

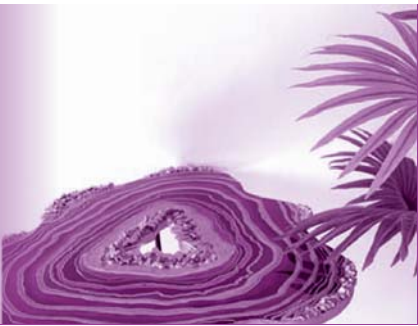
P10

RONALDO AT 101 FOR PORTUGAL



P14

THE THERAPEUTIC AND INTRIGUING ART OF RESIN



P17

DUQM PORT MAIN GATE, CUSTOMS FACILITIES NEAR COMPLETION



OMAN

Fish landings rise by 33.7 per cent

**MUSCAT:** The total quantity of fish landed in the Sultanate reached 371,799 tonnes at the end of June 2020 compared to 278,013 tonnes during the same period of 2019, which is a rise of 33.7 per cent, according to statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Traditional fishing practices in the Sultanate contributed to 358,342 tonnes of fish at the end of June 2020, constituting a rise of 34.3 per cent over 266,780 tonnes in 2019. The total value of the fish stock was RO 160.85 million in 2020, representing a growth of 17.4 per cent over RO 137.04 million in 2019. Coastal fishing and commercial fishing contributed to about 2,274 tonnes and 11,183 tonnes of total fish landings, respectively, at the end of June 2020.

DETAILS ON P3

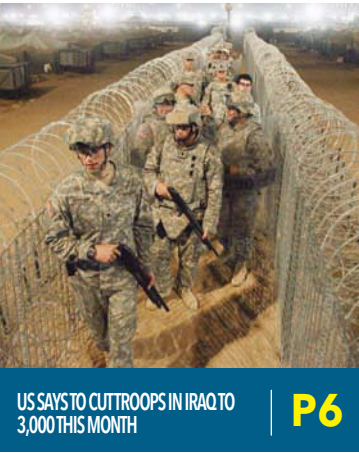
ASIA

Afghanistan VP injured in blast

**KABUL:** Afghanistan's Vice President Amrullah Saleh sustained minor injuries on Wednesday when an explosion targeted his convoy and killed at least 10 people, as government-backed negotiators and the Taliban prepared to meet in Doha for long-delayed peace talks. The attack in the capital Kabul was quickly condemned as an attempt to frustrate the peace process, with top Afghan and foreign officials calling for an end to violence so negotiations between the two warring sides can proceed.

DETAILS ON P7

INSIDE



WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT  
MAX: 39°C  
MIN: 25°C

SALALAH  
MAX: 30°C  
MIN: 25°C

NIZWA  
MAX: 41°C  
MIN: 28°C

SUNRISE 05.51 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR: 04:36

DHUHR: 12:09

ASR: 15:36

MAGHRIB: 18:21

ISHA: 19:32



HM and Trump review bilateral relations

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday received a phone call from President Donald Trump of the United States of America. During the telephonic conversation, His Majesty and President Trump reviewed strong relations between the two friendly countries in various spheres. They also exchanged views about

ongoing developments in the region. The US President expressed his deep appreciation for the co-operation extended by the Sultanate in different fields. On his turn, His Majesty the Sultan reaffirmed the Sultanate's keenness on enhancing relations with the United States and upgrading them towards wider horizons. — ONA

FAREWELL TO AMBASSADORS



On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister of the Council of Ministers for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received separately at his office on Wednesday Zuhair Abdullah al Nsour, Ambassador of Jordan to the Sultanate, and Andreas Panayiotou, Ambassador of Cyprus to the Sultanate, to bid them farewell at the end of their tour of duty. **DETAILS ON P2**

Oman Air to resume services to 12 countries

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

The national airline, Oman Air, will return to scheduled services from October 1 with flights to 16 cities in 12 countries. The announcement follows the Supreme Committee on COVID-19's decision to allow resumption of international flights from next month. The airlines will connect Muscat with London, Istanbul, Frankfurt, Cairo, Mumbai, Delhi, Kochi, Dubai, Doha, Dar Es Salaam, Zanzibar, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Lahore and Islamabad, with more destinations to be added in the coming days. Scheduled services will also connect Muscat with Khasab.

Flights to India are subject to Indian authorities lifting restrictions for scheduled international passenger flights, while domestic services to Salalah have not been announced as the Dhofar Governorate is still under lockdown. Oman Air will maintain its comprehensive safety programme throughout the journey to ensure that the passengers fly confidently. Masks are required when the passengers are onboard the aircraft and at Oman's airports. Distancing is to be maintained, while the passengers exit the aircraft, and flights are carefully cleaned after each flight and at the end of every day. **TURN TO P2**



Sultanate supports Palestine state

**MUSCAT:** Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, said that the Sultanate, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, strongly advocates calls for peace in the region and that Oman reaffirms its support for the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations of their right to self-determination and establishment of an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital. Sayyid Badr made the statement at the Arab League (AL) Council's 154th session, in which he said, "We stick to the Arab Peace Initiative for the establishment of peace based on international charters and Security Council's resolutions of relevance." **FULL REPORT ON P2**

MASK MUST FOR

CHILDREN ABOVE 5

Kids more prone to respiratory infections as seasons change



STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, SEP 9

Children are exposed to different infectious diseases throughout the seasons. Respiratory infections among kids are often frequent during winter seasons. Dr Badriya al Wailiyah, Senior Consultant of Pediatric Infectious Disease at the Royal Hospital,

said that the number of children with respiratory viral infections is more during October and November and last till April or May of each year. Children under 2-year are the most vulnerable to infection for their insufficient immune. About 34 per cent of children in this age infected with influenza are admitted to hospitals. The

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and seasonal flu virus are the most common viruses among children. Dr Al Wailiyah said that children get sick during summer due to intestinal infections, meningitis, mouth & foot syndrome, in which the enterovirus is the main cause of these diseases.

TURN TO P2

Obesity greatest risk factor for young adults with COVID-19

**WASHINGTON:** Young adults with underlying conditions such as morbid obesity, diabetes and hypertension are at the highest risk of being placed on a ventilator or dying from COVID-19, according to a study of 3,000 hospitalised patients aged 18 to 34. The analysis, published on Wednesday in the *journal Jama Internal Medicine*, focused on patients hospitalised between April

and June in the United States. It confirmed first and foremost that black and Hispanic people have been the worst affected by the pandemic: they accounted for 57 per cent of all young adults who were hospitalised and 49 per cent of those who died or needed ventilation. They represent about a third of all young people. As has been seen in other age groups, males are at greater risk

than females — representing 58 per cent of hospitalised cases among young people and 65 per cent of young people who died or were placed on ventilators. People with morbid obesity — defined as having a body mass index of 40 or more — were extremely overrepresented, accounting for 41 per cent who needed ventilation or died. This was followed by high blood pressure, which accounted for 31



per cent of intubated and dead patients, and diabetes, representing 27 per cent of intubated and dead patients. Young people with all three of these underlying conditions had the same risk for death or intubation as middle-aged (35-64) patients without the conditions. The study joins multiple others indicating that obese people are at a higher risk of complications from COVID-19. — Reuters



## Asaad bids farwell to Cyprus Ambassador

**MUSCAT:** On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister of the Council of Ministers for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan received Andreas Panayiotou, Ambassador of Cyprus to the Sultanate to bid them farewell at the end of their tour of duty.

The ambassador thanked His Majesty the Sultan, the government and the Omani people, for their support which had facilitated him

to carry out assignments. He wished His Majesty the Sultan a good health, happiness and a long life, and the Sultanate further progress and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty.

Sayyid Asaad thanked the ambassador for his efforts in serving the relations between the Sultanate and Cyprus, wishing him permanent success, and the people progress and prosperity. The meeting was attended by the Secretary-General and the two advisors at HH Sayyid Asaad's Office.

— ONA

# Sultanate, UK discuss bilateral ties



HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq bin Taimour al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs with Ben Wallace, UK Secretary of State for Defence in Muscat on Wednesday.



Ben Wallace with General Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office.



Ben Wallace and Air Vice Marshal Mattar bin Ali al Obaidani, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman at Musandam on Wednesday.

FROM PAGE 1

## Mask must for children above 5

Dr Al Wailiyah said COVID-19 infection among children is as low as 7 per cent of the total cases. About 30 per cent of children over 10-year and less than 1-year are most vulnerable to COVID-19. The percentage of children admitted in hospitals is 2.5 per cent to 4.1 per cent, while less than 1 per cent are in ICU.

Dr Badriya explained that COVID-19 symptoms among children are not different from other respiratory viruses. It is difficult to distinguish COVID-19 symptoms and mild flu symptoms. The symptoms may vary from one child to another.

She said COVID-19 infection among children may cause multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C). Symptoms may develop after weeks of the onset of COVID-19. MIS-C symptoms include fever, rash, red eyes, stomach ache, diarrhea, cough or breathing difficulties. Children infected with MIS-c may need to be admitted to ICU due to low pressure and rapid heart rate.

Dr Al Wailiyah pointed out that the number of children admitted in the Royal Hospital reached 70 cases including 30 MIS-C cases. All these cases were cured among them was a 10-day infant.

Dr Al Wailiyah reaffirmed the importance of taking the scheduled and additional vaccines for children with chronic diseases including that for flu to protect children from various viral infections. It is also important to wash hands, not to touch face and nose with unclean hands and a 2-meter social distance.

When they go out of home and in schools, children over 5-year must wear a mask. In the event of having any symptoms, children must stay at home and maintain physical distance.



## Oman Air to resume services to 12 countries

Cabin crew will wear a full set of personal protective equipment, meal services has been modified to further ensure safety, and a number of other steps have been taken to ensure that the airline's guests and crew are safe at all times.

The passengers who are planning to depart from Oman should also ensure that they are aware of all pre-departure requirements, which are available on omanair.com, as well as the requirements at their destinations.

"Our planes and people are ready and Oman's airports are ready, too. When we can fly, we will provide safe, careful service to our passengers, along with all travel-related information and requirements," the airline said in a statement.

**MUSCAT:** His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq bin Taimour al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs and Ben Wallace, UK Secretary of State for Defence, discussed bilateral relations between the Sultanate and the UK at the Ministry of Defence headquarters in Al Murtafa Camp on Wednesday.

HH Sayyid Shihab welcomed the guest, who expressed his delight to visit the Sultanate. They also discussed the existing defence cooperation and means of enhancing them. They also touched upon the joint defence agreement and emphasised its importance in the bilateral relations of the two countries.

The session was attended by Mohammed bin Nasser al Rasbi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence; Maj-Gen. Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO); Hamish Cowell, UK Ambassador to the Sultanate; and the delegation accompanying the guest.



Ben Wallace visits Duqm Special Economic Zone.

Wallace also held talks with General Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, in a separate meeting.

Gen Al Numani reiterated the historic, strong relations with the friendly United Kingdom and their

development in several fields, thanks to the attention accorded by the two leaderships of the two countries.

On his turn, the UK State Secretary for Defence expressed his thanks and appreciation for the Sultanate's role at the regional and international

arenas, as well as the Sultanate's role in strengthening ties of friendship and understanding. The meeting also reviewed the relations binding the two friendly countries, in addition to touching on a range of issues of mutual interest.

Ben Wallace, British Secretary of State for Defence, toured Musandam Governorate as part of his current visit to the Sultanate.

The minister was accompanied during the visit by Air Vice Marshal Matar bin Ali al Obaidani, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman.

Wallace also visited the Duqm Special Economic Zone along with his delegation, where they were received by Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Vice-President of the General Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones. They were briefed on the strategic location of the zone, its facilities and the various investment projects.

— ONA

# Oman supports independent Palestine state

**MUSCAT:** Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, said that the Sultanate, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, strongly advocates calls for peace in the region and that Oman reaffirms its support for the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations of their right to self-determination and establishment of an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Sayyid Badr made the statement at the Arab League (AL) Council's 154th session, in which he said, "We stick to the Arab Peace Initiative for the establishment of peace based on international charters and Security Council's resolutions of relevance."

Sayyid Badr also voiced the Sultanate's solidarity with the people of Sudan amid the disaster brought about by floods that ravaged large swathes of the country, causing significant loss of property and life. He offered his condolences to the government of the Republic of Sudan and the brotherly Sudanese people. Wishing the injured quick recovery, he prayed that the Almighty Allah will have mercy on the deceased and grant fortitude to their families to bear the loss.

Sayyid Badr also expressed the Sultanate's support for the Lebanese Republic and called on the international community to help in its reconstruction following the recent massive explosion that devastated the Port of Beirut.

Speaking about the Libyan crisis, Sayyid Badr stressed that the Sultanate



welcomes the announcement of President Fayiz al Sarraj about agreement among the warring parties for the implementation of an immediate ceasefire, the termination of all military operations and the drafting of arrangements for the resumption of oil exportation and management of revenues to the advantage of the Libyan people. He welcomed the declaration of an initiative to establish lasting peace and end the conflict in Libya.

Sayyid Badr also reiterated the Sultanate government's welcome for the efforts undertaken by the government of Morocco to host Libyan factions for meetings to

achieve mutual interests and establish peace and stability in the country.

The Sultanate's speech also welcomed the blueprint of the peace accord signed recently by the Sudanese government and armed factions under the aegis of the government of South Sudan. Sayyid Badr said that the Sultanate hopes that the peace accord will pave the way for stability and development and achieve the aspirations of the people of Sudan.

On the Yemeni stalemate, Sayyid Badr called upon the international community to lend support through the efforts of the UN envoy to Yemen to bring conflicting parties to the table of negotiation. "This is the only way

out of the impasse and the only hope to build a stable Yemen so that its people could enjoy peace and stability," said Sayyid Badr.

Sayyid Badr said that "Coronavirus imposed exceptional circumstances that prevented us from holding direct meetings during the Arab League Council's 153rd session held under the presidency of the Sultanate. I do not have the least doubt that things will get back to normal and that we will adapt and develop new methods to manage the course of life around us." Sayyid Badr congratulated the Foreign Minister of the State of Palestine for his country's presidency of the 154th session of the Arab League. — ONA

## Brave nine-year-old boy saves family from fire



**MUSCAT:** A nine-year-old child, Al Motasim bin Ahmed al Shaqsi, rescued his family members after fire broke out at his house in Muwehi al Murr area in the Wilayat of Bahla.

The brave child saved his youngest brothers and pulled

them out quickly from the burning house.

He also sought his neighbours' help to save his disabled mother. The heroic act by Al Motasim has resulted in zero casualties with some material damages due to the fire caused by electric shock.

# Fish landing rises 33.7% in June

**MUSCAT:** The total quantity of fish landed in the Sultanate reached 371,799 tonnes at the end of June 2020, compared to 278,013 tonnes during the same period of 2019, which is a rise of 33.7 per cent, according to statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Traditional fishing practices in the Sultanate contributed to 358,342 tonnes of fish at the end of June 2020, compared to 266,780 tonnes in 2019, constituting a rise of 34.3 per cent.

The total value of the fish stock was RO 160.85 million in 2020, compared to RO 137.04 million in 2019, representing a growth of 17.4 per cent.

Coastal fishing and commercial fishing contributed to about 2,274 tonnes and 11,183 tonnes of total fish landings, respectively, at the end of June 2020.

The Governorate of Al Wusta had the highest fish landing at 133,284 tonnes followed by the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah at 100,941 tonnes, and North and South Al Batinah at 46,355 tonnes. The quantity of fish landed in the Governorate of Dhofar was 42,184 tonnes, and the quantity in Musandam was 18,445 tonnes. The landed quantity in Governorate of



Muscat stood at 17,133 tonnes.

According to fish landing by species, the largest quantity of fish landed at the end of June 2020 comprised small pelagic fishes at 214,794 tonnes, compared to 175,872 tonnes at the end

of June 2019, a rise of 22.1 per cent. The quantity of large pelagic fish rose by 87.7 per cent to reach 83,649 tonnes at the end of June 2020, compared to 44,573 tonnes at the end of June 2019.

The quantity of demersal fish

landed reached 51,477 tonnes, an increase of 33.5 per cent, compared to 38,548 tonnes at the end of June 2019. Meanwhile, there was a decline in the quantity of crustaceans and molluscs by 3.2 per cent. — ONA

## National Survey Authority attends UN meet

**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate took part in the 10th meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management Experts on Wednesday. Oman was represented at the meeting by Air Commodore Ahmed bin Saif al Badi, Chairman of the National Survey Authority, and a number of officers from the Authority.

The virtual meeting, held via videoconferencing due to the prevalence of coronavirus pandemic, saw the participation of more than 170 countries from around the world.

The three-day meeting discusses issues and future trends pertaining to geospatial information seen within national, regional and global frameworks.

It also looks into the role of geospatial information in supporting sustainable development, as well as technical activities raised in the previous session (9th meeting), including the integration, management, sustainability and quality of geospatial data comprising an international point of reference. — ONA

# Vision 2040 aspires to build a healthy society

**KAUSHALENDRA SINGH SALALAH, SEPT 9**

The General Directorate of Health Services in Dhofar and the General Directorate for Planning and Studies held a crucial meeting to discuss preparedness for the 10th five-year plan (2021-2025) in the health sector and took an overview of the current situation.

