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DJOKOVIC KEEPS FRENCH OPEN TITLE BID ON TRACK AS KENIN SURVIVES



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US HOUSE'S ANTITRUST REPORT HINTS AT BREAK-UP OF BIG TECH FIRMS



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THOUSANDS OF EDIBLE PLANTS COULD FEED US ON A HOTTER PLANET



OMAN

HM thanked by Saudi King

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia in reply to His Majesty's condolences cable to him on the death of Prince Fahd bin Mansour bin Jalawi al Saud. In his cable, King Salman expressed his thanks for His Majesty the Sultan's generous feelings and sincere prayers, praying to the Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty against all harms. — ONA

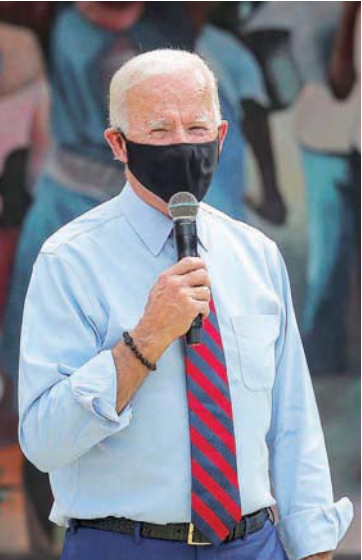
Oman joins EU list on tax purposes

MUSCAT: The European Union has decided in its meeting on Tuesday to include Oman in the list of cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes imitated by the EU in December 2017 to ramp up efforts aimed at curbing tax evasion, avoiding double taxation and fighting money-laundering. The EU said in a statement that the inclusion of the Sultanate in the list was the result of legislative amendments which made possible for spontaneous exchange of information for tax purposes, and the completion of all procedures related to the activation of information exchange with the EU. **DETAILS ON P5**

INSIDE



UN CALLS FOR IMPARTIAL PROBE INTO S KOREAN MAN KILLED BY NORTH **P7**



BIDEN IS COUNTING ON NEVADA. HAS THE PANDEMIC HURT HIS CHANCES? **P9**

WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT
MAX: 35°C
MIN: 26°C

SALALAH
MAX: 30°C
MIN: 23°C

NIZWA
MAX: 39°C
MIN: 23°C

SUNRISE 06.01 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR: 04:46

DHUHR: 12:00

ASR: 15:22

MAGHRIB: 17:54

ISHA: 19:04



Report commends Sultanate’s efforts in combating child labour

WASHINGTON: The United States Department of Justice (DoJ) has commended the efforts exerted by the Sultanate in controlling child labour. It noted that Oman enacted a number of laws and legislations to this effect.

In a report published in its website, the DoJ pointed out that the Sultanate achieved advanced places in 2019 in the index on elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

The DoJ said that the Social Development Ministry in Oman issued regulations that determine whether a child works within an official framework for household



work and whether the child undergoes medical tests that need to be completed before employment.

The report added that the National Committee on Combating Human Trafficking executed two training programmes on human trafficking, and that the Ministry of Labour issued a videotape, in Arabic and English languages, that explains the rights of expatriate workers.

The DoJ stressed that minimum age for work should correspond to the minimum age of compulsory education and that labour inspectors have to be well-versed in new regulations on combating child labour. — ONA



WELCOMING SPRING!

Spring season has arrived in Dhofar after the end of khareef and across the governorate one can experience pleasant weather, sunshine, low humidity, calm seas as well as clear and spectacular landscapes of mountains, plains and desert. Also known as Asurb season locally, spring starts from the end September for about four weeks every year. Temperatures around 20 degrees Celsius on the mountains, and in low-lying areas ranging from 26-28 degrees during the day.

PHOTO BY DR SACHIN SINGH

Oman trying hard to contain COVID-19

FIELD HOSPITAL RECEIVES PATIENTS AS 834 NEW CASES REPORTED

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 6

The Sultanate is working hard to contain the spread of the coronavirus outbreak, the health minister said as the Sultanate reported 834 fresh cases on Tuesday, bringing the total number of COVID-19 cases in the Sultanate to 102,648. The total COVID-19 deaths in the country reached 990 after 5 people died on Tuesday.

The rise in fresh cases is mostly due to the people's non-adherence to COVID-19 protocol like gatherings, not wearing masks and not following social distancing.

Addressing the online extraordinary meeting of the World Health Organization (WHO) Executive Council, Health Minister Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi said governments across the globe are "understandably concerned about the economic, social and political costs of the pandemic."

Dr Al Saeedi who is also the First Deputy Member of the Executive Board of the WHO, said: "Many countries had earlier implemented

measures over the past months that resulted in successful containment of the virus and a steady decline in cases. Across the region, more than almost 40 million people have been tested, and more than two million people have recovered from COVID-19. But now these countries, and many others, are seeing a worrying increase. In some countries, 1,000-3,000 new cases are being reported daily."

The Ministry of Health said 64 cases were admitted over the past 24 hours and now the total number of hospitalised COVID-19 patients stand at 557

(ICUs). A total of 91,275 out of the COVID-19 patients in the Sultanate have recovered, the ministry said.

Meanwhile, the field hospital, which was inaugurated at the old Muscat Airport premises on Monday, started receiving patients on Tuesday. A statement by the Ministry of Health, said: "The field hospital for treatment of COVID-19 cases has received the first set of patients infected with the virus." **SEE ALSO P2**

Black hole discoveries win 2020 Nobel Prize in Physics

STOCKHOLM: Britain's Roger Penrose, Reinhard Genzel of Germany and American Andrea Ghez won the 2020 Nobel Prize in Physics on Tuesday for their discoveries about one of the most exotic phenomena in the universe, the black hole.

Penrose, professor at the University of Oxford, won half the prize of 10 million Swedish crowns (\$1.1 million) for his work using mathematics to prove that black holes are a direct consequence of Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity.

Genzel, of the Max Planck

Institute and University of California, Berkeley and Ghez, at the University of California, Los Angeles, shared the other half for discovering that an invisible and extremely heavy object governs the orbits of stars at the centre of our galaxy.

Ghez — only the fourth woman to be awarded the Physics prize after Marie Curie in 1903, Maria Goeppert-Mayer in 1963 and Donna Strickland in 2018 — said she hoped it would inspire others. Asked about the discovery of a massive yet invisible object at the heart of the Milky Way, Ghez said "the first



thing is doubt". "You have to prove to yourself that what you are really seeing is what you think you are seeing. So, both doubt and excitement", the 55-year-old astronomer said in a call with the committee after receiving the award.

"It's that feeling of being at the frontier of research when you have to always question what you are seeing," Genzel said soon after hearing he had shared the prize that had been on a Zoom call with colleagues when the phone rang: "Just like in the movies, a voice said: 'This is Stockholm'", he said.

— Reuters



SAFETY OF HEALTH WORKERS IMPORTANT IN COVID-19 FIGHT

MUSCAT: The safety of health workers is important as they are essential in the fight against COVID-19, said Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health and First Deputy Member of the Executive Board of the World Health Organization (WHO), at the online extraordinary meeting of the WHO Executive Council on Monday.

Dr Al Saeedi said research related to obtaining safe and effective vaccines is still ongoing. He elaborated that three countries in the region have reached the Phase 3 clinical trial, stressing the need to ensure that the vaccine is distributed in a fair and equitable manner to all health workers and to all countries of the region.

The two-day meeting addresses the latest developments related to the response to coronavirus (COVID-19)

pandemic, as well as streamlines global efforts to combat the pandemic, identifying its trends and the mechanism for tackling it.

The Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response reviewed a report on the gained experiences and lessons from the health response to the pandemic, which is coordinated by the World Health Organization (WHO), in addition to the panel's key recommendations on capacity building to pandemic control, prevention and preparedness at the global level and the importance of reinforcing the health emergency programme.

Dr Al Saeedi delivered a speech during the meeting on behalf of the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) countries, in which he said, "The governments of the Eastern Mediterranean Region countries

are working hard to contain the pandemic and reduce health risks and social, economic and political impacts."

He also added, "The countries of the region have prepared very early for the pandemic and made remarkable progress in combating it. The number of infections declined after imposing measures that resulted in the successful containment of the virus and a steady decrease in the number of cases. More than 40 million people had been tested in the Eastern Mediterranean Region".

He indicated, "More than two million people have recovered from this disease, but some of these countries are currently suffering from an alarming increase in the number of infections. The number of new cases in some countries ranged from 1,000 to 3000 new cases in 24 hours".



40 tech firms to be part of first virtual expo today

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

As many as 40 technology companies from Oman as well as from abroad will take part in Oman's First Virtual Expo and Summit on Wednesday.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology is the Strategic Partner. The event is supported by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry are part of this 48-hour-long event that is expected to attract visitors from across the globe, according to the organisers.

"The first tech summit will allow local companies to stay connected in a new way," said Melwin D'cunha, CEO of Muscat Expo.

"We have kept this event engaging by getting all the attendees involved through live interactions and direct one-on-one meetings by utilising the latest and state of the art virtual event technologies available today."

Themed 'EXPOrience the Future', this first of its kind virtual event is expected to work very much the same

as other in-person events.

A person with a smartphone, desktop or laptop can digitally attend from the safety and comfort of your office or home. No Apps are required.

There are over 40 Booths at the Exhibition showcasing latest products and services where one can chat and meet face-to-face via video/audio the sales representatives of companies.

Sixty speakers will talk and present case studies on cybersecurity, digital forensic, AI, cloud, digital transformation, fintech, e-Commerce, 5G, space and education technology. The expo will feature a networking lounge which will allow attendees to interact with the visitors.

CITRA-Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority, Kuwait; Dubai International Financial Centre; LIAA-Investment and Development Agency of Latvia and Saudi Authority for Industrial Cities and Technology Zones; Qatar Financial Centre; and Russian Export Centre are other supporters of the event.

The event is organised by White Paper Summits and Muscat Expo.

Exercise boosts immunity, eases severity of COVID-19

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 6

More than half of the Omani university students are physically active, and one-quarter of the students physically inactive, according to a study. It also revealed that 17.4 per cent of Omani students are not practising any physical activity and 15.2 per cent have a low rate of physical activity. The findings were revealed by Dr Amal al Siyabi, Head of Health Community Partnership at the Community Health Initiative Department of MoH, who conducted the study on the ratio, type and barriers that prevent Omani university students from exercising physical activity.

The study's findings were presented during an online forum on Monday to mark the Omani Physical Activity Day, which falls on October 2. The forum discussed the relation between physical activity and COVID-19.

Dr Huda bint Khalfan al Siyabi, Director of Community Health Initiatives stressed that physical activity is a valuable



tool to control the infection and maintain public health. Physical activity may reduce the severity of COVID-19 infection due to muscle activity that results in improving the immunity system and reducing the infection. It will also reduce the chances of getting severe COVID-19 infection and therefore minimising admission of patients in ventilators. This would alleviate the burden on

the health care systems during the pandemic.

Dr Ameera al Ridan, Head of Mental Health at the Non-Communicable Diseases, highlighted the enhancement of mental health through physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The forum touched upon several related topics such as the healthy lifestyle during

COVID-19 pandemic, the role of physical activity in improving the mental state during the pandemic, as well as the scientific facts about how physical activity may help reduce the consequences of coronavirus.

Al Siyabi highlighted the role of physical activity in reducing persistent tension and stress, as well as maintaining mental health.

INVITATION TO TENDER

SOHAR ALUMINIUM

Sohar Aluminium LLC (SA), PO Box 80, PC- 327, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman hereby invites qualified Suppliers/Contractors for the following tender:

Tender No.	: 2020-ENG-SOW-0041
Tender Title	: UPS Battery Replacement
Scope	: Contractor shall supply and install batteries as required for UPS system as per SA scope of work.

Tender No.	: 2020-ENG-SOW-0055
Tender Title	: 220kv SAPP GIS Bus Bar Protection Relay upgrade
Scope	: Contractor shall do decommission, removal of existing relays, off-site demonstration of new design, Supply, installation, testing and integration with SA system in line with existing SA bus bar protection system.

Tender No.	: 2020-ENG-SOW-0064
Tender Title	: Generator, GSUT & SST Relay upgradation
Scope	: Contractor shall decommission and removal of existing relays; design, supply, installation, testing and commissioning to upgrade existing Generator, Generator Step-Up Transformer (GSUT) and Station Service Transformer protection (SST) relays.

Tender No.	: 2020-ENG-SOW-0067
Tender Title	: 220 KV Tunnel Civil Repair Work
Scope	: Contractor shall do Site Survey, Design, civil construction and Civil Defence/ROP/SIPC approval for 220 KV Tunnel Civil repair work as per SA scope of work.

Kindly send your email and company profile to: tender@sohar-aluminium.com
For list of active tenders visit: <https://www.sohar-aluminium.com/en/content/tender-listing>

■ RAFO CHIEF RECEIVES BRITISH OFFICIAL



Air Vice Marshal Matar bin Ali bin Matar al Obaidani, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) received Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston, Chief of the Air Staff in the friendly United Kingdom (UK), and his accompanying delegation, in his office at Mu'askar Al Murtafa' on Tuesday. They discussed means to promote cooperation between the air forces of the two friendly countries. — ONA



Brigadier-General Abdulrazaq bin Abdulqadir al Shahwarzi

HM keen on equestrian sports, encourages public participation

Racing season kicks off on October 17

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik accords attention to different equestrian sports through his continuous support to horse races organised by the Royal Horse Racing Club and by encouraging Royal Cavalry's participation in different events abroad.

"This support is aimed at preserving this historic Arabian sport that constitutes a source of income for a large segment of Omani society. It is aimed at attracting many young people to the sport and fostering equestrian sports culture locally and internationally," said Brigadier-General Abdulrazaq bin Abdulqadir al Shahwarzi,

Commander of the Royal Cavalry.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), he said the Sultanate has assumed a high status in the global sports map based on the rating and timing achieved by horses participating in local races, in addition to advanced places in international sports.

Brig. Abdulrazaq pointed out that the Royal patronage of equestrian sports prompted horse owners to obtain top pedigrees of purebred and thoroughbred Arabian horses compatible to bloodlines of local horses so that they could contest at all levels. Valuable prizes are given slated for the winners to encourage their outbound

participation under the banner of the Sultanate, he said.

The Royal Cavalry's horse racing track has been equipped at world-class standards by a firm specialised in organising horse races in the Sultanate. The company, manned almost 100 per cent by Omanis, has been continuously commended for its excellent performance in the management of this type of sports in the Sultanate, said the Commander of the Royal Cavalry.

Speaking about Omani jockeys, Brig. Al Shahwarzi said that they have accessed advanced levels of professionalism through their participation in local and international events. "This is

evidenced by the fact that they are called for participation within hours from the announcement of horse races in different countries. Their results are ideal, in fact major, due to the huge pressure that they undergo from, for example, their participation in a single week in a horse racing season in GCC states," he observed.

It is worth noting that the Royal Horse Racing Club opened registration in the 2020/2021 horse racing season proposed to kick off on October 17—this time without spectators. Yet the authorities have undertaken full precautionary measures to ensure the safety of all participants. — ONA

Women's empowerment pillar of development in Sultanate



MUSCAT: The Sultanate will mark the 11th anniversary of Omani Women's Day on October 17. The event celebrates the prominent status accorded to women during the blessed renaissance. It celebrates the welfare programmes of women which ensured their improvement of status, and their participation alongside men in nation building.

A number of women gave statements on the significance of Omani Women's Day, which came as one of the fruitful outcomes of the symposium on Omani women, held at Saih Al Makarim, Suhar, in 2009.

