cricket ground. "We had watched a bit of cricket played on this wicket. Small ground too. Good effort by the boys. We had something to bowl to," Boult said after being named man of the match. "I am known for swing and not for slower ones with the new ball, but you just use variations and angles." Boult got the key wickets of England batsman Jonny Bairstow

I am known for swing and not for slower ones with the new ball, but you just use variations and angles

TRENT BOULT
Mumbai Indians bowler

for 25 and his national captain Kane Williamson, caught behind for three, to choke David Warner's Hyderabad. "I don't actually get Kane out too much in the nets. So nice to do so, but more important to get the wicket," he said. "Very foreign conditions for me, very hot, but you have to be clear in your head. Execute what you want to do, and not worry about the ball travelling out of the park." Rohit Sharma-led Mumbai lead the eight-team points table with three wins and two losses. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

MUMBAI INDIANS

R Sharma c J Bairstow b S Sharma6
Q de Kock c&b R Khan67
S Yadav c T Natarajan b S Kaul27
I Kishan c M Pandey b S Sharma31
H Pandya b S Kaul28
K Pollard not out25
K Pandya not out20
Extras (Ob 1lb 1nb Open 2w)4
Total (20 overs)208-5
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-48, 3-126, 4-147, 5-188
Bowling: Sandeep Sharma 4-0-41-2, T Natarajan 4-0-29-0, Siddarth Kaul 4-0-64-2, Abdul Samad 2-0-27-0, Rashid Khan 4-0-22-1, Kane Williamson 2-0-24-0

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

D Warner c I Kishan b J Pattinson60
J Bairstow c H Pandya b T Boult25
M Pandey c K Pollard b J Pattinson30
K Williamson c Q de Kock b T Boult3
P Garg c R Chahar b K Pandya8
A Sharma b J Bumrah10
A Samad c R Sharma b J Bumrah20
R Khan not out3
S Sharma not out0
Extras (Ob 5lb Onb Open 10w)15
Total (20 overs)174-7
Fall of wickets: 1-34, 2-94, 3-116, 4-130, 5-142, 6-168, 7-172
Bowling: Trent Boult 4-0-28-2, James Pattinson 4-0-29-2, Krunal Pandya 4-0-35-1, Jasprit Bumrah 4-0-41-2, Kieron Pollard 3-0-20-0, Rahul Chahar 1-0-16-0

Spurs hit shambolic United for six

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, OCT 5

Manchester United suffered a humiliating 6-1 defeat, their heaviest in nearly a decade as Tottenham Hotspur became the first visiting side to score four first-half goals in a league match at United's home in 63 years. It is also the first time in 34 years that United have lost their opening two league fixtures at home. A dejected manager Ole Solskjaer said: "This is my worst day ever as manager. It's hurt all the players and it's hurt me, it's embarrassing. I hold my hand up, it's my fault. I am responsible for this. Today was the worst that you can get from these players." The difference between the sides clearly stood out. United were lacking organisation, resilience and it seemed the desire to compete. Tottenham on the other hand, had all these qualities. They were energetic, quick-witted, they worked hard and were dominant in midfield.

The match had sprung into life as early 24 seconds of the start when Anthony Martial was felled by Davison Sanchez in the box and Bruno Fernandes slotted home the spot kick. But within two minutes the equaliser came. Erik Lamela took the ball off Luke Shaw for Tanguy Ndombele to put the ball into the net. Just three minutes later Spurs took the lead, Harry Kane, having been fouled by Harry Maguire, was alert enough to take a quick free-kick which sent Heung-Min Son clear to run through 40 yards and clip the ball past De Gea. United's misfortune continued when after 28 minutes they were down to ten men. Lamela struck Martial with his forearm while waiting for a corner kick which drew a retaliatory weak slap to the face. That was enough for Lamela to go



Tottenham Hotspur's Son Heung-min celebrates scoring their second goal against Manchester United with Harry Kane at Old Trafford. – Reuters

down in a play-acting performance and Martial was shown the red card. Within a couple of minutes Spurs got the third goal with Son picking out Kane from the left to apply a simple finish. United were by now in total disarray and Son picked up his second goal in the 37th minute when he ran untracked into the penalty area to receive a cross from Serge Aurier and flicked the ball inside the near post. Six minutes after the comfort of a 4-1 first-half lead, the visitors added their fifth. Paul Pogba failed to follow Aurier when he received a pass from Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg and sent a lovely shot just inside the far post. Finally, eleven minutes before

time, Pogba went sliding into Ben Davies for Kane to covert the penalty to make it six and the second for himself. After this victory over the club where he was predecessor to Solskjaer, Spurs manager Jose Mourinho said: "Manchester United don't lose many matches. To lose by six doesn't happen everyday. It's a historical victory, it's history for Tottenham, history for my boys and I can't deny also history for me." He added: "It's a victory of confidence, the team is so confident. I feel very happy, it's an honour for us to have this unique record in this stadium. The performance was very, very impressive. The message this week is that together and with this squad we can make it."



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Czech Republic's Petra Kvitova celebrates after winning a point against China's Zhang Shuai during their fourth round match of French Open 2020 at the Roland Garros in Paris. – AFP

TSITSIPAS FIRST GREEK PLAYER
IN FRENCH OPEN LAST EIGHT

KVITOVA RETURNS TO QUARTERS AFTER 8 YEARS

PARIS: Petra Kvitova returned to the French Open quarterfinals for the first time in eight years on Monday.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Kvitova is through to the last eight at Roland Garros for just the second time. Her best run in Paris came when she reached the semifinals in 2012.

Seventh seed Kvitova, who missed last year's tournament due to an arm injury, defeated China's Zhang Shuai 6-2, 6-4 and will next play German veteran Laura Siegemund.

"After eight years to be in the quarterfinal again, it's great. I'm really happy for that, that I'm still able to play on all surfaces," said Kvitova.