The meeting took note of the facilities that need upgrades as well as new features to streamline the healthcare system to cater to the overall health needs.

About 73 participants from the Directorate participated in the meeting remotely ensuring ongoing precautionary measures to limit the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Walid al Nadabi at the Ministry of Health explained about the reasons for the review of the healthcare system and said it was part of the National Vision 2040, which aspires for an international healthcare system by setting up a culture of a sustainable healthy society that means 'health is



everyone's responsibility'.

"The idea is to create a health system that is decentralised, transparent, quality-oriented, fair

and accountable... it should be diversified with sustainable funding for guaranteed the best possible health system," he said.

Intending to boost research and development, the plan aims to create cadres for national health in the field of scientific research and innovation,

in addition to creating systems for medical and technical services and a high quality curative and preventive healthcare service at all levels.

## Students to get training in AI skills

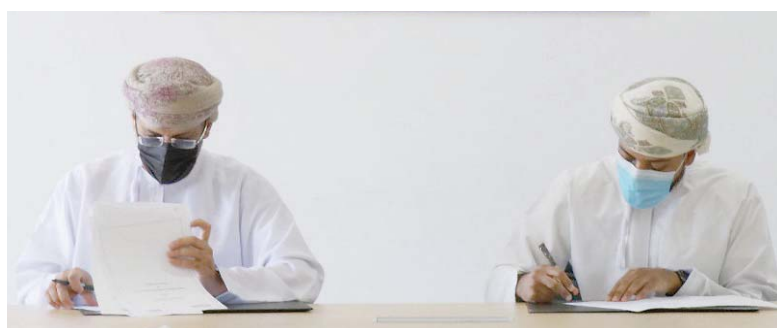
**STAFF REPORTER MUSCAT, SEPT 9**

German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech) signed a cooperation agreement with PhazeRo on Tuesday to offer artificial intelligence, courses to equip GUtech students with much needed AI skills through project-based learning.

Dr Hussain al Salmi, GUtech's Acting Rector, and Masood al Rawahi, PhazeRo Executive Director, signed the agreement, in the presence of Dr Nabil al Sahli, Dean of the Engineering and Computer Science faculty at GUtech.

PhazeRo is a specialist consultancy and future-oriented technology education group, building the region's largest engineering team out of local software talent. PhazeRo handles digital consulting, software development, talent onboarding, and continuous improvement for corporate clients so they can get back to focusing on their core business.

Al Salmi announced that the signing of the agreement establishes a solid partnership ground with PhazeRo, as it will contribute to bring in real-world AI applications to the classroom. He added that GUtech spares no effort to provide students with the right practical skills they



need to be ready for the job market. "Collaborating with PhazeRo to infuse our curriculum with hands-on learning opportunities is an example," he said, before adding that GUtech always seeks to bring in the industry into the learning process of students.

GUtech is finalising all requirements to launch the Cyber Security and Artificial Intelligence programmes, he stated. "It is extremely important to bring in the practical aspects of AI into our Computer Science curriculum and beyond." Through the expertise of PhazeRo, GUtech students will get to explore the real-life applications of AI in different sectors. "We believe that high-performing tech talent is at the heart of a thriving innovation ecosystem. Our mission is to accelerate the development

of the next generation of software engineers and data scientists to realise the ambitious goals laid out in Vision 2040. To achieve this, deep integration between industry and academia is necessary. We are excited to co-create a programme, with the GUtech, that infuses our industry experience with a rigorous academic curriculum that is very practical in nature."

He continued: "PhazeRo is a young and very promising Omani company which we think can connect GUtech to the AI market and support us in improving our academic programmes by offering the opportunity to our students to practice AI concepts in real-world applications. We will start this partnership as soon as this month with a course that PhazeRo will offer to our third year CS students."

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#Living\_with\_COVID19



# HOW DRUGMAKERS CAN DELIVER VACCINE SURPRISE

Vaccines must demonstrate they are at least 50 per cent more effective than a placebo to be considered for approval. To prove that, government officials have said, at least 150 COVID-19 infections must be recorded among trial participants with at least twice as many occurring among the placebo group

**NEW YORK:** As questions mount over whether the United States will authorize a coronavirus vaccine ahead of November elections, experts say there is a slim chance that enough evidence will be available to prove one is safe and effective in that time frame.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly said a vaccine is possible before the Nov. 3 election, and accused a “deep state” within the nation’s top health regulator of trying to slow pivotal clinical trials to hamper his chances at a second term.

The US Food and Drug Administration denied that claim, saying its decisions will be guided by data alone. Drugmakers, seeking to bolster public confidence amid political squabbles on Tuesday pledged to uphold scientific safety and efficacy standards in their quest for a vaccine. Vaccine safety was in focus on Wednesday after AstraZeneca PLC said that it had

put a pause on its coronavirus trial on the vaccine with Oxford to review the safety data of an unexplained illness in the U.K. trial. It described the move as routine and said it would restart trials when an independent committee recommended it do so.

Other companies have recently made comments suggesting they could have an answer on whether their vaccines work before November. “It would really be an amazing vaccine to show that,” Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said. Fauci said initial trial results are likely to become available in November or December, but late October remains a possibility. “It is conceivable that if there are enough infections documented early on that you might get that answer earlier,” he said.

Vaccines must demonstrate they are at least 50 per cent more effective than a placebo to be considered for

approval. To prove that, government officials have said, at least 150 COVID-19 infections must be recorded among trial participants with at least twice as many occurring among the placebo group. If a vaccine is especially effective, companies could have their answer sooner.

Pfizer Inc and Moderna Inc , whose US vaccine trials have enrolled thousands of people and are the most advanced, say they may have proof after just a few dozen subjects become infected.

Independent panels of experts called data and safety monitoring boards (DSMB) will review trial data at pre-specified points. These boards can recommend companies stop the trials if the evidence is overwhelmingly positive or negative. For Pfizer, the first interim look occurs when 32 trial volunteers get infected. Experts interviewed by Reuters cautioned that information gleaned from a limited number of

subjects could miss important safety issues that letting the trial fully play out might reveal.

**‘ABSOLUTELY INSUFFICIENT’**

Pfizer’s trial calls for four interim analyses by the DSMB, the first after just 32 recorded infections. “We may have enough data to be able to share the first analysis by October,” said Pfizer spokeswoman Jerica Pitts. Moderna’s first interim analysis will come after 53 trial subjects become infected, the company told investors last month. Basing a decision on 53 cases, is “an absolutely insufficient number,” said Dr Gregory Poland, a vaccine researcher at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester who has served on FDA vaccine advisory panels. “You would know very little about safety.” To halt the trials due to positive results, vaccines would likely have to exceed the 50% efficacy threshold. Pfizer has not disclosed what standard will be used for stopping its trial early.

William Gruber, head of vaccine clinical research and development for Pfizer, said “the standard would be evidence of very high efficacy.” A senior official with the U.S. effort to accelerate COVID-19 vaccine development said companies have created appropriate trials to hold interim analyses that could detect especially effective vaccines earlier.

**SPEEDY ENROLLMENT**

Although both drugmakers began vaccinating people in their respective 30,000-subject trials on July 28, Pfizer is in position to generate results earlier in part because it is administering the second shot of its two-dose vaccine a week earlier than Moderna. Moderna also slowed enrollment to ensure greater participation of at-risk minorities in its study. Pfizer’s trial also begins collecting data on infections that occur a week after it administers its second shot.

Moderna has a two-week lag

between the second shot and when it will begin collecting infection data in earnest. Both trials are on pace to be fully enrolled soon. Dr Henry Miller, a senior fellow at the Pacific Research Institute think tank and former director of the FDA’s office of biotechnology, said an emergency use authorization based on a small number of infections would not deliver an adequate answer on the safety of a vaccine intended for use by millions of healthy people. Some side effects could take four to six months to occur, he said. Dr. Gregory Glenn, research chief for Novavax Inc, which is also developing a coronavirus vaccine, said the October timeline remains possible. But he believes Americans will likely be waiting longer. “I just think humility is a good thing right now,” he said. “The FDA set out some pretty strict criteria for success. So that’s going to take a pretty good vaccine to do that.”

—Reuters



EU chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier (C) walks with members of his team towards a conference centre in London on Wednesday for the latest round of trade talks with the UK. — AFP

## EU ‘very concerned’ by UK plan to break divorce treaty

**LONDON:** Britain plunged Brexit trade talks into crisis on Wednesday by explicitly acknowledging it could break international law by ignoring some parts of its European Union divorce treaty, prompting a rapid rebuke from the EU’s chief executive.

Brushing aside warnings from Brussels that breaching the treaty would prevent any trade deal being struck, London said in the proposed legislation that it would ignore parts of the Withdrawal Agreement, which was only signed in January.

The Internal Market Bill spells out that certain provisions are “to have effect notwithstanding inconsistency or incompatibility with international or other domestic law”.

The government has said international law would be broken “in a very specific and limited way”. Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, promptly tweeted that she was “very concerned” about the British government’s intentions.

“This would break international law and undermines trust. Pacta sunt servanda = the foundation of prosperous future relations,” she said. The Latin phrase, meaning “agreements must be kept”, is a basic principle of international law. John Major, a former Conservative prime minister, warned the government that “if we lose our reputation for honouring the promises we make, we will have lost something beyond price that may never be regained”.

The bill’s publication, on the day the EU’s chief negotiator arrived in London for a new round of trade talks, suggested to some that Prime Minister Boris Johnson might be trying to goad the bloc into storming out of those negotiations. But EU sources said they would not seek

a suspension.

Although EU officials expressed dismay, one said that giving up on the negotiations “would only play into the UK game”.

### ‘KAMIKAZE THREAT’

Johnson told parliament the bill was “a legal safety net to protect our country against extreme or irrational interpretations” of the Withdrawal Agreement’s Northern Ireland protocol that could threaten peace in the British province.

The bill, if approved, would give ministers the power to ignore parts of that protocol by modifying the form of export declarations and other exit procedures. But the list of specific agreements that might be ignored includes not only provisions of the Northern Ireland Protocol but also “any other provision of the EU Withdrawal Agreement” and “any other EU law or international law”.

The bill says Britain may ‘disapply’ provisions including one that relates to Northern Ireland and state aid. Johnson’s team see state aid as crucial for ensuring they can incubate new global technology firms and help “level up” parts of Britain. Johnson’s spokesman said the EU divorce deal was like no other treaty and had been “agreed at pace in the most challenging possible political circumstances”.

Opponents accused him of blatant hypocrisy after promising before December’s election that he had an “oven-ready deal”.

The bill will be debated in both chambers of parliament and require their approval before becoming law. Britain quit the EU in January but has remained part of its single market, largely free of trade barriers, under a status quo agreement that expires in December.

— Reuters

# In race for COVID-19 vaccine, safety trumps speed

## PAUSE:

AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford said they were ‘pausing’ trials after volunteer falls ill

**PARIS:** The halting of clinical trials for one of the most advanced experimental COVID-19 vaccines shows the importance of safety in developing new medicines despite overwhelming international pressure, experts said on Wednesday.

Pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford said on Tuesday they were “pausing” trials of the vaccine after a volunteer developed an unexplained illness.

AstraZeneca said in a follow-up statement that a participant in Britain had been taken ill during Phase 3 testing.

It called the move to pause the trial “a routine action”, but the setback briefly spooked markets as the world races for a vaccine that could signal the beginning of the end of the pandemic.

“It’s a totally reasonable measure of caution,” immunologist Alain Fischer said.

“This should be seen as the proper functioning of a vaccine evaluation system.”

The vaccine in question is one of nine that are undergoing the final phase of clinical testing, according to the World Health Organization.

Phase 3 trials see experimental vaccines tested among tens of thousands of volunteers to check if they are effective and safe on a large scale.

Fischer said an inquiry would determine if the volunteer in question



got sick because of the vaccine or from something else.

## PRESSURE

David Lo, a professor of biomedical sciences at University of California, Riverside, said that there had been reports of mild side effects among volunteers during previous trial phases.

“During the earlier stages of the clinical trial into this vaccine, patients reported side-effects classed as mild and moderate, but none that were severe,” he said.

Lo said that it was common for trials to be paused when one volunteer experienced adverse effects to allow time to see if any other participants also fall ill.

“Probably right now it’s just being cautious — it’s a pause, it’s not the same thing as saying, ‘We can’t move forward,’” said Lo.

**The vaccine in question is one of nine that are undergoing the final phase of clinical testing, according to the World Health Organization**

While the developers appear to be exercising caution, the pause comes at a time when scientists are under enormous pressure to push through a Covid-19 vaccine.

Competition is fierce and the stakes could hardly be higher.

Russia has already approved a vaccine — albeit with some question

marks from international observers — and the European Union on Wednesday reserved another 200 million doses of a potential vaccine from AstraZeneca rivals, BioNTech-Pfizer.

## SEVERAL CANDIDATES

“While we share with everyone the need to move fast, we can’t risk the safety of the (trial) participants,” Bruno Hoen, director of medical research at Paris’ Institut Pasteur said.

The WHO says there are currently 34 candidate vaccines for COVID-19 and another 145 in the pre-clinical stage.

“The more candidates we have that use different techniques, the greater the change of having a vaccine that works and which is well-tolerated,” said Daniel Floret, vice-president of France’s technical committee for vaccines. — AFP

# US virus deaths surpass 190,000; Iowa and South Dakota new hotspots

**WASHINGTON:** Coronavirus deaths in the United States topped 190,000 on Wednesday along with a spike in new cases in the US Midwest with states like Iowa and South Dakota emerging as the new hotspots in the past few weeks.

Iowa currently has one of the highest rates of infection in the nation, with 15 per cent of tests last week coming back positive. Nearby South Dakota has a positive test rate of 19 per cent and North Dakota is at 18 per cent, according to a Reuters analysis.

The surge in Iowa and South Dakota is being linked to colleges



Flight attendants, airline pilots and other aviation workers hold a protest organised by the Association of Flight Attendants urging the US Congress to pass a COVID-19 relief package and extend the Paycheck Support Program to save aviation jobs during a rally outside the US Capitol in Washington, DC, on Wednesday. — AFP

reopening in Iowa and an annual motorcycle rally last month in Sturgis, South Dakota. Kansas, Idaho and Missouri are also among the top 10 states for positive test rates.

New coronavirus infections have fallen for seven weeks in a row for the United States with a death rate of about 6,100 per week from COVID-19 in the last month.

On a per capita basis, the United States ranks 12th in the world for the number of deaths, with 58 deaths per 100,000 people, and 11th in the world for cases, with 1,933 cases per 100,000 residents, according to a Reuters analysis. — Reuters

# Pope sports a face mask for the first time in public

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis was seen on Wednesday for the first time wearing a protective face mask as he attended his second traditional general audience before a limited public presence after a six-month suspension.

The pontiff — known for a fondness for close personal contact — however quickly removed the mask as he emerged from the car carrying him to the audience, which was suspended in February over the coronavirus pandemic.

But he shunned his usual practice of shaking hands and kissing babies as some 500 faithful

filled a courtyard at the Apostolic Palace inside the Vatican.

At his second meeting since suspending general audiences on February 26, the crowd thronged behind a barrier and some even lowered their masks to greet the leader of the Roman Catholic Church.

The pope shook hands with prelates attending the audience and, smiling, then turned to the crowd, urging them not to shake hands and to return to their seats in order to “avoid contagion”.

Francis focused on the socio-economic impact of the pandemic which he said was “without



Pope Francis takes off his face mask as he arrives by car to hold a limited public audience at the San Damaso courtyard in The Vatican on Wednesday. — AFP

barriers”.

He advocated a society in which people should have more solidarity with their neighbours.

Pope Francis, whose birth name is Jorge Bergoglio, has shown little fear for his health since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic early this year.

Before Wednesday he had never appeared with a mask and had continued to receive visitors within the Apostolic Palace — albeit fewer groups than before.

Last Thursday he shook hands with a group of French actors committed to defending the environment. The group was

exempted from wearing face masks and included the actress Juliette Binoche.

The 83-year-old pontiff found it difficult to wear a mask that restricted his breathing, a member of his entourage said on Wednesday.

When he was 21 Jorge Bergoglio suffered from acute pleurisy and surgeons removed part of his right lung, according to his biographer Austen Ivereigh.

This forced him to give up his dream of becoming a Jesuit missionary in Japan and he also had to give up playing football.

— AFP



# US to cut troops in Iraq to 3,000 this month on Trump promise

**WASHINGTON:** The Pentagon will slash the level of US troops in Iraq to 3,000 this month, a senior general said on Wednesday, as President Donald Trump seeks to honour a pledge to withdraw from foreign conflicts.

General Kenneth McKenzie, the head of the US military's Central Command, said in Baghdad that the decision was "due to our confidence in the Iraqi Security Forces' increased ability to operate independently."

"In consultation and coordination with the Government of Iraq and our coalition partners, the United States has decided to reduce our troop presence in Iraq from about 5,200 to 3,000 troops during the month of September," he said.