Wadha bint Salim al Alawiyah, Director of Women's Affairs at the Ministry of Social Development, said, "Nations move forward through the contribution of individuals. Development without discrimination of women constitutes a basic pillar of progress. Their role is undeniably to contribute to various

social, economic and cultural aspects."

Wadha pointed out that the Royal attention accorded to women by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said in all health, scholarly and occupational fields, among many, culminated into this noble Royal gift—the designation of October 17 as Omani Women's Day. "It is a recognition of the significant potential of women in promoting their own personality and their society. This approach has been enhanced with a set of laws that grant women their deserved rights to enable them to shoulder their responsibility in sustainable development," she added.

Al Alawiyah noted that the Sultanate joined the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 2005. She added that, with a view to documenting all rights that secure women's social status, Oman

followed up all procedures and developments in the Convention.

"The establishment of the Women's Affairs department seeks to promote women in government and private sectors, and enable women to participate actively in the proper management of their family and social lives. The event celebrates these accomplishments," Wadha said.

She also spoke about the government's role in enabling women to join government institutions and private sector establishments or set up their own businesses. "Besides building leadership capacities, women in Oman have also been enabled to participate in decision making. They enjoy equal status as men in public participation and establishment of private/popular establishments, notably Omani women's associations whose number grew to 65 covering all governorates

"It is a recognition of the significant potential of women in promoting their own personality and their society. This approach has been enhanced with a set of laws that grant women their deserved rights to enable them to shoulder their responsibility in sustainable development"

WADHA BINT SALIM AL ALAWIYAH

Director of Women's Affairs at the Ministry of Social Development

and wilayats of the Sultanate. Women are also active participants in charity and professional associations," Wadha said.

Asia bint Yaqoub Al Kindiyah, a visually challenged Arabic language teacher at Omar Ibn al Khattab Institute for the Blind, said that the celebration of Omani Women's Day reflects women's role in promoting social development.



Wafa bint Ali al Amriyah, Chairperson of Omani Women's Association in Al Seeb, said, "The Almighty Allah has endowed Oman with women's empowerment during late Sultan Qaboos bin Said's blessed Renaissance, Women could act as partners with men across sectors that fits with nature, abilities and skills.

She pointed out that women shouldered this responsibility without sacrificing attention and care to their families, including the grooming of a generation that loves Oman and has the potential to continue the march of development.

Al Amriyah said the designation of October 17 as Omani Women's Day crowns women's accomplishments in the Sultanate. She added that women in the Sultanate have been able to lead many organisations and contribute to a variety of local, regional and international achievements.

"Therefore, this day assumes

great significance for every Omani woman because it makes them feel recognised. It is an incentive to exert more efforts to work for the progress of their country. It renews women's sense of responsibility towards their families and their society because the one who gave them confidence expects them to be responsible and worthy of realising what is expected of them." Al Amriyah said the Omani women are fully aware of Oman Vision 2040, and the government's endeavours to implement this strategy. "Women in Oman are keen to have enough legal and social awareness to protect their rights and ensure a balanced life. Women are expected to focus on religious aspects to lead a sound life based on principles of decent living. In this way, women can become a shield for the nation that secures the future of coming generations."

— ONA



TOURISM REVIVAL DEPENDS ON LOCAL DEMAND

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The efforts of the governments in this part of the world, including Oman, to reduce the dependence on oil have been largely driven by travel and tourism.

Despite this overwhelming focus, the tourism sector's contribution to Oman's GDP has been facing challenges as it declined to 2.5 per cent in 2019 from 2.6 per cent in 2017 and 2.9 per cent in 2018.

The government aims to increase the contribution of the tourism sector's contribution to GDP to six per cent by 2040.

With international tourism facing an indefinite worldwide lockdown, the figures for 2020 will be unprecedented and a wild guess

for now.

The fear of getting stranded on a foreign land without sufficient cash, PCR tests after and before travel, mandatory self or forced quarantines have forced people to defer any type of non-essential travel for now or until the discovery of the vaccine.

Domestic tourism contributed to RO 609 million in 2019, compared to RO 685 million, underlying its equal importance. It may be also noted that Omanis dominated all guests across five to two-star hotels.

Given the circumstances, governments have been encouraging people to embark on domestic tourism or staycation to prevent the total collapse of the local hospitality industry that accounts for thousands of jobs.

"After nearly seven months of 'stayhome' and 'workfromhome' (WFH) I am looking for an option to get some fresh air away from the house, even if it is within the country", said Muna al Balsuhi, who is used to foreign travel in the summer every year.

"Within Oman package of the Omran is a good imitative but they should have launched the scheme after the opening of flights, so that people take flights to places like Khasab or Salalah. I am sure both hotel customers and the hotel staff will follow the health protocols."

There is a national responsibility on all citizens and residents to promote the domestic tourism industry.

"The hospitality sector is the

After nearly seven months of 'stayhome' and 'workfromhome' (WFH) I am looking for an option to get some fresh air away from the house, even if it is within the country

MUNA AL BALSUHI

backbone of the future Oman, also for job creation. So we need to support this economy during difficult times and not just stay home and regret not having a foreign trip", said Sulaiman, a government employee.

The employees of some leading hotel brands that have the WithinOman scheme told the *Observer* that the response has been positive but at the same time customers are extremely mindful of getting an infection.

"This winter will be extremely important for the domestic tourism in Oman I am certain people as stakeholders will support this vital industry in the country", said a senior official at the Ministry of Tourism.

According to the UN's World Travel Organization, the world witnessed a loss of 440 million international arrivals that wiped out \$460 billion in export revenue in the first half of 2020. That is almost five times the loss in international travel revenues recorded during the 2008 global financial crisis.

Over the past month or so, restrictions have been eased in nearly 50 per cent of the world's travel destinations. Although there are new safety measures in place that alter the travel experience considerably, we must see this as an opportunity to inject resources into the travel sector, in order to jumpstart economic activity and begin the slow process of recovering the massive losses.



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European Union lauds Sultanate cooperation to curb tax evasion

MUSCAT: The European Union removed the Sultanate from the list of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions on Tuesday. A statement issued online by Government Communication Centre (GCC) said: "The removal of the Sultanate from the list of countries came as a result of the measures it has taken in aspects related to international cooperation in the tax field, the most important of which is the issuance of Royal Decree No 118/2020 amending the provisions of

the Income Tax Law."

The European Union's decision on Tuesday is part of its efforts aimed at curbing tax evasion, avoiding double taxation and fighting money laundering.

The EU said in a statement that the inclusion of the Sultanate to the list of cooperative tax jurisdiction was the result of legislative amendments which made possible for spontaneous exchange of information for tax purposes, and the completion of all

procedures related to the activation of information exchange with the EU.

Within the framework of the Sultanate's participation in the international community efforts aimed at boosting cooperation in taxation matters and identifying the best practices regarding global tax governance, the Sultanate joined the inclusive framework to tackle Base Erosion and Profit Shifting and the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information

for Tax Purposes. Additionally, the Sultanate signed a number of multilateral conventions overseen by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) most significantly the Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting and the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters, which were ratified by the Royal Decree No 43/2020 and Royal Decree No 34/2020 issued on

The EU said the inclusion of the Sultanate to the list of cooperative tax jurisdiction was the result of legislative amendments

March this year.

It is worth noting that the Royal Decree No 118/2020 issued on September 14 amending some provision of the Income Tax Law supports the Sultanate's efforts to cooperate with the international community in the taxation matters as the amendment added a legislative tool which allows for the exchange of information with international parties concerned.

— ONA

CPA: Don't hike prices without permission

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Shops been urged to abide by the consumer protection laws and act accordingly especially during COVID-19.

"We urge all commercial outlets in the country to abide by the consumer protection laws and not to hike prices without the prior permission from the CPA," Salim bin Ali al Hakmani, Chairman of the Consumer Protection Authority, said.

He further said that efforts are on to ensure sufficient stocks of all essentials reach the markets and reasonable prices are charged from the end-users. "We are making more efforts in monitoring and following up the markets and facilitating and expediting the delivery of services to consumers," Al Hakmani said.

A source at the Consumer Services and Market Watch department added that suppliers are

We urge all commercial outlets in the country to abide by the consumer protection laws and not to hike prices without the prior permission from the CPA

SALIM BIN ALI AL HAKMANI

Chairman, CPA

not entitled to increase the prices of essentials without permission from the authority and without any reason.

"FMCG products, essential goods and services, especially barbers and beauty salons cannot

increase their prices due to the demand seen during these days," he said.

He further said that the market has been under close monitoring and 24/7 alert system is in place to report any price hike. Consumers can, if any trade malpractice or price hike is found at any outlet, reach the CPA on toll-free numbers 80079009 or 80077997 and report the same.

Teams from the CPA have been visiting various commercial centres and markets across various governorates to ensure the availability of goods, price stability, and the suppliers' commitment to laws and legislation, and to closely examine how effectively the consumer protection law is implemented.

The Authority's regional offices have been urged to make more efforts in monitoring and following up the markets and facilitating and expediting the delivery of services to consumers.



In brief

■ **HAIMA**



NEW ROP HAIMA STATION SERVICES FROM TODAY

Royal Oman Police (ROP) on Tuesday announced the resumption of services at the Haima Police Station and the service building and the provision of traffic, passport and residency and civil status services at the new premises from Wednesday.

■ **MUSCAT**

CRYPTOCURRENCIES RISKY, SAYS CBO

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) reiterated a warning to citizens and residents against the use of cryptocurrencies such as Dagecoin, and others.

CBO has affirmed that dealing in cryptocurrencies involves a high financial risk due to their fluctuating value as well as their vulnerability to crypto-jacking and Internet fraud.

CBO confirmed that it has not granted authorisation to any entity for dealing in cryptocurrencies or any similar products which are neither guaranteed by the CBO nor protected by the Banking Law No 114/2000 as a Central Bank money. Hence, those who deal in cryptocurrencies will be doing so at their own risk.

Airlines lose \$418m/day

GENEVA: The world's airlines are burning cash at a rate of around \$418 million a day, according to an estimate by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which urged governments to provide additional aid.

The IATA said on Tuesday that it expects the airline industry to rack up \$77 billion in losses during the second half of this year, assuming restrictions relating to the pandemic continue to curb global travel.

Since the outbreak, governments have provided \$160 billion to airlines, through cash injections, loan guarantees, wage subsidies and tax relief.

IATA chief Alexandre de Juniac told a press conference in Geneva that airlines normally build up cash reserves during the peak travel season around the middle of the year.

This year, however, airlines burned cash throughout this period, he said. "And with no timetable for governments to reopen borders



without travel-killing quarantines, we cannot rely on a year-end holiday season bounce to provide a bit of extra cash to tide us over until the spring," de Juniac warned.

Without further government support, 4.8 million aviation jobs are at risk, IATA warned.

The industry group repeated its call for passengers to undergo rapid testing for COVID-19 before they fly, to ensure flights are safe and to remove the need for quarantines that are keeping people from travelling. — dpa

14,000 tonnes of batteries used a year

IMPROPER DISPOSAL OF USED ONES THREAT TO ENVIRONMENT

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnassri

The total number of lead-acid batteries used in the Sultanate has reached more than 14,000 tonnes a year, a report by *Lynx* monthly newsletter said. This increase is related directly to the rise in the number of vehicles, which by the end of May 2020, reached 1,530,671 million, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

When disposed improperly, these batteries pose a danger to humans as well as environment.

The batteries which have completed their life span pose danger to nature. Batteries need to be replaced continuously for reasons related to the efficient performance of vehicles or equipment in general. According to a study conducted by the Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah), the average battery life is estimated at about one

year for small vehicles and one and a half year for heavy vehicles.

In the Sultanate, used batteries are not thrown directly after their expiry date, rather there is a great demand for them and are recycled for economic returns. The problem, according to *Lynx*, lies in wrong practices employed by unqualified workers who buy used batteries, disassemble them in primitive ways and dispose the acid by pouring it directly on the ground to extract lead. This affects the soil, plants and the groundwater in the long run.

The disposal of lead-acid batteries is carried out in the Sultanate with the help of small and medium enterprises in addition to scrap dealers where they all work in the process of collection as per contracts and at specific geographical areas, under the supervision of the company, be'ah company stated.

In addition to this, some companies treat lead-acid batteries and

produce lead metal. It will work to develop other facilities once the flow of used batteries is controlled and appropriate quantities are available, be'ah said.

On the other hand, be'ah has recently signed agreements with a number of government and private agencies focusing on the proper disposal of used batteries and recycling by treating them at approved treatment centres in the Sultanate with the best international specifications and standards. Through the authorised carriers, the company collects lead-acid batteries from institutions and then transport them to the treatment site to be recycled and manufacture of secondary materials. The company provides special containers for battery disposal that are characterised by the presence of insulating layers that prevent the leakage of substances harmful to human health and environment.

Watchdog confirms nerve agent in Navalny's blood

AMSTERDAM: Blood samples taken from Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny confirmed the presence of a nerve agent from the banned Novichok family, the global chemical weapons watchdog said on Tuesday.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) said in a statement that the biomarkers in his blood and urine had "similar structural characteristics as the toxic chemicals belonging" to the Novichok group. The findings confirm results released by Germany, where

Navalny was treated after falling ill on a flight in Siberia on August 20.

Berlin asked the OPCW to take samples from Navalny and test them after German doctors concluded he had been poisoned with Novichok. The precise substance in Navalny's samples that was detected by the OPCW's designated laboratories was not on the list of banned chemical weapons, but is a new and undeclared variant in the Novichok family, the statement said.

"These results constitute a matter of grave concern," said OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias,



calling on members to uphold the international treaty banning chemical weapons use.

"States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention have declared the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances as reprehensible and wholly contrary to the legal norms established by the international community," he said. "It is therefore important now for States Parties to uphold the norm they have decided to adhere to."

Western governments have called for sanctions against Moscow over the case. Russia denies any

involvement and has said it doubts Navalny was poisoned.

"No doubt Novichok nerve agent used to poison Alexey #Navalny," Britain's delegation at the OPCW said on Twitter. "Any use of a banned chemical weapon is a matter of great concern."

Novichok, a Soviet-era nerve toxin, was also used to poison a former Russian spy in England in 2018. The OPCW's member states agreed last year to ban chemicals in the Novichok family, a ban that went into effect four months ago.

— Reuters



Lawyers walk out of Bashir's trial in protest

KHARTOUM: Most lawyers for Sudan's ousted president Omar al Bashir and other defendants walked out of his trial over a 1989 coup in protest at alleged bias on the part of the prosecutor general.

Dozens of lawyers, in a hearing broadcast on Sudanese television, left the courtroom after the prosecutor, Tagelsir al Hebr, read out the charges.

Bashir and the 27 others face accusations of undermining constitutional order and use of military force to commit a crime, Hebr said.

Defence lawyer Abdelbasit Sebdarat said that Hebr had made the same accusations even before taking up the post of public prosecutor.

"He lodged these complaints as an ordinary citizen. Now, as he is prosecutor general, we object to him reciting the charges," the lawyer said.

Presiding judge Essam Ibrahim responded that "whoever wants to leave, they can", and adjourned the trial to October 20.

The 28 defendants stand accused of plotting the 1989 backed military coup that brought Bashir to power.

Proceedings have been repeatedly delayed, with Tuesday's hearing the sixth since the trial opened in July.

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

If convicted, Bashir and his co-accused — including former top officials — could face the death



Defendants in the trial of ousted president Bashir stand up to leave the accused box as the hearing is adjourned in Khartoum. — AFP

penalty.

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

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

Sudan's transitional government has agreed that Bashir would stand

trial before the ICC.

