

HM GREETINGS  
TO SENEGAL PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Macky Sall of Senegal on the occasion of his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to the President and the friendly Senegalese people further progress and prosperity.

P6

STARBUCKS LATIN AMERICA FRANCHISE HOLDER SUSPENDS 1,600 JOBS IN CHILE



P10

STUCK AT HOME? TRY DALGONA COFFEE

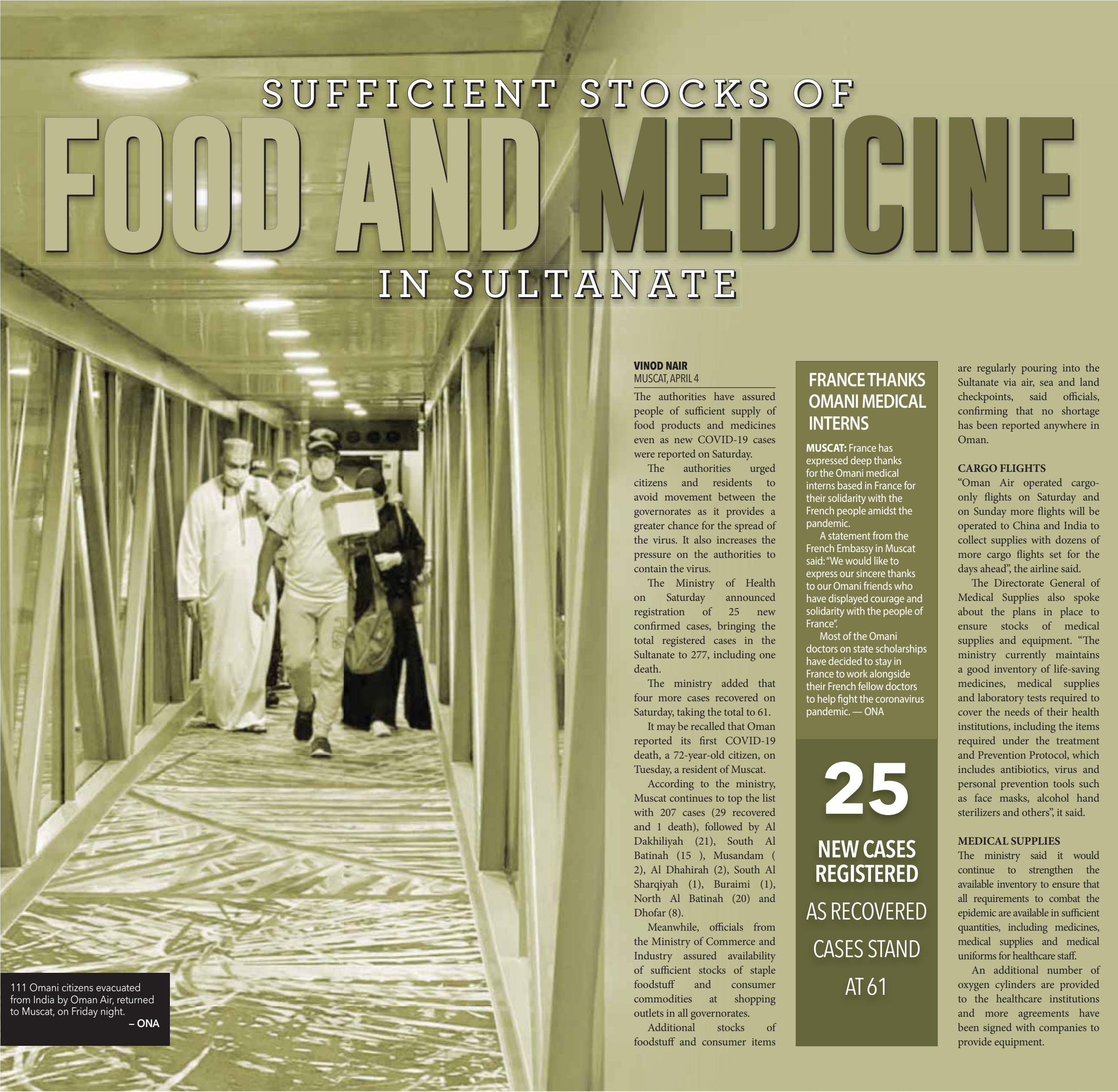


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OFA STARTS ONLINE TRAINING LESSONS FOR JUNIORS ON OFFICIAL WEBSITE



SUFFICIENT STOCKS OF  
FOOD AND MEDICINE  
IN SULTANATE



VINOD NAIR  
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

The authorities have assured people of sufficient supply of food products and medicines even as new COVID-19 cases were reported on Saturday.

The authorities urged citizens and residents to avoid movement between the governorates as it provides a greater chance for the spread of the virus. It also increases the pressure on the authorities to contain the virus.

The Ministry of Health on Saturday announced registration of 25 new confirmed cases, bringing the total registered cases in the Sultanate to 277, including one death.

The ministry added that four more cases recovered on Saturday, taking the total to 61.

It may be recalled that Oman reported its first COVID-19 death, a 72-year-old citizen, on Tuesday, a resident of Muscat.

According to the ministry, Muscat continues to top the list with 207 cases (29 recovered and 1 death), followed by Al Dakhiliyah (21), South Al Batinah (15), Musandam (2), Al Dhahirah (2), South Al Sharqiyah (1), Buraimi (1), North Al Batinah (20) and Dhofar (8).

Meanwhile, officials from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry assured availability of sufficient stocks of staple foodstuff and consumer commodities at shopping outlets in all governorates.

Additional stocks of foodstuff and consumer items

FRANCE THANKS OMANI MEDICAL INTERNS

MUSCAT: France has expressed deep thanks for the Omani medical interns based in France for their solidarity with the French people amidst the pandemic.

A statement from the French Embassy in Muscat said: "We would like to express our sincere thanks to our Omani friends who have displayed courage and solidarity with the people of France".

Most of the Omani doctors on state scholarships have decided to stay in France to work alongside their French fellow doctors to help fight the coronavirus pandemic. — ONA

25  
NEW CASES REGISTERED  
AS RECOVERED CASES STAND AT 61

are regularly pouring into the Sultanate via air, sea and land checkpoints, said officials, confirming that no shortage has been reported anywhere in Oman.

CARGO FLIGHTS

"Oman Air operated cargo-only flights on Saturday and on Sunday more flights will be operated to China and India to collect supplies with dozens of more cargo flights set for the days ahead", the airline said.

The Directorate General of Medical Supplies also spoke about the plans in place to ensure stocks of medical supplies and equipment. "The ministry currently maintains a good inventory of life-saving medicines, medical supplies and laboratory tests required to cover the needs of their health institutions, including the items required under the treatment and Prevention Protocol, which includes antibiotics, virus and personal prevention tools such as face masks, alcohol hand sterilizers and others", it said.

MEDICAL SUPPLIES

The ministry said it would continue to strengthen the available inventory to ensure that all requirements to combat the epidemic are available in sufficient quantities, including medicines, medical supplies and medical uniforms for healthcare staff.

An additional number of oxygen cylinders are provided to the healthcare institutions and more agreements have been signed with companies to provide equipment.

111 Omani citizens evacuated from India by Oman Air, returned to Muscat, on Friday night.  
— ONA

Global think-tank hails Oman’s COVID-19 containment efforts

WASHINGTON: The US-based think-tank Atlantic Council hailed the Sultanate’s plan devised by the newly-formed Supreme Committee to prevent the spread of COVID-19, describing it as impressive, adding “Oman appears to be managing the spread of coronavirus effectively, so far at least with the lowest numbers of deaths and infected persons in the Gulf”.

An article penned by Marc J Sievers who served as the US ambassador to the Sultanate from January 2016 to December 2019, for the Atlantic Council, said: “On March 26, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik chaired a session of the Supreme Committee and then announced a personal donation of about \$26 million. In the same vein, Oman’s larger banks have established mechanisms for private donations to the health ministry’s efforts and several banks made their own donations. The Central Bank Of Oman has also announced funds to shore up the banking sector and the government announced an array of measures to reduce the burden on businesses, including deferment of municipal taxes and rents for factories in industrial zones among other measures”.