McKenzie said the US would be able to continue supporting the Iraqi military in its fight against the IS group, which was driven out of its "caliphate" territory last year but remains scattered around Iraq.

He said the US was committed to its "ultimate goal" of an Iraq where local forces alone can prevent the IS from returning and secure "Iraq's sovereignty without external assistance."

"The journey has been difficult, the sacrifice has been great, but the progress has been significant," the general said.

By late 2018, there were an estimated 5,200 American troops still stationed in Iraq, making up the bulk of the 7,500 coalition forces there, according to US officials.

Over the past year, dozens of rocket attacks have targeted those forces, the US embassy and logistics convoys heading to Iraqi bases, killing at least six military personnel — three Americans, one Briton and two Iraqis.



US Army soldiers carry shotguns as they walk along a corridor separating what they deem to be the most extreme and dangerous detainees held inside the Camp Bucca detention centre located near the Kuwait-Iraq border. — AFP file photo

US officials have blamed the violence on hardline factions, which have repeatedly demanded US troops leave the Middle East.

Trump is also set to announce further troop withdrawals from Afghanistan in the coming days, a senior administration official said.

Washington currently has 8,600 soldiers deployed in Afghanistan in accordance with a bilateral agreement signed in February between Washington and the Taliban.

Trump, who is trailing Democratic rival Joe Biden in the polls ahead of the November 3 presidential election, has promised to bring troops home in a bid to wrap up what he has called America's endless wars.

**General Kenneth McKenzie, the head of the US military's Central Command, said in Baghdad that the decision was "due to our confidence in the Iraqi Security Forces' increased ability to operate independently"**

## GERMANY TO CUT TROOPS

Germany is to cut the upper limit of its military personnel deployed to Iraq to 500 from 700, the cabinet decided at its weekly meeting in Berlin on Wednesday.

The deployment can be reduced as a result of the withdrawal of German Tornado jets which have been carrying out reconnaissance duties over the Middle East as part of the country's contribution to combating the IS militia.

Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer said Germany remained committed to helping Iraq. "The IS is continuing its terrorist activities despite the coronavirus pandemic."

— AFP/dpa

## Saudi supports comprehensive peace solution to ME conflict

**CAIRO:** Saudi Arabia told an Arab League meeting on Wednesday it supports all efforts to reach a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. But a statement released by the Saudi foreign ministry on remarks made by Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud included no direct mention of a normalisation deal between Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

The prince said Riyadh supported the establishment of a Palestinian state based on the borders before the 1967 Middle East war, with East Jerusalem as its capital, according to the statement.

During the 1967 war, Israel captured territory including the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which it still occupies. Announced on August 13, the UAE-Israel accord was the first such accommodation between an

Arab country and Israel in more than 20 years.

In comments about the UAE at the Arab League meeting in Cairo, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al Maliki referred to the accord as a "surprise", "a normalisation" and an "earthquake" that hit Arab consensus. But he avoided strong words such as "betrayal" that were used by Palestinian leaders in the immediate aftermath of the announcement.

Maliki used tougher language against Israel, referring to "colonial and racist occupation", and accused the United States of blackmail, pressure and assault against Palestinians and some Arab states.

Maliki voiced dismay at the lack of Arab consensus that prevented an emergency Arab summit being held at the Palestinians' request following the August 13 announcement.

— Reuters

## Lebanese parties say US sanctions target whole nation

**BEIRUT:** Two Lebanese political parties said on Wednesday they would not be swayed by US sanctions imposed on its members, with the Amal group saying Washington's move was like targeting the whole nation.

The United States expanded sanctions related to Lebanon on Tuesday by blacklisting two former government ministers, including Amal's Ali Hassan Khalil.

It said the two men had aided Hezbollah. Alongside the heavily armed Amal is one of two dominant factions in Lebanon's fractious sectarian political system. The US move comes at a sensitive time, as a new government is being formed under a tight deadline in a bid to extricate Lebanon from a deep economic crisis that poses the biggest threat to the country's stability since the 1975-1990 civil war.

"This (US) decision will not change our convictions and our national and patriotic principles at all," Amal said in a statement issued after Washington added the senior Amal politician and former finance minister, Khalil, to a blacklist.

The group said imposing sanctions on Khalil was like "targeting Lebanon and its sovereignty."

The United States also blacklisted former transport minister Yusuf



Ali Hassan Khalil



Yusuf Finyanus

Finyanus, a Christian politician who is a member of the Marada party that is also allied to Hezbollah.

Marada's leader, Suleiman Frangieh, said his party would not be influenced by Washington's decision, the Lebanese state news agency reported. — Reuters

## Yemen 'pandemic of impunity' must end: UN experts

**GENEVA:** War-ravaged Yemen is in the grip of a "pandemic of impunity", UN war crimes investigators said on Wednesday, calling for the case to go before the International Criminal Court.

The investigators, appointed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2017, lamented in a fresh report that after six years of brutal conflict in Yemen, all sides had continued in the past year

to commit a wide range of horrific violations with impunity.

They noted a "consistent pattern" of the parties harming civilians not only amid fighting, but also away from the frontlines, listing abuses including killings, torture, sexual violence and the recruitment of child soldiers.

"Many of the violations identified may amount to war crimes," one of the three experts, Melissa Parke, told

reporters.

"We have to end the pandemic of impunity," she insisted.

Her colleague Ardi Imseis agreed.

"Impunity is endemic," he said, pointing out that while the investigators had "seen some progress in terms of investigations conducted by the parties, to date no one has been held accountable for the violations that the group has identified."

Since 2015, fighting in Yemen has claimed tens of thousands of lives and sparked what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

### 'SHOCKS THE CONSCIENCE'

Both the Yemen government and the Saudi-led coalition that intervened in the conflict in 2015 to support the government against Ansar Allah fighters have refused to cooperate with the experts. — AFP

## Made homeless by record floods, thousands of Sudanese wait for aid

**KHARTOUM:** Sudanese authorities and the United Nations are rolling out aid to tens of thousands who lost their homes in record Nile floods, but many of those camping out on roadsides and higher ground are despairing of when it will reach them.

Sudan's government said it had allocated more than 150 million Sudanese pounds (\$2.73 million) to help flood victims, the state news agency said. The UN refugee agency UNHCR said that with the help of the United Arab Emirates it had flown 100 metric tonnes of relief material including blankets, which will be distributed across 12 states.

The floods have left at least 102 people dead in the country and destroyed or damaged tens of thousands of homes, according to the interior ministry. Authorities have declared a three-month state of emergency.

Standing by tents in south Khartoum, Idris Ahmed, who lost his home, said the government was not giving enough support. "They are not helping, not doing anything," he said. "I, as a citizen, am asking for my citizen's rights, am looking for refuge."

Residents packed into boats to check on their houses as parts of the capital Khartoum such as Toti island at the confluence of the White and Blue Nile were submerged. "We hope that things get better, that this flood gets better," said Alaa Eldin, another displaced person. "But from what we see, what is coming may be harder... that is why we are calling on everyone to stand by the citizens, the simple, poor citizens who have lost their shelter and home." Some 85,000 internally displaced and 40,000 refugees have been affected by the floods in Khartoum, in eastern Sudan, along the White Nile and the restive Darfur region who urgently needed help, UNHCR said in a statement. — Reuters



Sudanese stand amidst flood waters in Tuti island, where the Blue and White Nile merge in the Sudanese capital Khartoum, on September 3. — AFP

## IN BRIEF



## Actress arrested after ex-boyfriend's suicide

**MUMBAI:** Bollywood actress Rhea Chakraborty has been arrested for allegedly buying drugs for her former boyfriend, the actor Sushant Singh Rajput, whose suicide sparked a media storm in India.

Rajput, 34, was found dead in June in his Mumbai apartment — with police saying he took his own life. A star with many hit movies to his name, his suicide initially triggered a debate over mental health in the multi-billion-dollar industry.

But Rajput's family disputed reports that he suffered from depression and accused Chakraborty, 28, of stealing his money and harassing him. She has strongly denied the allegations.

Chakraborty was arrested on Tuesday. The police have also detained others in connection with the case including her brother and a member of Rajput's house staff. — **AFP**

## Thailand tests nearly 600 for COVID-19

**BANGKOK:** Thailand said on Wednesday it had tested nearly 600 people potentially exposed to the country's first domestic coronavirus case in over three months, but has so far found no new infections.

The man, 37, had worked as a nightclub DJ at three different venues in the capital Bangkok in the two weeks before he tested positive on arrival in prison, following his recent conviction for a drugs-related offence.

Individuals deemed at risk across 12 venues including the court where he appeared, nightclubs and supermarkets were tracked down and 569 tests were administered, the Public Health Ministry said.

So far, all tests have come back negative and 32 individuals were awaiting results. — **Reuters**

## China's biggest airshow cancelled

**BEIJING:** China's International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition, the country's biggest airshow, scheduled for November, has been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, and the next one will take place in 2022, the organiser said on Wednesday.

The biennial event usually draws key suppliers - such as Airbus SE, Boeing Co and Commercial Aircraft Corp of China (COMAC) - and has traditionally been used by Beijing to show off its growing aviation capability, such as military fighters and drones. — **Reuters**

## Afghan vice president hurt, 10 dead in blast

**CONVOY HIT:** The Kabul attack was condemned as an attempt to frustrate the peace process

**KABUL:** Afghanistan's vice president sustained minor injuries on Wednesday in an explosion targeting his convoy that killed at least 10 people, as government-backed negotiators and the Taliban prepared to meet in Doha for the long-delayed peace talks.

The attack in the capital Kabul was quickly condemned as an attempt to frustrate the peace process, with top Afghan and foreign officials calling for an end to violence for negotiations between the two warring sides to succeed.

In a video posted on Facebook soon after the explosion, Amrullah Saleh, an outspoken Taliban critic, said he had been travelling to his office when his convoy was attacked.

"I am fine but some of my guards have been wounded. My son, who was in the car with me, and I are both fine," Saleh said, with bandages on his left hand.

"I have some burns on my face and hand. The blast was strong."

The ministry of interior said the bomb was placed on a hand cart and detonated remotely when Saleh's convoy passed by.

"Unfortunately, 10 civilians, mostly people who were working in the area, were killed, and 15, including a number of the first VP's bodyguards, were wounded," Tareq Arian, spokesman to the ministry, told reporters at the scene.

The Taliban, who have pledged not to launch attacks in urban areas under a deal with the United States, denied responsibility.

Abdullah, a shopkeeper who gave only one name, said the blast had blown out windows of his shop.

"A shop that sold gas cylinders also caught fire, causing the cylinders to blow up," he said.



Firefighters spray water at the site of an explosion targeting the convoy of Afghanistan's vice president Amrullah Saleh in Kabul on Wednesday. — **AFP**

Saleh, the senior of Afghanistan's two vice presidents, survived an assassination attempt last year ahead of presidential elections.

At least 20 people — most of them civilians — were killed and 50 others wounded when a suicide attacker and gunmen targeted Saleh's Kabul office at that time.

## 'ENEMIES OF PEACE'

The EU in Afghanistan said on Wednesday's attack was a "desperate act by spoilers of peace efforts", while Nato's mission in the country said in a statement that "enemies

of peace" were ignoring the will of the Afghan people for peace talks to begin.

President Ashraf Ghani, who met Saleh soon after Wednesday's blast, condemned what he said was a "terrorist attack" on his first deputy.

"The terrorists and their foreign backers cannot undermine the people's strong faith in peace, democracy and the bright future of our country," Ghani said in a statement.

The head of the Afghan negotiating team, Mohammad

Masoom Stanekzai, called for violence to stop if the peace process was to succeed.

"The time for making excuses has passed. The killing of the people must end," he said in a statement.

Even as preparations for negotiations continue, violence on the ground has carried on unabated, with the Taliban unleashing daily attacks.

Saleh on Sunday said Kabul's negotiating team would push early on at peace talks for a permanent truce. "The first test for the Taliban is (a) ceasefire," Saleh told Tolo

News. "If they accept the ceasefire, they are committed to peace. If not, they are not."

Peace talks were supposed to begin in March but were repeatedly delayed over a prisoner swap that included the release of hundreds of battle-hardened insurgents.

Paris and Canberra in particular have opposed the release of six Taliban militants because of their links to the killings of French and Australian civilians and troops.

Saleh said on Sunday the six inmates would be sent to Qatar.

— **AFP**

## India plans to reopen schools, reports 89,700 new virus cases

**NEW DELHI:** India logged a daily rise of 89,706 coronavirus infections on Wednesday, taking its second-highest tally globally to over 4.3 million cases as the government said it would reopen schools for students in upper grades after more than five months of closure.

At least 1,115 deaths linked to the virus were reported in the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of fatalities to 73,890, the Health Ministry said in its daily update.

India is the second-most infected country globally, with 4,370,128 cases, behind only the United States, which has a total of 6,327,793 cases, according to the US-based Johns Hopkins University.

The ministry announced late Tuesday the partial reopening of schools from September 21 for students between 9th and 12th



Commuters wait in a queue to enter a metro station following the resumption of services after a nearly six-month hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in Ghaziabad on Wednesday. — **AFP**

grade. The final decision has been left to parents, who will have to provide a written permission for their children to go to school, the ministry said.

Online learning will still be

permitted. There was no word no opening schools for younger students. The guidelines were released as part of the fourth phase of easing lockdown restrictions.

— **dpa**

## Japan's Suga vows to put growth ahead of fiscal reform

**TOKYO:** Yoshihide Suga, on course to become Japan's next prime minister, said he would maintain incumbent premier Shinzo Abe's policy prioritising economic growth over efforts to fix the country's tattered finances.

Suga, Japan's chief cabinet secretary, also said he would continue to focus on revitalising regional economies, which he described as among key pillars of "Abenomics".

"A strong economy is necessary for social welfare, national security and fiscal reform," Suga told a debate hosted by the ruling party on Wednesday. "We must first revive the economy, because only then can we push through fiscal reform."

The remarks reinforce market expectations that an administration led by Suga won't trigger big changes to the pro-growth economic policies Shinzo Abe championed



Yoshihide Suga speaks during a debate at Liberal Democratic Party headquarters in Tokyo on Wednesday. — **AFP STR**

during his nearly eight-year stint as prime minister.

If he becomes Japan's next leader, Suga will face the daunting task of containing the coronavirus pandemic while managing the economic consequences.

— **Reuters**

## Sri Lankan navy tows stricken tanker away from coast

**COLOMBO:** The Sri Lankan navy towed a stricken supertanker away from the Indian Ocean island's east coast on Wednesday, while an Indian Coast Guard plane sprayed chemical dispersants on a long oil slick that trailed in its wake.

A fire broke out in the engine room of the Greek-owned New Diamond tanker last Thursday. The blaze was believed to have been doused on Sunday but reignited a day later.

Laden with 2 million barrels of crude oil, there are fears that the accident could cause an environmental disaster, but so far the

slicks have resulted from escaping marine fuel oil rather than leaking crude.

"This morning when we started moving the ship we noticed another slick trailing behind. It was about 1-2 nautical miles (1.8-3.6 kilometres), longer than the previous slick," said Indika de Silva, spokesman for Sri Lankan Navy.

The first slick, spotted on Tuesday, had been around a kilometre long. The slick, comprising marine fuel and residue from the fire, has been sprayed with chemical dispersants from a Dornier aircraft deployed by the Indian Coast Guard, de Silva said.



A Sri Lankan Navy boat sprays water on the New Diamond, a very large crude carrier (VLCC) chartered by Indian Oil Corp. — **Reuters**

Three members of a salvage team boarded the tanker on Wednesday to assess the damage, while a naval tug towed the vessel 41 nautical miles (76 kms) off Sri Lanka's east coast. Greece-based Porto Emporios Shipping Inc is the registered owner of the 20-year old Panama-flagged very large crude carrier New Diamond, according to Refinitiv data.

New Shipping Ltd is the manager of the vessel. There was no immediate comment from either company. Legal action would be filed against the owner under Sri Lankan laws protecting the marine ecosystem, Jagath Gunsekera, deputy general

manager of the Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) said.

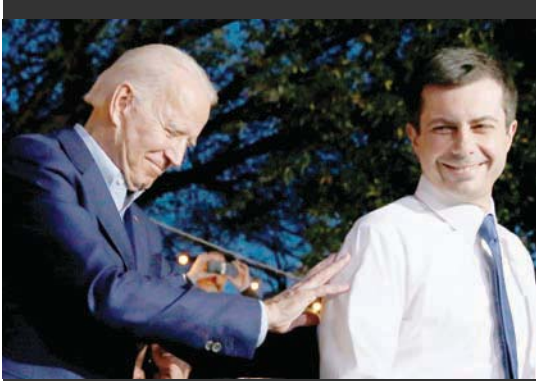
"We are deciding whether to claim criminal liability or civil liability or both," Gunsekera said. Sri Lanka has deployed scientists and experts from MEPA, with one team examining the area around the ship and another surveying coastal areas for signs of pollution.

"I have been informed there was some marine life, like turtles, closer to the incident, so this oil spill would have definitely damaged these species," MEPA chairwoman Dharshani Lahandapura said.