However, in an August peace deal with rebels, the government agreed to set up a special court for crimes in Darfur and that Bashir should also face that court.

Meanwhile, hundreds of people on Monday blockaded Sudan's Red Sea port to protest against a landmark peace agreement signed at the weekend, complaining that they had been excluded from the deal.

The protesters are from among the Beja people, who were angry that representatives who signed Saturday's deal with the government came from the rival Beni Amer tribe.

Since Sunday they have blocked the docks and the highway linking Port Sudan, the transit point for most of the country's foreign trade, to the rest of the country.

"We're carrying out this action because those who signed (the

agreement) do not represent the east of Sudan and because the text (of the deal) does not take into consideration our point of view," one of the organisers of the protest, Sidi Moussa, said on Monday.

The head of the dockers union, Aboud Elshribini, said: "We won't allow anything to go through as long as the government does not satisfy our demand and freeze the agreement."

Men in traditional white robes

Proceedings have been repeatedly delayed, with Tuesday's hearing the sixth since the trial opened in July

carried sticks or swords and chanted "Beja Hadid", meaning "the Beja people are strong like iron."

Security forces did not intervene and there was no immediate reaction from the government.

The historic deal, hailed by the international community as a key milestone to ending decades of war, was signed by the government and a coalition of rebel groups, the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF).

The rebels included groups from Darfur, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan, while political parties from Sudan's impoverished east were also party to the agreement.

All had spent decades opposing the regime of ousted president Bashir, who was toppled in 2019. But the Beja protesters said Saturday's deal excluded them.

Sudan's east has experienced several violent clashes in recent months between rival ethnic groups jockeying for political posts.

The country is currently led by a precarious transitional government which took power several months after Bashir's ouster.

It is struggling to rebuild an economy beleaguered by decades of conflict and US sanctions. — AFP



Iraqi volunteers grill chicken to be served to pilgrims as they make their way to the holy city of Kerbala, amid the outbreak of the coronavirus disease in Baghdad. — Reuters

Iraqi volunteers cater for thousands of pilgrims

BAGHDAD: "Fried chicken, fried fish, rice!" Mohammed al Mohammedawi shouts to it pilgrims passing his roadside food tent in Baghdad on their way to the holy city of Kerbala on foot.

His tent is among hundreds in the Iraqi capital providing free food, shelter and even clothes to the thousands of pilgrims making the 90-kilometre journey to Kerbala, which will take them two to three days, for the annual Arbaceen pilgrimage.

Local men founded a volunteer group 'Ahhbab al Zahra' to assist the pilgrims after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The climax of the pilgrimage will be held tomorrow (October 8) in Kerbala.

Although their operation had been growing ever since 2003, this year

is different, Al Mohammedawi said. With the coronavirus continuing to spread in Iraq and with new cases averaging around 3,000 to 5,000 per day, the Iraqi government decided to limit the number of foreign pilgrims to 1,500 per country of origin.

Neighbouring Iran has banned flights to Iraq and closed land borders due to the pandemic. Last year, about 2 million Iranians had visited Iraq for Arbaceen.

Al Mohammedawi said he also noticed a decrease in Iraqi pilgrims this year. But fear of the pandemic did not deter 'Ahhbab al Zahra's Sattar al Souaidi from volunteering.

Despite losing two of his brothers to COVID-19 he is convinced he won't catch the virus himself. — Reuters

Channelling 'anger into art', artists in Beirut process blast

BEIRUT: On the day of the Beirut explosion two months ago, 54-year-old Nabil Debs was busy planning the opening of his boutique hotel which had been in the works for the past decade.

Instead, the day after escaping death in the massive blast that killed nearly 200 people, Debs was clearing rubble from the collapsed facade, roof and balconies of the heritage building that was his family home for decades and now a business.

With the debris cleared, the halls of the building are now open to visitors to view more than 100 works of art by mostly Lebanese and Arab artists, reflecting on the explosion itself and also the turmoil and wars of past decade.

The initiative, "Beirut Year Zero", features paintings, installations, and sculptures by some 60 artists and aims to raise money to support them and the Lebanese Red Cross, which was at the forefront of rescue and relief work after the blast.

Debs - who is one of the curators of the exhibition - said many artists' studios were destroyed in the explosion which hit Gemmayzeh, a neighbourhood known for its galleries and nightlife, especially hard.



Visitors wearing face masks look at artworks by composer and visual artist Zad Moutaka during a collective exhibition entitled 'Beirut Year Zero', at Arthaus Beirut. — Reuters

It "was an assault on our ways and beliefs", he said. "The political system, the economic crisis, everything is coming against us, so we transformed that anger into...an art front."

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

crashed by 80 per cent and banks have severely restricted withdrawals.

The explosion that ruined a swathe of Beirut has compounded the financial meltdown.

British artist Tom Young, who has been working and living in Lebanon for more than a decade, and one of the participants in the exhibition, said

artists needed "to do something with this pain and this anger".

The main inspiration for his work was the Beirut port silo, a towering structure which bore the full force of the August 4 explosion - but by doing so, shielded some western districts of the city from the worst impact. — Reuters

CAIRO

Egyptian artist crafts pictures with salt

Egyptian artist Hany Genedy focuses as he carefully pours white salt onto a black surface to create an image of actor Al Pacino. Genedy experimented with materials such as leaves and money before settling on a substance he says is versatile and cheap - salt. Genedy, who crafts images of Egyptian and international celebrities and landmarks, says he thinks only a handful of artists worldwide use the mineral.

Surrounded by assorted colours of salt in his home studio in a village in the Nile Delta province of Sharqia,



the 24-year-old says he developed a secret technique to fix his images.

"At first it took me four or five hours to make a picture with salt then I had to erase it, but later I had the idea of looking for a way to preserve these works," he said.

ALGIERS

Endangered genets reappear in Algeria

The genet, a cat-like species threatened with extinction in Algeria, has reappeared in forests of the North African country, likely as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, authorities said Tuesday.

"We had not seen them for a long time, but we have now," said Ilham Kerboua, head of wildlife at the forestry directorate, adding that the number of these animals in the wild remained minimal.

Shy and nocturnal, the genet is a carnivore with thick, dotted fur and a tail almost as long as its slender

body. It is often mistaken for a cat.

"Generally speaking, the confinement (of people due to the coronavirus) has seen biodiversity, nature regain some of its rights. Fauna like peace and quiet," said Kerboua.

The genet is the third endangered species that has reappeared in Algeria in recent months.

The Saharan cheetah, a feline that had not been seen for 10 years, was spotted in May in Ahaggar National Park, in the far southern region of Tamanrasset.

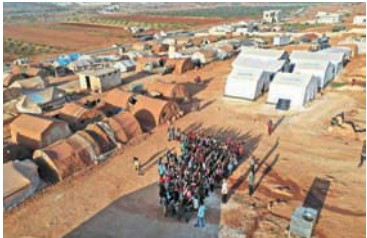
BEIRUT

Car bomb in north Syria kills 18, mostly civilians

A car bomb on Tuesday killed 18 people, including at least 13 civilians, in the Turkish-controlled town of Al Bab in northern Syria, a war monitor said. The explosion near a bus station in the town also wounded at least 75 people, some of them seriously, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported.

Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said the remaining five victims could not immediately be identified.

Turkey and its Syrian proxies control several pockets of territory on



Syria's side of the border. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the car bombing, but there has been a string of attacks in Al Bab since its capture by Turkish troops from the IS group in 2017. — Agencies

In brief

■ BANGKOK

MALAYSIAN PM
SHUNS REIMPOSING
LOCKDOWN

Malaysia will not reinstate strict general curbs on movement despite record daily coronavirus case numbers over the past two days, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said in a televised speech.

“The government has no plans yet to reinstate the Movement Control Order”, said Muhyiddin, referring to the nearly two-month lockdown imposed in mid-March that largely confined people to their homes and saw more 23,000 arrests made for alleged infractions. Reimposing such limits would have “a major impact on the nation’s economic and social system”, Muhyiddin said. — **dpa**

■ COLOMBO

LANKA BANS PUBLIC
EVENTS AFTER VIRUS
CASES RISE

Sri Lanka on Tuesday banned all public gatherings after the country recorded its highest ever number of new coronavirus cases in a single day, the Health Ministry said.

All exhibitions, large conferences, parties, indoor and outdoor events, musical shows and religious gatherings have been banned until further notice, the Ministry said in a statement.

The move comes as 466 coronavirus cases were detected among staff at a factory producing garments for the export market located in the Gampaha district north-west of the capital Colombo. — **dpa**

■ MALE

MALDIVES EX-VICE
PRESIDENT GETS 20
YEARS FOR GRAFT

Maldives former vice president Ahmed Adeb was sentenced to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to graft, money laundering and abuse of power, court officials said on Tuesday.

Adeb was a close ally of ex-president Abdulla Yameen until Adeb was jailed for allegedly trying to assassinate the strongman former ruler with a bomb on board his yacht in 2015.

The Criminal Court in an overnight decision also imposed a fine of two million rufiyaa (\$129,000) for Adeb’s role in syphoning money from the state tourism promoter during the former administration. — **AFP**

Probe into S Korean man killed by North

SEOUL: The United Nations Human Rights office in South Korea called on Tuesday for an impartial investigation into the killing of a fisheries official by North Korean troops at sea last month, as the man’s family urged the UN to conduct its own probe.

The death of the official, whose family identified him as Lee Dae-Jun, sparked a dispute over why and how he was found floating in North Korean waters nearly 36 hours after he went missing.

The South Korean government said their investigation suggests Lee wanted to defect to the North, but his family disputes that. Lee’s brother, Lee Rae-Jin, told reporters outside the Seoul office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that he wanted to expose North Korea’s “atrocities” and ask for a “fair and objective investigation” by the UN.

In a statement on Twitter, the UN human rights office in Seoul said both Koreas are obligated to carry out a “prompt, impartial, and effective investigation” and to make the findings public, but made no mention of the UN playing a role. North Korea should also engage with the South to return the man’s remains, the UN office said.

Lee Dae-Jun’s teenage son wrote a letter to South Korean President Moon Jae-In accusing the government of failing to save his father’s life.

“Would you have acted the same



South Korean soldiers walk along a fence of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating North and South Korea, on the South Korean island of Gyodong. — **AFP**

way if it were your own child or grandchild going through this pain?” he wrote to Moon. Moon’s office said that the president planned to respond to the boy personally.

A spokesman for South Korea’s ministry of defense said it would respond to the family after reviewing

their request for information. South Korea has accused the North of dousing Lee’s body in fuel and setting it on fire in an effort to prevent any possible coronavirus infections.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un offered an apology for the killing, but Pyongyang denied it burned his body

and has not responded to Seoul’s call for a joint probe.

Ha Tae-Keung, an opposition party lawmaker on parliament’s intelligence committee, told reporters that the government would also ask the UN to investigate whether North Korea is executing people who don’t

follow anti-coronavirus measures.

North Korea has not confirmed any coronavirus infections and has imposed strict virus-control measures including closing its borders, although South Korea and the United States doubt it has managed to avoid the pandemic completely. — **Reuters**

■ INDIA, JAPAN HOLD TALKS



India’s Foreign Minister S Jaishankar, Japan’s counterpart Toshimitsu Motegi, Japan’s Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga before the meeting at the prime minister’s office in Tokyo. — **Reuters**

Trishaws turn campaigners as
virus curbs in Yangon canvassing

YANGON: As surging coronavirus infections make election canvassing difficult in Myanmar, humble trishaw drivers are becoming unlikely champions for a nationwide ballot just a few weeks away.

Lockdowns have put the brakes on election activities, with parties focusing efforts on social media and trishaw drivers who spread the message on the street, festooning their bicycles and passenger seats with party flags, umbrellas and logos.

“It’s like we are doing an election campaign on their behalf”, said by Zaw Min, a trishaw driver kitted out in the red attire of the incumbent National League for Democracy (NLD) party.

“I hope our activity will be effective for the candidates.”

A handful of the three-wheeled passenger bikes popular in Myanmar’s biggest city of Yangon displayed the colours of opposition parties running against the NLD.

Myanmar’s COVID-19 infections have grown rapidly from a few hundred in mid-August to more than



A trishaw drives by while campaigns for the National League for Democracy party amid the COVID-19 spread in Yangon. — **Reuters**

18,781 and 444 deaths as of Monday, when 987 new cases and 32 fatalities were reported. With authorities piling resources into fighting the virus, there are doubts about the viability of the November 8 poll, which Myanmar’s de-facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi last

week said must go ahead and is “more important than COVID”.

The main challenger to Suu Kyi’s NLD, the Union Solidarity and Development Party, and 23 other opposition parties have called for a postponement. — **Reuters**



A man lays flowers for the victims of the Thammasat University massacre during the annual commemoration ceremony for the event at Thammasat University in Bangkok. — **AFP**

Trump ‘looking forward’ to next presidential debate

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said on Tuesday he wants the next debate against his Democratic challenger Joe Biden to go ahead despite his bout of coronavirus.

“I am looking forward to the debate on the evening of Thursday, October 15th in Miami. It will be great!” Trump tweeted.

The debate, which will be in a town hall format with audience members putting questions to the candidates, has been thrown into doubt after Trump’s hospitalisation last Friday with the coronavirus.

He was discharged on Monday and declared himself on Tuesday via Twitter to be “feeling great!”

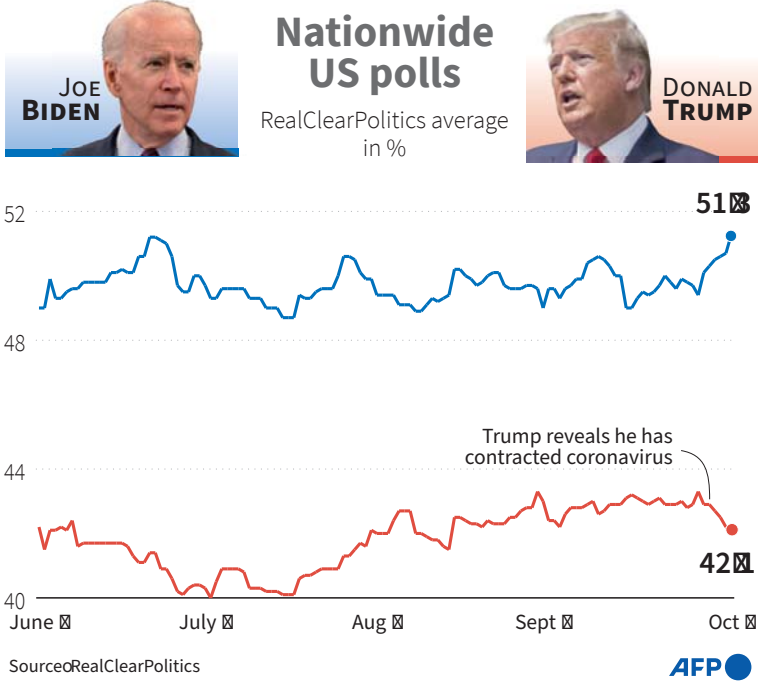
If Trump’s health does hold up and the debate goes ahead it will mark one of the last set-piece events before the November 3 election where Trump has a chance to try and turn around his seeming slide to defeat.

Polls consistently show him behind Biden and their first debate on September 29, which immediately descended into an ugly shouting match, shows no sign of having improved Trump’s standing with voters.

A third and final debate is scheduled for October 22 in Nashville.

On Wednesday, Biden’s running mate Kamala Harris and Vice President Mike Pence hold their sole debate in Utah.

Pence has tested negative for coronavirus, but given Trump’s illness and a widespread outbreak in the White House, they will be separated by



a plexiglass barrier.