Titled Oman’s handling of the coronavirus, the article went on to say: “On April 1, the Supreme Committee and Royal Oman Police announced the establishment of checkpoints on roads connecting Oman’s governorates. The checkpoints are manned jointly by the police and the army who are enforcing instructions to limit ground travel between regions to emergency personnel and those transporting necessities such as food. The Royal Oman Police also reported that several citizens had been called in for questioning and possible prosecution for spreading false information through social media accounts.

“The Royal Air Force of Oman has now conducted two special flights of transport aircraft to China to bring medical supplies and equipment, with the second flight heavily covered in state media”.

Testing for COVID-19 is also ramping up, and the controls imposed between regions and the sustained messages telling the public to stay home and maintain social distance are also likely to produce positive results, especially since over half the number of total cases are within the greater Muscat area, the article concluded.

— ONA



# Mobile COVID-19 check-ups in Muttrah soon

MOH EXHORTS PRIVATE HOSPITALS TO TAKE ACTIVE PART IN NATIONAL ANTI-COVID-19 DRIVE

KABEER YOUSUF  
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

The Ministry of Health (MoH) is looking at launching mobile medical examination bus in Muttrah. According to Dr Mohammed Saif al Hosni, Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Health, this mobile clinic will work round the clock for both citizens and expatriates who wish to get themselves checked against coronavirus. “The mobile medical centre is intended to examine the largest possible population in the area who have been isolated”, Dr Al Hosni said.

Speaking to Oman TV, Dr Al Hosni said this would help check further cases that are likely to come out of Muttrah. “This is an effort to screen both locals and residents in and around the wilayat of Muttrah which is the hotspot of COVID-19 in the recent days”, he said.

Additionally, health centres in Muttrah will accept more patients for regular check-ups and cases will be referred to other hospitals. Also, there will be an ‘Expat Medical Centre’ which will be exclusively used to screen the majority expatriate population living in this area.

“These health centres will receive all residents in the area who are either not diagnosed or have just completed home quarantine. The dedicated health centre will attend to expatriates who need to be screened”, he added.

## ANTI- COVID-19 DRIVE

Muscat: Hospitals in the private sector have a major role to play in the national anti-Covid-19 drive and the Sultanate will be seeking more private entities to join the fight, according to the Ministry of Health.

The ministry further called upon all medical entities in the private sector to be ready to offer the country any service that it considers necessary from time to time.

“The private medical sector is a strategic partner serving both Omanis and non-Omani residents as they can offer crucial services to the national goal of containing Covid-19”, said Dr Al Hosni.

Speaking to the Observer, Al Hosni said more ways and avenues for better working together were being explored and it would work closely with the sector.

“We are further strengthening our partnership by working together”, he added.

## MORE DRASTIC MEASURES

Muscat: He further said that Oman has reached stage 5 of the outbreak where we began to see cases in the community that seem not to be traceable to a known index case. But, with the passage of time, other emerging cases reveal the source of those cases previously labelled as of unknown source.

“We also begin to see clusters of cases and therefore more drastic actions such as lockdowns have become necessary”, Al Hosni said.

The mobile testing centre will boost our testing capacity for Muttrah residents and the samples will be processed in the central public health lab.

Oman is proud to have one of the best primary healthcare systems in the world and a dedicated medical team as well as paramedical members.

“We are proud of our healthcare workers who have shown dedication and courage especially at a time like this. Wish you all the best”, he said.



# Mawaleh Central Market cleaned and sanitised



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH  
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

The Muscat Municipality cleaned and sterilised the Central Market of Vegetables and Fruits in an effort to create healthy shopping environment for the market visitors.

The cleaning was done on Friday as the market’s main shaded area, its surroundings, and the parking area

stood out with cleanliness everywhere.

“This is part of the steps taken to clean, sterilise and purify the market as a precautionary measure to combat Coronavirus (COVID-19),” said Abdullah Ahmed al Riyami, Head of Food Monitoring and Inspection Section, Central Market of Vegetables and Fruits Administration, Muscat Municipality.

The Central Market, which operates from 4 am to 11 pm, continues to attract crowd even during the current situation. The fruits and vegetables come from 87 different countries around the world through Al Wajaja land border, Wadi Al Jizzi border posts, via sea through Salalah, Suhar and Mina Sultan Qaboos Port and by air through Muscat International

Airport. Though COVID-19 has brought in some changes but the market continues with brisk business and is a main distributor of fruits and vegetables.

“Precautionary steps have been taken. We make sure all the staff and workers in the market take full precautions and adhere to right guidance and instructions. They follow

the measures seriously by wearing masks and gloves during the working hours in the market. They maintain hygiene habits of using sanitisers and keeping their display area of fruits and vegetables well organised and clean.

Most importantly the prices of fruits and vegetables are monitored by the Public Authority of Consumer Protection”, Al Riyami added.

Earlier last week at the Supreme Committee press conference for COVID-19, Hassan al Dheeb, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, had talked about online shopping which is to be available soon in the Mawaleh Market for Vegetables and Fruits after similar experiment in the fish wholesale market.

# 'WHOLE-OF-GOVT AND WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACH MUST TO FIGHT COVID-19'

**SAMUEL KUTTY**  
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

The increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the Eastern Mediterranean Region shows that the transmission is rapidly occurring at local and community levels.

This was stated by WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Dr Ahmed al Mandhari, while expressing his concern that new cases have been reported in some of the most vulnerable countries with fragile health systems.

Even in countries with stronger health systems, there is a worrying spike in the number of cases and deaths reported, he said in a statement in Cairo on Friday.

"I cannot stress enough the urgency of the situation. We have a window of opportunity to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our Region, and we need to act quickly. Government leadership is vital. A whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach are absolutely necessary for an effective response", he said.

The increasing number of cases show that transmission is rapidly occurring at local and community levels. There are two ways in which this transmission can be controlled.

First, he said, countries need to be more aggressive in testing all suspected cases, tracing all contacts and ensuring proper isolation measures.

Isolation of confirmed cases is critical and requires scaling up in many countries. These actions are



Members of medical staff wearing protective face masks and gloves wait for people at a screening centre. Isolation of confirmed cases is critical and requires scaling up in many countries, Dr Ahmed al Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, said. – Reuters

critical to controlling and reducing transmission of the disease and changing the course of this pandemic.

Suspected and confirmed cases must be removed from the community and placed in hospitals, temporary

facilities or other appropriate settings with proper infection and control measures. Where needed, temporary

isolation centres must be established. There must be greater focus on identifying and isolating even mild

cases that can silently advance the pandemic. Health workers must be properly protected as they can be most at risk of contracting the disease.

Second, people need to maintain stricter physical distancing practices and more stringent hygiene behaviours. It should be clear by now to everyone how important these measures are to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Stay home, stay safe is not just a slogan, it is a life-saving reminder. Anyone showing suspected symptoms of fever and cough must self-isolate, avoid all contact with others, and quickly seek medical care if they have trouble breathing.

"I know that several contexts in our Region, such as camp settings, represent high-risk environments for transmission of the virus and can make physical distancing a challenge. We are working hard to ensure that people who are most vulnerable are protected, and able to get tested and treated without delay or interruption", he said.

He said that there is still a window of opportunity, but this window is slowly closing day by day.

"Our regional vision is based on safeguarding the health of all people by all people, so countries, communities and individuals have an equally important role to play. COVID-19 can only be controlled using aggressive, appropriate measures, and an inclusive approach that is built around solidarity and action, protecting every individual's rights to life and health. We cannot allow this virus to take hold of our region", he added

## Coronavirus pandemic and the news media

**HAIDER AL LAWATI**  
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In the health crisis and the injuries and deaths resulting from coronavirus pandemic, the mission of journalists and media to deliver information to radio, television and daily press institutions is no less than what individuals do in the medical, health, security and military fields. In such crises, there are several groups exposed to the possibility of this disease at any moment as a result of their entry into endemic places or in healthcare rooms to follow up patients' conditions and treatment.