— **Reuters**



OPINION POLL



Former Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg endorses Joe Biden's campaign at Chicken Scratch in Dallas, Texas, on March 2.  
— Reuters file photo

Biden leads Trump by 12 points nationally

NEW YORK: Democrat Joe Biden leads President Donald Trump by 12 percentage points nationally among likely US voters, according to a Reuters/Ipsos opinion poll that also showed the number of persuadable voters had shrunk compared with four years ago.

The September 3-8 poll, released on Wednesday, found 52 per cent of likely voters planned to support Biden, while 40 per cent would back Trump. Three per cent said they would vote for another candidate, and just 5 per cent said they remained undecided with less than two months to go until the November 3 presidential election.

The survey showed the number of voters who had not yet backed a major-party candidate to be less than half of what it was in 2016, and that Biden currently had the advantage in securing the national popular vote. Even if the remaining undecided voters threw their support behind Trump, the poll showed, he would still lose the popular vote to Biden.

Trump can still win re-election, however, without winning the national popular vote. US presidential elections are not decided by the national vote but rather who wins the Electoral College, a contest based on a tally of wins from state-by-state contests.

Four years ago, Democrat Hillary Clinton got almost 3 million more votes than Trump, only to see her Republican rival narrowly win the Electoral College and the presidency. This was the first time the Reuters/Ipsos poll measured support for the 2020 candidates among likely voters.

When measured by registered voters who include those less likely to vote, Biden leads Trump by 8 percentage points, versus his 7-point lead in a similar poll last week.

— Reuters

THE SEPTEMBER 3-8 POLL, RELEASED ON WEDNESDAY, FOUND 52% OF LIKELY VOTERS PLANNED TO SUPPORT BIDEN, WHILE 40% WOULD BACK TRUMP

Thousands homeless as blaze guts Greece's main migrant camp

LESBOS ISLAND: Greece's Lesbos island was plunged into crisis on Wednesday after thousands of asylum seekers were left homeless from a huge fire that gutted the country's largest and most notorious migrant facility, Moria camp.

The civil protection agency declared a four-month emergency for the island of 85,000 people and Germany urged EU states to take in the camp's survivors.

"With the European Commission and other EU member states that are ready to help, we need to quickly clarify how we can help Greece," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, whose country holds the presidency of the bloc, said on Twitter.

"That includes the distribution of refugees among those in the EU who are willing to take them in," he added.

EU home affairs commissioner Ylva Johansson said the bloc would finance "the immediate transfer and accommodation on the mainland of the camp's remaining 400 unaccompanied children and teenagers."

Norway on Wednesday offered to take in 50 Syrians from Moria — though Greece has currently banned the camp's former residents from leaving the island.

An exception will be made for the 400 minors, a migration ministry source told state agency ANA.

Over 12,000 men, women and children had overnight fled in panic out of their containers and tents into nearby olive groves and fields as the fire destroyed most of the overcrowded, squalid camp.

The blaze started just hours after the migration ministry said that 35 people had tested positive at the facility, among 2,000 tests conducted on residents and staff.

The UN refugee agency said it had deployed staff to assist Greek authorities, noting that there were over 4,000 children



Migrants sit inside the burnt Moria Camp on the Greek island of Lesbos on Wednesday, after a major fire. — AFP

among the displaced in addition to pregnant women and elderly people.

"We have been informed about reports of tensions between people in neighbouring villages and asylum seekers who were trying to reach Mytilene's town. We urge all to exercise restraint," the UNHCR said, calling on the camp's former residents to stay in the area with efforts to find them shelter underway.

Citing anonymous police sources, Greek news agency ANA reported that the fires had started after a revolt by people who were to be placed in isolation, but there was no official confirmation.

A local town official said the perpetrators had taken advantage of strong winds and deliberately set tents on fire.

"It was premeditated. The tents were empty," Michalis Fratzekos, deputy mayor

for civil protection, told state television channel ERT.

Firemen said there were no known casualties so far, although a number of people were suffering minor respiratory problems.

Dozens of people were milling among charred containers, some carrying away belongings, others snapping cellphone pictures.  
— AFP

Norway MP nominates Trump for 2021 Nobel Peace Prize

OSLO: An MP for a Norwegian populist party said on Wednesday he had nominated Donald Trump for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize, citing his role in brokering an agreement normalising relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

"The reason is that he crafted a unique and historic agreement between Israel and the UAE. An agreement that, we hope, can be extended to other Arab countries so that we can have lasting peace in the Middle East," Christian Tybring-Gjedde said.

A member of the right-wing, anti-immigration Progress Party, Tybring-Gjedde is the deputy chair of the Norwegian parliament's committee on foreign and defence affairs.

Together with another lawmaker, he had already nominated Trump for the Nobel in 2018 for his rapprochement with North Korea, now in limbo.

Being nominated for a Nobel is however no guarantee that someone will win the prestigious prize.



US President Donald Trump arrives for a campaign rally at Smith-Reynolds Regional Airport in Winston-Salem, North Carolina on Tuesday. — AFP

The Norwegian Nobel Institute welcomes all proposed names, as long as they are sent in by January 31 for the year in question and are submitted by those

eligible to nominate.

Tybring-Gjedde falls into that category as a member of parliament.

Each year, the Nobel Institute receives

hundreds of nominations. The Institute keeps the names secret for 50 years, although those who nominate are allowed to publicly disclose their pick.

Trump "deserves" the Nobel, Tybring-Gjedde said, "especially if you compare with other past laureates."

"Whether it's the 1978 Camp David accords or the 1993 Oslo accords, the Nobel Peace Prize has been given to the protagonists and this agreement is at least as revolutionary for the Middle East."

Asked whether he thought the US President had any real chance of being awarded the prize in a Norway generally lukewarm to his cause, Tybring-Gjedde stressed that the candidate's personality was "not important".

"For Nobel laureates, whether they are in... literature or chemistry, nobody cares about their personality," he insisted.

"It's not personality that decides whether someone wins the prize, but what the person has really accomplished to make peace in the world," he said. — AFP

Nobel laureate Alexievich denounces Belarus 'terror'

MINSK: Nobel prize-winning author Svetlana Alexievich accused the Belarus authorities of terrorising their own people on Wednesday as another opposition politician was detained by masked men in plain clothes.

Maxim Znak was the latest figure to be seized in a systematic campaign by the government of President Alexander Lukashenko to round up the leaders of a month-long mass protest movement.

"What is happening is terror against the people," said Alexievich, who summoned supporters to her home after being harassed by repeated phone calls from unknown numbers and constant ringing by strangers at her door. "We have to unite and not give up our intentions. There is a danger we will lose the country," she said.

In a show of solidarity with

Alexievich, who won the 2015 Nobel Prize for Literature, diplomats from several European countries went to join the author in her flat.

Znak was detained two days after another opposition leader, Maria Kolesnikova, was snatched in the street by masked men. Both are prominent leaders of protests demanding the resignation of Lukashenko following an August 9 presidential election that the opposition says was rigged. Lukashenko denies vote-rigging. Znak and Alexievich were the last members of the opposition's Coordination Council still active inside Belarus.

All the rest have fled, been forced abroad or detained in a crackdown by Lukashenko's security forces as he seeks to maintain his 26-year grip on power. The interior ministry said 121 more protesters had been arrested across the country on



Exiled Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhonovskaya (R) walks with Polish Prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki after a meeting with students at the Warsaw University, Warsaw, on Wednesday. — AFP

Tuesday. Lukashenko accuses Western countries of meddling by supporting the opposition.

Linas Linkevicius, Lithuania's foreign minister, said diplomats had gone to Alexievich's apartment to monitor the situation, "and in a certain sense they are the defence, because it is harder to resort to brutal methods when diplomatic staff is around".

They are visitors to citizen Alexievich, at her invitation," he said. "She is a citizen, she has a flat, and there are guests in the flat".

NOTHING TO DISCUSS

Russian news agencies quoted Lukashenko as saying there was nothing to discuss with the opposition. He raised the possibility of constitutional reform and a new presidential election — suggestions he has made in the past — but said it

was too early to say when they might happen. The 66-year-old leader retains the backing of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The West has so far been cautious about the prospect of provoking Russian intervention, but the European Union is drawing up a list of individuals to target with sanctions. For Russia, Belarus is strategically important as a buffer state against Nato and a transit country for its exports of oil and gas.

Russian news agency RIA said Lukashenko would visit Moscow for talks on Monday. The detention of Znak on Wednesday was part of a criminal case against the opposition's Coordination Council "for inciting actions aimed at harming the national security of the Republic of Belarus", his lawyer Dmitry Laevsky said.

— Reuters

# Spending on innovation vital for country's growth

The retreat of the Sultanate of Oman by four places in the Innovation and Higher Education Index for 2020, released by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), was shocking. This index is considered a global standard for measuring innovation system in 131 countries around the world. There were certain reasons and factors which have led to this. These should be dealt with at the earliest. These require solutions so that there is no repetition of efforts and wastage of money. One of the reasons might be not updating of data and not giving importance to related index. This may have led to placing the country in a lower position than it has deserved.

This ranking should not deter us from our efforts aimed at fulfilling the commitment to strengthen higher education, innovation, scientific research, etc, as they are required for development of any nation. Perhaps, setting up of a ministry for higher education, innovations and scientific research made the future approach very clear. It shows that these areas are important for us in our endeavour for development and progress.

The performance as shown in the index should not be the end of the



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THE PERFORMANCE AS SHOWN IN THE INDEX SHOULD NOT BE THE END OF THE WORLD FOR US. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THIS WILL PROVE TO BE ONE OF THE MAIN FACTORS FOR BRINGING CHANGES IN THE AREA

world for us. We are confident that this will prove to be one of the main factors for bringing changes in the area. It will show that we are very keen on these areas and ready to make extra efforts in innovations and scientific research in future.

The Sultanate's ranking in innovation index at 84th position in the world was a direct result of fall in spending on education. The higher education index of the country fell eight positions to be at 12 globally from fourth position. There are many factors for this and they are interlinked. If we are not good in one area, it would have implications on other areas as well. Therefore, it is a must we reconsider our calculations and assessments of these areas in a more accurate manner. We also must have thoughtful planning and mobilise all efforts to achieve the set goals. All organisations from public and private sectors should make efforts to move forward and achieve higher objectives in the area.

Dr Sharifa bint Hammoud al Harthy, Director of the National Innovation Strategy at the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, has rightly diagnosed the reasons which led to this ranking. Her assessment makes clear how we deal

with the issues related to the country. There should not be any justification for any fault. Everything should be identified, and solutions should be found at the table to deal with this trend.

She has said that the decline in index was the result of the failure in increasing the financial allocations for higher education, scientific research, and innovation in recent years. On the contrary, this was the time when most of the countries in the world are racing against each other to increase spending on research and development. Not only this, but many demanded that there should be special allocation in the state budget for scientific research and innovation. They realised that this was very important for the development of the country. No other official is talking about the factors for the decline.

She not only spoke of lacklustre spending on scientific research and innovation, but also pointed out the need for expediting implementation of rules and regulations so that they reflect in innovation and scientific research. The Sultanate's ranking at 88th position on this index requires that the authorities concerned revisit these rules, and regulations and their implementation on ground.

## IMAGE OF DEFIANCE

### Enigmatic Afghan V-P vows to keep fighting

DAVID STOUT

Few lives have personified the fortunes and perils of Afghanistan since the US-led invasion in 2001 as that of Vice-President Amrullah Saleh.

Saleh on Wednesday narrowly survived the latest attempt on his life — the second in just over a year — after a bomb targeting his convoy killed at least 10 people in Kabul.

Within hours of the blast, Saleh appeared in a video with his left hand bandaged, vowing to fight on and apologising to those killed by the blast meant for him.

“We will continue our fight, and I am always at the service of our people,” said Saleh, cutting a familiar image of defiance.

The senior of Afghanistan's two vice-presidents, Saleh, 47, also survived an assassination attempt last year ahead of presidential elections.

His life has been forged by the decades of war that have engulfed Afghanistan since the late 1970s.

Orphaned young, Saleh fought alongside the famed guerilla commander Ahmed Shah Massoud in the 1990s against the Soviet-backed government in Kabul.



My view of the Taliban changed forever because of what happened in 1996, and I haven't seen or heard anything to make me believe they have truly changed their ways

**AMRULLAH SALEH**  
Vice President

before he was chased out of Kabul by the Taliban, who later tortured his sister in their efforts to hunt him down.

“My view of the Taliban changed forever because of what happened in 1996, and I haven't seen or heard anything to make me believe they have truly changed their ways,” Saleh wrote in February in *Time* magazine, a day before the US and Taliban

signed a withdrawal deal.

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US, Saleh — who was then fighting in the anti-Taliban resistance — became a key contact for the CIA.

The relationship paved the way for him to take over the newly formed Afghanistan intelligence service — the National Security Directorate (NDS) — in 2004.

As NDS chief Saleh is believed to have built an extensive network of informants inside the insurgency and across the border in Pakistan, where Pashto-speaking agents spied on Taliban leaders, according to Steve Coll's history of the Afghan War, “Directorate S”.

The intelligence Saleh collated provided what he alleged was definitive proof the Pakistani intelligence services were backing the Taliban and undermining their American allies.

Saleh's rise has not been without its share of falls. Known for his combativeness — and paranoia — Saleh has rarely wavered in his outspoken hatred of the Taliban and their alleged backers in Pakistan.

In 2010, he was fired as Afghanistan's spy chief following an embarrassing attack on a Kabul peace conference.

Forced into the political wilderness, Saleh maintained his fight against the Taliban and Pakistan on his Twitter account, where he fired off daily English tweets aimed at his long-time enemies.

A return to favour came in 2018 when he briefly led the interior ministry after forging an alliance with President Ashraf Ghani. His most recent political revival coincided with the US decision to leave Afghanistan. — **AFP**

## AN UPHILL BATTLE

# Japan's fractured opposition unites as Suga set to succeed PM Abe

LINDA SIEG AND AMI MIYAZAKI

Eight years after Japan's Democratic Party was ousted and began unravelling, opposition groups are once again unifying for a general election that could come soon, but they face an uphill battle to dent the current ruling bloc's performance.

The drive to unite has taken on new urgency as the dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) prepares to pick a new leader on September 14 after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said last month he would resign because of an illness.

Japan's centre-left opposition, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ), will merge with most of its former colleagues in the Democratic Party for the People (DPP) next week after picking a new leader on Thursday. The two groups, plus a batch of unaffiliated opposition MPs, emerged when the Democratic Party imploded in 2017 before a general election that the LDP won handily.

The newly-merged party, to be formally launched on September 15, could face an early test. Abe's lieutenant, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, is expected to win the LDP race, virtually assuring he becomes premier because of the party's majority in parliament. Suga and the LDP have already gotten a bump in voter surveys, and speculation is mounting that he will swiftly call a general election.

A strong performance by the LDP



Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (L) speaks to Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga before Suga during a lower house budget committee session at the parliament in Tokyo. – **Reuters**

THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY PREPARES TO PICK A NEW LEADER ON SEPT 14

would boost Suga's chances of winning a full three-year term after finishing Abe's tenure.

“Inside the LDP, everyone knows it (support rates) will never be this high again,” said Steven Reed, a professor emeritus at Chuo University. Support for the LDP had risen to 41 per cent from 33 per cent in a recent *Yomiuri* newspaper survey, compared with 4

per cent for the CDPJ.

Abe's nearly eight-year rule, which made him Japan's longest-serving prime minister, was aided by the fragmented opposition because of Japan's electoral system, in which most constituencies elect a single member of parliament to the lower house. That means the ruling party benefits if several opposition candidates compete. — **Reuters**

# sport

## RONALDO AT 101 FOR PORTUGAL

### FRANCE SEE OFF CROATIA IN WORLD CUP FINAL REPEAT

**PARIS:** Cristiano Ronaldo scored a stunning brace to take him to 101 international goals for Portugal in a 2-0 victory over 10-man Sweden in the Nations League on Tuesday, while France won a repeat of the 2018 World Cup final 4-2 over Croatia.

Ronaldo broke the mythical 100-goal mark on the stroke of half-time, the 35-year-old Juventus attacker curling in a free-kick from 25 yards over the wall and into the far left corner beyond Sweden's stranded goalkeeper Robin Olsen for a memorable milestone in his trophy-laden career.

The bonus second goal, and his 101st, came in the 72nd minute, the former Manchester United and Real Madrid forward cutting back inside the Swedish defence and producing a deft finish into the far corner from 20 yards.

"They are two important goals because it means I managed to reach this mark I'd been seeking," Ronaldo said.

"I'm very happy, first because the team won and of course to score the 100th and then the 101st, two great goals."

While acknowledging health came first, he lamented the COVID-19 enforced empty stadium in Solna.

"It's sad playing without fans, it's like going to the circus with no clowns or into a garden with no flowers," Ronaldo said.

"Speaking for myself, when I play away matches I like being whistled, it gives me motivation."

After making his first senior international appearance as an 18-year-old in 2003, Ronaldo notched up his first goal for Portugal in a 2-1 defeat by eventual winners Greece at Euro 2004.