Meanwhile, the Republican has returned to the White House boasting he vanquished the disease that upended the country this year — and, by extension, that he is still capable of vanquishing his grim odds on election day November 3.

“Maybe I’m immune,” he mused on the grand South Portico balcony late Monday after demonstratively taking off the mask which he’d worn back from hospital.

He spent three nights at the Walter Reed military hospital for emergency treatment and is still being administered an aggressive cocktail of

therapeutic drugs, as well being under constant monitoring in case of relapse. His doctor says he may not be “entirely out of the woods.”

Yet the way Trump, 74, tells it, COVID-19 was simply no match for him.

“Don’t let it dominate you. Don’t be afraid of it. You’re going to beat it,” he urged Americans in his homecoming speech.

Tuesday on Twitter he returned to one of his oldest lines of argument used to downplay the seriousness of the pandemic, saying it was comparable to the ordinary flu and “we have learned to live with it.”

If Trump’s health does hold up and the debate goes ahead it will mark one of the last set-piece events before the Nov 3 election

For a president whose brand centres on self-confidence, the entire hospital discharge is clearly stage-managed to convince voters that he has the near-superhuman strength to overcome not only COVID-19 but Biden’s steadily solidifying lead in the polls.

The latest CNN poll published on Tuesday gave Biden a national advantage of 57 per cent to 41 per cent among likely voters.

Fifty-two per cent of those polled said they have a positive impression of Biden while only 39 per cent said they have a positive view of Trump, a historically unpopular leader. Among women, the numbers were cataclysmic for the Republican: 32 per cent support to Biden’s 66 per cent.

Biden, 77, was due to give a speech on the “battle for the soul of the nation” in Gettysburg, the Pennsylvania battlefield where the Civil War turned decisively in favour of Abraham Lincoln’s north in 1863.

His running mate Kamala Harris, meanwhile, was set to debate Vice President Mike Pence in Utah on Wednesday, with a plexiglass barrier for coronavirus prevention between the two. — AFP



People protest against the results of a parliamentary vote in Bishkek. - AFP

Kyrgyz Prime Minister Boronov resigns, new speaker named

MOSCOW: Kyrgyz Prime Minister Kubatbek Boronov resigned on Tuesday, Russia’s RIA news agency reported, citing parliamentary deputy Myktybek Abdyldayev who it said had been elected speaker.

The Kyrgyz opposition said earlier on Tuesday it had seized power after storming government buildings and getting the central election commission to annul the results of Sunday’s parliamentary election, which had sparked protests.

Kyrgyzstan’s parliament elected opposition politician Sadyr Zhaparov as prime minister on Tuesday, Russia’s RIA news agency reported, after the previous cabinet chief resigned amid post-election protests.

However, according to Kyrgyz news website Akipress, shortly afterwards Zhaparov and other politicians had to flee the hotel where parliament had convened as a number of people carrying sticks and rocks broke into the building.

Opposition groups said earlier

on Tuesday they had seized power in Kyrgyzstan after taking control of government buildings during post-election protests in the strategically important Central Asian state.

Meanwhile, opposition groups said they had seized power in Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday after taking control of government buildings during post-election protests in the strategically important Central Asian state.

President Sooronbai Jeenbekov said his country, a close ally of Russia, was facing an attempted coup d’état. Two presidents have been toppled by revolts in Kyrgyzstan in the past 15 years.

Jeenbekov called for calm and ordered security forces not to open fire on protesters after overnight unrest in which the government said one person was killed and 590 wounded. Officials said that Sunday’s parliamentary election would be rerun, but it was not clear who would organise it or govern until then. — AFP

CLEAN-UP OPERATIONS IN FULL SWING



An aerial view shows damaged houses in Saint-Martin-Vesubie, southern France, as clean-up operations continue after storm Alex hit the Alpes-Maritimes department, bringing record rainfall in places and causing heavy flooding that swept away roads and damaged homes. — Reuters

Physics Nobel for black holes too late for Hawking

PARIS: Scientists greeted the news that the Nobel Physics Prize was awarded Tuesday for research on black holes with regret that the accolade came too late for world-renowned astrophysicist Stephen Hawking, who died in 2018.

British mathematician Roger Penrose was awarded half of the 10 million Swedish kronor (about \$1.1 million, 950,000 euros) prize money for mathematically proving in the 1960s that black holes could exist according to the theory of general relativity.

Penrose, an emeritus professor at the University of Oxford, worked alongside Hawking for years, and experts lamented the fact that it had taken the Nobel committee so long to recognise their work.

“It’s a shame that Penrose and Hawking didn’t get the Nobel before now,” Luc Blanchet, from the Paris Institute of Astrophysics and director of the National Centre for Scientific Research, said.

“This prize comes two years after (Hawking’s) death yet their work took



German astrophysicist Reinhard Genzel reacts following the announcement of winning the 2020 Nobel Prize for Physics in Munich. — Reuters

place in the 1960s and its importance was recognised since the 1980s.”

Hawking, who died in March 2018 after a long neurodegenerative illness, dedicated much of his life to explaining the existence of black holes, space’s enigmatic monsters.

After meeting in London early in their careers, Hawking and Penrose worked together on the origins of the universe.

Martin Rees, a British astronomer and fellow of Trinity College Cambridge, said the pair were “the two individuals who have done more than

anyone else since Einstein to deepen our knowledge of gravity.”

“Sadly, this award was too much delayed to allow Hawking to share the credit with Penrose,” he said.

The phone call from Stockholm took 68-year-old German astrophysicist Reinhard Genzel by surprise. “There is a saying that a necessary quality for a scientist to win the Nobel Prize is to be long-lived,” he says.

Asked about his first response to the news, he says: “There were a few tears.” Then a glass of bubbly was raised with colleagues. His family is not near where he works, so plans for an evening celebration are up in the air.

Genzel, who works at the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics in Garching, near Munich, believes he had little choice in his career. “My father was a physicist, and even worse, he was a director at the Max Planck Institute,” he says. The physicist sees the honour as one for his entire team and plans to go back to work immediately. — AFP/dpa

GENEVA

COVID-19 vaccine may be ready by year-end: WHO

A vaccine against COVID-19 may be ready by year-end, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Tuesday, without elaborating.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called for solidarity and political commitment by all leaders to ensure equal distribution of vaccines when they become available.

“We will need vaccines and there is hope that by the end of this year we may have a vaccine. There is hope,” Tedros said in closing remarks to the WHO’s Executive



Board meeting that examined the global response to the pandemic.

The EU health regulator has launched a real-time review of a COVID-19 vaccine developed by US drugmaker Pfizer and Germany’s BioNTech.

LONDON

Virus to cost UK hospitality over 560,000 jobs

Britain’s hospitality sector will shed more than 560,000 jobs this year as the coronavirus pandemic kills trade in bars, hotels, nightclubs, pubs and restaurants, its boss warned on Tuesday.

Kate Nicholls, chief executive of UKHospitality, told a cross-party panel of MPs that a recent survey showed “the anticipated number of additional redundancies by the end of the year was 560,000.”

She added: “We anticipate that number will be far higher now as the result of the local restrictions” and nationwide measures to tackle rising

cases of COVID-19 in the UK.

Nicholls warned of “large numbers” of additional job losses from next month when the government waters down its jobs support scheme that has helped keep millions of people in employment during the pandemic.

She said that 900,000 people are on the state’s furlough scheme paying the bulk of individual’s wages — a support system set to be heavily reduced from November.

“There is a very real danger that we will lose large chunks of the economy,” said Nicholls.

MIAMI

Hurricane Delta strengthens to Category 3

Hurricane Delta intensified into a Category 3 storm on Tuesday and is set to slam into Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula early on Wednesday, the US National Hurricane Centre said.

Maximum sustained winds have increased to 185 kilometres per hour, and the storm is “forecast to be an extremely dangerous Category 4 hurricane” when it makes landfall, the centre said.

Meanwhile, if Delta strikes the US Gulf Coast, it would break a record that dates back to 1916 for the most named storms to hit the United States, another milestone in



a year marked by repeated natural disasters, ranging from floods to wildfires to tornados.

The storm was expected to drop heavy rains on Mexico’s Yucatan peninsula and head up the Gulf of Mexico toward landfall between Louisiana and Florida. — Reuters

PM Johnson vows to transform Britain after coronavirus crisis

WILLIAM JAMES AND ELIZABETH PIPER

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, under fire over his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, vowed on Tuesday to transform Britain rather than settle for the “status quo” by building more new homes, improving education and boosting the green economy.

In a speech aimed at rallying his Conservative Party, which has become increasingly critical of its leader, Johnson laid out his vision for a country where deep-rooted inequality has been laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Using his own battle to shed excess weight - which made a bout of COVID-19 more difficult to overcome — as a metaphor for changing Britain, he listed the areas he wanted to tackle — housing, education, jobs, climate change and crime.

But Johnson offered few clues on funding after huge budget-busting expenditures to combat the pandemic, and opposition parties criticised the speech for being the “usual bluster” with scant detail on how he would protect jobs or get control over the

USING HIS OWN BATTLE TO SHED EXCESS WEIGHT AS A METAPHOR FOR CHANGING BRITAIN, HE LISTED THE AREAS HE WANTED TO TACKLE

increasing number of coronavirus infections. Britain has recorded the highest COVID-19 death toll in Europe.

“We’ve been through too much frustration and hardship just to settle for the status quo and to think that life can go on as it was before the plague,” he told his party’s annual conference, held virtually this year.

“It will not, because history teaches us that events of this magnitude, wars, famines, plagues, events that affect the vast bulk of humanity, as this virus has, they don’t just come and go... We cannot now define the mission of this country as merely to restore normality. That isn’t good enough.”

Hitting back at critics who say he has both lost control of the coronavirus pandemic in Britain and struggled personally since suffering from COVID-19, Johnson said suggestions he had lost his “mojo” was “self-evident drive!”

“The kind of seditious propaganda that you’d expect from people who don’t want this government to succeed, who wanted to stop us delivering Brexit and all our other manifesto pledges,” he said, adding he was sticking with a diet after losing 26

pounds.

After being criticised for presiding over a glitch-plagued COVID-19 testing system, giving the public confusing guidance and repeatedly backtracking on policy, Johnson sought to buoy party members, many of whom are increasingly concerned less than a year since the Conservatives won a resounding election victory.

According to research published on Monday by former Conservative deputy chairman Michael Ashcroft, Labour leader Keir Starmer has overtaken Johnson as the person those polled thought would make a better prime minister.

Johnson’s standing among Conservative Party members has also plunged, polls show. To try to turn the tide, he vowed to curb violent crime and protect the justice system from “lefty human rights lawyers”, while also accusing his political opponents of trying to rewrite history, saying he was proud to sing “Rule Britannia”.

For many in the party, it was just the ticket. One Conservative lawmaker said Johnson had rallied the troops while another felt that although the prime minister looked “tired”, it was good enough. — Reuters

RISKY BORROWING

Fearing loan sharks, Indian workers seek cash aid

ANURADHA NAGARAJ

Informal workers in India urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a petition on Tuesday to grant emergency financial aid to protect them from loan sharks and labour traffickers as the pandemic erodes their incomes. India is one of the countries worst affected by coronavirus, and a strict lockdown earlier this year took a heavy toll on informal workers, who represent 90 per cent of the nation’s 450-million-strong workforce.

Tuesday’s petition, signed by 1.5 million people including migrant workers, street vendors and home-based labourers, calls for cash handouts of Rs 6,000 (\$81) for at least the next four months to help prevent risky borrowing, human trafficking and child labour.

“This assistance will provide liquidity to the vulnerable families below poverty line,” said P Balamurugan, a member of the Tamil Nadu Alliance - a coalition of 100 charities seeking to improve the conditions of garment industry workers.

The petition, which was initiated by the charity

A slew of measures for all categories of workers had been announced since the start of the pandemic. These have been updated to meet the needs of people

K S DHATWALIA Govt Spokesman

coalition, included signatories from 23 Indian states, the organisers said. Asked about the appeal, Principal Government Spokesman K S Dhatwalia said “a slew of measures for all categories of workers” had been announced since the start of the pandemic.

“These initiatives have been updated along the way to meet the needs

of people,” he said. Modi’s administration has pledged to spend Rs 35 billion (\$463 million) on food for migrant workers and offer them local jobs under a rural employment scheme. But many informal workers fear lacking documentation or a bank account will hinder their access to government aid, and labour rights activists say large numbers have turned to informal lenders often charging high rates of interest. India’s home affairs ministry issued an advisory in July urging state governments to launch anti-trafficking awareness campaigns, amid increasing fears that countless people without work, food or money may fall prey to traffickers.

The petition said the cash aid would act as a “safety net”, minimising hunger and reducing the likelihood of human trafficking, child marriage and child labour among the informal labour force.

“The cash aid will give them access to essential food commodities, medical care, payment of rent, and other supplementary expenses,” it said.

On the opening day of the new Parliament session, MPs from Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra asked the labour ministry for details of migrant workers who had returned home during the lockdown, those who had died during their journeys, and the compensation received by their families.

The ministry said nearly 10.5 million workers had left for home. But on the number that died, it said, “No such data was maintained” and so, the question of compensation “does not arise”.

The lockdown had prompted millions of migrant workers to flee the cities, often on foot, for their homes in the countryside. The magazine *India Today* had documented details of 238 migrant workers who died while trying to reach home. — Thomson Reuters Foundation

A QUESTION MARK

Joe Biden is counting on Nevada... Has the pandemic hurt his chances?

MARK Z BARABAK

On a blazing hot afternoon, two canvassers recently went door to door in a working-class neighbourhood of east Las Vegas, bearing masks, campaign fliers and the weight of Democratic worries.

Up and down stairs, across baking driveways, past thirsty lawns, Maria Magana and Atilano Salgado took turns asking voters in English, Spanish and a combination if they would support Joe Biden for president.

“Perfecto,” Magana responded when the answer was yes. Then she entered the information on a tablet cradled in her arm. Nevada — once reliably Republican but more recently Democratic — is something of a question mark in these closing weeks of the campaign. Polls taken before President Donald Trump’s hospitalisation with COVID- gave Biden a small but consistent lead over the incumbent, who narrowly lost the state four years ago.

However, the great strength of Democrats — the work of political foot soldiers like Magana, 45, who helps tidy the casino at the MGM Grand hotel, and Salgado, 35, a line cook at Guy Fieri’s Vegas Kitchen — has been significantly reduced as a result of the pandemic.

