



HIS MAJESTY GREETES LEADERS ON NATIONAL DAY

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent cables of greetings to Julie Payette, Governor-General of Canada, President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo

of Somalia, President Evariste Ndayishimiye of the Republic of Burundi and President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda, on the occasion of their countries' National Day.

In his cables, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to the leaders and the friendly people of their countries further progress and prosperity. — ONA

DHOFAR, MASIRAH LOCKDOWN TO CONTINUE TILL JULY 17

MUSCAT: The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic held a meeting at the Interior Ministry on Tuesday under the Chairmanship of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior. The meeting was aimed at following up COVID-19 developments and procedures to avoid its spread and alleviate its impacts.

The Supreme Committee studied a report about epidemiological data from tourism sites that were closed as part of the precautionary measures endorsed earlier by the Committee to curb the spread of the disease.

The Committee decided to maintain the lockdown of Dhofar Governorate and the Wilayat of Masirah till July 17. The Committee also decided to continue with facilitation packages designed to support



the private sector and its manpower which were announced in April, until the end of September 2020.

The Committee followed up, with great concern, the epidemiological indicators of COVID-19 that point to a spate of new cases of infection, particularly among citizens, a considerable rise in intensive care patients and high rate of mortality. The Committee also expressed anxiety over the outcome of investigation operations, which indicated a lack of commitment, among some people, to precau-

tionary measures meant to prevent infections. The Supreme Committee urged all to stick to social distancing, wear face masks, keep washing hands and abide by other precautionary measures.

In particular, the Committee called upon all members of the public to shoulder their personal and collective responsibilities to protect the family and community from the pandemic. It also urged all public and private establishments to maintain a social distancing environment. — ONA

EXCESSIVE THINKING MAY LEAD TO INSOMNIA AND FATIGUE

VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: Excessive thinking can lead to serious health disorders like insomnia and fatigue, said the Royal Hospital in a statement on Tuesday.

“It is difficult for those with excessive thinking to be blessed with proper sleep as they often switch their rooms and beds for a place to think. They bring all the thoughts and events of the past when they start sleeping and then suffer from insomnia and fatigue”, said the statement.

According to medical experts, stress is inevitable in current situations due to worry about health, job situations, chronic diseases and mental health conditions. According to the Royal Hospital, one of the main reasons for excessive thinking is the social anxiety about what must be said and what must not be done, fear of society’s view of the individual, fear of failure and rejection, previous difficult experiences and bad results, obsessive and compulsive disorders (OCDs).



COVID-19 CASES CROSS 40,000 MARK IN OMAN

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: The number of new COVID-19 cases reported in the Sultanate on Tuesday was 1,010, bringing the total to 40,070. The first case in Oman was reported in

February this year. Among Tuesday's cases, there were 776 Omanis and 234 expatriates. However, an equal number of recoveries was also reported, 1,003 on a single day. As many as 176 people lost their lives in all

these months while the nation opened up most of the services, sectors and geographical areas which were closed due to the pandemic. The total number of cases in Muscat Governorate stood at 26,622, while North Al

Batinah and South Al Batinah 3,731 and 3,357 cases respectively. Dakhiliyah Governorate has 1,809, Al Wusta 1,197, North Sharqiyah 887, South Sharqiyah 713, Dhofar 798, Dhahirah 473, Buraimi 466 and Musandam 17.



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FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present to you the quarterly report on the performance of Galfar Engineering & Contracting SAOG ('the Parent Company') and its subsidiaries and associate companies (collectively 'the Consolidated Group') for the first quarter ended 31st March 2020 is presented below:

Financial Performance	Parent Company (RO '000s)		Consolidated Group (RO '000s)	
	Q1 2020	Q1 2019	Q1 2020	Q1 2019
Revenue	54,815	59,686	58,163	64,186
EBITDA	(3,405)	5,414	(2,578)	6,232
Operating profit	(6,646)	1,979	(6,307)	2,408
Profit/(loss) before tax	(7,951)	80	(7,541)	541
Net profit/(loss) after tax*	(7,951)	69	(7,654)	465
Net profit/(loss) after tax#				(868)

* Net Profit after Tax from continued operation

Net Profit after Tax from discontinued operation

Previous year figures have been regrouped in line with IFRS 5 requirement on investment held for sale (all investment in India)

Operations

The Company incurred losses of RO. 7.654 millions in the first quarter of 2020 as revenues dropped by approximately 9% compared to the same period in 2019. The Company continues to sustain heavy interest cost due to delayed payment of receivables. The Parent Company has certified overdue receivables of more than RO 48 million as on date from the government and its related entities. The delay in receiving the overdue receivable has caused a strain on our cash flow, which resulted in suboptimal execution of certain projects and delay in completion of certain projects. As a result, revenue was lower than planned and lower than the same period in 2019.

The Board and management continue to explore opportunities to reduce operating expenses, to maintain our competitiveness and to improve the financial results whilst strengthening the Company's financial position. Company resources are optimized continuously to align with the financial situation.