Ronaldo, capped 165 times by Portugal, is second only to Iran's Ali Daei, on 109, in the list of top men's international goal scorers.

"The record, it's step by step," Ronaldo said. "It's not an obsession because I think records come naturally."

Incredibly for Ronaldo, just 17 of his 100 goals have come in friendly matches, and his nine hat-tricks all came in Fifa or Uefa tournaments or qualifying games.

At the Stade de France, Eduardo

Camavinga became France's youngest international in 106 years as Les Bleus won a repeat of the 2018 World Cup final over Croatia 4-2.

Midfielder Camavinga, aged 17 years and nine months, replaced N'Golo Kante in the second half and is only surpassed by Julien Verbrugghe, aged 16 years and 10 months in 1906, and Maurice Gastiger, at 17 years and 4 months in 1914.

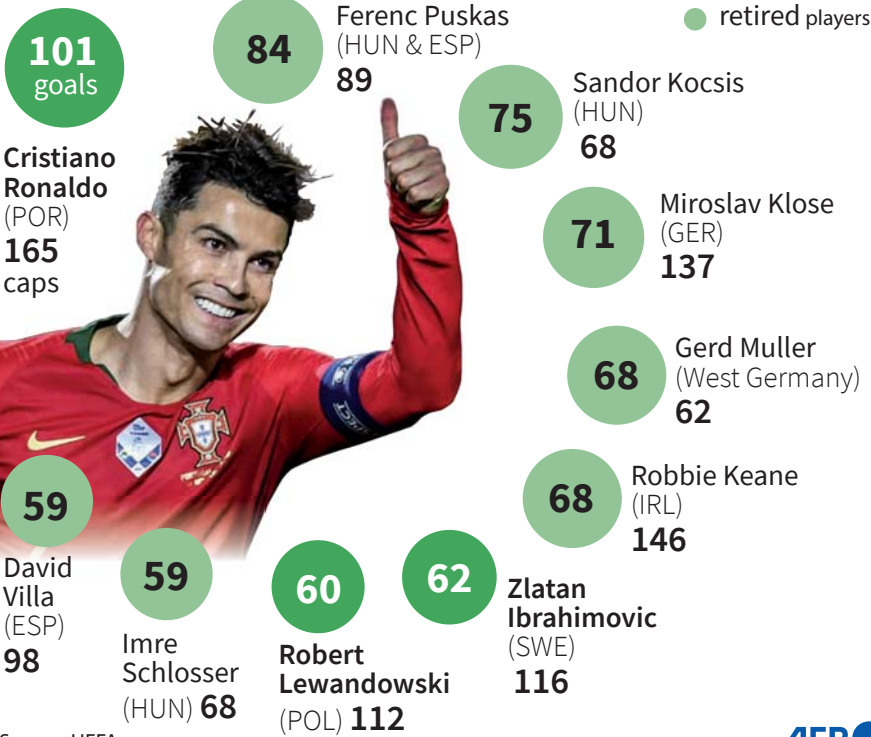
Deschamps made seven changes from Saturday's win over Sweden in Solna with Wissam Ben Yedder and Anthony Martial leading the attack after Kylian Mbappe contracted COVID-19.

Antoine Griezmann, Dayot Upamecano, Olivier Giroud as well as an own goal from the visitors' goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic secured a repeat result from Russia two years ago after Dejan Lovren had opened the scoring for Croatia, Wolfsburg's Josip Brekalo adding their second in the 55th minute. The result sees Didier Deschamps' World Cup winners second on goal difference in Group A behind Portugal. — AFP

### Ronaldo scores 100th goal for Portugal

All time Top 10 European international goal scorers

● Active or  
● retired players



## Bennett sprints to maiden Tour stage win

**SAINT-MARTIN-DE-RE, France:** Irishman Sam Bennett was left in tears after sprinting to a maiden stage win on the Tour de France on Tuesday after an Atlantic coast run between the islands of Oleron and Re.

The Deceuninck team rider's stage 10 victory, on his Tour debut, ensured he reclaimed the sprint points green jersey, a similar shade to the rugby and football shirts of the Ireland national team.

It also followed a dramatic start to the day as Tour director Christian Prudhomme tested positive for COVID-19 while the entire peloton returned negative tests. There was a negative test result, however, for French Prime Minister Jean Castex, whom Prudhomme had sat alongside in his car for Saturday's stage.

Wearing his Irish champion's tunic Bennett narrowly edged Australia's Caleb Ewan while peloton superstar Peter Sagan came third to cede the green jersey on a sunny day attended by more fans than on any previous day in the region famous for its huge, luscious oysters and other shellfish in the mud flats.

After the finish line on the chic Island of Re Ewan quickly rode alongside the winner to fist bump in a rare show of empathy between sprinters.

Surrounded by his teammates Bennett watched a replay before clenching his fist and cheering.

"It's almost a relief," said the 29-year-



Stage winner Team Deceuninck rider Ireland's Sam Bennett celebrates as he crosses the finish line at the end of the 10th stage. — AFP

old who had four near misses before finally clinching this win after a frantic 168.5-km-long stage 10 that featured 78 roundabouts.

Bennett said he could hardly think straight at the end of the stage.

"I threw my bike over the line to get the win but I was so excited I almost forgot to do it," he said.

"It hasn't sunk in yet," Bennett added at the finish line before bursting into tears and thanking his team and his family.

"I don't want to be a cry baby," said the powerfully built Belgian-born sprinter. "I want to bring this shirt home for Ireland, but Peter Sagan is a master of this game."

Bennett now has stage wins on all three Grand Tours, his stage win here following stage victories on the Giro d'Italia (three) and the Vuelta a Espana (two).

He said his next goal would be a Tour de France final day win on the cobbled Parisian streets of the Champs-Elysees, before concentrating post-Tour on the Milan-San Remo race and the World Cycling Championships.

#### RELIEF ALL ROUND

Jumbo's Slovenian leader Primoz Roglic holds on to the overall lead with Colombia's defending champion Egan Bernal in second place in the general classification, 21 seconds adrift.

Roglic will now go in to a third day in the leader's jersey.

"If I'm honest I'm relieved I wasn't positive and I'm still here, but I never really thought I was positive," said Roglic about Monday's COVID-19 tests that were delivered Tuesday.

"We are all healthy (the riders) and it's beautiful the race goes on. For the director I wish him a speedy recovery." — AFP



**Sultanate of Oman**  
**MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS AND YOUTH**  
**TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT**

Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects:-

| Tender No.        | Project Category | Location                                                                                                                                                    | Fees R.O | Grade In Tender Board Registration |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|
| Re-Tender 7/2020  | CONSTRUCTION     | MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO SEEB SPORTS STADIUM (INCLUDING SPORTS HALL AT SEEB SPORTS CLUB) FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2021 TO 31st DECEMBER 2022 | 25/-     | EXCELLENT                          |
| Re-Tender 8/2020  | CONSTRUCTION     | MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO AL AMAL SPORTS CLUB FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2021 TO 31st DECEMBER 2022                                             | 25/-     | EXCELLENT                          |
| Re-Tender 9/2020  | CONSTRUCTION     | MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO IBRI SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING SPORTS CENTRE AT DANK) FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2021 TO 31st DECEMBER 2022           | 25/-     | EXCELLENT                          |
| Re-Tender 10/2020 | CONSTRUCTION     | MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO KHASAB SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING SPORTS CENTRE AT LIMA) FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2021 TO 31st DECEMBER 2022         | 25/-     | EXCELLENT                          |
| Re-Tender 11/2020 | CONSTRUCTION     | MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO SALALAH SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING TAQAH SPORTS CENTRE) FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2021 TO 31st DECEMBER 2022          | 25/-     | EXCELLENT                          |

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) until 17/09/2020.

The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site at 9:00am 28/09/2020.

A Tender Bond equivalent to 1% of the tender sum issued from a registered bank, in the prescribed form, in Sultanate of Oman and valid for 90 days should enclosed with the tender.

Any tender without the bond will be reject and the tender committee is not bound to accept the lowest or any tender received.

**INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH**

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24166670 or through email [etenderhd@ita.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@ita.gov.om)



Naomi Osaka



Brady  
conquers  
nerves  
to beat  
Putintseva

Carrena  
Busta ends  
Shapalov's  
bid



Alexander Zverev

**NEW YORK:** Japan's Naomi Osaka sailed into the semifinals of the US Open on Tuesday as Alexander Zverev of Germany booked his spot in the last four of the men's draw.

Osaka, the tournament's fourth seed, swept aside unseeded Shelby Rogers in straight sets to set up a match with Jennifer Brady for a place in Saturday's final.

The 22-year-old Osaka required just 1hr 20 min inside an empty Arthur Ashe Stadium to defeat the 27-year-old Rogers 6-3, 6-4.

Osaka, the world number 9, said her victory was payback for three previous defeats to the 93rd-ranked Rogers.

They included a 2017 loss on clay in Charleston that Osaka said had left "a really bad aftertaste in my mouth."

"Honestly, I just felt like she had the upper hand because I've never beaten her," Osaka said.

"And those memories are stuck in my head so I consider this a little bit of revenge," she added.

Osaka's dominant service game contributed to a comfortable run-out for the 2018 US Open champion.

She won 83 per cent of points on her first serve and 70 per cent on her second.

In contrast, Rogers managed only 66 per cent and 33 per cent respectively. Rogers hit 29 unforced errors compared to just eight committed by Osaka.

Brady conquered some serious nerves to defeat Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva and reach the semifinals of a Grand Slam for the first time.

The American 28th seed needed just 1hr 9 min to blow away her 23rd-seeded opponent 6-3, 6-2. "Coming into the match today, honestly I was feeling like I was going to poop my pants. I was very nervous," said the 25-year-old Brady.

"I just tried to really stay calm and keep it cool as a cucumber out there," she added.

Brady is yet to drop a set and has lost only 24 games during her march to the semis, the fewest of anyone left in the draw.

# OSAKA, ZVEREV SAIL INTO SEMIS

Osaka said Brady would be a formidable opponent.

"I think she's a really amazing player she has the variety that I wish I had, so I'm a bit jealous," said the Japanese.

Zverev bounced back from a shocking start to oust 27th-seeded Croatian Borna Coric in four sets.

## 'HUNGRY'

The 23-year-old German prevailed 1-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/1), 6-3 in 3hr 25min.

He began playing more aggressively after finding himself a set down, and 4-2 behind in the second set.

"I thought to myself I'm down 6-1, 4-2, I have nothing to lose at the moment," Zverev.

The German will play Spain's 20th seed Pablo Carreno Busta for a place in Sunday's final.

The Spaniard defeated 12th-seeded Canadian Denis Shapovalov 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4), 0-6, 6-3 in an epic five-setter that ended in the early hours of Wednesday.

The disqualification of top

seed Novak Djokovic on Sunday has blown the men's competition at Flushing Meadows wide open.

His departure means the US Open will crown a first-time Grand Slam winner on Sunday.

"I know that all the young guys are hungry for it. It's going to be interesting," said Zverev, who will play either 12th-seeded Canadian Denis Shapovalov or Spain's Pablo Carrena Busta in the last four.

Zverev, who is in his second-consecutive Grand Slam semifinal after reaching the last four at the Australian Open this year, said he was yet to kick into fifth gear. "I feel like I can still improve a few more things and that only gives me confidence," he told reporters.— AFP

## US OPEN RESULTS

**Men (quarterfinals)**  
Pablo Carreno Busta (ESP x20) bt Denis Shapovalov (CAN x12) 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4), 0-6, 6-3  
Alexander Zverev (GER x5) bt Borna Coric (CRO x27) 1-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/1), 6-3  
**Women (quarterfinals)**  
Jennifer Brady (USA x28) bt Yulia Putintseva (KAZ x23) 6-3, 6-2  
Naomi Osaka (JPN x4) bt Shelby Rogers (USA) 6-3, 6-4

# Australia beat England to regain T20 top ranking

**SOUTHAMPTON:** Australia avoided a series whitewash as they survived a mid-innings wobble to beat England by five wickets in the third T20 international and regain their top-ranking in the sport's shortest format on Tuesday.

Having restricted England to 145 for 6 at Southampton they appeared to be cruising as they reached 70-1 off seven overs before three wickets for inspired spinner Adil Rashid slammed the brakes on their progress. But England's fielding was ragged and they spilled several catches before Mitchell Marsh plundered 13 off paceman Mark Wood's final over to ease Australian nerves and put them firmly back in the driving seat.

In the end it was reasonably comfortable for Australia with Marsh striking the winning single off Chris Jordan with three balls left to finish unbeaten on 39.

Jonny Bairstow had earlier top-scored for England with 55 in 44 balls. England won the series 2-1 and will now face Australia in three ODIs in Manchester, starting on Friday.

Australia had slipped to second in the ICC's T20 rankings after falling 2-0 down in the series.

Captain Aaron Finch said it was a relief to get a first win on the board



Australia's Steve Smith is run out by England's Eoin Morgan during the second T20I. — Reuters

since they returned from a long international hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially after throwing away the first match from a winning position.

"We know where we messed up

in the first game, we know where we could improve. We played good cricket but couldn't finish it off, but tonight Mitch and Ashton (Agar) got us over the line," he said.

"It's been great learning curve

after a long lay-off." England, captained by Moeen Ali for the first time with Eoin Morgan having a night off, laboured early on after Josh Hazlewood had Tom Banton caught behind in the second over.

Bairstow initially struggled to middle anything and England were 33-1 after the six powerplay overs. Dawid Malan and Bairstow broke the shackles before Malan was out for 21, Marcus Stoinis taking a good catch at deep mid-wicket off spinner Adam Zampa. Bairstow found his range with one huge slog-sweep six off Zampa but the spinner hit back to dismiss Sam Billings who gloved an attempted reverse sweep to Finch.

Bairstow was caught and bowled by Agar after top-edging and Steve Smith then superbly caught Moeen on the deep mid-wicket boundary off the rapid bowling of Mitchell Starc.

Opener Matthew Wade gave Australia a fast start and after he departed for 14, Stoinis continued the attack. Bairstow dropped a sitter off Finch before Stoinis fell to Curran for 26 off 18. Australia were in danger of imploding when Glenn Maxwell reverse swept Rashid to backward point and two balls later Rashid bowled Finch (39) through the gate with a ripper.

Malan failed to even get a hand on a routine catch when Marsh edged Denly but Smith chipped one straight back to Rashid for a routine catch to leave Australia on 100-5. Marsh kept his cool though to guide Australia home. — Reuters

## SCOREBOARD

|                                                                                                                                   |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>ENGLAND</b>                                                                                                                    |            |
| T Banton c Wade b Hazlewood .....                                                                                                 | 2          |
| J Bairstow c and b Agar .....                                                                                                     | 55         |
| D Malan c Stoinis b Zampa .....                                                                                                   | 21         |
| S Billings c Finch b Zampa .....                                                                                                  | 4          |
| Moeen Ali c Smith b Starc .....                                                                                                   | 23         |
| J Denly not out .....                                                                                                             | 29         |
| C Jordan c Smith b Richardson .....                                                                                               | 4          |
| T Curran not out .....                                                                                                            | 2          |
| Extras (lb2, nb1, w2) .....                                                                                                       | 5          |
| <b>Total (6 wkts, 20 overs) .....</b>                                                                                             | <b>145</b> |
| <b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-4, 2-53, 3-76, 4-94, 5-119                                                                              |            |
| <b>Bowling:</b> Starc 4-0-20-1, Hazlewood 4-0-23-1, Richardson 4-0-31-1, Agar 4-0-35-1, Zampa 4-0-34-2                            |            |
| <b>Australia (target: 146)</b>                                                                                                    |            |
| M Wade c Jordan b Wood .....                                                                                                      | 14         |
| A Finch b Rashid .....                                                                                                            | 39         |
| M Stoinis c Banton b Curran .....                                                                                                 | 26         |
| G Maxwell c Curran b Rashid .....                                                                                                 | 6          |
| S Smith c and b Rashid .....                                                                                                      | 3          |
| M Marsh not out .....                                                                                                             | 39         |
| A Agar not out .....                                                                                                              | 16         |
| Extras (w3) .....                                                                                                                 | 3          |
| <b>Total (5 wkts, 19.3 overs) .....</b>                                                                                           | <b>146</b> |
| <b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-31, 2-70, 3-86, 4-87, 5-100                                                                             |            |
| <b>Bowling:</b> Archer 3-0-32-0, Wood 4-0-38-1, Jordan 2-3-0-19-0, Rashid 4-0-21-3, Curran 4-0-23-1, Denly 1-0-8-0, Moeen 1-0-5-0 |            |
| <b>Result:</b> Australia won by five wickets                                                                                      |            |
| <b>Player of the match:</b> Mitchell Marsh (Australia)                                                                            |            |
| <b>Series:</b> England win three-match series 2-1                                                                                 |            |
| <b>Previous results</b>                                                                                                           |            |
| <b>Sep 04:</b> 1st T20, Ageas Bowl, Southampton: England won by two runs                                                          |            |
| <b>Sep 06:</b> 2nd T20, Ageas Bowl, Southampton: England won by six wickets                                                       |            |



ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

The elections of the domestic sports associations were postponed to 2021 after completion of the 2020 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo. According to a source, the officials at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth had instructed all the sporting associations to postpone the process of election for one year.