For months, Democrats failed to conduct the intensive voter registration and face-to-face conversations that helped flip the state in the late 2000s from red to blue. “People were sheltering at home. Nobody was going door to door. If you stood outside



Democratic US presidential nominee Joe Biden speaks during a campaign stop in Miami, Florida. – Reuters

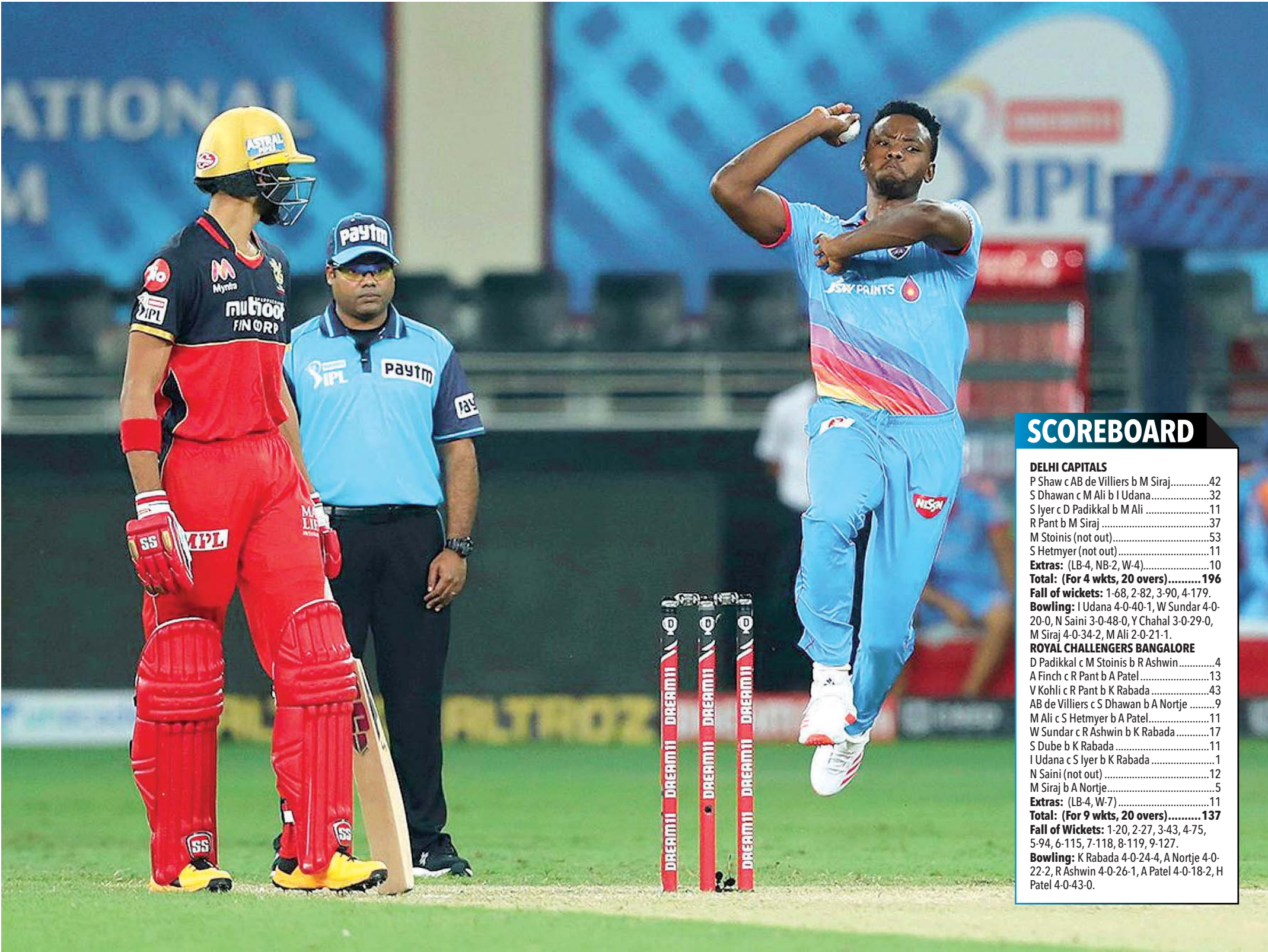
NEVADA ITS MINI-ME, RENO, AND VAST STRETCHES OF RURAL CONSERVATISM HAS A HISTORY OF CLOSE ELECTIONS

a supermarket, people would think you’re crazy,”said D Taylor, the head of Unite Here, the national parent of the local Culinary Union, which runs the state’s most powerful political operation. Although Democrats say they’re making up for lost time — using measures that ensure it’s safe again to knock on doors and finding creative means of engaging voters on social media and other outlets — they also say the contest is closer in Nevada than is comfortable. Privately, they fret over Biden’s lack of personal visibility in the state — he has not

been to Nevada since campaigning in February ahead of its caucuses — even as they condemn Trump for holding large-scale rallies last month in Reno and Las Vegas. Biden’s running mate, Senator Kamala Harris of California, held a drive-in voter mobilisation event in Las Vegas on Friday. Republicans say Democrats have good cause for concern. “Nevada’s been a tough state for us going back 16 years,” said Rick Gorka, a national Republican Party spokesman who served as a Las Vegas-based strategist for John McCain’s 2008 presidential campaign. — dpa



RABADA HELPS DELHI ROUT BANGALORE TO TOP IPL TABLE



SCOREBOARD	
DELHI CAPITALS	
P Shaw c AB de Villiers b M Siraj.....	42
S Dhawan c M Ali b I Udana.....	32
S Iyer c D Padikkal b M Ali.....	11
R Pant b M Siraj.....	37
M Stoinis (not out).....	53
S Hetmyer (not out).....	11
Extras: (LB-4, NB-2, W-4).....	10
Total: (For 4 wkts, 20 overs).....	196
Fall of wickets: 1-68, 2-82, 3-90, 4-179.	
Bowling: I Udana 4-0-40-1, W Sundar 4-0-20-0, N Saini 3-0-48-0, Y Chahal 3-0-29-0, M Siraj 4-0-34-2, M Ali 2-0-21-1.	
ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE	
D Padikkal c M Stoinis b R Ashwin.....	4
A Finch c R Pant b A Patel.....	13
V Kohli c R Pant b K Rabada.....	43
AB de Villiers c S Dhawan b A Nortje.....	9
M Ali c S Hetmyer b A Patel.....	11
W Sundar c R Ashwin b K Rabada.....	17
S Dube b K Rabada.....	11
I Udana c S Iyer b K Rabada.....	1
N Saini (not out).....	12
M Siraj b A Nortje.....	5
Extras: (LB-4, W-7).....	11
Total: (For 9 wkts, 20 overs).....	137
Fall of Wickets: 1-20, 2-27, 3-43, 4-75, 5-94, 6-115, 7-118, 8-119, 9-127.	
Bowling: K Rabada 4-0-24-4, A Nortje 4-0-22-2, R Ashwin 4-0-26-1, A Patel 4-0-18-2, H Patel 4-0-43-0.	

DUBAI: South African quick Kagiso Rabada claimed four wickets including Virat Kohli's key scalp to lead Delhi Capitals to the top of Indian Premier League table on Monday.

Rabada returned figures of 4-28 and topped the IPL bowling chart with 12 wickets in five matches as Delhi outplayed Royal Challengers Bangalore by 59 runs in Dubai.

Australia's Marcus Stoinis smashed an unbeaten 53 to guide Delhi to 196 for four, a total Rabada and company defended by restricting the Kohli-led Bangalore to 137 for nine.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel took two wickets and gave away just 18 runs from his four overs and paceman Anrich Nortje also struck twice.

"I don't really plan to get wickets, you can only control in which areas to bowl. I think if you want to be the best you have to adjust to the conditions", said Rabada.

"I think the spinners did a really good job today, they set up the game for us in the powerplay. Axar and (Ravichandran) Ashwin actually won us the game."

Patel, coming into the XI for injured Amit Mishra who was ruled out of the IPL, was named man of the match for his economical bowling figures.

Bangalore captain Kohli, who was kept under check in his 39-ball 43 before falling to Rabada, admitted his team was far from convincing against a top Delhi unit.

"DC are playing some really good cricket. Their batting is fearless. They have got pace, they have got good spinners", said Kohli.

"I won't say they are unbeatable, but they will be hard to beat. Against this side, you have to bring your A game. We didn't tonight."

The Twenty20 tournament is into its third week in the United Arab Emirates after being moved out of India due to the coronavirus pandemic.

— AFP

Qatar 2022 organisers receive prestigious safety award

DOHA: The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC) has received special recognition for its Workers' Welfare programme from the Ministry of Municipality & Environment.

Mohammed Fahad al Hajri, Compliance and Audits Senior Manager from the SC's Workers' Welfare Department, received the award during the Qatar Achievements on Vocational Safety book launch ceremony. The award was presented by HE Abdulla bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie, Minister of Municipality & Environment.

Al Hajri said: "I am honoured to receive this award on behalf of my colleagues at the SC. The health, safety, and protection of our workforce has always been at the forefront of our work since we won the hosting rights and we appreciate this important recognition."

Developed under the patronage of the Ministry of Municipality & Environment, the 2020 Qatar Achievements on Vocational Safety book analyses and highlights important achievements of various Qatari companies and institutions in the field of occupational safety. It sheds light on Qatar's efforts to ensure the safety and protection of workers and celebrates best practices in the



country's business sector.

The book covers the SC's milestones to date, top line statistics across the programme, as well as information about a number of key initiatives aimed at enhancing the well-being of workers, including comprehensive annual health screenings, centralised electronic medical records, occupational health and safety training, and the innovative cooling wear 'StayQool'.

Through the SC's numerous health and safety initiatives, along with an unwavering commitment to best practices, the Workers' Welfare Department has delivered positive

change for thousands of workers since stadium construction began six years ago.

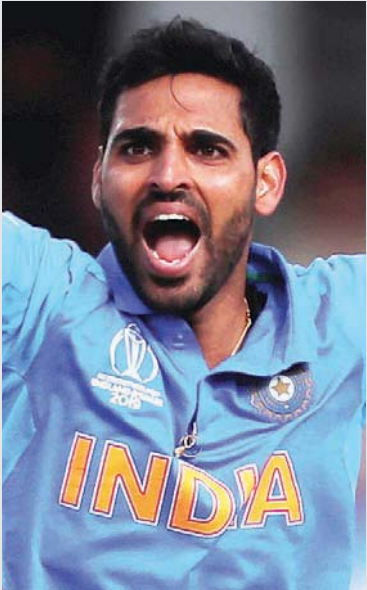
Mahmoud Qutub, Executive Director of the Workers' Welfare Department, said: "We are proud to receive this award as it is a testament to our efforts to not only improve workers' welfare standards on our projects, but also across the nation. As Qatar 2022 draws closer, our workers' health and safety will remain a top priority. We want to ensure this tournament acts as a catalyst for significant positive and long-term impacts to the well-being of workers in Qatar and beyond. This will be our legacy."

SHORT TAKES

DELHI

Injury ends Kumar's IPL campaign for Hyderabad

Injured quick Bhuvneshwar Kumar will miss the remainder of the Indian Premier League, his Sunrisers Hyderabad team said on Tuesday. The 30-year-old appeared to sustain a thigh injury during Friday's match against Chennai Super Kings in Dubai and eventually limped off the field having failed to complete his fourth over. "Bhuvneshwar Kumar is ruled out of #Dream11IPL 2020 due to injury. We wish him a speedy recovery", his team wrote on Twitter. Left-arm quick Prithvi Raj Yarra will replace Kumar in the David Warner-led side, who are second from bottom in the eight-team league having managed two wins from five matches. — Reuters



KABUL

Afghan batsman Tarakai dies in road accident

Afghanistan top order batsman Najeeb Tarakai has died from injuries following a road accident last week, the country's cricket board said on Tuesday. The 29-year-old was critically injured in the accident on Friday, the Afghanistan cricket Board (ACB) said without sharing details. "ACB... mourns the heartbreaking & grievous loss of its aggressive opening batsman & a very fine human being..." the board tweeted. Tarakai made his international debut in the 2014 T20 World Cup in Bangladesh and played his only ODI against Ireland in 2017. — Reuters



MELBOURNE

'IPL stars to be short of red-ball practice before India'

A number of Australia's leading test players, including batsman Steve Smith and paceman Pat Cummins, look set to face India in the home series without warming up in the Sheffield Shield due to quarantine restrictions, captain Tim Paine said on Tuesday. Smith, Cummins, opening batsman David Warner and leading quicks Josh Hazlewood and James Pattinson are playing in the Indian Premier League, which runs until the final on November 10. The opening four-round block of Australia's domestic Sheffield Shield starts this weekend, with the last match of the block between New South Wales and Victoria.



LIVERPOOL'S SHAQIRI TESTS COVID POSITIVE

Switzerland forward Xherdan Shaqiri has joined Liverpool team-mates Thiago Alcantara and Sadio Mane in contracting coronavirus, the Swiss football federation announced on Tuesday. Shaqiri had joined up with the national set-up at the start of the week hoping to make his first appearance for his country since June 2019.



ITALY WINGER CHIESA JOINS JUVENTUS

Juventus have signed Italy winger Federico Chiesa from Fiorentina in a deal worth up to 60 million euros (\$71 million), the Italian champions announced on Monday just hours before the close of the transfer window. Juventus revealed that Chiesa had signed on an initial two-year loan deal worth 10 million euros. — AFP

UNITED SIGN FOUR, PARTEY JOINS GUNNERS AND BAYERN MAKE DOUBLE MOVE



In this file photo taken on February 9, 2020 Paris Saint-Germain's Edinson Cavani plays the ball during the French L1 match against Lyon at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. — AFP



In this file photo taken on February 23, 2020 Atletico Madrid's midfielder Thomas Partey controls the ball during the Spanish league match at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium in Madrid. — AFP

MANCHESTER, England: Manchester United made four signings on transfer deadline day, including Uruguay striker Edinson Cavani while European champions Bayern Munich strengthened with two new arrivals.

But the biggest single move of the final day of deal-making was midfielder Thomas Partey making a 45 million pound (\$58.46 million) switch from Atletico Madrid to

Arsenal. United signed Cavani on a free transfer, Brazilian left back Alex Telles from Porto, Uruguayan 18-year-old winger Facundo Pellistri and reached an agreement to sign Atalanta's teenage winger Amad Diallo.

European champions Bayern signed right back Bouna Sarr from Olympique de Marseille and brought back Brazilian winger Douglas Costa on loan from Juventus.

Arsenal met the 45 million pound (\$58.40 million) release clause for the 27-year-old Ghana international Partey who should add some steel to their midfield.

Arsenal's Uruguay midfielder Lucas Torreira moved in the opposite direction on loan. United's 6-1 thrashing at home by Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday has increased the pressure on chief executive Ed Woodward to give manager Ole

Gunnar Solskjaer some new options.

Attacking full back Telles and experienced former PSG forward Cavani now join Netherlands midfielder Donny van de Beek, who moved to United from Ajax last month. Cavani was a free agent after leaving Paris St Germain and said he was looking forward to the challenge at Old Trafford.

"I look forward to continuing to write my little story inside the book

of football and I know that's why my focus has to remain the same as always — work, work, work. I have had a conversation with the manager and this has increased my desire to wear this beautiful shirt," he said.

Solskjaer said he was hoping Cavani could add to the team's firepower. "He'll bring energy, power, leadership and a great mentality to the squad but, most importantly, he'll bring goals. He has had a brilliant

career so far, winning trophies at almost every club he has played for, and he still has so much more to give at the highest level," said the Norwegian.

Pellistri joined United from Club Atletico Penarol on a five-year contract, with an option to extend for a further year. The speedy teenager has already featured 37 times for the Uruguayan Primera Division club's first team.

— Reuters

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCTOBER 6

Oman's Powerlifting team is gearing up to take part at the Asian Equipped Powerlifting Championships which will be held in Indonesia. The Asian Powerlifting Federation (APF) had postponed the event from May to December 2020 due to the ongoing pandemic crises. The Asian tournament dates may shift again to the following year due to the unstable situation of the pandemic globally.

Ahmed al Hassani, the national head coach of the Powerlifting team told Oman Daily Observer that the powerlifting team players are underway in the planned training schedules. "Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the team players did not stop from training during the non-action sporting period. The training was conducted at homes in line with the government instructions at that time. After the

Coach Ahmed aims to groom competitive powerlifting team for top sporting events

decision of resumption the sporting activities, we had return back to the GYM at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex and we are performing six sessions weekly except Friday. We are eyeing on the top spots for the forthcoming tournaments including the closest top Asian assignment," he added.

Commenting on the challenges and obstacles that face the team, coach Ahmed al Hassani highlighted that the team require support from the private sector to accomplish our targets in different participation at the regional and international events.