"When the roof is closed it's like being indoors and I really love to play."

Stefanos Tsitsipas overcame an eye problem to become the first Greek man to reach the last eight of the French Open with a 6-3, 7-6 (11/9), 6-2 win over Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria.

The 22-year-old will now take on Andrey Rublev in a repeat of the recent Hamburg final which was won by the Russian.

Fifth seed Tsitsipas has won 12 successive sets at the tournament



Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas makes a return to Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov during their fourth round match at the Roland Garros in Paris. – AFP

having been two sets down to Jaume Munar in the opening round.

Rublev, the 13th seed, also advanced to the quarterfinals for the first time after battling past Marton Fucsovics of Hungary 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3).

In a match which featured 12 breaks of serve, the 22-year-old Rublev had been a break down in the second and third sets. He also had to save three set points in the fourth.

"I knew it would be tough," said Rublev who arrived in Paris having reached his second US Open

quarterfinal last month.

"I had a little bit of luck today. There was a lot of wind so you are going to lose your serve a lot in those conditions."

FIRST ARAB WOMAN

Ons Jabeur is targeting a second quarterfinal in three Slams after becoming the first Arab woman to make the fourth round here.

The Tunisian 30th seed next faces 57th-ranked American Danielle Collins.

Siegemund, 32, advanced to her first Grand Slam singles quarterfinal after defeating former junior champion Paula Badosa of Spain 7-5, 6-2.

She became the fourth unseeded player to make the last eight this year, joining Iga Swiatek, Nadia Podoroska and Martina Trevisan.

Siegemund won last month's US Open women's doubles titles alongside Vera Zvonareva. — AFP

FRENCH OPEN RESULTS

Men (fourth round)
Andrey Rublev (RUS x13) bt Marton Fucsovics (HUN) 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3); Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x5) bt Grigor Dimitrov (BUL x18) 6-3, 7-6 (11/9), 6-2

Women (fourth round)
Petra Kvitova (CZE x7) bt Zhang Shuai (CHN) 6-2, 6-4
Laura Siegemund (GER) bt Paula Badosa (ESP) 7-5, 6-2

Oman futsal side lines up 9 friendlies ahead of AFC Cup

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 5

Oman futsal team has lined up nine friendly matches and an overseas camp in Dubai ahead of their participation in the AFC Asian Futsal Championship in Kuwait in December.

Head coach Younis al Fahdi told *Oman Daily Observer* that the team is better now in terms of fitness and physical preparation and is still striving to reach the best levels.

"The confirmed preparatory matches will be against Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and some local teams in the UAE during end of October and beginning of November and part of the overseas camp in Dubai. The upcoming domestic camp of the team is scheduled to take place in mid of this month until October 25 while the external camp

in Dubai will begin from October 28 until November 12," he said.

The former Seeb captain detailed the focused areas of training sessions during the recently concluded internal camp.

"In the training sessions, the focus was on some technical aspects including speed, endurance and jumping. All these sessions were done under full supervision of the fitness head coach Ricardo De Silva. Two training periods were conducted daily including morning and evening sessions. The morning warm-up concentrated on the fitness part as it was done in gymnasium while the evening training focused on the tactical side on the field," he added.

The preparatory camp which was under full implementation of medical protocol featured some other special techniques on style



of playing. "The tactical training sessions included instructions for players on creating chances from different sides, the speedy movement of the balls and delivering the balls properly to the team-mates," the experienced coach said.

The Sultanate futsal team's fitness coach had delivered many sessions remotely since last April. The technical staff focused on maintaining the fitness level of the players besides developing the strength and endurance skills.

The AFC Futsal Championship draw clubbed Oman in Group A besides Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Vietnam. Japan, one of the favourites, are clubbed in Group B alongside Lebanon, Kyrgyz Republic and Kuwait. Group C comprised four-time runners-up Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Bahrain and China.

Iran, title holders of the last edition, were grouped in Group D alongside Korea Republic, Saudi Arabia and Thailand.

The upcoming edition of the Asian Futsal Championship will be the final stage of FIFA Futsal World Cup qualifying. The top five teams at the AFC Asian Futsal Championship will represent the continent at the FIFA Futsal World Cup Lithuania 2020.

OMAN (PROBABLES):
Hisham al Wahaibi, Abdulaziz al Raqadi, Moosa al Raqadi, Younis al Aweisi, Muhannad al Shibli, Essa al Balushi, Mohammed al Adawi, Loai al Wahaibi, Mutaism al Shamsi, Zamil al Balushi, Khalfan al Maawali, Samer al Balushi, Mohammed al Hasani, Ammar al Busaidy, Mansoor al Hadi, Essa al Jabri, Mohammed al Lawati and Mukhaled al Raqadi.

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Oman signs deal with Swedish firm to tap Mafraq’s heavy oil potential

UPSTREAM INTEREST: Maha Energy (Oman) Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Maha Energy AB of Sweden, is the operator of Block 70 with a 100 per cent working interest

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 5

Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals, signed a new Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA) with Maha Energy (Oman) Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sweden’s Maha Energy AB, covering the exploration and development of hydrocarbons in Block 70 in central Oman. Signing on behalf of the Swedish firm was Talal bin Saifal Subhi, representing Maha Energy (Oman) Limited.

The pact will help unlock the heavy oil potential of the Mafraq oilfield, which is the most important prospect within the relatively tiny 639 sq kilometre concession — one of six Oil & Gas blocks that were tendered out by



the Ministry as part of the 2019 Oman Licensing Round. Along with 58, 73, 74, 75 and 76, Block 70 was previously part of the prolific Block 6 currently operated by majority-government-owned Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

In a statement, the Ministry

said the Swedish firm, as the operator with a 100 per cent working interest in the Block, will undertake geological and geophysical studies and 3D seismic reprocessing, as well as drill appraisal wells to evaluate the potential of the Mafraq field.