The election was initially due to take place in November as most of the sports association bodies completed the preparation and established the election panel. Moreover, the candidates for different positions began submitting

## Election of Oman sports bodies moved to 2021



their applications to the election committee during the last few days. The decision was welcomed by many of the top personnel sporting

members in the Sultanate. Dr AbdulRahim al Droushi from Sultan Qaboos University and lecturer in sports tweeted that

the postponement of the election is a critical step to re-organise the election policies and restricting the associations and sports bodies. He

mentioned this decision is in line to the Oman Vision 2040. Salim al Habsi of the Gulf Media Journalism Association said in

his tweet that the shifting of the sporting associations election to 2021 is a great step and needed accomplishment for those who is looking for the development of the domestic sports.

The former coach of the Sultanate U-19 football team said the decision is right under the situation of the pandemic and will give some sports associations to continue policies till the Olympics.

The sports lovers have requested the Ministry to revise and study the process of election taking into the consideration about restructuring the associations for the better development of the domestic sports.



# Heat oust Bucks to reach East finals

## LEBRON SHINES AS LAKERS DOWN ROCKETS TO TAKE 2-1 LEAD

**MIAMI:** The Miami Heat punched their ticket to the NBA Eastern Conference finals on Tuesday, beating top-seeded Milwaukee 103-94 as injured Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo watched from the bench.

Jimmy Butler and Goran Dragic finished with 17 points apiece as six Heat players scored in double figures and Miami completed a 4-1 series victory in a bruising encounter against the league's top defensive team.

Khris Middleton led the Bucks with 23 points. Antetokounmpo — tipped to scoop a second straight NBA Most Valuable Player award this season — aggravated his sprained right ankle in the first half of the Bucks' game-four overtime victory over the Heat.

The Bucks declared him inactive less than an hour before tip-off on Tuesday.

The loss of Antetokounmpo, who averaged career highs of 29.5 points and 13.6 rebounds per game this season, was a huge blow for the Bucks, as they tried to do what no NBA team has done before: come back from an 0-3 deficit to win a seven-game play-off series.

It's the second straight campaign that the Bucks built the best regular-season record only to come up short in the play-offs.

In 2019 they fell to the eventual champion Toronto Raptors in six games in the Eastern Conference finals.

The fifth-seeded Heat will face either the Boston Celtics or Toronto Raptors for a place in the NBA Finals.

The Celtics lead their series against the defending NBA champion Raptors three games to two.

Butler, who added 10 rebounds and six assists and was a perfect eight-for-eight from the foul line,

| NBA PLAY-OFF RESULTS        |         |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| (ALL SERIES BEST-OF-SEVEN): |         |
| SEMIFINALS                  |         |
| Eastern Conference          |         |
| Miami bt Milwaukee          | 103-94  |
| (Miami win 4-1)             |         |
| Western Conference          |         |
| LA Lakers bt Rockets        | 112-102 |
| (Lakers lead 2-1)           |         |

said the Heat's impressive 8-1 record so far in the play-offs means nothing now.

"All of that is behind us now," he said. "We'll wait and see who we get out of Toronto and Boston and then we'll lock in on that."

"But it's zero-zero now, we've got eight more to get."

The Heat trailed 28-19 after a chaotic first quarter in which they committed six turnovers leading to nine Bucks points.

They trailed by as many as 13 in the first period, but settled down in the second, out-scoring the Bucks 33-18 to take a 52-46 lead into halftime.

But Milwaukee, with Middleton leading the way, refused to go away.

After going scoreless for more than six minutes in the third period, the Bucks put together an 8-0 run to pull within five points.

Trailing 73-65 going into the final period, the Bucks trimmed the deficit to four multiple times, but the Heat's depth finally proved too much.

"Obviously they missed their MVP," Butler said. "But we knew we were going to have to get one out of the mud and I think this was the one."

Antetokounmpo said he felt "lost" as he was unable to contribute.

"Mentally it was a battle, but at the end of the day

you've got to trust your team-mates and that's what I decided to do," he said after the Bucks medical staff persuaded him not to risk further injury by playing.

**LEBRON LEADS LAKERS**

In Western Conference action, LeBron James scored 36 points and Anthony Davis added 26 as the Los Angeles Lakers powered to the finish in a 112-102 victory over the Houston Rockets.

The Lakers grabbed a 2-1 series lead and James notched an NBA record 162nd career play-off win.

"It says that I've played with a lot of great teams," said James, who won two NBA titles with the Miami Heat and one with the Cleveland Cavaliers. "It says that I've played with a lot of great team-mates and some great coaches."

James Harden scored 33 points with nine rebounds and nine assists and Russell Westbrook added 30 points for Houston in a back and forth battle that saw 16 lead changes.

The Lakers' reserves scored 42 points, with Houston's only points off the bench the 16 of Jeff Green.

Rajon Rondo, who scored 21 off the bench for Los Angeles, hit back-to-back three-pointers and came up with a steal and layup as the Lakers surged ahead with a 17-5 scoring run to start the fourth quarter.

After putting up 64 points in the first half, Houston scored just 38 in the second and the Lakers posted their second straight win of the series.

There was a frightening moment in the fourth quarter, as Robert Covington and Davis collided as Davis rose for a rebound.

Davis's elbow appeared to hit Covington in head and he left the court holding a bloodied towel to his face, while Davis was hurting from Covington's elbow in his side. — AFP

## Taha takes part in Asian Games China 2022 meeting



**MUSCAT:** Oman Olympic Committee Secretary-General Taha bin Sulaiman al Kishry participated in the third meeting of the Coordination Committee formed by the Olympic Council of Asia to follow up the work of the Organising Committee of 19th Asian Games (Hangu-China), which was held online on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the sports programme of the games with the dates of the competitions, the committee's findings regarding the promotional campaign and

marketing, and a documentary film about the Asian Games were reviewed. The latest updates were presented regarding the stadiums and the athletes' village, media, medicine and anti-doping, plans and programmes prepared for the torch as well as the festival and the exhibition accompanying the games.

The 19th Asian Games will be held in Hangu from September 10 to 25, 2022, and it will be the third Asian Games hosted by China after Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou in 2010.

## Hull withdraws from ANA Inspiration after COVID positive

**LOS ANGELES:** England's Charley Hull withdrew from this week's rescheduled LPGA ANA Inspiration golf major in California on Tuesday after testing positive for COVID-19.

Hull, the world number 28, said she had pulled out of the second women's major of the year after learning of the positive test early on Tuesday.

"As part of the LPGA TOUR's Covid-19 testing process, I was informed this morning that I tested positive for Covid-19 and I have withdrawn from the ANA Inspiration," Hull said on Twitter.

"I didn't feel great yesterday but I put it down to jet lag, the heat and my asthma playing up."

"I now realise I have some mild symptoms which feel similar to

having a cold and I am self-isolating and working with Tour on contact tracing.

"I am very disappointed to have to withdraw from what is one of my favourite events of the year but wish everyone the best of luck at this week's tournament and look forward to when I can return to playing on Tour."

The 24-year-old has a solid record in the ANA Inspiration, posting three top 10 finishes in the event since 2014.

The tournament at the Mission Hills Country Club in Rancho Mirage tees off on Thursday. The tournament is usually in late March/early April but was rescheduled to September this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP



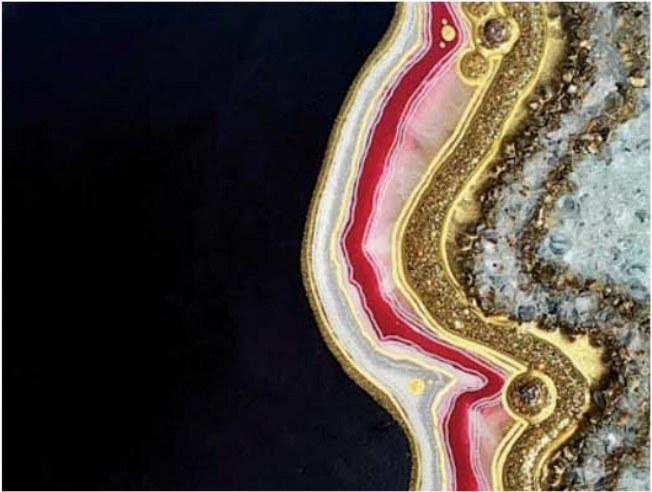
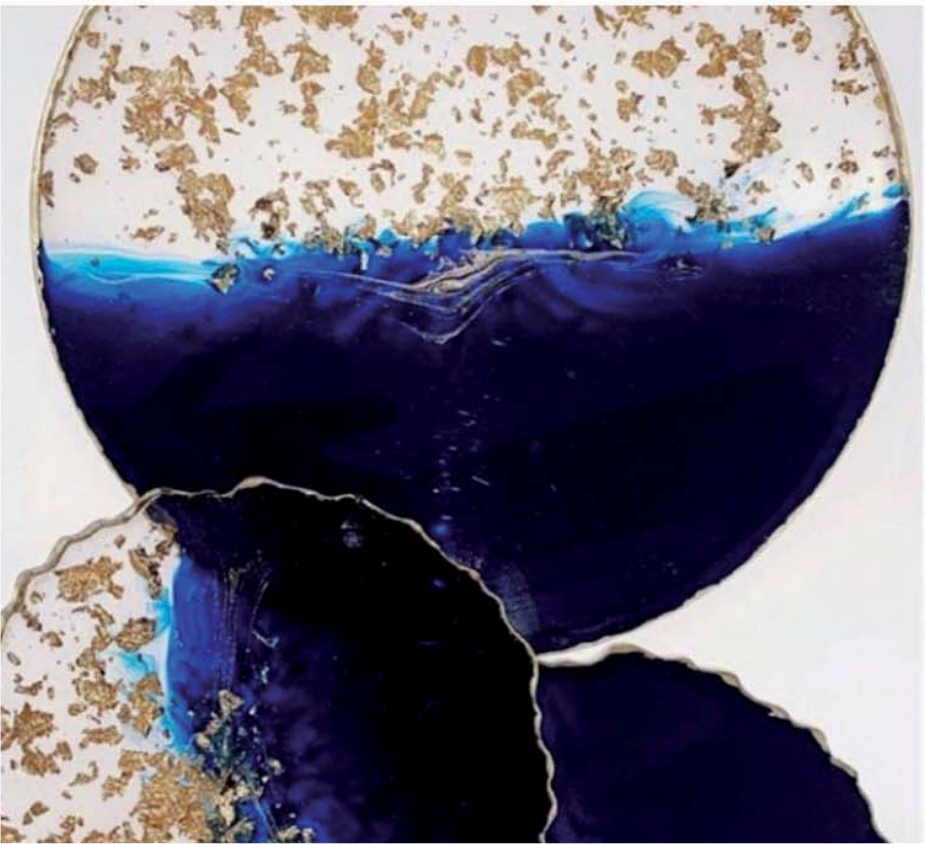
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## The therapeutic and intriguing art of resin

It looks like one of the easiest materials to work with but it takes skills and techniques to attain desired results. Namariq bint Khalid al Rawahiyah is a mother for two who discovered that venturing into resin art can be both therapeutic and a good source of alternative income.... **P14**



### DAILY PICKS

#### TRAVEL



##### THE NIGHT BEAUTY OF BILAD SAYT

Hidden in the mountains, Bilad Sayt is one of Oman's charming and sleepy villages that transports you to a time past. Thriving on agriculture, the people living here managed to carve their own paradise and build a life of peace and tranquillity others can only dream of. [Photo by Saud al Thuhli]

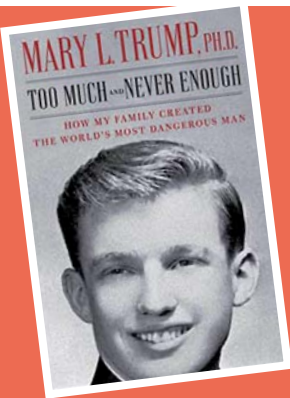
#### EAT



##### BEACH PAVILION SEAFOOD CHOWDER

Chef Anoob continues to amaze with the amazing food he prepares for Al Bustan Palace. He shares the recipe of the Beach Pavilion Seafood Chowder, a starter to surprise your family with this weekend. [Recipe on <https://www.omanobserver.om/category/cook-like-a-chef/>]

#### READ



##### TOO MUCH AND NEVER ENOUGH

BY MARY L. TRUMP

The clinical psychologist gives her assessment of events and patterns inside her family and how they shaped President Trump.

#### WATCH



##### ALIVE

As a grisly virus rumpages a city, a lone man stays locked inside his apartment, digitally cut off from seeking help and desperate to find a way out.

Director:  
Il Cho

Starring:  
Yoo Ah-in  
Park Shin-Hye  
Lee Hyun-wook

#### CELEBRATE



##### WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY

It's a rising epidemic all over the world. The celebration of World Suicide Prevention Day creates awareness about this tragic issue and works towards the prevention through education and support for those who struggle with suicidal ideation.



# The therapeutic and intriguing art of resin

TITASH CHAKRABORTY

The medium that artists use and the style of art they pursue are usually influenced by their life history and background. Such has been the case for Namariq bint Khalid al Rawahiyah who finds comfort and therapy in the fluidity and beauty of resin.

A mother of two, one afflicted by a congenital disease, she turned to art to help her navigate the suffocating mental pressure of the daily life challenges.

From the initial infatuation of just watching videos online to doing resin art herself and later turning her passion into a business, Namariq has become a success story now managing her own small business centred around different resin art pieces.

For her, resin is an unconventional style of painting where brushes are seldom or not used at all and canvas or paper is totally out of the picture. What is primarily needed is an excellent understanding of resin, an artistic eye and the ability to go with the flow.

"Art is my therapy and the more I succeed, the more recovered and strong I feel," Namariq shared. Guided by her creativity and turning her emotions into art, *Oman Daily Observer* reached out to the artist to ask her a few important details that can serve as inspiration for others.

## WHEN DID YOUR INTEREST IN ART PEAK?

Since I was young, I loved art class at school. I still remember that I had sketches all over in my notebooks, and almost every page was decorated with lines, shapes or even random doodles. Honestly, it would be hard to pinpoint a time, as I think it has always been a passion of mine. But as is the story of many, with age came responsibilities and these passions became a memory of the past.

## WHAT DREW YOU TO RESIN ART?

The moment I decided to rekindle my passion for art was in a time of much emotion. Not long after the birth of my second daughter, we found out she had a congenital issue and my little girl was put through many surgeries. As her mother, it took a severe toll on my mental health and I looked out for a distraction to keep me sane through these tough times. Whilst scrolling through social

media, I discovered videos of fluid resin art and then discovered a course for fluid art and it was the perfect thing for me! I joined the course and before I knew it, resin art became my new favourite thing. I remember when I asked the instructor about resin because I felt that it's a very interesting type of art, her answer was "it's very difficult, I couldn't work on it." That's when I decided resin art was what I wanted to do, I ordered my first package online and tried it for the first time, the outcome was amazing and I immediately knew that not only was this good creative outlet but a potential business as I hadn't seen much around in the Sultanate at the time.

## WHAT IS YOUR MAIN SOURCE OF INSPIRATION?

I draw my inspiration from everything around me. Nature, flowers, the sunrise and even trips to the furniture store. To me, a piece of furniture suddenly doesn't just look like something functional, but a canvas which is why I especially love upcycling tables and plain trays because to me, I don't see it for what it is, to me it inspires me to create something beautiful.

## TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR ART STYLE?

I love creating classic masterpieces, something that I know my customers or I will cherish for a long time. Most of the pieces I create include not only high-quality resin but also real crystal quartz, gemstones and crushed glass. I love creating things that are both aesthetic but also imbibe a positive vibe for those interacting with them. As evident in my social media, I love working with white, gold and black but I do enjoy mixing different colours from all parts of the spectrum and sometimes even create my own shades to create gorgeous fluid or geodes like patterns on trays, ring holders, coasters, bookmarks, wall art and a variety of accessories that people can add into their homes to bring in good vibes but also a pop of something beautiful.

## WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE WITH YOUR ART?

Since day one, resin art has intrigued people. Not just the result but also the process is therapeutic to many as it was to me. To me, my goals not only include building a successful business but also sharing my experience with my customers and anybody else who might be interested. Many people who I previously worked with have also started their own businesses

and to me isn't a competition but a way for sharing my love for the art, it makes me proud and now we have a good community of fluid artists who share their work, tips and tricks and passion for resin and fluid art. I want people to not only see me for my art but how this helped me through a very difficult time in my life and hope that it can be the same to others who might need it. Art is a great way to heal, mixing and pouring and painting is a proven way to dealing with difficult times and elevate us as humans to a place of peace, happiness and bring meaning back into our lives which can be especially true as the whole world fights through a global pandemic that has left us all a little hopeless.

## WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER AS YOUR MEMORABLE ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR?