The net profit of subsidiaries in Oman decreased to RO 218K in Q1, 2020 from RO 349K in Q1 2019. The associate in Kuwait made a contribution of RO 117K to Group's profit in Q1 2020 as against RO 112K in Q1 2019.

Outlook

The Board and Management are determined to turnaround and improve the financial performance of the company through various measures such as overdues collection, restructuring, cost optimization & better projects performance.

As a "flagship" for Oman's contracting and engineering business, Galfar is looking forward firmly to build on its strength and to continue supporting the Government endeavors for economic growth and pursual of important development and infrastructure projects.

During the period Q1-2020, the Parent Company has received new orders worth RO 9.845 million. The order book as of date is around RO 376 million. The contracts awarded were:

- Supply of Precast Concrete for Naphtha & Shoreline Tank Areas from - SAIPEM for Duqm Refinery- RO.0.345 Million
- Fahud Runway Rehabilitation Project from PDO- RO.9.450 Million

Oman's economy is expected to contract in 2020 due to the oil price slide and the COVID-19 public health response. Low oil prices and the spread of COVID-19 are the key challenges that Oman will need to navigate in the short-run. With oil prices in the mid-\$30s in 2020 and constrained oil demand, growth is expected to contract. The company is expected to face severe challenges for the balance period of 2020 with pressure on committed delivery of materials and services from internal and external sources with cascading effect on the performance of the company.

The company also expects to have challenges on the Cash Flow front with pressure on collection of receivables from various clients.

The management is formulating strategies for the cost control, optimizing the resources and plans for close interaction and follow up with clients to ensure collection of outstanding receivables.

Going forward, management expects to maintain a solid work pipeline with a significant number of tenders under evaluation across a diverse array of sectors and clients. We reasonably expect to be successful in a number of those which will ensure stability and sustainability of our strong market position.

On Record

We extend our sincere thanks and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the government for the efforts accorded on handling COVID 19 Pandemic and to curb its impacts on Oman's economy and social development. We pledge our support to the efforts of the government in execution of significant development and infrastructure projects.

The Board would also like to thank our esteemed clients, Banks and Financial Institutions, Consultants, Suppliers, Service Providers and Shareholders for their generous cooperation and continued support and the employees and management of the company for their commitment and dedication.

Majid Salim Said Al Fannah Al Araimi
Chairman

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2020

	Parent Company		Amount in RO '000s Consolidated	
	Mar, 2020	Dec, 2019	Mar, 2020	Dec, 2019
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	39,007	41,313	44,413	47,032
Intangible assets	300	283	313	294
Right of use assets	1,205	1,439	1,599	1,862
Investment in subsidiaries	3,923	3,923	-	-
Investment in associates	5,466	5,466	4,876	4,943
Investments at fair value through other comprehensive income	125	145	145	145
Retentions receivables	8,906	8,042	8,906	8,042
	58,932	60,591	60,252	62,318
Current assets				
Inventories	10,806	9,034	12,626	10,712
Contract work in progress	49,932	56,486	49,932	57,466
Contract and trade receivables	142,136	133,880	149,759	141,105
Advances, prepayments and other receivables	22,649	25,222	22,161	26,255
Deposits with banks	2,307	2,307	2,338	2,329
Cash and bank balances	1,719	2,538	3,118	4,246
	229,549	229,467	239,934	242,113
	288,481	290,058	300,186	304,431
Total assets				
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Share capital	41,522	41,522	41,522	41,522
Share premium	18,337	18,337	18,337	18,337
Statutory reserve	13,840	13,840	14,426	14,426
Foreign currency translation reserve	-	-	(504)	(320)
Accumulated losses	(36,903)	(28,952)	(33,352)	(25,695)
Equity attributable to shareholders	36,796	44,747	40,429	48,270
Non-controlling interests	-	-	909	906
Total equity	36,796	44,747	41,338	49,176
Non-current liabilities				
Term loans	9,414	11,321	9,690	11,713
Lease liability	850	850	1,259	1,288
Employees' end of service benefits	15,069	14,818	15,283	15,020
Advance from customers	15,587	7,411	15,587	7,411
Deferred tax liability	-	-	323	323
	40,920	34,400	42,142	35,755
Current liabilities				
Term loans - current portion	12,037	13,711	12,660	14,418
Lease liability -current portion	285	467	452	644
Short term loans	28,050	27,050	28,050	27,050
Bank borrowings	34,689	34,204	34,689	34,261
Trade payables	75,519	69,627	85,481	79,815
Other payables and provisions	58,783	64,450	53,868	61,804
Provision for taxation	1,402	1,402	1,506	1,508
	210,765	210,911	216,706	219,500
Total liabilities	251,685	245,311	258,848	255,255
Total equity and liabilities	288,481	290,058	300,186	304,431
Net assets per share (RO)	0.089	0.108	0.097	0.116