Workers in the press and media fields go to the task of conducting interviews with patients, medical staff and the public in the endemic places, and they take live pictures from the fields, hospitals and health centres, as well as their regular travel on planes and passing through airports and checkpoints, which can lead to their infection at any time. Hence, the International Federation of Journalists in Brussels has sent occupational safety guidelines for journalists and media professionals to prevent this virus, warning them that necessary action must be taken in all cases. The important thing in this work is to preserve themselves and always give priority to their health,

so they can continue working with their institutions and audiences.

The Federation has expressed its willingness to cooperate with press unions in the world because of the rapid spread of this disease, which emphasises the need to take the necessary precautions, and to comply with the recommendations issued by WHO experts. Everyone here must consider safety in their workplace so that they can continue their humanitarian and journalistic mission in this area, while seriously considering doing work from home to reduce the risk of infection with the virus at the institution's headquarters.

Everyone is aware that many journalists and media workers need the necessary health tools to carry out these tasks. But if the health conditions are not appropriate in the places of coverage and daily work, and if this poses a risk of infection, they can work from their homes.

They must not travel in these conditions in order not to cause concern for their institutions, families and employers, with the necessity of seeking medical advice for those who intend to travel to cover tasks and planning their mission carefully. They must take into account the restrictions imposed on travel, providing themselves with vaccinations, and covering their lives and their families with insurance, especially

in areas most affected by the virus outbreak.

Media and press coverage also needs to provide health tools along with the pen, microphone, imaging and recording tools such as gloves and hand sanitizers. This will help the journalists and the media people to continue work, and write the reports from infected places with the virus. They need to deal with extreme caution with patients suffering from the epidemic when visiting them in medical treatment, and taking all precautions required in this regard. Today, there are capabilities to conduct interviews by phone or via Skype to limit the use of affected areas, with the need to conduct external interviews by leaving the social distance between people.

Some journalists are likely to encounter restrictions that prevent them from reaching some areas or to withdraw press credits from them, which requires them to understand these conditions.

They must have backup copies of their work and press records required. It also requests consideration of supporting the work of freelance journalists, whose income will be affected by the outbreak of the disease and the payment of the financial dues required for them for projects that were not completed due to the crisis.

## Oman Air brings citizens home from India



**STAFF REPORTER**  
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

Oman Air is operating a repatriation flight to bring 111 citizens home from India.

The flight, organised in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, departed at 8:50 am local time on Friday, April 3, with stops in Kochi, Bangalore and Madras.

Also on Friday, the airline conducted its second cargo-only flights from Muscat to Mumbai to collect food and from Muscat to Guangzhou, China to collect medical equipment. Another round-trip flight to Guangzhou, to bring more medical equipment to Oman, is set for Saturday.

Those flights follow the recent initiation of cargo flights to India and China to bring needed supplies to the

Sultanate.

An airline official said, "Oman Air and its people stand ready to help serve the nation in any way we can. We are grateful for the support and encouragement from people across the nation".

### BAHRAIN TRANSIT

Transit through Bahrain International Airport is open again for international travellers, Manama-based Gulf Air said on Saturday, though entry to the country is limited to Bahrainis and other residents during the coronavirus pandemic.

"In compliance with the new regulations issued by the Bahrain Civil Aviation Authority, we are welcoming back transit passengers through Bahrain International Airport. Arrival into Bahrain remains restricted to nationals and residents",

the airline said on Twitter.

### FLIGHTS TO EVACUATE UAE RESIDENTS

Etihad Airways and Emirates Airlines will resume a limited schedule of flights from April 6.

According to the UAE Civil Aviation Authority, Etihad and Emirates will be operating special flights for the purpose of evacuating residents and visitors who wish to leave the country and return to their country.

The GCAA said the suspension of passenger and transit flights are still in force.

UAE has country extended its suspension of entry for UAE residency visa holders for another two weeks.

Residents were banned from re-entering the Emirates two weeks ago in a bid to stop the spread of coronavirus.



# SUFFICIENT FOOD STOCK TO TIDE OVER CRISIS, MAINTAIN PRICE STABILITY

**MUSCAT:** A number of officials valued the efforts made by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and other government and private sector establishments concerned to ensure the availability of sufficient stock of staple foodstuff and consumer commodities in shopping outlets in all governorates of the Sultanate at a time the world is rife with coronavirus COVID-19) pandemic.

Additional stocks of foodstuff and consumer items are regularly pouring into the Sultanate via air, sea and land checkpoints, said the officials, confirming that no shortage of such goods has been reported anywhere in the Sultanate's markets.

In the meantime, factories and commercial outlets are operating in full swing as they continue to tap their plentiful stocks, said the officials, who reaffirmed that an existing elaborate programme of direct import is being carried out in accordance with specific, well studied plans aimed to realize a high level of supply that rises to the expectations of all parties.

Commenting on this, Salayum bin Ali al Hikmani, Member of Majlis

Ash'shura and Head of the Majlis' Economic and Financial Committee, said that, according to 2019 Global Food Security Index, the Sultanate occupies 46th place internationally and 5th place in the Arab world.

Referring to a meeting of the board of directors of Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve on the availability of sufficient stocks, Al Hikmani said that the issue solicits no concerns and reaffirmed that the existing stocks will achieve food balance price stability.

He pointed out that the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council approved financial credits needed by the Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve to address coronavirus developments. He added that many government and private establishments are working on the production of food and commodity supplies.

Speaking about prices, Al Hikmani said that, by comparing the prices of staple foodstuff (rice, sugar, barley and wheat) in the first quarter of last year, globally, it is observed that the prices of sugar, wheat and barley

Government ensures continued flow of basic consumer goods in the market, reaffirms price stability

remained relatively stable while the price of rice went up slightly to touch \$400 per tonne, according to data of the International Grains Council and International Sugar Organization.

Al Hikmani called upon owners of commercial outlets to implement modern payment and delivery applications and enhance technology localisation's contribution to financial solvency.

The Majlis committee urges owners of shopping outlets to ensure the coronavirus free environment to consumers.

Mubarak bin Mohammed

al Dohani, Director-General of Commerce at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, said that the Ministry recently formed a working team tasked with tackling the developments of coronavirus under the leadership of Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The working team will look into economic impacts of coronavirus developments and take necessary steps to provide foodstuff requirements via border outlets, working in coordination with government departments and private sector establishments concerned.

Al Dohani reaffirmed that there is a constant monitoring of availability of foodstuff and basic commodities. He warned against stockpiling of foodstuff, since this is not justified, and asked consumers to rationalize their spending.

Meanwhile, Dr Ahmed Abdulkareem al Hooti, Member of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and Head of OCCI's Economic Committee, said that competent government departments

### MoCI waives mandatory Arabic labelling on products

**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) said that it temporarily permits the import of food products bearing explanatory data in the English language.

It has suspended the mandatory condition that the description label is must in the event that it is not available from the source, provided that it meets the standard specifications.

The decision will take effect from Sunday, April 5 until further notice.

and private sector parties have exerted great efforts to secure the basic needs of society in the backdrops of the

current coronavirus pandemic, noting that large storage areas have been made available in all governorates of the Sultanate to help accommodate more stocks in the forthcoming period.

Al Hooti stressed that commendable efforts are under way to advise shoppers about how to use sterilizers. He also called upon merchants to make prices affordable to consumers and avoid exploiting the pandemic as an excuse to raise prices.

Last week, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Al Raffid Fund and the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises (Riyada), launched an initiative codenamed "Shop-From-Home#" via Twitter, following precautionary measures undertaken by the Supreme COVID-19 Control Committee.

The initiative seeks to encourage shoppers and shopping outlets to use electronic applications to promote social distancing as a measure to curb the spread of the contagion.

The Ministry calls upon firms specialized in home delivery to respond to this initiative and provide their services online. — ONA

KEY MILESTONE

Sebacic Oman bio-refinery exports maiden cargo

THE EXPORT CONSIGNMENT - THE FIRST EVER FROM SEBACIC OMAN - IS DESTINED FOR PORT OF NHAVA SHEVA ON INDIA'S WEST COAST

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

Sebacic Oman celebrated its maiden export of product from its bio-refinery complex at the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) at Duqm, marking a new milestone in the operational phase of this first-of-its-kind project in the Middle East.

Over the weekend, Port of Duqm announced that it has handled a containerized shipment of glycerin produced by Sebacic Oman at the adjoining SEZ. The export consignment – the first ever from Sebacic Oman – is destined for Port of Nhava Sheva on India's west coast, the port stated in a message.