I was honoured also to be hosted in Oman channel Morning show "Qahwat al Sabah", and it was my first experience of live TV which went well. I also participated in IDF — international design and furnishing exhibition in Oman conference in the exhibition centre last year. Currently, I am in the works of collaborating with luxury brands in Oman, something special and new for Oman's resin art scene. Stay Tuned!

## FOR THOSE CONSIDERING TO TAKE THE SAME PATH AS YOU, WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THEM?

I believe if you want something, you've to fight for it. Don't wait for the right time to come, you make it now the right time to start. And the more challenges you face; the stronger foundation you'll have. There has been a time where I couldn't work with resin because of many circumstances but I didn't stop taking online courses, watching videos or even chatting with resin artist, and this is because I don't want to be far from Art even if I couldn't paint. Follow your passion, try to search for your interest. You'll feel more alive & happy.

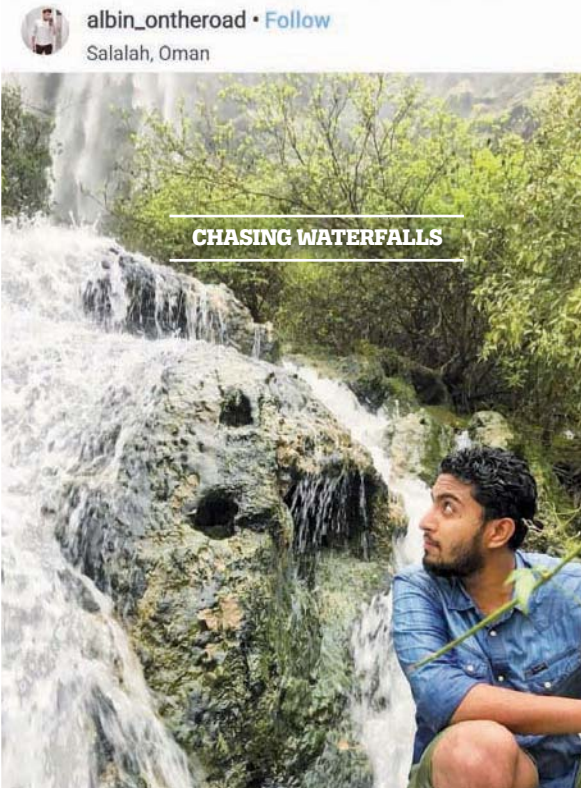
Follow Namariq on Instagram: [@ArtByNamariq](https://www.instagram.com/ArtByNamariq) to see more of her art. You can also check her online store [www.abnstore.om](http://www.abnstore.om) — the first of its kind, specialised resin art store based in the Sultanate of Oman.





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# Oscars academy sets out new diversity standards for best picture contenders



LOS ANGELES: The body that hands out the Academy Awards on Tuesday published detailed inclusion and diversity guidelines that film-makers will have to meet in order for their work to be eligible for a best picture Oscar, starting in 2024.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which has been criticised for honouring few movies and creators of colour, said the standards represent a new phase of a 5-year effort to promote diversity on and off screen.

The rules lay out percentages or numbers of actors, production staff, marketing staff and internships on a movie that must be filled by people of colour, women, people with disabilities or

Originally planned as a festival with about 40 bands, the anniversary concert had to be downsized due to the coronavirus pandemic. It will be made up for later, however, according to the organisers.

people from the LGBTQ community.

"We believe these inclusion standards will be a catalyst for long-lasting, essential change in our industry," Academy President David Rubin and Chief Executive Dawn Hudson said in a joint statement.

The rules will not apply to films vying for Oscars at the next ceremony in 2021, but movies that want to be considered

eligible for a best picture nomination at the 2024 Oscars will have to meet two of the four new standards, the Academy said.

The four standards cover diversity representation among actors and subject matter; behind-the-camera staff, such as cinematographers and costume designers; paid apprenticeships and training opportunities; and mar-

keting and publicity.

Criticism of the film academy intensified in 2016 with the social media hashtag #OscarsSoWhite, a backlash against two consecutive years of an all-white field of acting contenders.

Hollywood has come under further scrutiny this summer. Amid mass protests over systemic racism in the United States, streaming service HBO Max added a disclaimer and an introduction to the 1939 Oscar-winning Civil War film "Gone with the Wind."

Since 2015, the Academy has doubled the number of women and people of colour in its invitation-only ranks. The Academy's more than 8,000 members vote to choose the Oscar winners. — Reuters

FASHION

## LVMH taps Dior's Jones for women's designs at Fendi



PARIS: Italian fashion label Fendi, part of luxury conglomerate LVMH, on Wednesday named British designer Kim Jones as artistic director for womenswear collections, a role previously held by the late Karl Lagerfeld.

Jones, who already designs men's clothing for LVMH stable mate Christian Dior, will retain both jobs.

At Dior and in a previous design role at Louis Vuitton, Jones was credited with freshening up collections by pairing tailoring with sportier looks, at a time when luxury brands are competing to attract younger consumers.

While sales of luxury menswear ranges have gained momentum in recent years, partly thanks to a shift towards more casual styles, they are still a sliver of labels' revenues compared to women's collections.

Jones will work alongside Silvia Venturini Fendi, one of the scions of the brand's founding family who creates its menswear collections and accessories and collaborat-

ed with Lagerfeld until his death in February 2019.

Founded in 1925, Rome-based Fendi has long been known for its furs, and remains one of the most prominent exponents of fur designs.

Rivals like Chanel, Kering's Gucci or Britain's Burberry have dropped pelts in the face of pressure from animal rights activists and changing consumer tastes.

Fendi has also found success with its double "F" logo prints and handbag collections, although LVMH does not break out revenues for its brands.

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, which forced retailers to temporarily shut stores and curtailed international travel to shopping capitals like Paris, LVMH's biggest labels like Dior and Vuitton have maintained their momentum while smaller ones have struggled more, according to analysts.

Fendi said Jones' first collection for the brand would be presented during Milan Fashion Week next February. — Reuters



# Bollywood actor's death grips India with frenzied TV coverage

The abrupt death of **S u s h a n t Singh Rajput** has spurred a debate about the stigma of mental health, the rarefied insider world of Bollywood, and, more recently, condemnation of the media for the non-stop coverage of the duelling accusations between Rajput's family and his girlfriend.

Mumbai police initially reported Rajput's death as accidental and local media called it a suicide. But the federal police agency is now investigating if there was any foul play and is questioning Rajput's girlfriend, Rhea Chakraborty, and others.

On Tuesday, Chakraborty was arrested by India's narcotics department, which is investigating a drugs case linked to the probe of Rajput's death. She denies any wrongdoing and her lawyer, Satish Maneshinde, called the arrest "a travesty of justice".

Along the way, the story has become a media obsession in India, fed by a wave of TV coverage still swelling almost three months after Rajput, 34, was found dead in his Mumbai apartment.

In recent weeks, India's TV channels have given more airtime to the Rajput case than India's surging COVID-19 caseload, a plane crash and top political stories, according to the Broadcast Audience Research Council.

India's boisterous TV networks, which include more than 350 news channels in English and several local languages, have flashed photos of Rajput's body, analysed his medical prescriptions,

even used voodoo dolls and graphics of a skull to hype allegations that "black magic" was performed on the actor.

The federal police, the High Court in Mumbai, and the government watchdog Press Council of India have all criticised the coverage of the investigation.

"I spent 21 years in television and I've never seen a race to the bottom this bad," said Nidhi Razdan, who recently left Indian news network NDTV to teach journalism.

"It is a media trial. What else is it?" she said. "I haven't seen this kind of viciousness in coverage before."

## 'SICKENING'

Before his June 14 death, Rajput, most famous for portraying India's cricket captain in a biopic, and his girlfriend were more likely to be depicted as a down-to-earth - if Bollywood-beautiful - couple, cuddling tousled-haired at home or sitting playfully in jeans on a rundown park bench.

Chakraborty, 28, was regularly hounded by reporters when she appeared in public, with news commentators opining on her innocence or guilt.

Rajput's family claims she poisoned him, used black magic and is responsible for his death.

"There has been a conspiracy to break me and my family and my spirit," Chakraborty said in an interview with television anchor Rajdeep Sardesai in late August. "It is the systematic breakdown of an innocent family, an innocent girl who loved an innocent boy."

On Sunday, she was jostled by a pack of journalists as she tried to enter a narcotics department

office in Mumbai, where police struggled to disperse the crowd.

"Sickening," journalist Swati Chaturvedi wrote on Twitter. Alaka Sahani, a senior Indian Express journalist, said, "The visuals of Rhea being hounded makes my stomach churn and puke."

The CBI, the federal police agency, said last month it was investigating allegations of abetment to suicide and criminal conspiracy. Its announcement came after requests from Rajput's family and Chakraborty.

In a statement last week, the CBI said some media reports on its probe were "speculative" and "not credible." The bureau, it said, "has not shared any details of investigation with media."

The Press Council of India has urged the media not to "conduct its own parallel trial."

Some television editors have defended the coverage.

Arnab Goswami, editor of Republic TV and a widely watched anchor known for his sharp-elbowed commentary, last week credited his channel's coverage with ensuring that Rajput's death wasn't "white-washed" as a suicide.

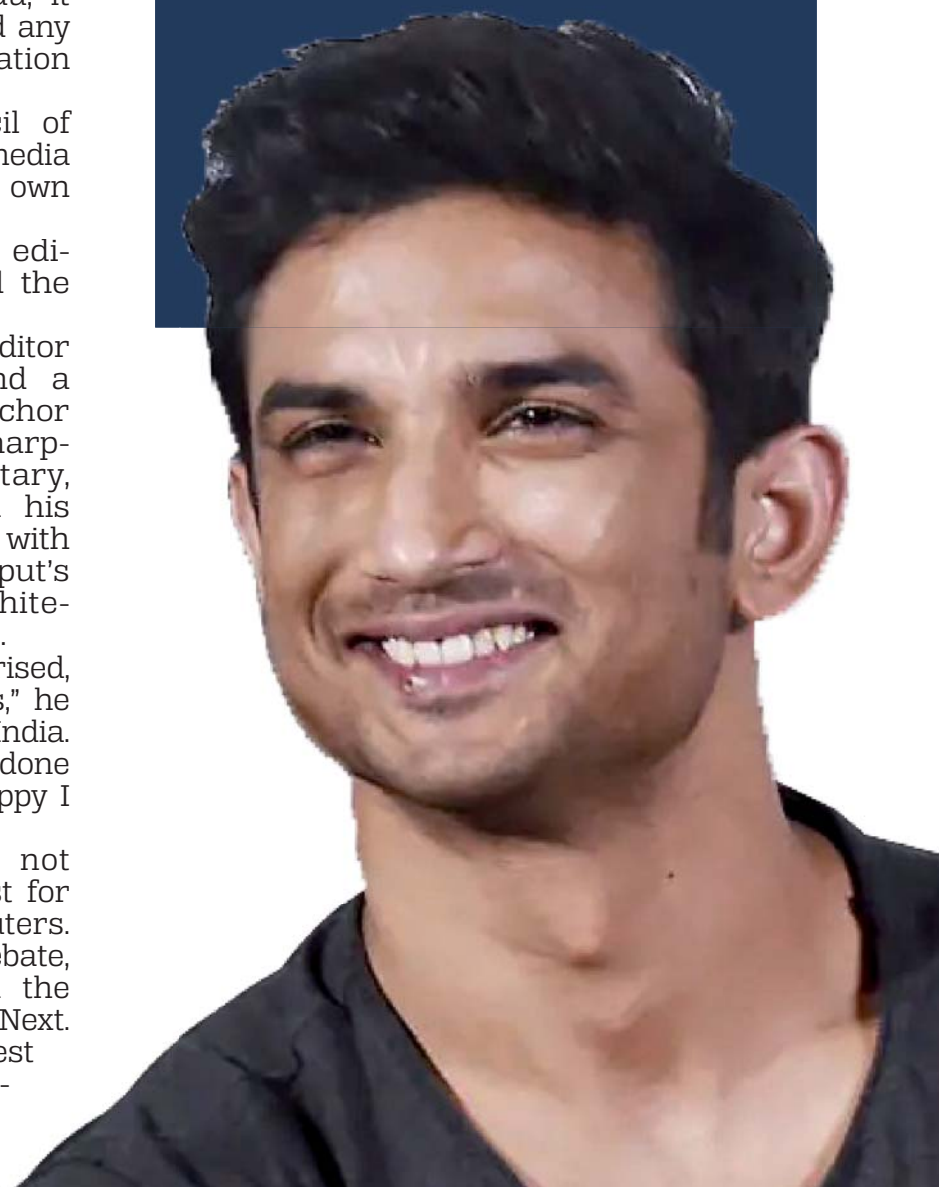
"I pushed, I pressurised, I connected the dots," he told news website OpIndia. "In the process, if I've done a media trial, I'm happy I have done one."

Goswami did not respond to a request for comment from Reuters. His main show, The Debate, ran last week with the hashtag #ArrestRheaNext.

Soon after her arrest on Tuesday, the channel started using the tag #RheaArrested.

— Reuters

In recent weeks, India's TV channels have given more airtime to the Rajput case than India's surging COVID-19 caseload, a plane crash and top political stories, according to the Broadcast Audience Research Council



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making life easy

## Oman's be'ah plans strategy for plastics segregation from waste

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

Oman Environmental Services Holding Company SAOC (be'ah), the sole entity overseeing the management of solid waste in the Sultanate, says it working on a strategy to segregate the prodigious amounts of plastic waste currently ending up in landfills around the country.

According to the government-run agency, plastic waste – which it dubs “the biggest threat to our environment” – makes up 21 per cent by weight and 50 per cent by volume of the engineered landfills set up across the length and breadth of the country.

“Volume is the main issue in landfills because all landfills are designed and structured to hold specific capacities,” said be'ah, warning that the massive quantities of plastic waste generated around the Sultanate threaten to overwhelm



these dumpsites.

Writing in its newly published 2019 Annual Report, be'ah said it is working to segregate and divert recyclable types of plastic, chiefly polyethylene terephthalate (PET) based waste, and thereby reduce the

quantities of waste being disposed of in landfills.

“Nearly 50 per cent of plastics or 190,000 MT in our landfills is considered as polyethylene terephthalate (PET). Diversion of PET bottles from landfills will

**CIRCULAR ECONOMY:** Move to divert estimated 190,000 MT of PET bottles and other plastic waste away from landfills and into commercially attractive recycling and reuse activities

eventually help reduce space consumption, which in turn, will increase the life of each landfill. be'ah is currently working on a PET diversion strategy and segregation plans,” it said.

The move comes as Oman prepares to enforce a ban on single-use plastic shopping bags with effect from January 1, 2021. A ministerial decision issued by the newly renamed Environment Authority prescribes fines ranging from RO

100 to RO 2,000 for violations of this mandate.

In recent years, be'ah has explored opportunities that support the segregation, recycling and commercialisation of waste streams in line with its vision to support the growth of a circular economy in Oman.

“Be'ah sees environmental and economic potential in commercialising waste streams such as Construction and Demolition Waste (C&D), End of Life Tyres (ELT), Lead Acid Batteries (LAB), green waste, Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and End of Life Vehicles (ELV). It is in the process of developing an integrated system for these with the objective of having a system in place for waste collection at source, its transportation and identifying an attractive market for the private sector to invest in a processing facility,” the agency stated.

### IN BRIEF

VW's former CEO to stand trial over 'dieselgate'



**BERLIN:** Volkswagen's former chief executive Martin Winterkorn (pictured) will stand trial over the car giant's massive "dieselgate" scam, a German court said on Wednesday, five years after one of the biggest crises to rock the automobile industry.

“The chamber has determined that there is sufficient suspicion, that is, an overwhelming possibility of conviction, of the accused Professor Doctor Winterkorn for commercial and organised fraud,” said the court.

Winterkorn, 73, will stand trial with four other former colleagues, who are also accused of fraud, as well as serious tax evasion and fraudulent advertising.

Volkswagen sank into a deep tangle of legal problems over its stunning revelation in 2015 that it had installed devices in 11 million diesel vehicles worldwide to make them seem less polluting than they were when undergoing emission tests.

Winterkorn resigned days after the revelations but denied any personal wrongdoing.

The "dieselgate" cheating scandal plunged one of the main pillars of German industry into the biggest crisis in its existence.

But the VW group had in May put to bed one of the most potentially damaging cases, by paying nine million euros in an out-of-court settlement to prevent its two current bosses from going to trial over market manipulation charges. — AFP

## General meetings season a virtual success: CMA

BUSINESS REPORTER  
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

As many as 170 ordinary Annual General Meetings and Extraordinary General Meetings were convened virtually by listed companies during the pandemic-related lockdown period, underscoring the success of

electronic means championed by the Capital Market Authority (CMA) as a safe alternative to in-person sessions.

The average attendance was more than 80 per cent for public joint stock companies and investment funds and about 74 per cent voted prior to the date of the general meeting in addition to other gains

such as saving time, funds and efforts employed blockchain technology for higher credibility in the results of voting without human interference and with accurate results.