Statement of comprehensive income For the period ended 31 March 2020

	Parent Company		Amount in RO '000s Consolidated	
	Mar, 2020	Mar, 2019	Mar, 2020	Mar, 2019
Continuing operations				
Contract revenue - recognised over the time	53,959	58,829	54,308	59,198
Sales and services income	856	857	3,855	4,988
Total revenue	54,815	59,686	58,163	64,186
Cost of contracts and sales	(60,618)	(57,038)	(64,018)	(60,800)
Gross profit	(5,803)	2,648	(5,855)	3,386
Other income	332	695	338	704
General and administrative expenses	(1,377)	(1,363)	(992)	(1,681)
Reversal for impairment of receivables and other current assets (net)	202	-	202	-
Financing costs, net	(1,305)	(1,899)	(1,351)	(1,947)
Share in results of associates	-	-	117	80
(Loss) /profit before tax	(7,951)	81	(7,541)	542
Income tax expense	-	(12)	(113)	(77)
(Loss) /profit for the period from continuing operations	(7,951)	69	(7,654)	465
Discontinued operations				
Profit/(loss) after tax for the period from discontinued operations (subsidiaries)	-	-	-	(868)
Loss after tax for the period from discontinued operations	(7,951)	69	(7,654)	(403)
(Loss) /profit for the period				
Other comprehensive income				
Item that may be subsequently reclassified to profit or loss:				
Foreign currency translation reserve reclassified to profit or loss on disposal of foreign operations	-	-	(184)	108
Total comprehensive (loss) /income for the period	(7,951)	69	(7,838)	(295)
Attributable to:				
Equity shareholders of the parent company	(7,951)	69	(7,657)	(410)
Non-controlling interests	-	-	3	7
	(7,951)	69	(7,654)	(403)
	(0.019)	0.000	(0.018)	0.001
(Loss) /Earnings per share from continuing operations (RO)				

Notes: The Complete Financial Statements are available at Issue and Listing Department of Muscat Securities Market. The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them, in either Arabic or English, as requested, within seven days of receipt of the request at the Company's address: P.O. Box No. 533, Postal Code 100, Sultanate of Oman.

TOURISM MINISTRY ISSUES GUIDELINES

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Tourism on Tuesday issued a guide containing COVID-19 preventive measures to be applied at travel and tourism offices.

The step comes in implementation of decisions taken by the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus pandemic and terms set for the re-

opening of travel and tourism offices.

The guide seeks to provide personal protection for workers at travel and tourism offices, tour organisers, tourist guides and tourist groups in a manner that strikes a balance that sustains business-as-usual and precautionary measures.

The preventive procedures include training workers

on safe ways of dealing with clients, including social distancing, providing hygiene requirements, sterilisation and personal protection supplies. They also include preventive measures to be undertaken prior to the arrival of tourists, requiring tourists to present medical certificates, conducting on-line booking to avoid paperwork and checking that all

tourists have health insurance before finalising booking formalities.

It is recommended that tours be organised in batches of not more than 15 people as a measure to facilitate social distancing. It is also required to use billboards to display reminders about instructions and preventive measures to be pursued by visitors. — **ONA**

Visit, express visa period extendable

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: Starting on July 1, both express and visit visa holders who are currently stranded in the Sultanate after the outbreak of the COVID-19 can request for visa extension electronically, according to the Royal Oman Police (ROP).

Speaking to the Observer, a highly placed source at the ROP said the normal visa extension fees would be charged for this service.

“Holders of tourist and express visas can request their visa extension through the electronic visa website starting from July 1 after paying the fee,” he said. A normal fee will apply for the service.

He further added that for visa extension physical presence of the person at the service centre is not required.

“Also, the person need not



go to an ROP service centre for this. Instead, he or his representative can do it online.”

The ROP have extended the expiry dates of visit and express visas by 15 days twice to enable tourists and visitors those who are currently awaiting their turn to go back to their countries stay in Oman till further notice.

“Visit and express visas of all those who are in the country but are overstaying due to the airport closure were

automatically renewed and extended till June 30,” the ROP source said further.

Additionally, all the tourist visas that were issued from March 1, 2020, until August 31, 2020, would be reissued with a new validity period up to March 31, 2021. To obtain this service, the concerned person has to visit any of the ROP centres.

For students of expatriates’ parents who are studying in their origin country but not possible to come back due

to the lockdown can renew their visa online from there itself or parents can do it from here. Various embassies are working towards this cause by getting the details of these students online.

However, those who are studying outside of Oman but not in their origin country and stuck there due to the lockdown need to wait till the international gateways are open and till such time the ROP announces the requirements for their civil status to return to the Sultanate.

“However, these students will be taken care of with some relaxed method of renewing their expired visas in due course of time.”