First discovered by PDO in

1988, the Mafraq field is estimated to contain between 185 — 280 million barrels of original oil in place (OIP).

There are seven wells drilled in this block. Most are older wells, drilled prior to 1992. Primary targets for the older wells were the Shuaiba Formation and the

Natih Formation, where gas was discovered. Besides the Natih and Shuaiba formations, deeper targets exist. These include the Barik, Miqrat and Amin. All are gas-condensate targets. That makes this block an oil (proven) and gas-condensate (prospective) block, according to the Ministry.

Block 70 will mark Maha Energy’s maiden foray into Oman’s upstream sector. The EPSA pact for Block 70 covers an initial exploration period of three years with an optional extension period of another three years, the company said.

In the event of a commercial oil or gas discovery, the EPSA can be transformed into a 15-year production license which can be extended for another five years. Additionally, in case of a commercial discovery, an Omani state-owned oil company has a right to acquire up to a 30 per cent interest in Block 70 against refunding the pro-rata share of past expenditure.

Stockholm-headquartered Maha Energy currently operates oilfields in Brazil and the United States.



Singapore’s economy recovering from lockdowns

BANGKOK: Singapore is gradually recovering from record losses prompted by coronavirus-related restrictions, according to data released on Monday.

Retail sales in South East Asia’s wealthiest economy were up 1.4 per cent in August compared to July, the Department of Statistics said, marking the continuation of a rebound seen since a two-month lockdown ended in June. August sales remained down 5.7 per cent year-on-year, however.

“Food retail and administrative [and] support services sectors remained adversely affected by ongoing social-distancing measures,” the statistics department said.

Almost 11 per cent of all August retailing was done online, including a fifth of food and beverage sales, as restaurants struggled to regain dine-in business after a ban during the lockdown.

— dpa

Omantel and Equinix inaugurate Sultanate’s first international data center

The world-class facility is the first carrier-neutral hub in Oman where carriers, content providers and cloud providers can colocate critical IT infrastructure

Muscat, October 05,— Taking yet another major technological stride that will further revolutionise the future of telecommunications in Oman and the Middle East region, Omantel has proudly announced the opening of MC1, an international data center built in collaboration with Equinix — the world’s digital infrastructure company. The facility is the first world-class, carrier-neutral hub in Oman where carriers, content providers and cloud providers can colocate their critical IT infrastructure.

This state-of-the-art hub, an International Business Exchange™ (IBX®) data center, that has been opened in Barka is strategically located between Asia, Africa and Europe. MC1 will serve as a regional interconnection hub providing ultra-low latency connection points between key global business markets. The new facility benefits from direct connectivity to strategic cable landing stations (CLS) and subsea cable systems that terminate directly inside the facility, providing customers with increased performance and security, along with significant cost savings.

Talal Al Mamari, CEO of Omantel, said, “Today, data center infrastructure sits at the heart of global ICT and enables all of us to enjoy the cloud-based apps and services we use every day. MC1 represents a significant step forward for Oman and the Middle Eastern ICT markets. We are delighted that the facility is now operational, and together with Equinix, we hope to enable a new era of telecommunications both regionally and globally. Coupled with the majority of the GCC’s international submarine cables landing in Oman, all accessible from the Equinix data center, we believe this partnership will further



enhance Oman’s competitiveness in the global digital economy.”

MC1 will provide customers with direct access to the Equinix Internet Exchange™, creating a regional peering hub for networks, content providers and large enterprises to exchange internet traffic over the world’s largest peering solution. MC1 is Equinix’s first data center in Oman and its fourth in the MENA region.

Omantel entered into a joint venture with Equinix in 2018 to deliver data center and interconnection services to customers in the Middle East through the development of the new network-dense data center. The resulting site, MC1, is operated by Equinix and includes 23,600+ square feet of colocation space and 725 cabinets. The site also has the capacity to grow to 2,150+ cabinets with future IBX builds.

With subsea cable systems terminating directly in MC1, the site benefits from continued



investments by Omantel in multiple strategic subsea cable systems throughout the world, reaching over 50 countries globally. Omantel currently has investments in more than 20 subsea cable systems and leverages six diverse landing stations in Oman and one in Marseille, France.

Eugene Bergen Henegouwen, President, EMEA, Equinix, said, “We are seeing an accelerated demand for digital transformation in MENA. Across different sectors, organizations are re-assessing their cloud adoption strategies and cloud readiness. In the digital age, companies need to reach all the right places and partners to seize opportunity, and they need to do it out at the edge. Our partnership with Omantel greatly supports our ability to meet this need, particularly as our customers can now leverage Omantel’s significant subsea cable infrastructure. This type of colocation and interconnection services platform creates a magnetic effect that draws in more

users that can leverage a global subsea cable fabric connecting cities, countries and continents together. Along with this, our investment in the Middle East market—including the new data center in Oman—reflects our commitment to our customers as they continue their digital transformation journeys.”

According to the latest edition of the Global Interconnection Index (GXI), enterprise consumption of interconnection bandwidth is predicted to grow at a 67% CAGR by 2022 in Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA), outpacing other forms of business data exchange, as businesses respond to rapidly growing volumes of data.

Sohail Qadir, Vice President of Omantel Wholesale Unit said “Omantel provides cable landings and connectivity to more than 120 cities across the world. We also have investments in 20 subsea cable systems and leverage six di-

verse landing stations in Oman and another in France. Additionally, Omantel is an investor in AAE-1 consortium, one of the largest, newest high-capacity connections between Asia, Africa and Europe. And through this partnership with Equinix, we believe we are well-positioned now to provide the current and future needs of carriers, content providers, and cloud providers”.

Based on demand and requirements, customers across Gulf states and the wider MENA region can also leverage other Equinix data centers in the region for dual access to content providers, allowing carriers, content providers and cloud providers to leverage interconnection and further build resilience into their IT and network infrastructures.