"Powerlifting is a costly sport as the player should follow a systematic schedule either in preparing and shaping the players to tournaments and having a proper nutrition plan. Moreover, the players also need food supplements which are a significant part in player's shaping to the top and prestigious powerlifting events," he pointed out.

The national powerlifting team featured top potential junior including Al Khattab Awlad Thani, Nibras Awlad Thani, Yahya al Kiumi Al Azhar Bani Oraba, Ayman al Hasani, Musaab Awlad

Thani and Nasser al Siyabi. The main weights that the Sultanate player's competing including 50 kg, 74 kg, 83 kg, 93 kg and 105 kg.

Al Hasani affirmed that the long term plan is to prepare the players for the Olympics. "We believe that we have the ability and capability to shape the future stars who will impress at Paris Olympic Games 2024. This will be achieved only with proper cooperation between the government, support from the private sector and media focus. We hope to raise the Sultanate flag in the top sporting events and this is our top target," he concluded.

sport



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates winning his fourth round match against Russia's Karen Khachanov. – Reuters

DJOKOVIC KEEPS FRENCH OPEN TITLE BID ON TRACK AS KENIN SURVIVES

PARIS: Novak Djokovic defeated Karen Khachanov in straight sets to make the French Open quarter-finals for the 11th consecutive year on Monday while Sofia Kenin escaped trouble to also clinch a spot in the last eight.

Top seed and 2016 champion Djokovic won 6-4, 6-3, 6-3 against Russian 15th seed Khachanov to draw level with Rafael Nadal on a record 14 quarter-final appearances in Paris.

Djokovic faced his toughest assignment so far but Khachanov was unable to derail his bid to become the first man in half a century to win all four Grand Slam titles twice.

The Serb hit 44 winners and has yet to drop a set in the tournament, losing only 25 games in four rounds.

He improved his record in 2020 to 35 wins against just one loss.

“It was a very even match, perhaps more difficult than the result showed,” said Djokovic, who is chasing an 18th Grand Slam title.

He admitted to suffering an “awkward moment of déjà vu” after unintentionally hitting a ball which smashed into the head of a line judge while trying to return serve.

The incident came just weeks after Djokovic was defaulted at the US Open in New York for swiping angrily at a ball which hit a female line judge, standing just behind him, in the throat.

“I’m actually trying to find the linesperson and see if he’s okay because I saw he had a little bit of a

bruise,” said Djokovic.

The world number one will face Pablo Carreno Busta, the man who benefited from Djokovic’s US Open disqualification, for a spot in the last four after the Spaniard swept German qualifier Daniel Altmaier aside in three sets.

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

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

Fifth seed Tsitsipas has won 12 successive sets at the tournament having been two sets down to Jaume

Munar in the opening round.

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

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

“I knew it would be tough,” said Rublev who arrived in Paris having reached his second US Open quarter-final last month. “I had a little bit of luck today. There was a lot of wind so you are going to lose your serve a lot in those conditions.”

‘SUPER PROUD’ KENIN

Australian Open champion Kenin

recovered from a set down against Fiona Ferro, the last home player left in the singles draw, to advance 2-6, 6-2, 6-1.

“I feel like I’m playing really well,” said Kenin, who cried into her towel after sealing victory. “I’m super proud to be in the quarter-finals.”

The 49th-ranked Ferro, who won on clay in Palermo in August, threatened an upset as she reeled off six games on the bounce to grab the opening set.

But Kenin, who was taken to three sets in the first two rounds, stormed back to move into a quarter-final match-up with either Tunisian 30th seed Ons Jabeur and Danielle Collins.

Their tie was rescheduled for Tuesday due to rain that restricted

play to just Court Philippe Chatrier for much of the day.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova returned to the last eight at Roland Garros for the first time since 2012.

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

“After eight years to be in the quarter-final again, it’s great. I’m really happy for that, that I’m still able to play on all surfaces,” said Kvitova, a semi-finalist eight years ago.

“When the roof is closed it’s like being indoors and I really love to play.”

— AFP

Collins ends Jabeur’s historic run to reach quarterfinals

PARIS: Unseeded Danielle Collins battled past Tunisian Ons Jabeur 6-4 4-6 6-4 on Tuesday to reach the French Open quarterfinals for the first time in her career.

World number 57 Collins raised her level after the opening nine games of the first set went with serve, when the American broke to edge ahead in the contest as Jabeur made an unforced error from the back of the court.

The big-hitting 26-year-old then raced to a 3-0 lead in the second set, showing the craftiness more

commonly associated with her opponent to pull off a superb drop shot in the second game as Jabeur appeared to wilt on Court Philippe Chatrier.

But the Tunisian, who became the first Arab woman to reach the Roland Garros last 16 by beating eighth seed Aryna Sabalenka, regained focus to win the next five games in a row before dragging the match into a deciding set.

In complete contrast to the opener, both players traded breaks freely at the start of the decider before Collins



Danielle Collins returns the ball to Tunisia's Ons Jabeur during their French Open match in Paris. – AFP

came back from 0-40 to hold for 3-2 and staved off a late comeback attempt to seal the win.

“I felt I was in the driver’s seat until 6-4 3-0... she’s tricky, served really well and hit some drop shots I wasn’t expecting,” Collins said.

“I had to try and dig it out. It broke my rhythm. I lost my way there a little bit, lost some of the shots I’d been hitting earlier and I needed to try and stay positive.” Collins, who was without a coach at the US Open where she lost her opener, said she was reaping the rewards of working

with Spaniard Nicolas Almagro.

“Nico and I started working with each other last week, it’s all new,” added Collins, who beat 2016 winner Garbine Muguruza in the third round. “... Luckily I found someone with an incredible career... It’s a special treat to be able to work with him.”

She takes on Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin next, after the fourth-seeded American beat Frenchwoman Fiona Ferro 2-6 6-2 6-1 in their last 16 encounter on Monday.

— Reuters

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بنك ظفار

IRU lauds first TIR shipment between Oman and Saudi Arabia



TRADE FACILITATION: World body describes milestone as a turning point in regional trade, enabling noticeable acceleration of electronic customs procedures.

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 6

The International Road Transport Union (IRU) has commended the efforts of Oman — represented by the Directorate General of Customs of Royal Oman Police — in handling the first TIR shipment following the country's accession to TIR. The landmark operation between Oman and Saudi Arabia, completed with the support of IRU members in Oman, Asyad Group and TIR issuing and guaranteeing association Sinyar, reduced the journey time by 72 per cent.

Announcing the safe arrival of the first TIR shipment to its destination on its website, IRU described this milestone as a turning point in regional trade, enabling noticeable acceleration of electronic customs procedures.

On this occasion, Brigadier Khalifa Ali al Siyabi, Director General of the Royal Oman Police — Directorate of Customs stated that the activation of the TIR System—crucial for facilitating cross-border trade — reinforces Oman's role as a global foreign trade hub.

"The first TIR shipment

from Saudi Arabia to Oman, which safely passed through border crossings, reflects Oman Customs' readiness for TIR Convention. The shipment was handled in accordance with the International Road Transport (TIR) system that facilitates trade and simplifies cross-border customs procedures. We hope that Oman's business community will make use of the operationalisation of the Convention for promoting the country's imports and exports", he added.

On his part, Eng Hilal Salem al Kharousi, Senior Trade Facilitation Strategist at Asyad Group, expressed his appreciation for the stakeholders' sustained efforts to facilitate trade and movements of goods in implementation of Royal Decree No 27/2018, which ratified the Sultanate's accession to the Customs Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) of November 14, 1975.

"Contributing to harmonisation of Oman's transport and transit procedures with more than 100 countries around the world, the global customs transit standard is deemed a key pillar of trade facilitation and will steer the national economy towards further growth as it enhances interconnectivity between Oman and the GCC, Indian and African markets", he further noted.

Major upgrade under way of Oman's payment system

MODERNISATION: Upgraded Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system will be available 24x7 when it comes online in H1 2021: CBO Executive President

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Sultanate's payment system architecture — billed as the digital backbone of the country's financial system — is being progressively upgraded to position it among the most modern in the Arabian Gulf.

According to Tahir Salim al Amri, Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), the technological enhancements will, among other benefits, modernise the wholesale payment system, boost efficiencies in mobile payments, enable the entry of new payment service providers, and facilitate person-to-person payments.

Delivering the keynote address at the 5th New Age Banking Summit 2020, an annual forum held at the Sheraton Oman Hotel on Tuesday and live-streamed to a virtual audience as well, Al Amri said a robust regulatory framework continues to provide solid underpinnings for the growth and development of the country's payment infrastructure. At the heart of this regulatory framework is the National Payment System Law (NPSL), issued vide Royal Decree 8/2018, and backed up by executive regulations issued in early 2019.

"It paves the way for licensing new types of non-banking entities — payment services providers — which are essentially start-ups or innovators", said the Executive President.

"The NPSL has enabled us to issue the first payment service provider licence in Q2 2020. This has kindled interest among several start-ups who are seeking PSP (payment service provider) licences which are under our consideration right now."

But preceding the enactment of the National Payment System Law, the launch of a Mobile



(For illustration only)



This is a truly interoperable and unique switching and clearing platform for person-to-person and person-to-business mobile payments via mobile numbers. It was upgraded in 2019 to process QR code-based and merchant payments

TAHIR SALIM AL AMRI
Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman

Payment Clearing and Switching System (MPCSS) in July 2017 had helped to facilitate mobile payments, he pointed out.

"This is a truly interoperable and unique switching and clearing platform for person-to-person and person-to-business mobile payments via mobile numbers.

It was upgraded in 2019 to process QR code-based and merchant payments.

This will facilitate instant person-to-person payments of up to RO 500 across all participating banks. We are trying to make this channel the ultimate and affordable channel when compared to, for example, card payments", said Al Amri.

Significantly, the apex bank is also upgrading the existing payment infrastructure to increase the scale and efficiency

of the Sultanate's payment architecture, he noted.

"The wholesale payment system, namely, the Real Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS), is in an advanced stage of upgrade and will be up and running 24x7 by the first half of 2021. This will make Oman the first country in the Arab Gulf region to operate the RTGS 24x7.

It will help businesses to make high-value payments round the clock, which will greatly help the payment system participants manage their funds efficiently."

Additionally, the Central Bank is in the process of integrating the national RTGS with the GCC RTGS, besides exploring the prospects of integrating it with the Arab regional payment system — a move that would make regional payments "much more affordable", he said.

Another notable offering set to be rolled out by the Central Bank pertains to Debit Mandate Management. "This will facilitate automatic recurring payments that customers wish to make by pre-authorising the amount of debit — either fixed or variable — at regular intervals for a predefined period.

This will also simplify the collection of payments for corporates and companies, while also providing ample scope for the development of further innovative products", he added.

BRIEF BITES INSIDE

NATION

DUQM SEZ HOSTS OCCI'S REAL ESTATE AND CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE DELEGATION



SEZAD welcomed a delegation representing the real estate development and construction committee of the OCCI. During the meeting, SEZAD reviewed the success achieved in the real estate and construction sector in the Zone. < Page 14

TECHNOLOGY

US HOUSE'S ANTITRUST REPORT HINTS AT BREAK-UP OF BIG TECH FIRMS



The US House of Representatives anti-trust report on Big Tech firms contains a "thinly veiled call to break-up" the companies, Republican Congressman Ken Buck said. The House antitrust subcommittee is expected to publish its report this week. < Page 15

ENERGY

OFFSHORE TURBINES TO POWER POST-VIRUS UK RECOVERY PLAN



Prime Minister Boris Johnson vowed to turn Britain into the Saudi Arabia of wind power with a plan to connect every household to energy derived from floating turbines. He plans to quadruple power generated by offshore wind from 10 to 40 gigawatts. < Page 15

Duqm SEZ hosts OCCI’s delegation

BUSINESS REPORTER
DUQM, OCT 6

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) welcomed a delegation representing the real estate development and construction committee of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). During the meeting, SEZAD reviewed the success achieved in the real estate and construction sector in the Zone. Also, it touched on the investment opportunities, establishment of commercial and real estate businesses and the role of local and international investors in the Zone. The significant role of SEZAD in supporting real estate



sector was highlighted too. Hassan bin Khamis al Ruqaishi, Chairman of Real Estate Development and Construction Committee, pointed out: “The Special Economic Zone at Duqm is full of different investment opportunities in the real estate sector, offered with simple procedures and clear information to attract individuals to invest in Duqm. I believe what we have seen during the visit is a testimonial for the promising growth, which will be witnessed in the Zone over the next five years.” In a number of presentations, the delegation was briefed on the master plan of the Zone, land usufruct mechanism and other

details of Duqm development project. The delegation was also familiarised with the role played by the Oman Company for Development of Special Economic Zone at Duqm in developing the Zone and projects developed there. Other presentations presented by the General Directorate of Housing in Al Wusta Governorate and Duqm Quarries Company highlighted the investment opportunities in the mining sector in the Zone. Besides, the delegation was toured around different key projects at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, including Oman Dry Dock Company, Port of Duqm and Duqm Refinery.

NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Bank Muscat implements sustainable strategy to develop young talents

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, in line with its vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’ is one of the largest institutions supporting young people in the Sultanate and playing a crucial role in developing Omani human resources. The bank has become a dream employer for many job seekers in the Sultanate as it provides training to employees and empowers them to grow further in their careers. From the very first moment an employee joins the bank, suitable training and development opportunities are provided to make the employee skilled and familiar with work-related processes and procedures such that they can deliver to the best of their abilities.

Since the beginning of this year, the bank has appointed 104 employees till June 2020, bringing the total number of Omanis who work across the bank to 3,551, with an Omanisation ratio of about 95 per cent. About 48 per cent of the employees are women, who work across different job roles and at all levels including management.



Said Salim al Aufi (above), Group Deputy General Manager - Human Resources, Bank Muscat, expressed his happiness with the bank’s achievements and said: “As the nation’s leading banking partner, Bank Muscat attaches great importance to national initiatives, especially human resources development aimed at contributing to Oman’s future by investing in talent which is the real wealth of the nation. The bank has been continuously working towards its commitment of being a leading employer by providing safe and well-equipped facilities that ensure the safety of all employees, customers and partners. We have a large number of young Omanis working across all disciplines and levels. A large number of senior positions in executive management as well as heads of departments and branches are Omanis. This success has been possible only thanks to the excellent efforts and work put in by Omani employees across all levels.” Speaking about the high level of Omanisation at the bank, Said Salim al Aufi, said: “Sustainable human resources

development is one of the key priorities of the bank. Bank Muscat is proud to take the lead among private sector institutions to carry out national responsibility in creating job opportunities and providing an excellent work environment. The high Omanisation rate of about 95 per cent is evidence of the top priority accorded by Omani youth in making the best use of opportunities offered by the bank. Bank Muscat takes into account the need to develop Omani human resources across all specialties and cooperates with various government institutions, universities and colleges in its mission to develop the Sultanate’s human resources.”

Afra al Zadjali (above), an IT



employee at Bank Muscat said: “I had worked at three different institutions before joining the bank. I have now been working at the bank for more than 5 years and am very happy to say that this has been a period of great learning and experience. I take this opportunity to thank Bank Muscat for supporting and helping me achieve my dream of completing my postgraduate studies once I fulfilled the relevant conditions. I am now studying at an institution in the Sultanate, and hope to complete my Master’s degree in a year. This support will help me greatly in my career and I really value the strong support provided to me by Bank Muscat.”