ANNOUNCEMENT

Al Buraimi Council for Solidarity Trading Company registered at the Commercial Registry Secretariat in the Ministry of Trade and Industry under No. 1236587 announces that it is transferring its legal form from a joint liability company to a one-person company in accordance with Article No. 30 of the Commercial Companies Law 18/2019 and its amendments and on all. Anyone who objects to this must submit the reasons for his objection to the Commercial Registry Secretariat at the Ministry of Trade and Industry within a period of one month from the date of the publication of this announcement.



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OMAN

Pension scheme for Omanis working in GCC

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) has decided to address the conditions of insured persons subject to the unified pension scheme coverage. Among the issues that need to be addressed are differences in the minimum wages, rates of subscriptions and liable allowances in the GCC countries. The process for this will start on Wednesday.

These changes come under the definitions of a liable wage subscription in the unified system pension scheme, and minimum wages in accordance with the workplace standards are part. The workers shall bear the differences as a result of receiving a wage less than the



defined minimum wage and the wage liable to the subscription. The Pension Scheme Coverage was issued by a decision of the Supreme Council of the GCC countries in its 25th session held in Bahrain in December 2004, regarding the approval of the unified system for extending insurance protection for citizens of the Gulf Council states and working in any other member state.

The system will apply to all Omanis working in the private sector with any employer in one of the Gulf countries as of January 2006, except for the United Arab Emirates and Qatar that implemented the system on January 1, 2007.

Since its establishment on July 2, 1991, the PASI has undertaken insurance protection for social groups, which are subject to the provisions and requirements of the Social Insurance Law. This protection is represented in four main schemes: Social insurance for Omanis

working in the private sector; Social insurance system for Omanis working abroad and alike; Extending insurance protection for Omanis working in the Gulf states; and Social insurance system for self-employed Omanis working and alike.

This insurance protection has evolved as it started insurance against the risks of ageing, disability and death. Then it extended to cover work injuries and occupational diseases. Besides, insurance benefits have also witnessed continuous improvements, most notably raising the pension calculation factor, raising the minimum pension, calculating contributions on the overall wage (basic + bonuses), and raising benefits for work injury compensation and occupational diseases.



شركة المها لتسويق المنتجات النفطية ش م ع ع

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Chairman’s Report

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the Unaudited Financial Statements for the I Quarter ended 31 March 2020.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE (RO’000)

	1 Qtr 2020	1 Qtr 2019	Inc/(dec)	Inc/(dec)%
Sales	100,965	112,489	(11,533)	(10%)
Gross profit	5,500	6,587	(1,087)	(16%)
Other income	950	556	394	71%
Total expenses	(6,311)	(6,163)	148	2%
Net Profit after tax	139	980	(841)	(86%)

Earnings per Share (RO)	0.002	0.014	(0.012)	(86%)
Book value per share (RO)	0.589	0.621	(0.032)	(5%)
Net equity (RO’000)	40,612	42,875	(2,263)	(5%)

• Total sales during the period dropped by about 10% from RO 112.5 million during I Qtr 2019 to RO 100.9 million in the I Qtr 2020), a decrease by RO 11.5 million mainly due to decrease in sales volume and sudden fall international aviation prices resulting from the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.

• Further, steep fall in the fuel prices mainly the international aviation fuel prices, during the period, resulted in stock value losses leading to decline in the gross profit by about RO 1.1 million (16%) and net profit by about RO 0.8 million (86%).

MARKETING PERFORMANCE

Retail segment continues to be our top priority, as we target to increase our filling station network through-out the country. New customer centric initiatives to increase retail sales have been taken up.

Commercial segment is largely affected by the decreased demand from our major customers as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, which is disrupting the commercial activities of our customers.

Aviation segment, despite affected by the decline in Oman Air & other commercial airlines activities at the Muscat International airport, improved its performance due to increased supplies to our major customer in the Government sector.

Market share

Based on the information published in the financial results of the other petroleum products marketing companies, your Company’s market share at the end of I Qtr 2020 stood at 29%.

Annual General Meeting / Dividend

In the Annual General Meeting of the Company held on March 15, 2020 the shareholders approved a cash dividend of 70 balsa per share (70% of share capital) totaling RO 4,830 million for the year ended December 31, 2019, which was fully paid before the end of March 2020.

Contribution to Government Health fund to fight Covid-19

Amidst the current challenging conditions, Your Company has contributed RO 200,000 to the Government’s Endowment Fund, an important initiative by the Government to alleviate the impact of Covid-19 pandemic.

Future Outlook

As the pandemic, which threatens performance of many sectors of the economy, rages on into the second quarter, every business is predicting difficult times ahead.

In an effort to mitigate some of the risks posed by the pandemic, your Company is cautiously moving forward adopting digital alternatives to stay in business. Further several cost cutting measures have been implemented to ensure optimum utilization of available resources. We may be still in the midst of the pandemic and we may have to learn to live with it for several months to come.

While we continue to practice social distancing, we remain optimistic and look forward to the reopening of businesses soon as the Government has begun to ease lockdown restrictions. It remains to be seen ‘how the pandemic, once subsides, will shape the economic and social behaviors of our customers over the longer term’.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

On behalf of the Board of Directors and executive management, I take this opportunity, to express our most sincere gratitude and loyalty to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik** and his efforts in continuing the legacy of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos towards a prosperous Oman.