Kamel Al-Tawil, Managing Director for Middle East and North Africa, Equinix, stated: “As IP traffic growth continues to accelerate, it is more important than ever that the IP peering community has a scalable, reliable and globally consistent Internet Exchange solution in all markets where they want to peer traffic. Oman is strategically positioned between Asia, Africa and Europe, and with our partnership with Omantel, we intend to create a hub that will allow drivers of internet traffic to efficiently peer, and expand operations across the world”.

According to Equinix’s 2019-20 Global Tech Trends Survey, over 40% of IT decision-makers in EMEA are prioritizing connecting with new digital ecosystems as part of their organization’s overarching technology strategy.

Oman’s be’ah weighs waste-to-energy options to support PDO’s EOR operations

CIRCULAR ECONOMY:
Study sees potential for utilising power and steam recovered from incinerating an estimated 960,000 tonnes of waste per annum

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be’ah) — the Sultanate’s solid waste management flagship — says it has finalised a feasibility study into Waste-to-Energy (WTE) options aimed at generating high pressure steam for the Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) operations of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

The study envisions multiple scenarios for utilising power and steam recovered from incinerating an estimated 960,000 tonnes of waste per annum, wholly government-run be’ah stated in its 2019 Annual Report.

“This project will help PDO meet its requirement for high-pressure steam to be used for its Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR)



activities,” said be’ah.

“Upon a final decision from PDO on the preferred scenario, be’ah and PDO will enter into an agreement to commence RFQ (Request for Qualifications) and RFP (Request for Proposals) processes for tendering out the project on BOOT basis: Build, Own, Operate and Transfer,” it noted. be’ah has been exploring waste-to-energy options to deal with various kinds of waste. Its signature waste-to-energy project at Barka, centring on the development of Oman’s first such scheme for electricity generation, has been temporarily

put on hold due to a slump in power demand growth. Oman’s power authorities have promised to revive the project once market conditions are conducive for its implementation.

The proposed Barka Waste to Energy (WTE) plant envisions the diversion of 3,840 tonnes of

“The project concept was promoted to major stakeholders by demonstrating its sustainability and impact on a national level — from reducing environmental emissions, saving landfill spaces, reduction of dependency on non-renewable resources and attraction of foreign direct funds to generation of employment

BE’AH

municipal solid waste (MSW) everyday for the production of an average 137 MW/day of electricity, which will supplied to the main grid, said be’ah.

“The project concept was promoted to major stakeholders by demonstrating its sustainability and impact on a national level — from reducing environmental emissions, saving landfill spaces, reduction of dependency on non-renewable resources and attraction of foreign direct funds to generation

of employment.

Both be’ah and The Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP) conducted feasibility and techno-economic studies for developing the WTE plant in Barka highlighting the concept design and key operating parameters to be considered.”

However, flagging electricity demand triggered by the economic downturn stemming from collapsing international oil prices last year cast a shadow on the viability of the project with authorities deciding to put it on hold until market conditions improve.

Once revived, be’ah is expected to play its part as the principal supplier of municipal waste as feedstock, while OPWP will be the offtaker of electricity from the project.

Side by side, be’ah is exploring opportunities for converting biodegradable waste (organic waste) into commercial valuable fertiliser alongside the potential for biogas production as well. Also on the anvil is a project that seeks to produce biodiesel from used cooking oil recovered from hotels, restaurants, industrial kitchens and other local generators.

■ IMPACT ANALYSIS

MEDRC webinar debates water security amid COVID-19

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 5

A MEDRC-organised public webinar on the theme, ‘Water Security and COVID-19: Learning and Beyond’, on Monday convening leading water experts from Oman and the Netherlands to exchange on responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The event focused on analysing the impact of COVID-19 on the provision of water services, highlighting solutions and lessons learned based on the experiences of invited speakers.

It also showcased the findings of Dutch water researchers working on the development of a key indicator tool for measuring the severity of COVID-19 in communities through wastewater sampling.



Among the guest speakers and presenters were; Abdullah al Naimi, General Manager of Operations, Diam; Marwa Abdullah al Mahdouri, Process Engineer, Haya Water

and Frederic Been, Sewer Surveillance Research Scientist, KWR Water Research Institute. The Dutch Ambassador for the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Oman Laetitia van Asch and Dr Jauad el Kharraz, Head of Research at MEDRC, were also in attendance.

MEDRC Centre Director, Ciarán Ó Cuinn who could not join the webinar due to prior commitments said, “The global pandemic has reinforced the role water plays in keeping populations safe and well in times of crisis.

Water utilities are on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic as essential health service providers, working to keep clean water flowing, managing waste and monitoring the spread of disease.”

During the webinar Dr Frederic Been of the KWR Water Research Institute in the Netherlands summarised how wastewater surveillance could help gather data to map the extent of the virus in populations, providing critical information and acting as a powerful early warning tool to alert the health authorities, well before reported cases occur.

The expert panel discussed topics such as the fate and inactivation of the virus during water treatment, sewer surveillance, operational difficulties, impacts on water professionals and responded to questions from participants.

The event was held with the support of the Embassy for the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Oman, KWR Water Research Institute, Watershare, Diam and Haya Water.

Cineworld shuts down US and UK theatres; 45,000 jobs hit



People are seen at a Cineworld in Leicester's Square in London, Britain. — Reuters

LONDON: Cineworld, the world's second-biggest cinema chain, will close its UK and US movie theatres this week, leaving as many as 45,000 workers unemployed, as it fights a coronavirus-related collapse in film releases and cinema-going.

The company said the reluctance of studios to go ahead with major releases such as the new James Bond film had left it no choice but to close all 536 Regal theatres in the US and its 127 Cineworld and Picturehouse theatres in the UK from October 8.

Cineworld Chief Executive Mooky Greidinger told Sky News that the operations might resume in “two months, or a bit longer”. Movies including the superhero sequel “Wonder Woman 1984” are slated for a Christmas Day release.