Amira bint Said al Wahaibi



(above) who has been working at Bank Muscat for nearly eight years said: “I have worked in multiple roles within the customer experience department, serving both retail and corporate customers. Through my work here, I have been able to understand the needs of different customer segments and acquire problem solving,, customer service and communication skills. It’s my ambition is to further succeed in my career and give it my very best.”

Sohar International wins ‘Best Bank in Growth’ award

MUSCAT: Oman’s leading financial services company, Sohar International, won the ‘Best Bank (Large Size) in Growth’ award at the Oman Banking & Finance Awards 2020. The top honour is exemplary of Sohar International’s determined robust growth, underpinned by its continued investment in key economically viable initiatives. In recognition of the 2019 financial performance, the bank, in particular, reflected healthy growth in its loan books, customer deposits, fee income, operating profit, net profit, and gross loans despite challenging market conditions. Sohar International’s Chief Executive Officer, Ahmed al Musalmi received the award on behalf of Sohar International in a ceremony held at Hotel Sheraton Oman. Expressing his delight on winning the coveted award, Al Musalmi, said, “It is



with great pride and honour that we receive the ‘Best Bank (Large Size) in Growth’ Award. This award is a true testament to our resilient growth strategy that strongly aligns with our brand vision - positioning Sohar International as a world-leading Omani service company that helps customers, communities and people to prosper and grow. This award comes in at a time when the economies are battling unforeseen challenges, however

,with our focused approach and an unstoppable desire to win, we forge on delivering responsive banking for an ever-changing world, and ensuring international standard services for our customers and all other stakeholders. This reflects our steady journey towards becoming a world-leading Omani service.” Sohar International recorded spectacular financial performance and an exceptional year of growth in year 2019 as

it posted a net profit of 17.2 per cent compared to year 2018. As part of its ongoing strategy to continue focusing on sound asset quality to ensure long term sustainability of the bank, Sohar Internationals asset book witnessed a healthy increase of 15.1 per cent to OMR 3.505 billion compared to OMR 3.046 billion in year 2018, where net loans and advances increased by 9.0 per cent to RO 2,454 million compared to RO 2,252 million in year 2018. In a relatively small market, the Bank has also successfully managed to attract a vast number of depositors reflecting an increase in deposits of 15.3 per cent to RO 2,097 million compared to RO 1,818 million in year 2018. The bank also witnessed a double-digit growth of 10.8 per cent overall in Net operating income amounting to RO 104.659 million compared to RO 94.438 million in 2018.

BUSINESS ALERT

MUSCAT

BANKDHOFAR WINS AWARDS FOR ITS CORPORATE BANKING SERVICES



Reaffirming its position as a leading Omani financial institution, BankDhofar recently received “Best Business and Corporate Banking Oman 2020” by International Business Magazine, and “Best Investment Banking Brand, Oman 2019” award by Global Brand Awards. The recognition highlights the bank’s ongoing commitment to provide the best banking solutions for its corporate customers. BankDhofar’s CEO Abdul Hakeem Omar al Ojaili (pictured) stressed on the bank’s consistent and continuous efforts to further enrich its customers’ experience through diverse bundles of innovative products, top-notch services and tailored financial solutions. “All our products and services are tailored to fulfil the financial and investment needs of our customers, meet their requirements and exceed the expectations.”

MUSCAT

AL KHALILI GROUP APPOINTS MUSCAT INTERIORS FOR ITS REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Al Khalili Group has appointed Muscat Interiors to design and implement all finishing works for the Group’s real estate development projects. As the Al Khalili Group previously announced its entry into the real estate development field in cooperation with the Tibiaan properties, and it has allocated \$100 million for these luxury real estate projects.



The agreement was signed at the Group’s headquarters in the presence of Fahad al Ismaili, the CEO of Tibiaan properties who are the exclusive agent for marketing and sales. Shaikh Qais bin Salem al Khalili, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al Khalili Group, said, “Quality is the basis of our projects, and the delivery of units according to the highest specifications and finishes to our customers is of great importance to us and here comes the importance of cooperation with field experts, especially young Omani masters of their work.”

MUSCAT

V FOR VICTORY: THE STORY OF CADILLAC’S PERFORMANCE BRAND

In just over 15 short years of existence, the Cadillac V-Series has altered how the world views American performance cars. The brand shattered stereotypes and delivered unprecedented dynamics, luxury and incredible value for money, going head to head with firmly established European rivals. It was a bold move, but one that paid off.

The first V-Series vehicle, the Cadillac CTS-V sedan, was launched in 2004. Powered by the GM LS engine V8, with a six-speed Tremec manual transmission from the C5-generation Corvette Z06, the CTS-V delivered the practicality of a refined, family sedan and yet offered blistering performance.



However, it was not merely a case of strapping on a sports car V8 to a sedan and hoping for the best – the depth of engineering in the CTS-V made it one of the most agile performance cars on the market and garnered critical acclaim. Cadillac knew it was onto something big.

MUSCAT

OIG OPENS STATE-OF-THE-ART CATERING FACILITIES



Following four years of planning and construction, OIG has inaugurated a state-of-the-art accommodation facility in Tawiyat. The new facility is able to accommodate over 2000 staff and is equipped with a modern commercial kitchen capable of providing three meals a day for more than 4000 staff. The accommodation is conveniently located to provide easy access to many clients thereby minimising travel time for the staff. The company embarked on a construction programme ten years ago to reduce its dependency on rented accommodation and improve the quality of the living conditions of its valuable staff. This largest of the eight facilities the company has built. All of its facilities meet rigorous HSE standards and ensure a high level of comfort for its staff. The construction partner, NECC LLC, has been able to complete the project ahead of the budgeted timescale despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

UK’S JOHNSON TO BOOST HOME OWNERSHIP

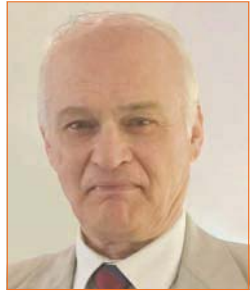
British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Tuesday his government would reduce deposit sizes for home buyers as part of a drive to increase the rates of home ownership, especially among the under-40s. “We need to unleash the urge not just to build but to own. We need to fix our broken housing market,” Johnson said during a speech to the Conservative Party’s annual conference. > **Reuters**



DAIMLER TO CUT FIXED COSTS BY MORE THAN 20%

Daimler said on Tuesday it will cut fixed costs, capex and research and development expenditure by more than 20 per cent by 2025 compared with 2019 levels as part of a strategy overhaul to reposition Mercedes-Benz as a luxury brand. Mercedes-Benz stopped building sedans in the US to focus on more profitable SUV’s, and halted an automated development alliance with BMW. > **Reuters**

Euronext Dublin sees big increase in trading



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

DUBLIN STOCKBROKERS ARE LOOKING TO THE OPPORTUNITY AFFORDED BY BEING THE ONLY ENGLISH-SPEAKING EXCHANGE FOR COMPANIES SEEKING A EUROPEAN LISTING

While in Ireland last week, I picked up on business news here that trading in top Irish blue-chip stocks on the Euronext Dublin exchange has soared in the last year as institutional investors have shifted their activity away from London ahead of Brexit. Euronext’s market share in trading Ryanair, CRH and Smurfit Kappa — three highly liquid companies listed in both London and Dublin — has topped 50 per cent each, outperforming London Stock Exchange (LSE) by a wide margin. The performance contrasts with 2018 and early 2019 when the LSE had bigger market shares in the stocks and was the preferred venue for trading dual-listed companies. But market sources say that uncertainty as Brexit approaches is beginning

to isolate the London market and driving the business towards Dublin, which is increasingly seen as a more dynamic market with access to global pools of capital through the Euronext network. It’s a big change from just a few years ago when many Irish companies — such as Greencore, DCC and C&C — abandoned Dublin for single listings in London. But post-Brexit, Dublin stockbrokers are looking to the opportunity afforded by being the only English-speaking exchange for companies seeking a European listing. According to data through July, trading volumes on Euronext Dublin overall have reached record highs in 2020 following the introduction of Euronext’s Optiq technology platform, which gives its more than a 100 members access to

high-speed trading and valuable market data. With a network of exchanges in Dublin, London, Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels, Lisbon and Oslo, Euronext has become the third force in European stock markets with an extensive order book, behind the LSE and the Deutsche Boerse in Frankfurt. New Euronext is looking to cement that position by buying the Borsa Italiana in Milan from the LSE, which is selling its Italian exchange as part of regulatory disposal to clear the way for its 23 billion euros purchase of data provider Refinitiv. The LSE said last week it had entered into exclusive talks to sell Borsa Italiana to Euronext after reviewing competing bids from Deutsche Boerse and Swiss Exchange Six. Euronext’s bid involves Italy’s Cassa di Risparmio di Venezia and Intesa Sanpaolo who will become shareholders in the

French exchange operator if the bid succeeds by subscribing to a proposed capital increase. Italian regulators have a veto over sale of the Borsa Italiana — Italy’s only stock exchange. The acquisition of Borsa Italiana would represent a major step towards Euronext’s goal of building a leading pan-European market infrastructure that can serve as the backbone of the EU’s capital markets union and rival the major money centres in Frankfurt and London. That could be good news for Euronext Dublin and Ireland’s status as a post-Brexit European financial centre. Furthermore, looking at investments — the Investment Limited Partnerships (Amendment) Bill 2020 will help enable funds operating in Ireland to put money into “big projects that require the capital to be invested at different stages”,

according to Pat Lardner, CEO of Irish Funds. Partnership structures are commonly used to provide financing for major long-term capital projects where the funding is drawn down over a long period. Currently, none of this investment is taking place via Irish fund structures, according to Irish Funds, due to what it says is a lack of suitable investment fund structures in this investment space. Over 16,000 people are directly employed in the funds sector in Ireland. So far this year 57 investment companies have entered or expanded their presence in the Irish market, as the sector here benefits from the UK’s approaching exit from the European Union. (The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK).

In brief

SINGAPORE

TEMASEK ESTABLISHES NEW ASSET MANAGER OVERSEEING \$55 BN



Singapore state investor Temasek Holding said on Tuesday that it has established a new asset management group that will have combined assets under management of \$55.14 billion. Sevia Holdings Pte Ltd will be set up as the operational holding company for four existing asset management companies currently wholly-owned by, or affiliated to, Temasek. Those firms are Azalea Investment Management, Fullerton Fund Management Co, InnoVen Capital and Seatown Holdings Intl. — **Reuters**

KUALA LUMPUR

AIRASIA X PROPOSES DEBT RESTRUCTURING IN BID FOR SURVIVAL

The long-haul arm of Malaysia’s flagship budget airline, AirAsia X Bhd (AAX), has proposed restructuring its debt and reducing its issued share capital to avoid liquidation, it said in a late bourse filing on Tuesday. The group is seeking to restructure approximately 63.5 billion ringgit (\$15.30 billion) of debt and for any balance to be waived, the statement said. The group, hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic as closed borders kept most of its planes grounded for months, also proposed reducing its issued share capital by 90 per cent and consolidating every 10 existing ordinary shares into one share. AAX said it is facing severe liquidity constraints in meeting its debt and other financial commitments despite efforts to control costs, including grounding all scheduled flights, salary cuts and retrenchment across the group. — **Reuters**

China: TikTok, WeChat bans break WTO rules

GENEVA: China said at a World Trade Organization meeting that restrictions by the United States on Chinese mobile applications TikTok and WeChat violate of the body’s rules. The Trump administration has ordered download blocks on the two mobile apps and ordered ByteDance, the Chinese owner of TikTok, to sell its operations to a US company, citing national security concerns. However, US judges have questioned the government’s case. A representative for China said at the closed-door meeting that the measures “are clearly inconsistent with WTO rules, restrict cross-border trading

services and violate the basic principles and objectives of the multilateral trading system,” a trade official familiar with the matter, who did not wish to be identified, said. The official said the delegate described the US failure to provide concrete evidence of the reasons for its measures a “clear abuse” of rules. In the same meeting, the United States defended its actions, saying they are intended to mitigate national security risks, the official said. The government has previously said data from American users is being accessed by the Chinese government. — **Reuters**

US House’s antitrust report hints at break-up of Big Tech firms

WASHINGTON: The US House of Representatives antitrust report on Big Tech firms contains a “thinly veiled call to break up” the companies, Republican Congressman Ken Buck said. The House antitrust subcommittee is expected to publish its report this week on Amazon.com Inc, Apple Inc, Facebook Inc and Google owner Alphabet Inc. A Buck representative confirmed to Reuters the authenticity of the draft response, which was first reported by Politico. In the draft, Buck said he shared Democratic concerns about the power of Big Tech firms, with their penchant for “killer acquisitions” to eliminate rivals and self-preferencing in guiding customers to their other products. However, he objected to a plan to require them to delineate a clear “single line of business”. Social media platform Facebook also owns Instagram



The logos of Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Google are seen in this illustration photo. — **Reuters**

and WhatsApp, search engine provider Google’s businesses include YouTube and Android, and e-commerce leader Amazon operates a massive cloud computing unit. — **Reuters**

EYE-CATCHING PLAN

Offshore turbines to power post-virus UK recovery plan

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday vowed to turn Britain into the Saudi Arabia of wind power with a plan to connect every household to energy derived from floating turbines. In a speech closing his Conservative party’s annual conference, the beleaguered Johnson sought to regain the initiative with an eye-catching plan to quadruple power generated by offshore wind from 10 to 40 gigawatts this decade. But environmentalists said the plan fell woefully short of a promised “green recovery” to build a sustainable economy after the COVID-19 crisis, and critics accused Johnson of seeking to divert attention from a long series of pandemic failures. The prime minister said new investment of £160 million (\$208 million) for ports and factories to make next-generation turbines would support 60,000 jobs. “Offshore wind will be powering every home in the country,” Johnson told the



A man paddle boards, with an off-shore wind farm seen in the English Channel behind, during hot weather at Brighton in southern Britain, in this file photo. — **Reuters**

online conference, which this year has been accompanied by Conservative mutterings over his leadership amid a second wave of the pandemic. “As Saudi Arabia is to oil, the

UK is to wind — a place of almost limitless resource, but in the case of wind without the carbon emissions, without the damage to the environment,” he said. Wind turbines on land are

cheaper and more efficient, as they sit closer to the power grid. But they are unpopular with many, especially Conservative backbenchers in rural constituencies, and their

development has been stymied by planning regulations. Johnson gave a nod to such opposition in noting: “I remember how some people used to sneer at wind power, 20 years ago, and say that it wouldn’t pull the skin off a rice pudding. “They forgot the history of this country. It was offshore wind that puffed the sails of Drake and Raleigh and Nelson, and propelled this country to commercial greatness,” he said, referring to three naval heroes from centuries past. In fact, when he was mayor of London in 2013, Johnson himself said shale gas was a better answer to energy shortages than wind power, which he said: “failed to pull the skin off a rice pudding.” As mayor, Johnson was criticised for quixotic plans such as “Boris Island”, a new airport in the Thames estuary that came to nought, and a “garden bridge” over the river that incurred more than £50 million in planning costs before the project was abandoned. — **AFP**

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Requirements:

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

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Thousands of edible plants could feed us on a hotter planet

The drought-hardy African morama bean, which tastes like cashew nuts when roasted, and the artichoke-flavoured buds of the Middle East's thorny akkoub plant may be foods of the future. They are among two of the more than 7,000 edible plants that could thrive in a hotter world, nourishing millions of people, said a new report from Britain's Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, coinciding with a UN meeting on reversing biodiversity loss.

An international team of researchers warned that more than half of the global population relies on just three crops — rice, maize and wheat — as staple foods, making diets highly vulnerable to the impacts of global warming. "Climate change is threatening to unleash weather conditions, pests and diseases that our current crops will struggle to cope with", the report said.