We thank our shareholders, customers, the officials of Capital Market Authority and Muscat Securities Market for their valuable support and co-operation. We also appreciate the dedicated and committed service of our staff members.

Juma Ali Al Juma Al-Juma
Chairman

29 June 2020

Unaudited Financial statements for the three months ended 31 March 2020

Statement of Financial Position

	At 31 March 2020 RO’000	At 31 March 2019 RO’000	At 31 Dec 2019 RO’000
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	30,850	32,003	31,079
Investment property	623	670	635
Right of use asset	3,876	4,164	3,515
Contract assets	997	947	1,026
Deferred tax assets	2,157	1,841	2,157
Total non-current assets	38,503	39,625	38,412
Current assets			
Inventories	3,873	3,434	4,522
Trade and other receivables	59,887	60,514	58,925
Short term deposit	20,000	-	20,000
Bank balances and cash	17,031	14,733	28,722
Total current assets	100,791	78,681	112,169
Total assets	139,294	118,306	150,581
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Equity			
Share capital	6,900	6,900	6,900
Legal reserve	2,300	2,300	2,300
Retained earnings	29,308	31,571	33,999
Special reserve	2,104	2,104	2,104
Total equity	40,612	42,875	45,303
Liabilities			
Non-current liability			
Non-current portion of lease liability	2,981	4,164	2,631
Employees’ end of service benefits	206	325	333
Total non-current liabilities	3,187	4,489	2,964
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	37,676	45,940	45,228
Bank borrowings	56,559	20,000	55,032
Contract portion of lease liability	1,074	-	1,025
Contract liabilities	161	-	112
Dividend payable	-	4,830	-
Taxation	25	172	917
Total current liabilities	95,495	70,942	102,314
Total liabilities	98,682	75,431	105,278
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	139,294	118,306	150,581
Net assets per share (RO)	0.589	0.621	0.657

Statement Of Comprehensive Income

	Jan-March 2020 RO’000	Jan-March 2019 RO’000	Jan-Dec 2019 RO’000
INCOME			
Revenue from contracts with customers	100,965	112,498	468,140
Cost of sales	(95,465)	(105,911)	(438,829)
Gross profit	5,500	6,587	29,311
Other Income	950	556	2,079
Total Income	6,450	7,143	31,390
EXPENSES			
Salaries and other employee related costs	(1,385)	(1,202)	(5,377)
Operating expenses	(2,090)	(2,343)	(9,982)
Administration expenses	(949)	(1,008)	(5,418)
Depreciation & amortisation	(1,322)	(1,272)	(5,476)
Finance charges	(540)	(174)	(1,128)
Total Expenses	(6,286)	(5,999)	(27,381)
Profit before income tax	164	1,144	4,009
Income tax expense	(25)	(164)	(601)
Net Profit and comprehensive income	139	980	3,408
Basic and diluted earnings per share (RO)	0.002	0.014	0.049

Note:
The complete report is available with the Muscat Securities Market on the company website.
The complete report will be sent to any shareholder who requests them either in Arabic or English as required within 7 days of receipt of the request. The request should be sent to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) at the above mentioned address.

Low pressure in Arabian Sea may bring rains

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

MUSCAT: A low pressure that has developed in the middle of the Arabian Sea is moving towards the South East region of Oman. Rough waves with a height of three metres are experienced in the Arabian Sea currently and rains are expected in Dhofar, Al Wusta and Sharqiyah in the next two days.

On Thursday the neighbouring governorates, especially North Al Sharqiyah, may receive rain, explained Nasser al Ismaily, weather forecaster at Oman Met Office.

Meanwhile, the south-westerly wind is already bringing in the monsoon in Dhofar with its characteristic drizzle and light rain. On the other hand, Al Hajar Mountains continue with the active local cloud formation bringing thundershowers to the region and adjoining areas.

“We can see now some advective clouds coming towards the coast. By Wednesday these clouds will bring the rain. Thursday will have more rain which could cover the adjoining areas such as North Al Sharqiyah and even Dakhiliyah as well as parts of Al Dhahirah,” explained Al Ismaily.

As per the medium-range forecast, the summer rain will continue to be active this week.

Cautions are to be practised, advised the weather forecaster as the rains in Al Hajar Mountains activate flash floods and accordingly, wadis must be avoided.

“Keep away from the wadis and if you are in the mountainous areas then stay clear of lightening as there can be mishaps especially while using mobile phones. Visibility can be poor during the thundershowers.

STATE COUNCIL PANEL REVIEWS CULTURAL CONTENT WITH TECH MINISTRY OFFICIALS

MUSCAT: The Culture, Media and Tourism Committee of the State Council on Tuesday hosted Dr Salim Sultan al Ruzaiqi, CEO, Ministry of Technology and Communications (MTC), and several officials at the ministry as part of the committee’s study on “Omani digital cultural content”, in the meeting hall of the Council of Oman.