“From a liquidity point of view, we were bleeding much bigger amounts when we are open than when we were closed,” Greidinger said. Cineworld’s statement on Monday, confirming leaks over the weekend, spelt out the scale of job losses from its move, which affects thousands of ancillary staff including cleaners and security as well as its own employees.

Shares fell as much as 60 per cent to an all-time low within ten minutes of the opening bell on Monday as the group, which is carrying heavy debt due in part to its acquisition of Regal in 2018, said it was looking at all ways of raising additional funds. By 0915 GMT, they were 30 per cent lower, taking their loss this year to more than 90 per cent.

— Reuters

Canada M&A emerges from pandemic lows in Q3

ONTARIO: Canadian mergers and acquisitions are set to increase following a modest Q3 recovery from multi-year lows, as market stability and access to capital give companies the confidence to negotiate and price transactions.

Equity offerings also picked up in the three months through September, as stock market recovery following a tumultuous few months early in the coronavirus pandemic encouraged issuers to tap markets to recapitalise.

Some \$40.9 billion worth of M&A deals were announced in the third quarter, the highest since the onset of the coronavirus crisis in late 2019 and a 200 per cent jump from the three months ended in June, Refinitiv data showed. But it was lower than the \$50.7 billion worth of transactions from a year ago.



A Canadian flag flies in front of the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ontario. — Reuters

“There are clearly indications that we’re in the early stages of recovery, a lot more strategic dialogue going on and private equity is continuing to be very active,” said Emmanuel Pressman, partner at Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP.

Canadian security firm GardaWorld’s \$3.8 billion offer for Britain’s G4S and cable operator Altice USA Inc’s \$7.7 billion proposal to buy Canadian cable company Cogeco were among the deals announced Q3. — Reuters

BUSINESS ALERT

MUSCAT

BANK MUSCAT TO HOLD RO 500,000 SPECIAL NATIONAL DAY DRAW

Coinciding with the Sultanate’s 50th National Day celebrations on November 18, 2020, Bank Muscat has begun the countdown to conduct a special Al Mazyona draw for this National Day. Fifty lucky winners will win prizes of RO 10,000 each during the special draw.

The prize draw represents an excellent opportunity for the bank’s customers to win one of these special prizes. All that a customer needs to do is maintain a minimum balance of RO 1,000 in their Al Mazyona account to be eligible. The draw is being held in such a way that the more the customer’s savings, the greater the chance to win one of the valuable prizes.

Abdullah bin Tamman al Maashani (pictured), Deputy General Manager — Institutional Sales and Product Development, Bank Muscat, said: “The bank is



pleased to allocate these special prizes to our customers on the occasion of the 50th National Day celebrations of Oman. The bank places great priority on this special occasion as it is a much loved and dear occasion for all Omanis and residents of the Sultanate. To enable heartfelt celebrations by our customers, the bank will be offering large financial prizes during the raffle draws on this occasion, with the total amount of prizes amounting to RO 500,000.”

Bank Muscat always participates in all national

events in order to bring joy and happiness to its customers and will continue to conduct special prize draws on a number of other occasions too during the year. It calls upon customers to continue their savings in their accounts to get more opportunities to win exciting financial prizes.

Al Mazyona has succeeded in inculcating a strong savings culture in Oman. For over 25 years, Al Mazyona has rewarded numerous customers and enriched their lives. Bank Muscat encourages everyone to save for the future with the objective of creating a life-changing experience for winners and improving the well-being of their families. Oman’s flagship savings scheme continues to reward a prudent and financially responsible savings habit among millions of customers with a massive RO 11 million to be won by 6,677 over the course of the year.

Euro zone economic recovery in danger as COVID-19 resurgence hits service industries

To support the bloc's economy, the European Central Bank plans to make 1.35 trillion euros of additional pandemic-related asset purchases and the European Union has announced a 750 billion euro recovery fund due to kick in next year.

LONDON: The euro zone's economic recovery faltered in September with growing evidence sectors and countries in the bloc are diverging as a resurgence of the coronavirus forces the reimposition of restrictions on activity.

A rise in infection rates in Europe, which a poll concluded last month was the biggest threat to the economic recovery, will concern policymakers who had hoped the euro zone economy was healing after contracting an historic 11.8 per cent in the second quarter.

Monday's purchasing managers' surveys showed services activity, which accounts for around two-thirds of the bloc's GDP, slammed into reverse after sister surveys last week suggested factories was enjoying something of a revival.

There was also a split between the currency union's member



Employees wear face masks as they work on power trains for the Taycan full-electric sports car at a car production site in Stuttgart, southern Germany. — AFP

countries.

While Germany's service industry barely grew in September, strong manufacturing helped the private sector in Europe's largest economy remain on track for a solid recovery.

But French business activity fell for the first time since June and in Spain the services sector sank deeper into the red as travel

restrictions ravaged the summer tourism season. Italy's services industry contracted for the second month running with no sign of recovery on the horizon.

"The recovery in industry had been lagging but does seem now to have been catching up whereas services really is bearing the brunt of tighter restrictions," said Jessica Hinds at Capital Economics.

"In Spain and France in particular, and elsewhere in the euro zone, there has been a tightening up. Fears of a resurgence are adding to consumer caution," Hinds said.

Meanwhile, Britain's economy, outside the currency union, proved more resilient than initially thought last month, despite a tightening of lockdown

restrictions and an end to a temporary government subsidy for businesses such as restaurants and bars.

Euro zone retail sales were much stronger than expected in August due to a sharp surge of online purchases and increased clothing sales amid the pandemic, although July sales were revised downwards, official data showed

on Monday.

"These sales numbers are almost too good to be true, with worries about unemployment rising and consumer confidence at historically low levels," said Bert Colijn at ING. "Current levels of spending cannot be maintained for more than a few months at best, and are likely to be reversed sooner."