"If humanity is to thrive in future, we need to make our food production systems more diverse, resilient and environmentally sustainable."

A collaboration among 210 scientists from 42 countries, the report on the state of the world's plants and fungi identified their potential for medicine, food and fuel. But it warned that nearly 40 per cent of all plants face extinction due to factors such as land clearing, over-harvesting of wild species and changing weather patterns. Tiziana Ulian, lead author of the food chapter and a senior scientist at Kew, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation humanity faces "a double challenge".

"On one hand, there is a problem of hunger in the world.

On the other, there is a problem of excess of calories that leaves a lot of people obese", she said. Diversifying the crops people grow and eat is key to tackling both issues as the planet heats up, she added. In 2019, more than 3 billion people —



A collaboration among 210 scientists from 42 countries, the report on the state of the world's plants and fungi identified their potential for medicine, food and fuel. But it warned that nearly 40pc of all plants face extinction

about two in five — could not afford healthy diets and almost 690 million went to bed hungry, figures from the United Nations showed.

Yet many plants described as "neglected" are rich in nutrients, resistant to pests and diseases, and can grow even in difficult conditions, the report said.

For example, pandanus — a small-trunked tree which grows in coastal lowlands from Hawaii to the Philippines — could withstand drought, strong winds and salt spray.

Morama beans also yield oil, butter and milk, and its tuber and young stems are high in protein, while fonio, a grain-yielding grass species that grows wild across the savannas of West Africa, is high in iron, calcium and several amino acids. But realising their potential is a challenge because in industrialised food systems, growing, processing and packaging are "geared towards uniformity" focused on very specific crops, said Danny Hunter, co-author of the food chapter.

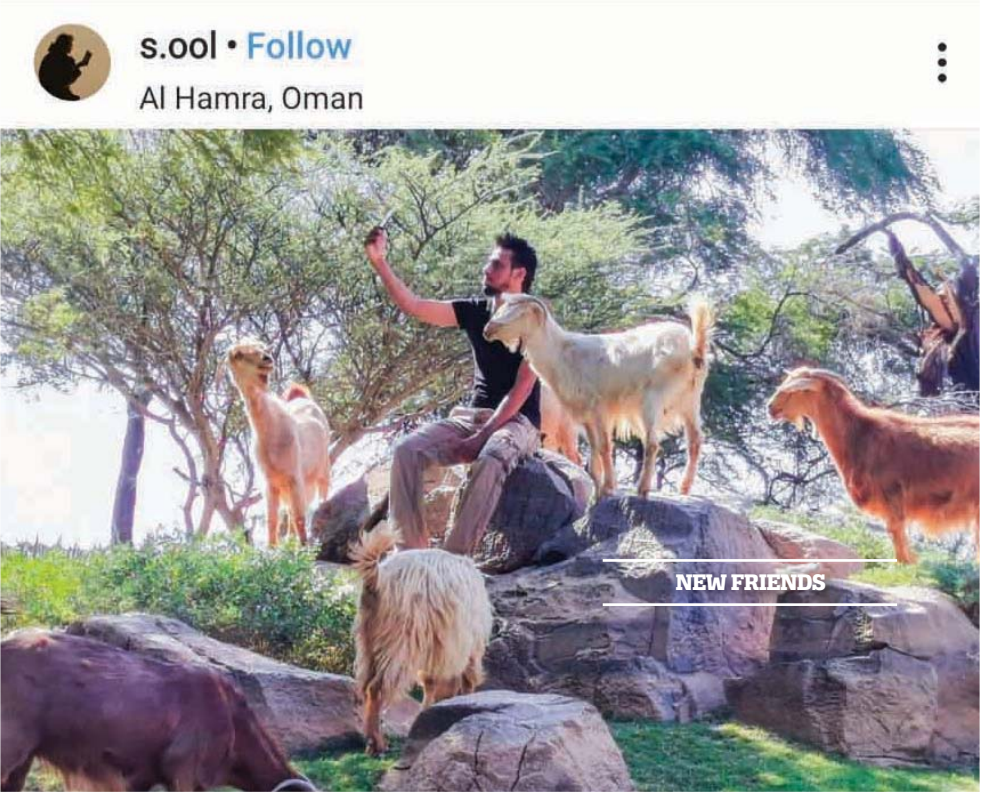
One way to support a more diverse diet is through Brazil's national policy which stipulates that at least 30 per cent of food for school meals must come from local farmers, he noted.

Hunter, a senior scientist at agricultural research group Bioversity International, said his organisation was working in Brazil, Turkey, Kenya and Sri Lanka to promote native species.

At the same time, surging demand for healthy foods that suddenly become popular in Western societies can come at the expense of indigenous communities and small farmers who have nurtured and managed them for generations, he said. "When these things become 'superfoods', these custodians don't really benefit — so we need to look at ways to empower them and work with them", he added.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.



COOK LIKE A CHEF

Get full stories online at www.omanobserver.om

Hammour fish and shrimps vindaye



ULTIMATE JOY

Chef Thierry Quintric is convinced that food should bring the ultimate joy to consumers, and he believes that the creative approach to cooking creates a viable excuse to get together at the table. As executive chef of Hormuz Grand Hotel, he made it his mission to give Oman diversified and inspiring dishes that are now served at restaurants like Omny, Straits and even the Indian-cuisine themed restaurant Qureshi. In the next two weeks, Chef Thierry will be sharing four of his best recipes so you can have something to surprise your family with at least twice each week.

PREPARATION AND COOKING INSTRUCTIONS:

- Marinate the onion in vinegar for 15 minutes. Add salt and paper to the fish cuts as cubes.
- Heat oil in deep frying pan, fry the fish until golden brown and drain the excess of oil.
- Combine the mustard seeds, garlic cloves, red chilli, bits of water & grind into a fine paste.
- Clean and seeds off all capsicum and then cut into cubes as 3x3cm.
- In a pan heat 3 tablespoons of oil, add the turmeric powder, ground mustard, garlic and chili paste and keep stirring for 3 minutes. Then add the capsicum, onions and let it confit / Simmer for 15 minutes in slow fire.
- Combine the fish with the sauce from the bell peppers stew.
- Check seasoning as per your liking. Store in a jar in the fridge.



INGREDIENTS:

1 kg Tuna or kingfish
8-10 cloves garlic
2 tbspoon mustard seed
2 Nos red chillies
1 tbspoon turmeric powder
3 Nos medium onion
10 Nos medium bell pepper (green-red-yellow)
Salt to taste
Pepper to taste
½ cup white vinegar
Oil for frying

ABOUT THE CHEF

CHEF THIERRY QUINTRIC

Executive Chef
Hormuz Grand, A Radisson Collection Hotel

Chef Thierry Quintric is currently the Executive Chef of Hormuz Grand Muscat, A Radisson Collection Hotel. Born in Brest, France, he joined a culinary school at the age of 17, formally beginning his apprenticeship/career four years later. His professional career began in Europe where he worked for several restaurants and hotels, including Michelin-starred properties. Thierry's travels have taken him to London and Caribbean Islands, where he worked at Cap Juluca Hotel-Resort, Anguilla. His rich career has seen him work with brands such as Le Méridien, Moevenpick, Kempinski and, more recently, Radisson Group, in Africa and the Middle East.

The chef has specialised in dietetics and healthy food, having spent the summer of 2004 in a specialised hotel – Thalasso-Spa restaurant in France. Chef Thierry is known to be a follower of the new cooking method that incorporates in-value freshness and bio products; he is a big fan of Mediterranean food, which offers a large range of fresh food, herbs and spices to discover. He also likes to use local products in his sophisticated culinary creations to sublimate his dishes.

He also believes in using fresh Omani local produce that enhances his creation for guest's discovery & satisfaction and in return contributes to our local economy.



FASHION



Chanel brings Hollywood glamour to Paris Fashion Week

PARIS: French fashion label Chanel brought a touch of Tinseltown to the Paris runway on Tuesday, with glamorous feathered gowns and a nod to the Hollywood sign, recreated to spell out the brand's name.

Models paraded in and out of the giant "Chanel" lettering, transposed from the hills of Los Angeles to the interior of Paris' Grand Palais exhibition hall, as guests perched on stools at the socially-distanced show.

Fashion labels are only before the show paid tribute to actresses such as Jeanne Moreau and Romy Schneider who caught the eye of American directors but also starred in French classics at the time.

Looks included off-the-shoulder evening gowns and feathered black-and-white dresses, while designer Virginie Viard — who took over last year from the late Karl Lagerfeld - brought out new twists on Chanel's classic tweed suits.

Models wore tweed jackets over silky shorts, while



just returning to the catwalk, after shows were cancelled over the summer due to the coronavirus pandemic, and in Paris only the major luxury brands pressed ahead with physical events.

LVMH's Louis Vuitton is due to present a collection on Tuesday, the last day of Paris Fashion Week.

Chanel's latest outing showcased inspiration drawn from Hollywood's 1950s heyday — with a French touch.

A short film released shift dresses included trompe l'oeil details such as pockets on the back. The collection also featured dashes of bubblegum pink and logo-heavy pyjama style tops.

A-listed guests included singer and actress Vanessa Paradis and her daughter Lily-Rose Depp. Chanel would normally invite its clients from around the world to attend catwalk shows, though many were absent due to travel restrictions linked to the pandemic. — Reuters



■ ART

Rock, paper scissors: Curating art pieces to connect people with their inner child

BY TITASH CHAKRABORTHY

Based on the children's game, Rock Paper Scissors, Debjani Bharadwaj and Radhika Hamlai have curated RPS to help people connect with their inner child and unlock the full spectrum of their imagination.

Founded in 2020 by two renowned women artists, they aim to transform people's lives with art. They believe that the creative potential of art is limitless and touches every aspect of their lives and by sharing their combined experience of 30 years in the world of visual art, they would like to create an art awareness by teaching art and by designing unique pieces which one can interact with.

Rock, Paper, Scissor aims to be a multifarious platform, catering to the many facets of being and becoming an artist. A vision created by two established artists that share a passion for the arts, this collaboration is a perfect representation of their uniqueness whilst showcasing their individuality and love for vibrancy in harmony.

Their products are created from the heart and inspired by the things they love, the things that make them who they are.

Nostalgic memories from their childhood and their love of being original and creative is a focus of our inspiration. Rock Paper Scissors products are quirky and arty but they also strive to make them affordable so that they can be owned and loved by many. You can see two different styles of designs on these wheel-thrown pots, the abstract painting style is by Radhika and the illustration style is by Debjani. All their products are available on their Instagram @rockpaperscissors.rd.

Other than creating their very own artefacts, the two artists also want to share their knowledge and years of experience and through their collaboration will also be providing the following.

ART EDUCATION- To make a difference in people's lives by regularly teaching engaging art projects online and on physical platforms using our expertise as artists. We are committed to making art education accessible and available to everyone. Adapting to the current situation during a pandemic, our classes will be hosted online. For those signing up to these classes, all their required materials will be provided and delivered at right to them. Other than classes, RPS also caters to hosting online events for arts and crafts for groups, including providing supplies

and hosting the class for friends or families that want to come together to create something virtually.

ART MENTORSHIP- To support other artists by helping them develop new and existing skills in their preferred art medium and find a direction in their art-making process. This will involve receiving guidance on how to establish a successful career in the arts. They believe that the process of finding your voice in your art is a process of trial and error until they find their own artistic identity.

ART RESIDENCIES- To generate opportunities for international guest artists by providing them time and space for developing work and creatively exploring new ideas. These residencies aim to promote cultural understanding, exchange and artistic endeavour and to work on prestigious projects in collaboration with us.

SPATIAL DESIGN- To change the perception of spaces and create dialogues between ourselves and our surroundings. We render customised, statement wall murals that advocate community interaction and communication within public spaces and transform private spaces by making them playful and memorable.

A LITTLE ABOUT THE ARTISTS

RADHIKA HAMLAI DIRECTOR & COFOUNDER

Radhika's work is a quest for personal identity and is driven by a desire to understand herself. She invokes the child in herself through mark-making, uniting philosophy, aesthetics and functionality. She has a fascination for techniques, structures, patterns and colours and is recognised for her very personal creative style, her habit to push boundaries and to provoke and surprise. Most experiments start quite impulsively by a certain curiosity for how things would function or how something would look. From there Radhika challenges the materials to explore various possibilities and push the boundaries. The reward for each challenge is a new one. She has an in-depth understanding of a wide array of traditional materials like oil paints, acrylic paints, inks, drawing, ceramics and printmaking.

Displayed in numerous museums and at international festivals and fairs, Radhika's works can be found in the permanent collections of National Museum Oman, Bait Al Zubair Museum, Oman and the Oman International Airport many Banks and luxury hotels among others.

Radhika launched the highly successful annual event, Oman Affordable Art Fair in 2018, to provide a platform for local and international artists to showcase interesting, budget-friendly artworks.

DEBJANI BHARDWAJ DIRECTOR & COFOUNDER

Specialising in storytelling, process and material investigation, her work incorporates research and installation as well as imaginative visual creations to explore bizarre, dreamlike scenarios. Fluctuating between the real and the imagined, her delicate and intricate creations probe into the precarious line between the possible and the impossible.

Her techniques are labour intensive and intuitive working methods. Her approach to art is driven by her own curiosity, the knowledge of materials and a highly experimental hands-on creative process. She always returns to the origins of organic materials like paper and clay. She is interested in transforming these humble natural materials into refined art pieces, using low tech processes such as hand-building clay, paper-cutting, drawing and printmaking.

Debjani has participated in three solos and over 60 international group exhibitions in prestigious art galleries including Tashkeel, Gallery and XVA Gallery in Dubai, Stal Gallery, Bait Muzna Gallery and Gallery Sarah in Muscat, over a career spanning 12 years. She has illustrated two children's books "World Tales" a book of folk tales written by the students of Dubai International Academy (2009) and "A Magic Place" published by Orient Longman, a book of short stories used by Middle School children in India (2010).

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Rock, paper scissors: Curating art pieces to connect people with their inner child

Founded in 2020 by two renowned women artist, Debjani Bharadwaj and Radhika Hamlai have curated Rock Paper Scissors intending to transform people’s lives with art. With a combined experience of 30 years in the world of visual art, they hoped that the multifarious platform will cater to the many facets of being and becoming an artist... **P19**



DAILY PICKS

CHANGING WORLD



THOUSANDS OF EDIBLE PLANTS COULD FEED US ON A HOTTER PLANET

The drought-hardy African morama bean, which tastes like cashew nuts when roasted, and the artichoke-flavoured buds of the Middle East's thorny akkoub plant may be foods of the future.... Story on **Page 17**

COOK LIKE A CHEF



HAMMOUR FISH AND SHRIMPS VINDAYE

In the next two weeks, Chef Thierry will be sharing four of his best recipes so you can have something to surprise your family with, at least twice each week... Story on **Page 18**

READ



HAIR LOVE

BY MATTHEW A. CHERRY
ILLUSTRATED BY VASHTI HARRISON

A father and daughter work together on an extra-special hairstyle.

FASHION



CHANEL BRINGS HOLLYWOOD GLAMOUR TO PARIS FASHION WEEK

French fashion label Chanel brought a touch of Tinseltown to the Paris runway on Tuesday, with glamorous feathered gowns and a nod to the Hollywood sign, recreated to spell out the brand's name.... Story on **Page 18**

CELEBRATE



RANDOM ACTS OF POETRY DAY

Poetry has always been there even during the ancient times. They are, after all, one of the best ways to communicate how one feels. To celebrate today, get wild with your imagination and put pen to paper and concoct a fascinating poem that you can share on social media.