The Authority proposed virtual meetings to avoid delays in the general meetings of the issuers of securities due to suspension of the

meetings in mid-March based on the instructions of the Supreme Committee tasked with dealing with the developments of the outbreak of coronavirus.

Mohammed bin Said al Abri, Vice-President, Capital Market Sector, commented: “The CMA was able to manage the issue of

general meetings of public joint stock companies and investment funds this year successfully and competently by proposing the convening of the meetings via electronic means and providing for a legislative environment to enable the companies holding the general meeting electronically.” **TOP 18**

## Duqm Port main gate, customs facilities near completion

BUSINESS REPORTER  
DUQUM, SEPT 9

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) is gearing up to hand over the main buildings in the customs station at Port of Duqm. This comes as part of ensuring the overall readiness of all facilities at the station to provide key services for export and import operations through the commercial berth at the Port.

Eng Yahya bin Khamis al Zadjali, In-Charge of Managing Operations of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, said that the construction works in the customs building, agriculture and fisheries building and the clinic are nearing completion and they will be handed over to the concerned bodies in coordination with the Port of Duqm.

“Oman Company for Development of Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Tatweer), a fully-owned by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), is currently striving to accelerate the works in the buildings and getting the main gate of the Port ready for commercial use”, Al Zadjali explained.

He also pointed out that Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman



**NEXT MILESTONE:** Contract award for commercial berth cranes soon

of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), paid a visit last week to the buildings established in the Port of Duqm.

The visit was aimed to witness the readiness of these buildings prior implementing Bayan System, as well as to meet with officials from

Royal Oman Police and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. Present during the meeting were also representatives of the main contractor of Duqm Port, Special Economic Zone at Duqm and Port of Duqm Company.

The meeting highlighted the plan for launching the customs building

and the agriculture and fisheries building in order to facilitate the process of customs inspection on exports and imports coming to Port of Duqm at the same location, as well as to release all agriculture and fish consignments.

The agriculture and fisheries building is highly equipped with



different devices and facilities that are used for inspecting the agriculture and fish products and conducting veterinary quarantine tasks.

Al Zadjali remarked that the coordination is in progress with the Ministry of Health to operate the specialised clinic located in the customs station.

Moreover, Eng Yahya bin Khamis al Zadjali confirmed that the bids submitted for the tender for designing, manufacturing, supplying, installing, testing and operating container cranes for the commercial berth at Duqm Port are currently under review.

There will be 12 rubber wheeled cranes (TRG) and 4 container cranes (STS) to shift containers from ships to the dock and vice versa. “The tender will be soon awarded to the

The tender will be soon awarded to the selected company. The Port of Duqm is currently using mobile cranes until the new main cranes are installed during the coming 18 months

**ENG YAHYA AL ZADJALI,**  
In-Charge of Managing Operations, SEZAD

selected company. The Port of Duqm is currently using mobile cranes until the new main cranes are installed during the coming 18 months” Al Zadjali commented.



IN BRIEF

Gold falls on strong dollar

**MUMBAI:** Gold prices fell 1 per cent on Tuesday as a strong dollar outweighed lingering economic concerns and investors awaited policy cues from the European Central Bank.

Spot gold was down 0.5 per cent at \$1,918.79 per ounce by 1203 GMT, after falling as much as 1 per cent to \$1,907.61. US gold futures fell 0.7 per cent to \$1,919.90 per ounce.

If the US Federal Reserve does not announce any fresh fiscal push while the ECB announces some stimulus package, “in dollar terms, gold will face some headwinds,” said OANDA analyst Craig Erlam.

The dollar strengthened against its rivals, making gold more expensive for holders of other currencies, amid bets that policy signals from the ECB on Thursday could weigh on the euro. — Reuters

LVMH drops \$16 billion Tiffany takeover, battle lines drawn



Tiffany & Co jewellery is seen in a store in Paris. — Reuters

**PARIS:** French luxury goods giant LVMH said it would walk away from its planned \$16 billion takeover of US jeweller Tiffany, in the most high-profile example of a deal to face collapse following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The stage is set for an acrimonious legal dispute; Tiffany said it was filing a lawsuit against LVMH to force it to complete the deal as agreed last year, accusing the French group of deliberately stalling completion of the takeover.

The deal, which would have been the biggest-ever in the luxury industry, was struck before the pandemic, which has hit the sector hard and raised questions about whether Louis Vuitton owner LVMH was overpaying.

The luxury industry is facing an unprecedented sales slump after a decade of stellar growth, with revenues expected to fall by as much as 35 per cent this year. It will take until 2022-23 for revenues to return to 2019 levels, according to consultancy Bain. — Reuters

Exorcising the ‘tax havens’



JAMES RAVI

As the world has become increasingly globalised, it is easier for taxpayers to make, hold and manage investments outside their country of residence in locations, commonly known as “tax havens”. Until recently, tax havens were generally viewed as exotic sideshows to the global economy frequented by celebrities, gangsters and wealthy aristocrats. But tax havens collectively cost governments over \$600 billion in lost tax revenue annually.

To add to this malady, vast amounts of money are kept offshore and go untaxed to the extent that taxpayers fail to comply with tax obligations in their home jurisdiction.

A study reveals that 500 companies alone held an estimated \$2.6 trillion offshore in 2017, though a small portion of that has been repatriated following US tax reforms in 2018.

Corporations are not the only culprits. As estimated by an economist at the University of California at Berkeley, individuals have stashed \$8.7 trillion in tax havens.

Off-shore tax evasion is a serious problem for jurisdictions all over the world. Countries have a shared interest in maintaining the integrity of their tax systems. Cooperation between tax administrations is critical in the fight against tax evasion and in protecting the integrity of tax systems. The key aspect of that cooperation is exchange of information between various governments.

Global pacts

The OECD (Organisation



for Economic Cooperation and Development) has a long history of working on all forms of exchange of information — on request, spontaneous and automatic — and the Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters and the OECD Model Tax Convention provide a basis for all forms of information exchange.

In the past ten years much progress was made by the OECD, EU and the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes in improving transparency and exchange of information on request. The global model of automatic exchange is drafted with respect to financial account information.

Many jurisdictions already exchange information automatically with their exchange partners and also regionally (e.g. within the EU) on various categories of income and also transmit other types of information such as account balances, changes of residence, purchase and sale of immovable property, tax withheld at source, etc.

As a part of this process and on the basis of FATCA-IGA (Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act-Inter-Governmental Agreements) many countries have enacted FATCA and other similar legislations.

Common Reporting Standard

As drafted and approved by the OECD Council, Common Reporting Standard calls on jurisdictions to obtain information from their banks and automatically exchange that information with other jurisdictions on an annual basis.

CRS contains the reporting standards and due diligence standard that underpins the automatic collection and exchange of financial account information of individuals and corporations held by the banks. Under the reporting standards of CRS, banks adopt AML/KYC (Anti-Money Laundering/Know Your Customer) procedures for existing and new accounts, low-value and high-value accounts, accounts of residents and non-residents without de minimis threshold.

Due diligence standards of CRS require bank to carry out the review procedures where regulators may require banks to apply a threshold such as pre-existing accounts with a balance above \$250,000 are subject to review.

Measures taken by Oman

Oman has committed and signed the international framework for implementing the Common Reporting Standards (CRS) regulation in 2019 to enable automatic exchange of financial information with other jurisdictions.

Banks and other financial institutions were mandated by

the Central Bank of Oman to ensure collection of CRS-related information for new account holders effective from 1 July, 2019.

Further to that, Royal Decree No 34/2020 approved the Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters Agreement which required the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) to instruct all banks and finance and leasing entities operating in Oman to implement CRS requirements.

Accordingly, CBO has recently instructed all these entities to commit to the requirements of CRS and submit periodical reports to the Tax Authority in the Sultanate of Oman so that this information will be shared with the thirty-two countries participating with Oman for the Automatic Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes.

Argument in favour of tax havens as “tax neutral” conduits helping international finance and investment flow smoothly, increasingly becomes defenceless.

While the benefits for the private players involved are evident, the same may not be true for the world as a whole. It is now widely accepted that in addition to tax losses, allowing capital to flow freely across borders carries risks of financial instability and erosion of value in emerging market economies.

(The author is a Director at Crowe Oman)

Sharakah, HSBC Oman in partnership with Impact help young start-ups

**MUSCAT:** Sharakah has successfully conducted “Financial Structure for SMEs” workshop recently for the selected candidates in Tahfeez, the Fourth Industrial Revolution Programme for Entrepreneurs.

The 4-day workshop has been designed, developed and implemented by Sharakah as part of the “Tahfeez Programme” organised by Impact Integrated Company and by the support of HSBC Oman, as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) endeavours

The workshop is an extension of Tahfeez programme, a 13-week training programme targeting 26 young youths that highlights the skills of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

and the associated technologies. The programme is based on intelligent blended learning, with the needed skills for Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies, complemented with every 3-week applied project. The courses and projects are based on monitoring and evaluation of the trainee’s performance, and online courses

The workshop focuses on the basics of project structure, cost and operating assumptions, along with the of governance concepts with examples matching the theme of Tahfeez.

On the last day of the workshop, participants have successfully passed the closing challenge and learned



the governance concepts for SMEs, they expressed their satisfaction and

learnings from the programme.

The 4-day workshop helped them enhance the concept of financial and administrative structure as well as business aspect of any business venture.

Faris al Harthy, Senior Project Specialist, who conducted the workshop further, commented: “We are glad to join hands together with Impact Integrated in implementing one of HSBC Oman’s corporate social responsibility endeavours, the positive feedback we received from the participants was indeed heartening and a sign of achieving the programme objectives.”

Indian economy projected to contract 11.8%

**NEW DELHI:** India’s economy is projected to contract 11.8 per cent on the year in the current fiscal year beginning from April, before bouncing back in the next fiscal year, India Ratings and Research, a domestic arm of ratings agency Fitch, said.

“All indicators, be it mobility or consumption, are pointing towards a much weaker economic recovery,” Sunil Kumar Sinha, its principal economist, told an online conference.

The economy is projected to contract 11.9 per cent in the current quarter, followed by a



A worker cuts metal inside a workshop manufacturing metal pipes in Mumbai. — Reuters

contraction of 6.7 per cent in the December quarter and 5.4 per cent in the subsequent quarter, Sinha said, citing the adverse impact of coronavirus pandemic.

Earlier, India Ratings had projected the economy would contract 5.3 per cent in the current fiscal year, versus growth of 4.2 per cent in the previous year.

While a second wave of infections sweeps the globe, India has not yet managed to flatten the first wave, he said.

Its economy shrank 23.9 per cent in the quarter from April to June, much more than forecast, in a

sign that recovery could be longer than expected, with analysts urging further stimulus.

On Monday, India surpassed Brazil as the nation with the largest number of infections outside the United States, with a tally of 4.28 million.

India Ratings projected the federal fiscal deficit to rise to 8.2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, propelled by an economic contraction and greater government spending to mitigate the pandemic effects, versus 4.6 per cent in the previous fiscal year.

— Reuters

CMA: General meetings season a virtual success



FROM PAGE 17

Al Abri added that the general meetings season met all legal requirements with a dedicated electronic portal being created for convening general meetings supervised by Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (MCDC).

This electronic hall provides a legal setting for convening general meetings and the accompanying works per the legal and procedural requirements adopted by the CMA and appropriate for the needs of such meetings.

The portal added great value in recording wide participation by investors in the general meetings and voting on the proposals presented by the boards of directors compared to the attendance in the previous years, hence the portal enabled the investors to follow up the performance of the companies in which they invest remotely further to voting on the resolutions.

More than 170 general meetings held via electronic means with attendance over 80 per cent of shareholders

Al Abri pointed out that the number of general meetings convened through the portal were 170 general meetings varied between ordinary annual general meeting and extraordinary general meetings and most of the meetings were held in the first date appointed for the meeting except 8 extraordinary general meetings and four annual general meetings whereas the quorum was present in the second meeting which is an indication the season was able to overcome the challenges imposed by the outbreak and is constructive indicator confirming the success of electronic general meetings in the Sultanate.

Given that foreign investments make up more than 25 per cent of the Omani market, providing a virtual setting for general meetings would bolster confidence and ease the influx of local and foreign capital, he noted.

The CMA announced suspension of the general meetings of public joint stock companies and investment funds which were supposed to convene within 90 days from the end of the financial year for the entities their financial year ended on December 31, 2019, pursuant to Article 172 of the Commercial Companies Law, then the CMA issued a circular to the public joint stock companies and investment funds approving distribution of dividends proposed in the agenda sent to the shareholders and approved by the respective regulators.

He said CMA issued another decision extending the convening of general meetings until June 2020.

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

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### SHOWROOM and flats FLATS for rent near Diwan Zafraniya area end of Muttrah Corniche close to (Muscat Shiva Temple), family, bachelor. Contact ☎99083071, 99323015.

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☎93994402, 93994403, 24834644.

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☎99445771, 93204595 93203481.

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☎94664635, 95850345.

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☎99627724, Abu Abdulrahman ☎99315490.

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### HOUSE room, sitting room + kitchen toilet in South Al Maabala, served government water located near Nesto and opposite to Starcare in Al Maabala.

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☎99238012/ 24704994.

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

☎968 94991705.

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☎91719246.

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### Announcement

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IN accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company Fajr Al Mustaqbal Al Mushe'a LLC, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No 1196614, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from Omani Rials 250,000.000 to 10,000.000. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

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# Europe’s climate policies are getting an upgrade

KATE ABNETT

The European Union is set to kick start discussions next week on how quickly it will cut greenhouse gas emissions over the next decade. Already well on the way to meeting its current climate target for 2030, the EU now wants to make that goal even more ambitious, to get on track for its flagship plan to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

The EU’s Executive Commission will propose a new 2030 emissions target next week, paving the way for talks between member states and European Parliament, which must approve the goal but are split over how ambitious it should be. Here’s how the new goal will be decided, how it holds up against climate science, and what it means for global efforts to curb climate change.

### 50 per cent or 55 per cent?

The Commission will propose one of two options for the new EU target — a 50-per cent or a 55-per cent reduction in emissions by 2030, against 1990 levels. The EU’s current 2030 goal is a 40-per cent cut.

It is expected to choose the 55-per cent goal, which about 12 of the EU’s 27 members say they support, most of them wealthier countries. Poorer, eastern countries that rely on coal-fired power are more apprehensive, worried by the investments needed to achieve the goal, and the economic fallout for workers and companies in fossil fuel-heavy regions.

The EU plans to spend 550



Climate activists hold banners as they protest outside the EU Council headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, in this file photo. — Reuters

billion euros on green goals by 2027, however researchers say more than 3 trillion euros of low-carbon investments would be needed to reach a 50-per cent reduction target.

The Commission will publish an economic assessment of the new target next week. The new 2030 target will set the stage for reforms of EU policies including its carbon market, finance rules and taxation, to help deliver green goals. ... or 65 per cent?

Lawmakers drafting the European Parliament position are eyeing an even more ambitious 60 per cent or 65 per

The EU plans to spend 550 billion euros on green goals by 2027, however researchers say more than 3 trillion euros of low-carbon investments would be needed to reach a 50-per cent reduction target.

cent emissions cut by 2030. Parliament’s environment committee will vote on Thursday on which 2030 target they want inserted into the EU’s climate law.

A full parliament vote will come later. Ultimately, a lack of support from national governments makes 65 per cent unlikely. But, by aiming

high, lawmakers hope to ensure the goal gets watered down less when member states, the Commission and parliament seek a compromise on the final target.

### WHAT DOES THE SCIENCE SAY?

Globally, the world should

cut greenhouse gas emissions by about 40 per cent - 50 per cent by 2030 against 2010 levels, which works out to a 20-per cent - 35-per cent reduction from 1990 levels, according to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

That goal is designed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial times and avert the worst impacts from climate change.

There isn’t much wiggle room. Already, global temperatures have risen by more than 1 degree Celsius on average, and countries’ current efforts would likely fail to

avoid another 2 degrees Celsius of warming.

In Europe, scientists say the EU will struggle to reach its 2050 target of net zero emissions unless it achieves at least a 55-per cent reduction from 1990 levels by 2030. Europe is also expected to make steeper cuts than other regions in the world that are still developing. But calculating a “fair” share of emissions reductions for a developed economy like the EU is tricky.

“It is not a scientific question,” said Imperial College London climate scientist Joeri Rogelj, a lead author on IPCC reports.

### PARIS AGREEMENT PLEDGES

Capitals outside of Europe will be watching the EU wrangle over its 2030 goal, which also serves as the bloc’s pledge under the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. Countries have been asked to update their 2015 pledges by the end of this year, but only 11 of the 197 signatories have done so.

Currently, pledges by all countries worldwide would only limit warming to about 3 degrees Celsius — double what scientists say would be “safe.”

With the United Nation’s next global climate meeting postponed to next year, and a lack of climate leadership from the current US administration, observers are hoping an ambitious pledge by Europe will prod other countries to follow.

“One of the world’s largest economies accelerating its course towards climate neutrality... will send a strong signal,” said Laurence Tubiana, an architect of the Paris deal and France’s former climate ambassador. — Reuters