To support the bloc's economy, the European Central Bank plans to make 1.35 trillion euros of additional pandemic-related asset purchases and the European Union has announced a 750 billion euro recovery fund due to kick in next year.

But that didn't stop IHS Markit's final composite Purchasing Managers' index, combining services and manufacturing surveys and seen as a good barometer of overall economic health, falling to 50.4 in September from August's 51.9, close to the 50 mark separating growth from contraction.

Suggesting any pick up may take some time, however, demand for services fell in September and firms cut headcount for a seventh month.

Still, optimism about the coming year improved to levels not seen since before Europe felt the full brunt of the pandemic. The composite future output index rose to its highest level since February. — Reuters

Malaysia's AirAsia shuts operations in Japan

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's flagship budget airline AirAsia Group Bhd is ceasing its Japanese operations immediately, the carrier said in a bourse filing on Monday.

The airline said it has been notified that the board of directors of its majority-owned subsidiary AirAsia Japan has taken a decision to cease operations with immediate effect.

"We respect and have agreed to the decision made by AAJ as this would reduce the cash burn of AAJ and the Company amid the highly challenging operating conditions in Japan which have been aggravated by the



The tail of AirAsia X plane is seen at an airport in Kuala Lumpur. — AFP

COVID-19 pandemic," it said.

Group Chief Executive Officer Tony Fernandes last month said that the group was reviewing its business in Japan due to the impact of the pandemic.

The group, which employs around 300, has reported it flew 98 per cent fewer passengers in April-June than in the same period of last year. — Reuters

Oil rebounds on Norway shutdowns

LONDON: Oil prices rose on Monday lifted by an escalating workers' strike in Norway. Energy major Equinor shut four of its offshore oil and gas fields on Monday as its workers expanded their strike, a company spokesman said.

Two more fields operated by Neptune Energy and Wintershall Dea also face likely shutdowns on Monday because of the strike, the Norwegian Oil and Gas Association (NOG) has said.

"This will not entail any serious tightening of supply on the market as concerns about demand and fears of a renewed oversupply predominate at present," said Commerzbank analyst Carsten Fritsch.

The reduction in Norwegian production was mainly balanced by rising output in Libya, analysts said. Libyan oil production has increased by about 20,000 barrels per day (bpd) from last week to 290,000 bpd as exports ramp up, a Libyan oil source said.

Meanwhile recent price rises have prompted some US producers to resume drilling. US energy



Workers perform maintenance on oil pipelines at the Sirte Oil Company refinery in Brega, Libya. — Reuters

firms this week added oil and natural gas rigs for a third week in a row for the first time since October 2018.

Brent was up \$1.47, or 3.7 per cent, to \$40.74 a barrel by 1100 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was \$1.56, or 4.2 per cent, higher at \$38.61 a barrel. — Reuters

■ FLAGSHIP BILL

Investors warn Indonesia that jobs bill puts forests at risk

LONDON: Global investors managing \$4.1 trillion in assets have warned Indonesia's government that a flagship job creation bill due to come before parliament on Monday could pose new risks to the country's tropical forests.

In a letter seen by Reuters, 35 investors expressed their concerns, including Aviva Investors, Legal & General Investment Management, the Church of England Pensions Board, Netherlands-based asset manager Robeco and Japan's largest asset manager Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Asset Management.

"While we recognise the necessity for reform of business law in Indonesia we have



Indonesian President Joko Widodo walks in a burned forest as firefighters extinguish the remaining flames in Riau, Indonesia. — AFP

concerns about the negative impact of certain environmental

protection measures affected by the Omnibus Bill on Job

With President Joko Widodo's coalition controlling

74%

of seats, parliament is expected to pass the bill

Creation," Peter van der Werf, senior engagement specialist at Robeco, said in a statement.

With President Joko Widodo's coalition controlling 74 per cent of seats, parliament is expected to pass the bill that the government

says is needed to improve the investment climate and streamline regulations in Southeast Asia's biggest economy.

But the investors said they feared the bill could hamper efforts to protect Indonesia's forests, which would in turn undermine global action to tackle biodiversity loss and slow climate change.

"While the proposed regulatory changes aim to increase foreign investment, they risk contravening international best practice standards intended to prevent unintended harmful consequences from business activities that could deter investors from Indonesian markets," the letter said. — Reuters

In brief

■ TOKYO

TOYOTA, NISSAN TO SEEK REIMBURSEMENT FROM UK IF BREXIT TALKS FAIL

Japanese automakers Toyota Motor Corp and Nissan Motor Co Ltd would seek reimbursement from Britain if the government fails to agree an EU trade deal, the *Nikkei* financial daily reported on Monday.

The companies are bracing for an additional 10 per cent EU tax on automobile imports from Britain and are demanding that the government pays for such additional customs costs, the report said, without citing sources.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Sunday said that he did not particularly wish for a Brexit transition period to end without a new trade deal in place but that Britain could live with such an outcome.

— Reuters

■ LONDON

UK CAR SALES DROP IN SEPTEMBER, NORMALLY A BUMPER MONTH

British new car registrations fell by around 4 per cent year-on-year in September, usually one of the top two months of the year for sales, as the coronavirus pandemic continued to affect the sector, according to preliminary data from an industry group.

There is normally strong demand in September as it is one of two occasions per year when the licence plate series changes.

The monthly figure of below 330,000 units was expected to be the lowest in more than 20 years. — Reuters



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Above positions are well suited to individuals that are looking to advance their career and gain hands-on experience in a thriving and supportive workplace.

Requirements:

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- English Speaking with good communication skills.
- Traveling to multiple sites, Holding Oman Driving license.

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A Muscat Based company specialized in ICT services has an exciting opportunity for:

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Above positions are well suited to individuals that are looking to advance their career and gain hands-on experience in a thriving and supportive workplace.