In remarks to the Observer, Shaikh Khalid al Maawali, Director Operations of Sebacic Oman, said the shipment demonstrated the company's commitment to meeting its supply commitments to its overseas customers notwithstanding the challenges posed by the lockdown over the novel coronavirus pandemic.

He thanked in particular the SEZ Authority of Duqm (SEZAD), as well as the Port of Duqm, for facilitating the timely despatch of the shipment despite the challenging



Overview of Sebacic Oman's bio-refinery at Duqm

circumstances.

"The online support given by SEZAD in the form of permits and clearances, despite the lockdown, is much-appreciated. This support will

enable us to execute supply orders we have received from reputed multinationals, such as Dupont and Old World Industries in the US, even during the ongoing pandemic

related lockdown."

Set up with an investment of \$62 million, Sebacic Oman SAOC was the first heavy industrial project to be established in the Duqm SEZ –

the result of a decision by Shaikh Hilal bin Khalid al Maawali, the company's chairman, to support the growth of a non-oil economy in the Sultanate.

Sebacic acid, processed from castor oil, is used in the manufacture of a range of high-value commodities including Bio-Nylons, Sun Protection Creams, Lubricants, Aerospace Polymers, and various types of pharmaceuticals.

The global pandemic, according to the Director of Operations, has led to the slowdown in the uptake of company's products prompted.

"We feel this is just a temporary phase and businesses will be normal globally within the 2-3 months," he noted however, adding that operations at the Duqm plant have been scaled down to a minimum following the implementation of measures to secure the health and well-being of workers.

Commenting on the significance of the maiden shipment, Port of Duqm added: "As an export oriented unit (EOU) based within the Special economic zone in Duqm and located less than 20kms away from the port, it underpins the increasing cost and logistics advantage that Port of Duqm is offering to its clients. As such, Port of Duqm is expecting container handling at the Port to expand exponentially from now onwards."

BANNER

YEAR

Oman steel mill achieves record production in fiscal 2019-20

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

Omani steel maker Jindal Shadeed Iron & Steel (JSIS) has announced that fiscal 2019-2020 was a banner year for its integrated steel complex located within Sohar Port, with the company notching several production records notwithstanding the constrained regional economic environment.

The Sohar complex is a key source of hot briquetted iron (HBI), steel billets and rebars for the infrastructure, construction and hydrocarbon industries in Oman and the wider region.

"We are happy to report that 2019-20 was a record-breaking year when it came to our production units," said Jindal Shadeed in a series of tweets over the weekend.

"All three of our production units performed at their highest ever annual capacities – better than their nameplate production capacities for the month of March 2020," it noted. The company's financial year runs from April 1 to March 31.

The Direct Reduction Iron (DRI)

JINDAL SHADEED'S THREE PRODUCTION UNITS PERFORMED AT THEIR HIGHEST EVER ANNUAL CAPACITIES – BETTER THAN THEIR NAMEPLATE PRODUCTION CAPACITIES FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH 2020, THE COMPANY SAID IN A TWEET

plant, which is the centerpiece of the Sohar complex, achieved its "highest annual production" of 1.775 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) in 2019-20, surpassing its previous best of 1.547 MTPA achieved during the previous fiscal year, the company said. This compares with a nameplate capacity of 1.5 MTPA, attesting to its superior operational performance during the year.

Likewise, the Steel Melting Shop (SMS) recorded its "highest annual

production" of 1.87 million tons in 2019-20, surpassing its previous high of 1.71 million tonnes in 2018-19, the company said. Featuring a pair of Electric Arc and Ladle Refining furnaces, the Steel Melt Shop produces square and round billets or blooms for steel mills and downstream processing plants.

Many of the production records came during March 2020, according to the company.

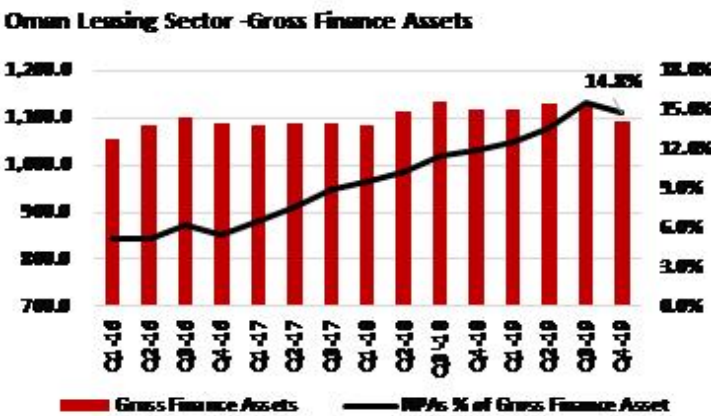
Output from the Steel Melting Shop hit a monthly high of 202K metric tons, surpassing the previous record of 185K metric tonnes achieved in January this year.

Also in March, the DRI plant notched a record daily production of 5,466 metric tonnes, which was achieved on March 6, 2020.

Commencing operations in 2011 with an investment of around \$1.1 billion, Jindal Shadeed Iron & Steel LLC (JSIS) is a wholly owned subsidiary of the \$18 billion Indian-based O P Jindal Group, which has interests in steel production, power generation, mining and infrastructure.



COVID19 fears, ex-dividend trades and low oil price pull down MSM



MUSCAT: The MSM30 Index closed the week down by 4.39 per cent and the MSM total return index was down by 1.30 per cent during the week. Ex-dividend trades and fears of an increase in coronavirus cases were the major reasons behind the decline.

All sub-indices closed down. Financial Index closed down by 3.76 per cent w-o-w, Services and Industrial index also closed down by 1.06 per cent and 4.53 per cent w-o-w. The MSM Shariah Index closed down by 0.92 per cent w-o-w.

Oman is extending austerity measures by telling government-owned companies to cut expenditure after the plunge in oil prices. All state-run companies will reduce their operational and administrative expenses in 2020 by 10 per cent, the Finance Ministry said in a statement. It also asked government-owned firms to stop the implementation of any new projects or capital spending for this year. Oman already announced plans to reduce budget spending by 5 per cent as the health emergency and much lower crude prices hammer revenue.

Companies that completed their financial year on December 31, 2019 were required to file their tax return by March 31, 2020 as stipulated by the Income Tax Law but now the deadline has been relaxed for another three months, in a gesture that takes into account the current challenges posed by the pandemic, the Tax Authority said. The authority has also announced a relaxation of compliance obligations and a waiver on penalties for late filings. It is now permissible to pay tax in instalments, among other relaxations.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has issued a Royal Decree for the setting up of a new tax administration system. No further details were announced about its mechanism. We believe government will sooner reduce some subsidies and implement new set of tariffs to counter with the current operating environment of low oil prices and subsequent low oil revenue.

During last week, Ubhar Capital SAOC updated its "Ubhar Capital Oman20 Index". The index witnessed the addition of Al Batinah Power, Raysut Cement, Ahli Bank, Muscat City Desalination and the deletion of Al Jazeera Steel, Al Sharqiya Inv. Holding, Oman Fisheries, Al Suwadi Power, the market cap of this index is about RO 4.12bn (representing 58.22 per cent of the total market capitalization at the end of 2019).

CBO recently released its quarterly bulletin for the fourth quarter. As per the bulletin, gross finance assets of the leasing sector dropped in 4Q19 by 2.9 per cent QoQ to RO 1.09bn compared to RO 1.12bn at the end of 3Q19. Non-performing assets also dropped to RO 162mn by 4Q19 compared to RO 175.1mn at the end of 3Q19. Non-performing assets as per cent of Gross Finance Assets drop to 14.8 per cent by 4Q19 compared to 15.5 per cent at the end of 3Q19.

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

COVID-19 pandemic 'humanity's darkest hour': IMF



International Monetary Fund managing director, Kristalina Georgieva, speaks to the media during a press conference in Geneva. – Reuters

GENEVA: The coronavirus pandemic has brought the global economy to a standstill and plunged the world into a recession that will be "way worse" than the global financial crisis a decade ago, the head of the International Monetary Fund said on Friday, calling it "humanity's darkest hour".