The committee’s 11th meeting of the first annual session of the seventh term, headed by the committee chairperson Dr

Aisha bint Hamad bin Said al Darmakiyah, was held in the presence of the committee members and several employees of the General Secretariat. The committee reviewed with the CEO of MTC and the ministry officials the guidelines followed by the ministry in presenting and displaying cultural content, its joint efforts to document and market the cultural product, the cooperation between the ministry and other government institutions in this regard, and the challenges faced by the

ministry in organising and marketing cultural content and its visions to overcome these challenges.

The delegation of the ministry included Dr Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman al Kharusi, Director-General of Electronic Services, Khalid bin Hamad al Kharusi, Director-General of Awareness and Media, Hassan bin Fida al Lawati, Director-General of Digital Community Development Sector, and Nasser bin Saleh al Ghailani, Director of Media.

NOC A BALANCING ACT FOR EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS

VINOD NAIR

MUSCAT: The government’s decision to scrap the NOC (no objection certificate) rule from 2021 is generally termed as employee-friendly, but it promises enough protection to the employers.

As per the details listed recently, apart from giving a grace period of six months to implement the rule, the new decision will allow employers to have mutually-beneficial clauses in a job contract.

An employer will be allowed to have a legal (non-disclosure) agreement to keep the work secrets even after the worker has moved to work with another company or a business owner.

On the possibility of the worker moving to a direct competitor, the owner can work in on a non-competition agreement ensuring that the employer does not move the worker to the direct competitor after the end of their contract period.

Speaking to the Observer, a senior



executive of a leading business firm in Oman said, “Ultimately, employment is a contract between two parties. If there are clauses/terms offered and accepted between both the parties then that will hold well.”

He added that some safety clauses might be necessary if an employee in senior positions is moving to the competition.

“Employment is a contract and the terms have to be mutually agreed between both the parties.”

The government stated that one of the main advantages is that it will raise the level of competitiveness of the Omani workers compared to the expatriates by reducing the

wage gap between them.

“The decision will also contribute to reducing cases of non-Omani workers running away from employers, especially those under pressure from employers who have the right to issue a no-objection certificate and deprive a person to work in the sultanate within two years of the end of his contract,” the statement said.

Lt Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, through his decision 157/2020 amended some provisions of the executive regulations of the Residence of Foreigners Law, which was published in the Official Gazette.



SUN PACKAGING COMPANY

Sun Packaging Company SAOC

Invitation and Agenda to the Extraordinary General Meeting of Sun Packaging Company SAOC

The Board of Directors of **Sun Packaging Company SAOC** (“Company”) is pleased to invite the shareholders of the Company to the Extraordinary General Meeting to be convened in accordance with Article 176 of the Commercial Companies Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 18/2019, to be held at 2:00PM on 15 July 2020 through the electronic portal designated for holding General Meetings, which can be accessed via the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository(MCD), to consider and decide upon the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the amendments to Article 21(a) and (b) of the Articles of Association attached hereto as Appendix 1.
- Amending the Articles of Association of the Company to comply with the Commercial Companies Law.

In accordance with the Articles of Association of the Company, and the Regulations for Holding General Meetings Through Electronic Channels that have been issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI), to highlight to the shareholders the following:

- A juristic person shareholder (only) is entitled to appoint a representative to attend the EGM and vote on its behalf through the described electronic channels, and such representation may be duly amended or withdrawn up to 24 hours prior to the time that the EGM is scheduled to be held.
- The shareholders that will be attending the EGM shall vote for the articles set out in the Agenda of the EGM within a maximum period of (3) days prior to the date of the EGM. The electronic platform shall record the votes privately, without disclosing the votes until the respective article is discussed during the EGM, and due for the shareholders’ votes.

In the event that the quorum for the Extraordinary General Meeting is not completed, the second meeting will be held at 2:00 PM on 16 July 2020 through the electronic platform described above. The second meeting shall be valid whatever the number of shares present.

For further information please contact Mr. Nandan Sarkar Mobile No.: 99837700

Chairman

Legal Advisor

Auditor



SUN PACKAGING COMPANY

Sun Packaging Company SAOC

Invitation and Agenda to the Annual General Meeting of Sun Packaging Company SAOC

The Board of Directors of **Sun Packaging Company SAOC** (“Company”) is pleased to invite the shareholders of the Company to the Annual General Meeting to be convened in accordance with Article 172 of the Commercial Companies Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 18/2019, to be held at 1:00PM on 15 July 2020 through the electronic portal designated for holding General Meetings, which can be accessed via the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository(MCD), to consider and decide upon the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors on the activities of the Company and the financial status of the Company, for the financial year which ended on 31 December 2019.
- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors on the organisation and management of the Company, for the financial year which ended on 31 December 2019.
- To consider and approve the auditor’s report, balance sheet and profits and loss statement for the financial year which ended on 31 December 2019.
- To notify the shareholders of related party transactions entered into in the ordinary course of business during the financial year which ended on 31 December 2019.
- To consider and approve the sitting fees of the members of the Board of Directors and the committees under the Board of Directors for the last financial year which ended on 31 December 2019, and to confirm the same for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To appoint the external auditor for the financial year ending on 31 December 2020 and to determine their remuneration.