Requirements:

- 5 years Minimum experience.
- English Speaking with good communication skills.
- Traveling to multiple sites, Holding Oman Driving license

Interested candidates, please forward your CV to: **info@ip.com.om**



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‘Gilded cage’: private pools, fancy meals in Thailand’s luxury quarantine

A private infinity pool, gourmet meals – and two temperature checks a day. Welcome to five-star quarantine in Thailand, where well-heeled tourists can live in luxury while obeying some of the world’s strictest anti-coronavirus measures.

After barring visitors for six months, the tourism-reliant country is reopening to a small number of holidaymakers, with the first batch arriving in Phuket, a popular resort island, in the coming weeks.

But before enjoying the beaches, the 300 tourists from China and Scandinavia will have to complete 14 days of compulsory quarantine, including two coronavirus tests, overseen by a “war room” of doctors and security guards.

“It will be comfortable but I am afraid I might be anxious because of the confinement,” said Jean-François, a French retiree living in Sweden who hopes to escape the winter in the kingdom.

“I do wonder if Thailand is doing a bit too much,” he said.

At The Senses Resort overlooking Phuket’s Patong Bay, 16 villas have been specially prepared for quarantine guests.

The villas, which are up to 220 square metres (about 2,400 square feet) were redesigned, getting rid of cushioned surfaces to make disinfecting easier, while CCTV security cameras have been installed at the entrances.

Employees have also received training at a hospital in how to spot infections, and given personal protective equipment to deliver room-service meals.

‘NOT MUCH PROFIT’

“We won’t make much profit from these special clients because of the expenses involved,” says hotel owner Suppachoke Laongphet.

But “we had to find other sources of income to support our staff and the local economy”.

His resort is one of nine properties in Phuket – mostly luxury

Expectations for a record 40 million visitors this year were dashed after the coronavirus put global travel on hold, sending Thailand’s economy into free-fall.

Border closures in April meant an immediate freeze to the incomes of millions of Thais working in the sector – with knock-on effects on the service

Before the pandemic, tourism generated 93 per cent of Phuket’s income. Today, nearly all hotels and more than 70 percent of the island’s businesses are shuttered, officials say

hotels – with government approval for quarantining guests.

Upmarket quarantine does not come cheap: confinement at The Senses runs to a hefty \$5,300, or \$18,700 for a family of four. If the Phuket model proves successful, the government will attempt to replicate it in the rest of the country.

Once visitors finish quarantine, they can stay and travel freely for three to nine months on a special visa created to revive tourism.

and restaurant industries.

Before the pandemic, tourism generated 93 per cent of Phuket’s income. Today, nearly all hotels and more than 70 per cent of the island’s businesses are shuttered, officials say.

But Thailand has emerged relatively unscathed from the virus with just 59 deaths, and authorities are hoping travellers can be lured back despite having to abide by strict – and costly – quarantine measures.

POLICE ON CALL

The number of visitors under the new visa scheme will likely be limited – “just those with the means and who wish to stay several months in our country”, says Kongsak Khoopongsakorn, president of the Thai Hotel Association’s southern chapter.

But a tourism revival – however small – is sorely needed, he says.

“This is not what will sustainably improve the economy of the country but it allows us to be patient.”

At The Senses resort, visitors will wake up to a view of the island’s lush sloping mountains and can swim laps in each villa’s infinity pool.

But attempting to leave the room could bring police at a guest’s door within 15 minutes, said Thanchanok Pramkull, the hotel’s deputy commercial director, while an infected guest can be taken to hospital within half-an-hour.

Completing quarantine does not ensure unfettered freedom – Thai premier Prayut Chan-O-Cha has said visitors’ whereabouts will continue to be tracked via mobile phone apps.

But the strict rules have not deterred interest. About 20 people from India and Europe have already contacted the hotel since it got approval for the programme.

“It is effectively a gilded cage,” says a 50-year-old Danish visitor planning a stay at The Senses, who declined to be named.

“But it’s worth it. After the quarantine, we will be able to enjoy beautiful sunsets in one of the safest places in the world for COVID.”—AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



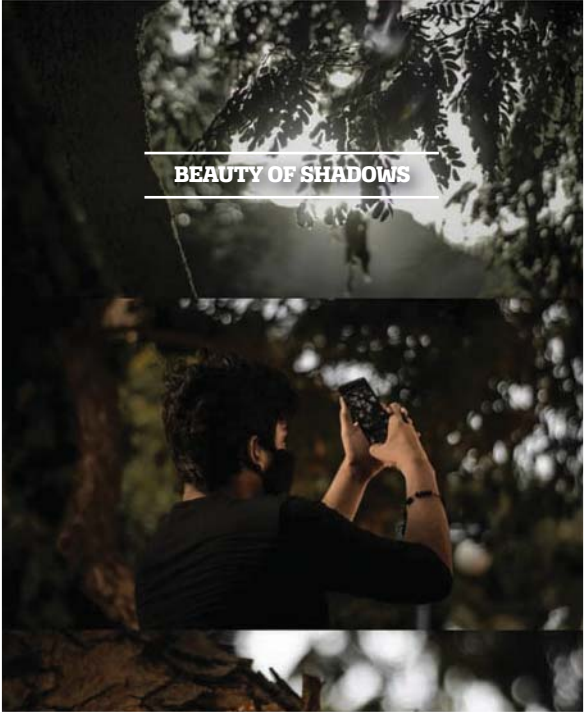
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CONSERVATION

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CELEBRITY



Prince George and siblings quiz Britain's Attenborough on his favourite animal

LONDON: Britain's Prince George, third-in-line to the throne, and his younger sister and brother appeared in rare video footage on Saturday, asking David Attenborough questions about extinction, spiders and the naturalist's favourite animals.

says: "Hello David Attenborough, what animal do you think will become extinct next?", while his sister Charlotte, in a grey school dress, reveals she likes spiders. "Do you like spiders too?," she asks.