The IMF's managing director, Kristalina Georgieva, speaking at a rare joint news conference with the leader of the World Health Organization (WHO), called on advanced economies to step up their efforts to help emerging markets and developing countries survive the economic and health impact of the pandemic.

"This is a crisis like no other," she told some 400 reporters on a video conference call. "We have witnessed the world economy coming to a standstill. We are now in recession. It is way worse than the global financial crisis" of 2008-2009.

World Bank President David Malpass echoed her outlook in a post on LinkedIn, writing, "Beyond the health impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, we are expecting a major global recession."

More than 1 million people worldwide have been infected with COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, and more than 53,000 have died, a Reuters tally showed on Friday. — Reuters



## Bank Muscat to provide essential banking services



**MUSCAT:** Bank Muscat, the leading financial institution in the Sultanate, has announced that 59 branches distributed across various governorates, will provide various critical banking services from Sunday, 5 April 2020. The branches will work on rotation basis and will change every week as required by the situation. This step comes in line with the implementation of the directives of the Supreme Committee and directives of the Central Bank of Oman for dealing with COVID-19 to reduce the number of employees in offices while ensuring continuity of work and provision of critical services.

The new measures will ensure social distancing to limit and prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus while ensuring the continuation of critical banking facilities including ATMs/CDMs and other e-banking channels. Bank customers can find out the names and locations

of the branches which are open during this period by visiting the COVID-19 help page on the Bank's website <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/awareness/Pages/update.aspx> as well as through the bank's official social media channels.

The branches that will operate during the current period were chosen by the bank on the basis of easy accessibility to the maximum number of customers as well as ensuring that banking facilities are remain accessible across all wilayats and remote locations. Operational branches will be changed on a weekly basis and also according to the latest developments and announcements related to the COVID-19 by the Supreme Committee and authorities. The changes will be continuously updated on the bank's website as well as through social media channels with the aim of informing all customers who may need to access branch services during the current period.

# COVID-19 pandemic brings ME economies to temporary standstill

**BUSINESS REPORTER**  
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

The Middle East economy will see a sharp slowdown in the first half of 2020, despite stimulus packages and monetary rate cuts to soften the economic blow of the coronavirus outbreak. According to ICAEW's latest Economic Update, the Middle East economy is expected to see a pickup in the second half of 2020, when both demand and supply-side disruptions fade. This should see GDP growth of 1.0 per cent, an increase from the 0.2 per cent growth in 2019 – however, still down from previously forecasted figures.

'Economic Update: Middle East Q1 2020', produced in partnership by ICAEW and Oxford Economics, reports that higher oil production in Saudi Arabia and the UAE will boost the GCC's GDP growth to 2.6 per cent this year. However, the steep decline in oil prices will lead to fiscal adjustments to contain budgetary deficits – dragging down non-oil economies, reinforcing headwinds from the coronavirus and escalating pressure on diversification efforts. This will, in turn, lead to growth in GCC non-oil activity grinding to a halt in 2020.

According to the report, the impact of the coronavirus sent shockwaves across the oil market, driving oil prices down. However, contrary to expectations of further supply cuts, Saudi Arabia and Russia announced their decision to hike oil production as the Opec+ alliance faltered on 5 March. This move worsened the supply glut, as demand for oil had already weakened substantially and saw Brent crude prices tumbling further to below \$30 per barrel. The report says that Brent is set to average at \$38.5/b in 2020 – 40 per cent lower than 2019 – and increase to \$46/b in 2021.

The region has employed similar measures to the rest of the world to contain



The continued uncertainty in the global oil market has put more pressure than ever before on Middle East economies that are heavily reliant on oil to increase their non-oil revenues

the spread of the coronavirus, with varying severity of restrictions. Current limitations include travel bans, closure of most public venues; including schools, and a halt to some industrial activities.

Mindful of the impact of the isolation and semi-shutdown of the economy, regional authorities have followed the lead of other countries and taken steps to support demand. For example, Gulf central banks, whose currencies are pegged to the US dollar (with the exception of Kuwait) have slashed the cost of borrowing. Conventional monetary policy easing is being combined with stimulus packages to minimise the damage caused by the coronavirus outbreak. Measures include additional liquidity, custom duty

exemptions, rent relief, loan deferment, lower utility charges and credit guarantees for SMEs.

Despite such measures, countries like the UAE and Bahrain, where travel and tourism have become a mainstay of the non-oil economy, are facing a recession in their non-oil economies. With supply chains facing disruption, travel restricted, and events cancelled due to the virus outbreak, this will weigh on the performance of the broader economy.

Michael Armstrong, FCA and ICAEW Regional Director for the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA), said: "2020 is certainly going to be a challenging year for economies, both globally and regionally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic

and the unprecedented national response efforts countries are having to implement. Although we are pleased to see Middle East governments put in place the necessary fiscal reforms to soften the economic blow of the virus, growth prospects have deteriorated significantly.

"The continued uncertainty in the global oil market has put more pressure than ever before on Middle East economies that are heavily reliant on oil to increase their non-oil revenues. This is a most challenging task in these times, but governments in the region must remain proactive and continue to support their economies with pro-growth initiatives in order for them to bounce back quickly."

Elsewhere in the region, growth is also expected to contract this year. Economic conditions have deteriorated in Iran following additional US sanctions in January. And with the region's worst coronavirus outbreak exerting further pressure on its vulnerable economy, Iran is likely to experience its third year of recession in 2020. However, no official economic data has been disclosed since 2018.

In Q4 2019, Lebanon's economic downturn worsened significantly amid disruption to business from protests, informal capital controls and the emergence of a parallel currency market. The economy shrank by an estimated 3 per cent in 2019 overall. The forecast for 2020 is for significant contraction of around 9 per cent.

According to the Economic Update report, inflation spiked in both Iran and Lebanon against the backdrop of currency devaluation and will reach double digits in 2020 and 2021. Iraq, the least diversified economy in the region, will also be under pressure amid low oil prices.

# Commodities look to fiscal bazooka for support



OLE S HANSEN

The coronavirus outbreak has set three major macro impulses in motion. They will all have a major impact on commodities, especially the energy sector, over the coming months. The global economy is currently dealing with the biggest demand shock since the global financial crisis, plus a global supply shock and an oil price war which is driving a destruction of capital. The lockdowns in China at the beginning of the outbreak have now spread to the rest of the world, most noticeably Europe and the US. The short to medium term result is going to be a slump in global growth, rising unemployment, rising mortgage rates and lower consumer confidence.

The second quarter is likely to begin with the focus squarely on the price-damaging impact of the dramatic drop in demand for many key commodities: from crude oil and industrial metals to some agriculture commodities. But as coronavirus continues to spread it is very possible that the supply outlook

will become challenging as well. Miners and producers may begin to feel the impact of staff shortages and breakdown in supply chains. The impact of lower fuel prices is being felt from agriculture to mining as it drives down input costs. However, the potential risks to supply could see some markets find support sooner than the demand outlook suggests.

Without making any price predictions, we've taken a look at some of the commodities that could potentially benefit from the current troubling developments.

The impact on global growth and demand will be significant. With millions of people around the world being ordered to work from home and refrain from traveling, the demand for transportation fuel has collapsed. The drop in consumer confidence, meanwhile, will impact demand for consumer goods.

The biggest effect has so far been seen across the energy sector. A combination of strong non-Opec supply growth and a weakening outlook for global demand led to the inevitable breakdown of Opec+ co-operation on March 6.

Instead, Saudi Arabia started an all-out price war by dumping the price while ramping up production. Whether the intended target was Russia or high-cost producers in the US shale oil industry, the impact on oil has been devastating. If the aim was shock and awe, the timing has been perfect — global demand has fallen off a cliff as the global community goes into lockdown to combat COVID-19.

Brent crude oil has dropped to an 18-year low. The SPDR Energy Select ETF (XLE), representing some of the biggest US oil companies, has more than halved since December. A group of 12 major independent US



oil and gas producers, meanwhile, have seen their market cap collapse to below \$90 billion from above \$300 billion in December.

Given the fact that most oil producers (including Russia and Saudi Arabia) are currently selling at a price well below their budget break-evens, we will eventually see the market recover.