In accordance with the Articles of Association of the Company, and the Regulations for Holding General Meetings Through Electronic Channels that have been issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI), to highlight to the shareholders the following:

- A juristic person shareholder (only) is entitled to appoint a representative to attend the EGM and vote on its behalf through the described electronic channels, and such representation may be duly amended or withdrawn up to 24 hours prior to the time that the EGM is scheduled to be held.
- The shareholders that will be attending the EGM shall vote for the articles set out in the Agenda of the EGM within a maximum period of 3 days prior to the date of the EGM. The electronic platform shall record the votes privately, without disclosing the votes until the respective article is discussed during the EGM, and due for the shareholders’ votes.

In the event that the quorum for the Annual General Meeting is not completed, the second meeting will be held at 1:00PM on 16 July 2020 through the electronic platform described above. The second meeting shall be valid whatever the number of shares present.

For further information please contact Mr. Nandan Sarkar
Mobile No.: 99837700

Chairman

Legal Advisor

Auditor

OMAN

Mist on mountains signals advent of khareef in Salalah

KAUSHALENDRA
SINGH

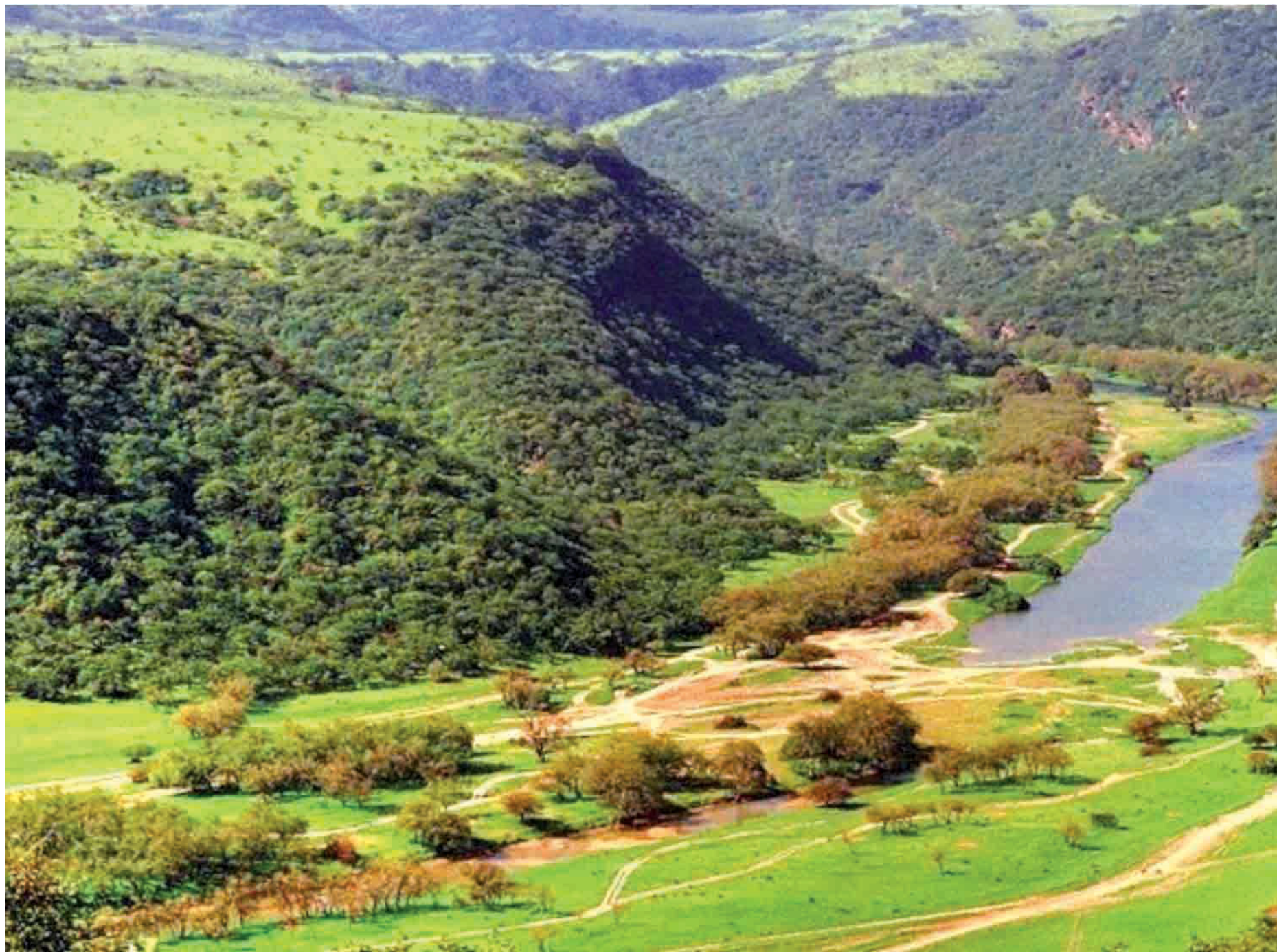
SALALAH: Ten days into the season and there is no sign of khareef except for building humidity. People here are wondering whether the season also has had some corona impact. Not really, because the mist is building upon the mountains and those who are living there are already enjoying the advent of the season. This is a signal for the advent of khareef in Salalah very soon.