Louis asks: "What animal do you like?"



Seven-year-old George, five-year-old Charlotte and two-year-old Louis, whose voices are rarely heard in public, asked the 94-year-old broadcaster questions about the natural world in footage recorded at Kensington Palace last month.

The three children seem set to follow their father, Prince William, Queen Elizabeth's grandson, and their grandfather, Prince Charles, in pursuing environmental causes.

Pictured in a red school polo shirt, George Last month, Attenborough was pictured in the gardens of Kensington Palace after joining the young family to watch an outdoor screening of his film "David Attenborough: A Life On Our Planet."

To celebrate that occasion, the naturalist gave George a fossilised shark tooth but the gift sparked controversy when Malta, where Attenborough discovered the fossil, initially asked for it to be returned before saying the prince could keep it. — **Reuters**

France to ban mink farms and wild animals in travelling circuses

France said on Tuesday it planned to "gradually" ban mink farms in the country as well the use of wild animals in travelling circuses and the breeding of dolphins and orcas in captivity.

Environment Minister Barbara Pompili announced the sweeping measures saying "our attitude to wild animals has changed".

The country's three dolphinariums will also no longer be able to breed or bring in new dolphins or killer whales.

"It is time that our ancestral fascination with these wild beings no longer means they end up in captivity," Pompili added.

However, the minister was vague on when the shutters would come down on mink farms and the use of wild animals for entertainment, saying only that it would be in "the years to come".

"Putting a date on it does not solve all the problems," she said.

"I prefer to start a process so that we get there as quickly as possible."

The measures are sure to be resisted by the French fur industry, which has fought a dogged rearguard action in recent years against luxury fashion houses going fur-free.

And it is as yet unclear what the measures will mean for theme parks that stage birds of prey shows.

French circuses use some 500 wild animals at the moment, according to the profession.

Pompili said the government was going to offer circuses and dolphinariums an aid package of up to eight million euros (\$9.3 million) to help them adapt to the bans.

"We are asking (circuses) to reinvent themselves," she said.

"It will be a time when they will need support, and the state will be at their side," the minister added.

More than 20 European countries have either banned or heavily restricted the use of animals for entertainment.

Some 400 local councils in France already have such bans in place. — **AFP**



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■ HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Growing interest on skincare in Oman

BY BAYAN AL HADHRAMI

Right skin is not simply a matter of genes. Your daily habits have a big impact on what you see in the mirror. There is a dizzying number of opinions on everything from how to moisturize to how to protect your skin. Some products are fighting to survive and some have already gained popularity among consumers. Ultimately, caring for your skin is simply personal.

Korean culture had been globally growing in popularity since the 1990s and with the spread of Korean drama and Korean pop, other Korean motifs gained popularity as well. One of them is Korean skincare and cosmetics. Wa'ad Ali and Wasan Ali, owners of the online k-beauty store Glow Up, explains more about the Korean skincare and the reasons behind this enormous popularity.



Wa'ad and Wasan believe that the Korean Wave helped kick start the trend of k-beauty. Media played a big part in promoting Korean cosmetics as Korean idols advertise for brands and promote the idea of self-care and self-love. The rise of the wellness movement, where you prioritise giving yourself a me-time helped skincare become a routine in our

Wa'ad and Wasan had always been interested in Korean trends and Korean skincare and decided to create their online store in 2018 to introduce Korean cosmetics to the Omani consumer

daily lives. However, the trend wouldn't have lasted this long if it wasn't good enough. Wa'ad and Wasan believe that South Korea is ahead of others in terms of skincare research and ingredients development, and the variety of product options is amazing. Nevertheless, the k-beauty trend is not as popular in Oman where many consumers are

still reluctant to try new products and avert from Western cosmetics. For this reason, Wa'ad and Wasan work hard on educating consumers through their Instagram page @glowup.om. They believe that by educating their customers they are enabling them to choose better. "When you know better, you do better for your skin, and that's the goal."

Wa'ad and Wasan had always been interested in Korean trends and Korean skincare and decided to create their online store in 2018 to introduce Korean cosmetics to the Omani consumer. They love to think that consumers are more interested in k-beauty than before and hope the demand will get better in the future.

"Beauty routines are an opportunity to notice changes within yourself," says Wa'ad. As your skin needs shifts with age, so will your products. Still, she adds, "it's not about creating perfection. It is all about giving yourself the chance to feel and look better".

features



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DAILY PICKS

TRAVEL TALES



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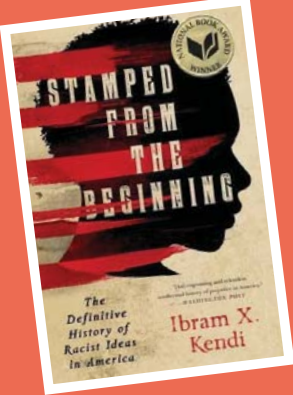
CONSERVATION



FRANCE TO BAN MINK FARMS AND WILD ANIMALS IN TRAVELLING CIRCUSES

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READ



STAMPED FROM THE BEGINNING

BY IBRAM X. KENDI

Winner of the 2016 National Book Award for nonfiction. A look at anti-Black racist ideas and their effect on the course of American history.

CELEBRITY



PRINCE GEORGE AND SIBLINGS QUIZ BRITAIN'S ATTENBOROUGH ON HIS FAVOURITE ANIMAL

Britain's Prince George, third-in-line to the throne, and his younger sister and brother appeared in rare video footage on Saturday, asking David Attenborough questions about extinction, spiders and the naturalist's favourite animals... Story on **Page 18**

CELEBRATE



WORLD CEREBRAL PALSY DAY

Cerebral Palsy is a condition common to a lot of people. While the challenges are great for those afflicted, the family, too, suffer along with them. To celebrate today, learn more about Cerebral Palsy and participate in the conversation.