However, before that happens the virus either needs to show signs of retreating or we need to see a meaningful and long-overdue reduction among high-cost production companies in places like the US and Brazil. In addition, the long road to recovery back towards the \$50 to \$60 range in Brent will be hampered by the rapid rise in global stocks. These will need to be reduced before Brent can recover — we recommend you to take a look at Peter Garnry's assessment of

which companies could end up being potential winners and losers.

Staying with energy sector, it is our belief that a meaningful reduction in US shale oil production over the coming months may lead to a long-overdue reduction in associated gas production. Rising production, a mild winter across the northern hemisphere and the virus-related drop in activity have all helped send global gas prices sharply lower. US gas prices touched a 25-year low in March. Depending on how quickly production slows, we see gas prices rise beyond levels currently reflected in the forward market.

Gold's failure to rally as COVID-19 spread and economic uncertainty rose has brought back memories of 2008. During the early part of the GFC, all assets were sold as investors deleveraged to realise cash or pay for losses elsewhere. In

the early weeks of the crisis, gold suffered a 27 per cent sell-off to \$725/oz before beginning an ascent which eventually took it to \$1920/oz.

The rally started in gold mining stocks before moving to gold and it took another few months before the stock market finally bottomed out. With this in mind, we are keeping a close eye on gold mining companies through the Van Eck Major Gold Miners ETF.

We also have to keep in mind that the cost of fuel, which accounts for 20 per cent of mining costs, has collapsed. Gold miners have therefore, at least for now, not suffered the hit that the drop in gold would otherwise imply.

We believe the long-term reasons for holding gold have, if anything, been strengthened by current developments. While official interest rates have been slashed, corporate

bond yields have been rising. The broken transmission between central bank actions and developments on the ground is likely to trigger a major fiscal and potential inflationary response from governments around the world. US 10-year real yields, another major driver of gold, have risen sharply in response to much lower inflation expectations. We believe this move is unsustainable and that real yields will eventually move back into deeper negative territory.

The aggressive sell-off in crude oil hasn't helped gold. The Russian central bank has been a strong buyer of gold in recent years. That buying has now stopped and depending on how long it takes before crude oil recovers, we could potentially see Russia become a net-seller. After all, they will have to cover the shortfall of oil slumping below their budget break-even, which is somewhere close to \$40/b.

Silver's complete collapse to an 11-year low in March drove its relative value to gold down by more than 50 per cent below the five-year average. A combination of inadequate liquidity to withstand the aggressive dash-for-cash phenomenon and its correlation to economic growth are helping drive the steep loss. Once the market stabilises, we see the potential for a strong recovery with traders focusing on its relative cheapness to gold.

HG copper, which started the year with a forecast of a small supply deficit, finally broke key support at \$2.50/lb. However, with the outlook for aggressive fiscal measures and the potential risk to supply from virus-related disruptions, we see risk being skewed to the upside in Q2.

(Ole S Hansen is Head of Commodity Strategy at Saxo Bank)

# Trump aims to ease US oil industry's cash crunch

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has directed his cabinet to find ways to ease a cash crunch in the drilling industry after oil company executives told him in a Friday meeting it was among their top concerns, according to three sources briefed on the matter.

Trump hosted the White House meeting with executives from Exxon Mobil, Chevron Corp, Continental Resources and others as his government seeks to contain the fallout from an historic slump in oil prices that has threatened the industry with bankruptcies and layoffs.

Oil prices have dropped by about two-thirds this year as the coronavirus outbreak crushes fuel demand and major producers Saudi Arabia and Russia engage in a price war.

US Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette told a broad industry conference call following Trump's meeting with the oil executives that Trump had directed him to work with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to look for ways to immediately fix the energy industry's "liquidity shock", according to sources who listened in on the call.

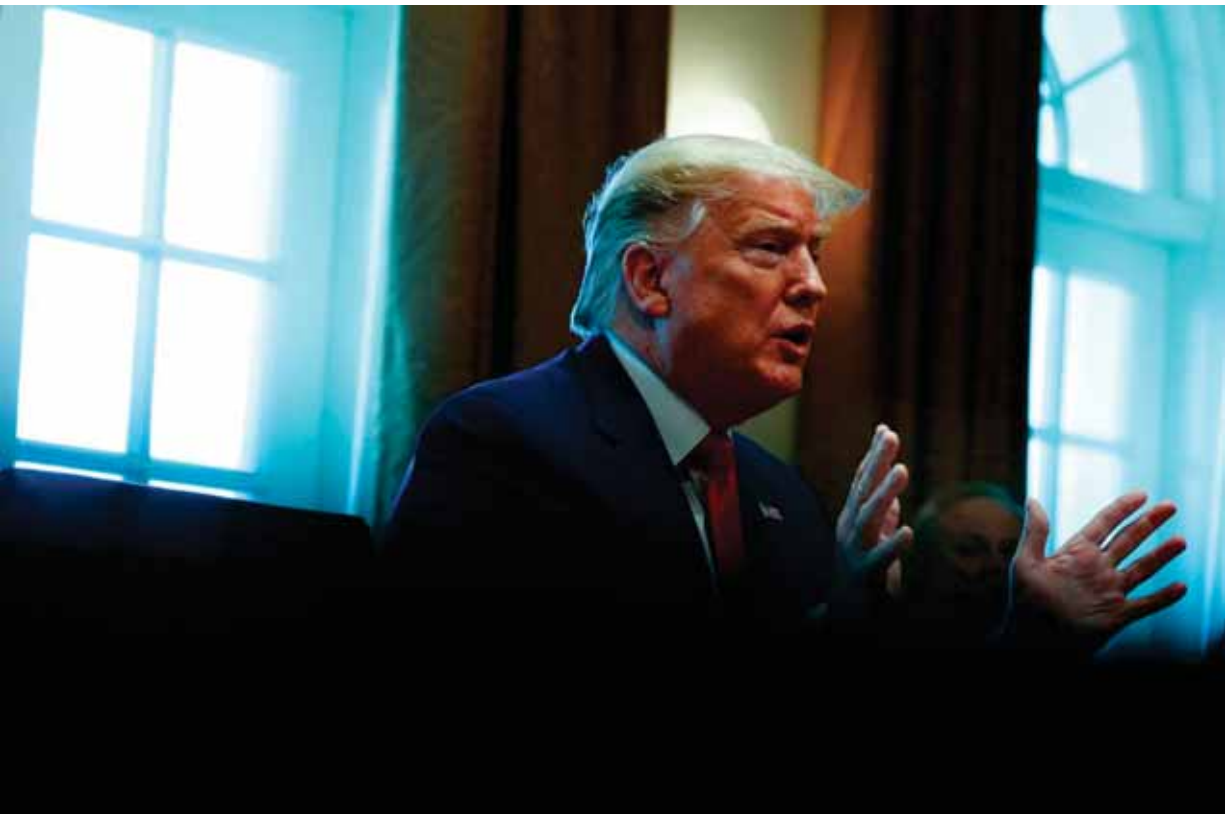
The measures could include easing banking regulations to expand the oil industry's access to credit, which has shrunk rapidly alongside the decline in oil prices, Brouillette said, according to the sources.

Oil prices have dropped by about two-thirds this year as the coronavirus outbreak crushes fuel demand and major producers Saudi Arabia and Russia engage in a price war.

Brouillette also pointed out that the administration was helping the industry cope with a rapidly worsening storage glut in the United States by leasing out space in the nation's emergency oil reserve, the sources said. Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, who was also on the call, said he was making federal lands available to drillers and considering a series of other options to help oil companies, but provided no details.

The briefing quashed rumors that the Trump administration was planning to announce measures to restrict US crude oil production to help lift global prices, as it pushes Saudi Arabia, Russia and other major oil producers to do so.

Trump has highlighted his efforts to push Moscow and Riyadh to end



US President Donald Trump speaks during a roundtable meeting with energy sector CEOs in the Cabinet Room of the White House in Washington. – Reuters

their price war and tighten their taps, and Brouillette said on the call that the administration was not negotiating with those countries, only encouraging them to make a deal amongst themselves.

The energy industry had also expected the administration to offer

some additional ways to help the industry weather the crisis, including waiving royalty payments from drillers for oil produced on federal lands, imposing an import tariff on foreign crude oil or easing shipping regulations. One of the sources called the outcome "a waste of time".

After the meeting, Trump said his administration planned to make sure the US oil industry stays in "good shape".

Asked if he is considering tariffs on Saudi oil, Trump said: "Tariffs are a way of evening the score ... Am I doing it now? No. Am I thinking about

imposing it as of this moment? No. But if we're not treated fairly it's certainly a tool in the toolbox."

He added that he expected Saudi Arabia and Russia to "settle their dispute very quickly."

Trump had said on Thursday that Saudi Arabia and Russia had agreed to cut output by an unprecedented 10 million to 15 million barrels per day (bpd), representing 10 per cent to 15 per cent of global supply, after he discussed the issue with their leaders. The countries did not confirm the plan, but said they would discuss ways to stabilize the market with other major world oil producers.

The United States in recent years has become the world's biggest oil producer, at times putting its exports in competition with Russia and countries in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

The American Petroleum Institute, which represents the US oil and gas industry, had asked Trump for regulatory relief to ensure steady supplies during the pandemic. The administration has since announced a temporary easing of environmental enforcement.

The API, many of whose members operate globally, has opposed the idea of an oil import tariff, which could hurt domestic refiners and complicate projects and business relationships across borders. – Reuters

## Tesla cuts contractors from California, Nevada factories



The view of Tesla Inc's US vehicle factory in Fremont, California. – Reuters

NEW YORK: Tesla Inc is cutting contractors from its US car and battery plants, CNBC reported, citing workers and a contract staffing agency.

The electric carmaker is axing contractors at both its vehicle assembly plant in Fremont, California, and at its Gigafactory outside of Reno, Nevada, according to the CNBC report.

The cuts affect hundreds of workers, the report said, citing people familiar with the decision.

"It is with my deepest regret that I must inform you that the Tesla factory shutdown has been extended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, Tesla has requested to end all contract assignments effective immediately," Balance Staffing, a workforce management company, said in a memo sighted by CNBC.

Balance Staffing told workers they would stay on the agency's books and could find other work via their business, according to the report, which added that contractors hired with other temp agencies had received similar notices.

Tesla's production and delivery was largely unaffected by the coronavirus outbreak in the first three months of the year, before it began suspensions at its Fremont plant last month.

Tesla and Balance Staffing did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

– Reuters

## US airlines apply for payroll help but terms still unclear

CHICAGO: Major US airlines applied on Friday for payroll grants from the US Treasury meant to keep workers employed during a sharp downturn resulting from the coronavirus outbreak, but while talks over the terms were expected to continue in coming days some warned the funds would not be enough to help them through their toughest crisis ever.

American Airlines Group Inc, United Airlines Holdings Inc, Delta Air Lines Inc, Southwest Airlines Co, JetBlue Airways Corp and Hawaiian Airlines each said they submitted grant applications, but did not disclose details or terms.

Treasury asked companies to propose financial instruments such as warrants or equity options as possible taxpayer compensation for up to \$32 billion in payroll grants for airlines, cargo carriers and airport contractors under the CARES Act passed by Congress last week.

US Treasury set a 5 pm EDT (2100 GMT) on Friday deadline to expedite the grants. There is a



Delta Air Lines passenger planes are seen parked at Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport in Birmingham, Alabama. – Reuters

second final deadline on April 27.

The airline industry and some lawmakers have pushed back on the possibility of the government taking an equity stake in exchange for the grants, which companies and unions argue are strictly to protect workers.

Southwest said on Friday that government support is just one

possible source of capital it is evaluating as it discusses the terms of the grants.

In memos to employees, Delta and JetBlue executives warned that government funds would not be enough to help them weather a crisis in which they are spending more cash every day than they are bringing in. — Reuters

## Kraft Heinz reduces output at three factories

SAO PAULO: Kraft Heinz Co said it has moved to significantly reduce production at three plants providing restaurant supplies amid the new coronavirus outbreak, but its CEO noted the company has added shifts at others to meet demand for packaged foods like macaroni and cheese.

Speaking in a video presentation hosted by Brazilian retail brokerage XP Inc, Miguel Patricio said the affected factories, two in the United States and one in the United Kingdom, are in the food service segment and saw demand drop due to the pandemic, mainly in Europe.

In a statement sent after the video, in which Patricio said the plants had been halted, Kraft said, "These facilities have significantly reduced production."

Patricio, who took over as Kraft Heinz's CEO last year, said its packaged food units are working in three shifts to meet high demand, especially for macaroni and cheese in the United States and canned beans and soups in the United Kingdom.

"We feel that people are seeking more comfort food at this moment, as they seek some other ways to feel pleasure," Patricio said.



A man shops for discounted products at the Kraft Heinz booth at the annual Berkshire Hathaway shareholder meeting in Omaha, Nebraska. – Reuters

He said operations in China are returning to normal now, but he feels that consumers' behavior has changed, as individuals are using more home deliveries.

Patricio said he considers Kraft Heinz to be a "safe haven" but is worried about the effect of credit constraints on its suppliers, adding that he is looking at ways to address the issue.

The company's shares were up 2.7 per cent on Friday even as the S&P500 slumped 1.5 per cent. — Reuters

## Air France-KLM in talks on \$6.5 bn loan package

PARIS: Air France-KLM is in talks with banks to receive up to 6 billion euros (\$6.5 billion) in loans guaranteed by the French and Dutch governments, as the airline group braces for a sustained coronavirus shutdown, sources said.

The two states, which each own 14 per cent of Air France-KLM, have paused a long-running boardroom feud to address the cash crunch, according to three people close to the discussions. But the crisis ultimately risks deepening their conflict, they said.

Details and amounts are not finalised and could change, the people said. Under the most likely scenario, Air France could get about 4 billion euros in French-guaranteed loans while KLM receives close to 2 billion backed by The Hague, two sources said.

The group has appointed BNP

and Societe Generale to advise on refinancing, two of the sources said.

Both banks declined to comment. "We are naturally in constant discussions with both governments," an Air France-KLM spokeswoman said, declining further comment.

Governments around the world are scrambling to prop up airlines at risk of bankruptcy as the pandemic gathers pace, gutting travel demand and bringing traffic to a near-standstill.

The French and Dutch governments also declined to comment in detail on the Air France-KLM talks. Both countries have expressed willingness to offer financial help.

"We've been in discussions for a long period of time with KLM and Air France, and very specifically with the French state," Dutch Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra said on Wednesday. "It's extremely important to help this vital company through these difficult



Logo of Air France KLM Group is pictured on the first Air France airliner's Airbus A350 in Colomiers near Toulouse, France. – Reuters

times."

Air France-KLM's emergency borrowings would be a multiple of its depressed 2.12 billion-euro market capitalisation - reflecting the scale of

the threat to major airlines and the steps being taken to save them.

The US Senate approved a \$58 billion bailout for the US aviation industry on March 25, a day before

Singapore Airlines received a \$13 billion lifeline. Lufthansa is poised to receive billions in aid.

Loans destined for Air France and KLM would be backed by their respective governments, two people said, with the Paris package drawing on 300 billion euros in aid for companies pledged last month, with a 70 per cent state guarantee.

Air France is in talks with potential lenders including Credit Agricole and Natixis, while KLM is likely to draw on existing relationships with Dutch banks, one of the sources said, adding that agreements were expected this month.

France is resisting demands from the banks for a higher level of state loan guarantees, according to the same people. By comparison, German rival Lufthansa is set to secure emergency funding with an 80 per cent state guarantee. — Reuters

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RUWI

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Adjacent to Dhofar Building, Ruwi.

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CLASSIFIED SECTION  
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.....

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# STUCK AT HOME?

## TRY DALGONA COFFEE



**A**s everyone is stuck at homes, feeling bored, looking for something to do amid the global coronavirus outbreak, a new at-home coffee recipe has taken the Internet by storm. On TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, social media users have started making Dalgona coffee, a creamy iced-coffee drink that combines a mixture of instant coffee, sugar and hot water with cold milk. The coffee is becoming popular in Oman as well.

If you're looking for something to do while practicing social distancing and isolation, this coffee trend will bring little sweetness to your day. Making

Dalgona coffee is super easy, and will give you the chance to join a global community of people posting the treat online. The hashtag #dalgonacoffee has earned popularity on TikTok and Instagram. The trend takes inspiration from a South Korean candy called Dalgona, a sugary toffee with a sponge-like texture that's made by heating sugar, oil and baking soda.

For all the caffeine-lovers who are missing their daily trips to their favourite coffee shops, Dalgona coffee can bring a little bit of normalcy back into your lives.

The Korean based coffee, Dalgona coffee is like a cappuccino turned on its head, with the frothy coffee on top and the

milk underneath. It only requires three ingredients to make and you can have it hot or cold.

To make Dalgona coffee, you'll need instant coffee, granulated sugar, hot water, and the milk of your choice. First, combine two tablespoons of instant coffee, two tablespoons of granulated sugar, and two tablespoons of hot water in a small mixing bowl. Use a hand mixer or latte frother to beat the mixture until it gets really thick, with a golden brown colour.

Next, pour the milk of your choice into a glass with a few ice cubes. Scoop the mixture out of the bowl and place it on top of the cold milk. And that's it! Take a picture of your

Dalgona coffee and post it on your favourite social media to become part of a growing coffee-obsessed community. You can also mix the two parts together to make it look and taste more like a latte.

Al Zahra Said whipped-up a cup of Dalgona coffee after seeing it pop up everywhere on social media.

"I'm not much of a coffee drinker, but I can say it's rich in flavour. I enjoyed the process of making it so much, I keep making it for everyone in the house just for the sake of making it!" she laughs.

If you're not one who gets their kicks out of a caffeine fix, apply the same technique but replace instant coffee with matcha powder instead.

### ALTERNATIVES TO NON-COFFEE DRINKERS

If you're a non-coffee drinker, here are some alternatives for coffee powder, sugar and milk substitutes.

- Coffee powder substitutes – Cocoa powder, chocolate health drinks, decaf-coffee powder, matcha powder, protein drink powder
- Sugar substitutes – Brown sugar, jaggery, palm jaggery, coconut sugar, 3/4 tbsp of honey or maple syrup or agave syrup,
- Milk substitutes – Coconut milk, soy milk, almond milk, cashew milk, non-dairy creamer, milk spiced with cinnamon, nutmeg or dry ginger, rice milk.



# OFA STARTS ONLINE TRAINING LESSONS FOR JUNIORS ON OFFICIAL WEBSITE

ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

The Oman Football Association (OFA) technical department has started the online training lessons on their official website.

This step is a tool to encourage the national coaches and technical staff to benefit from their time during their stay at home since all the outdoor sports activities are suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Slobodan Pavkovic, the OFA technical Director, affirmed in his statement to Oman Daily Observer, that this was part of the long term programme to develop the technical skills and ability of the domestic coaches.

"We have set a full detailed programme to develop the technical work of the domestic coaches and technical staff at the clubs and football academies. However, this plan faced the existing challenging circumstance of the spreading the recent coronavirus around the world. In addition, we preferred to follow this online training lessons as a practical session and that was planned but due



to the current situation we postponed that until month of May if everything is back to normal and definitely if the government directions allow us to do that. I hope things will be back to

normal and we will start the technical programme" he added.

The online training lessons included different coaching foundation skills such as player's basic

moves, techniques of controlling the ball, movement of the player with the ball, the right movement of the legs with the ball, the equivocation ways with full controlling of the ball, group

coaching of players, implementation of some technical tactics and other related technical topics.

The recently appointed OFA technical Director shared his previous lessons and training videos at the [www.OFA.om](http://www.OFA.om) website as educational tools to improve the capability of the national technical staff specially for the junior level. Pavkovic is a well-known personnel on the YouTube channel as he used to have many online training sessions in different e-learning platforms.

The Serbian coach has a wide experience in football as he worked in different football associations. He was the former coach of Kuwait national team, the Serbia U-19 Team, as well as at top clubs in Egypt, Kuwait, Oman, Sweden and his native Serbia.

The 64-year-old was the technical director at Football Association of Singapore. Pavkovic had developed the football structure for Singapore being the technical director in Football Association of Singapore. He had applied different systematic styles of player development and coaching education programmes to improve the overall standard of play in Singapore.

## Drogba joins row after French scientists suggest virus testing in Africa



**Paris:** Two leading French doctors on Friday insisted they had been misunderstood after sparking a storm of criticism by discussing the idea of testing a vaccine for coronavirus in Africa on television.

Although they later apologised for any offence caused if their comments had not been clear, former international and Ivory Coast football star Didier Drogba joined lawyers and a French anti-racism organisation in criticising the remarks made on Wednesday in a broadcast on the LCI channel.

Camille Loch, head of research at the National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM) in Lille, was questioned about a shield for coronavirus using the well-known BCG vaccine for tuberculosis.

He was asked by Jean-Paul Mira, head of intensive care at the Cochin hospital in Paris, whether Africa offered better conditions for testing the vaccine.

"If I could be provocative, shouldn't we be doing this study in Africa, where there are no masks, no treatment, no intensive care, rather as was done with certain studies on AIDS, where things are tested on prostitutes because it's known that they are highly exposed (to HIV)?" Mira asked. "What do you think?"

Locht replied: "You're right, we are thinking in parallel by the way about a study in Africa with the same kind of approach, (but) it doesn't prevent us from being able to think about a study in Europe and Australia at the same time."

Scientists who carry out clinical trials try to find conditions in which large numbers of people are exposed to the disease, as this gives a better opportunity for testing a new drug.

Such trials are carried out under strict supervision, which requires volunteers to be briefed about any risks and to give their informed consent.

But the idea of having Africa as a setting for a coronavirus vaccine is controversial. — AFP

## Concacaf postpones Nations League finals due to COVID-19



**New York:** The CONCACAF Nations League Finals, which were scheduled for June 4-7, have been suspended because of concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic, the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football said on Friday.

The finals, due to be contested by Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico and the United States and held in the Houston and Dallas areas of Texas, will be rescheduled for a later date in venues to be determined.

The announcement came after global governing body FIFA recommended that all football in June be suspended.

CONCACAF said the Road to Gold Cup qualification matches, scheduled in the June international window, and the Flow Caribbean Club Championship scheduled for May have been suspended.

—Reuters



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## EUROPEAN FOOTBALL FOCUSING ON RESTART IN JULY AND AUGUST



LONDON: European football, currently at a standstill because of the coronavirus, is focusing on a restart in July and August with clubs and leagues being told that stopping competitions should “really be the last resort.”

UEFA, the European Club Association and the European Leagues umbrella group sent a joint letter to their members on Thursday saying it was of “paramount importance” that competitions, including domestic leagues, were decided on the field.

The letter was sent hours after the Belgian league abandoned the season and proclaimed Club Brugge as champions. There have also been calls from clubs in the Netherlands and Italy for those respective leagues to be called off.

However, the letter said that two working groups set up by UEFA — which has agreed to postpone its flagship Euro 2020 tournament until next year — were working on ways of extending the current season beyond the official June 30 finish. It expected to give more details by mid-May.

The letter said the working groups were “focusing on scenarios encompassing the months of July and August, including the possibility that the UEFA competitions restart after the completion of domestic leagues.”

It said that a joint management of calendars was needed to coordinate the



end of the current season with the start of the new one “which may be partly impacted because of the overstretch.”

It also called on leagues around Europe to work together.

“Only an extraordinary coordinated effort of all competition organisers can help European football out of the crisis, recovering in full its core asset, the competitions,” it said.

It added: “Stopping competitions should really be the last resort after

acknowledging that no calendar alternative would allow to conclude the season.

“We are confident that football can restart in the months to come – with conditions that will be dictated by public authorities – and believe that any decision of abandoning domestic competitions is, at this stage, premature and not justified.”

It appeared to suggest that, where competitions did not end on the field,

the clubs involved might not qualify for European competition next season.

“Since participation in UEFA club competitions is determined by the sporting result achieved at the end of a full domestic competition, a premature termination would cast doubts about the fulfilment of such condition,” it said.

It added that UEFA reserves the right to “assess the entitlement of clubs” to take part in the Champions League and Europa League.

— Reuters