The pandemic has dampened the general mood, yet khareef has its charm among the people of Salalah. They are waiting for its arrival soon after the beginning of the season on June 21, as per the official calendar.

"All the mountain areas which are closer to the sea are getting early morning and post afternoon mist, which is enough to drench someone if exposed for a long time under the open sky," said Salim al Mashani, who lives in Salalah but loves to explore the mountains.

"If you visit Al Shan, you will find light drizzling. It means the arrival of the monsoon is just a matter of time," he said.

He mentioned categorically that the mountains near the sea are having drizzle and not those which are far away. "Like, you will



not find drizzling now on Madinat Al Haq because it is far from the sea. When the khareef will settle, this area is so misty that it is difficult to drive due to heavy mist and low visibility."

Khareef of course is entirely different due to the spread of coronavirus and restrictions on visitors coming to Salalah from other countries or even from within the country. As per the decision of the Supreme Committee on COVID-19, Salalah is under lockdown till July 17.

Within Salalah, access to

most of the tourist sites has been blocked by the local authorities to avoid gathering and subsequent spread of the virus.

"Otherwise you would have seen a large number of people from outside visiting all the places and most of the hotels must have booked by now for another four months," said Al Mashani while mentioning he was missing the humdrum of the season.

Another explorer of the khareef season, Ali Sahri is waiting for the news of the arrival of khareef from

Rakhyout and Dhalkout. "Without fail I rush to have a view of the season in Rakhyout and Dhalkout with my closest friend Said. But this year I am yet to decide."

He, however, is happy over the news that khareef might be arriving very soon in Salalah.

"Even though I do not go to faraway places, I will surely be enjoying the season even by sitting at my home and following the guidelines set by the authorities to prevent the pandemic," he said.

SAI ATTENDS MEETING ON IMPACT OF AUDIT OPERATIONS

MUSCAT: The State Audit Institution (SAI) participated in an online meeting entitled, 'Measuring the impact of audit operations and its added value, which was organised by the General Auditing Bureau (GAB) of Saudi Arabia through video conferencing, with the participation

of a number of Arab SAIs.

The meeting reviewed and discussed issues relevant to quality assurance of audits and promotion of the resulted added value. The agenda covered several topics focusing on the positive impact of audit standards and mechanisms of measurement in

public sector, the added value resulted from the audit reports in addition to fostering the added value and audits during the current outbreak of COVID-19.

The SAIs also reviewed their assigned role in the realisation of sustainable development. — **ONA**



The European Union will reopen its borders to a select list of “safe countries” as the WHO warned the pandemic is still accelerating. — AFP

EU to open borders to ‘safe’ countries as pandemic accelerates

BRUSSELS: The European Union will reopen its borders to a select list of “safe countries” to be confirmed, as the WHO warned the pandemic is still accelerating with more than 500,000 deaths worldwide.

Europe’s piecemeal reopening comes as countries around the globe struggle to revive economic activity while battling new spikes of the virus, with hotspots still surging in Latin America and in the United States.

After days of negotiations, EU member are due to finalise the list of some 15 countries, including Australia, Canada, Thailand, Japan and others, whose citizens will be free to enter the bloc starting on July 1.

The US, Russia and Brazil were among those expected not to make the selection, which will be updated every two weeks based on the safety situation in each state.

With some 10.3 million known infections worldwide, the pandemic is “not even close to being over”, the World Health Organization has warned.

“Although many countries have made some progress, globally the pandemic is actually speeding up,” WHO chief Tedros Adhanom

Ghebreyesus said on Monday.

In Europe, where infections have stabilised in many countries, the relaxation of lockdown measures is still touch-and-go as governments try to reboot economies facing historic recessions.

The UK, home to Europe’s deadliest outbreak, has already seen its worst quarterly contraction in 40 years, shrinking 2.2 per cent from January-March.

The worst is yet to come, with economists predicting a double-digit slump in output during the second quarter, placing Britain in a technical recession.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday vowed to deliver an “infrastructure revolution” to help the country build its way out of the economic slump. In the meantime, his government is employing a “whack-a-mole” strategy of targeted lockdowns to snuff out the virus.

While the government plans to reopen pubs, restaurants and hairdressers across England on July 4, schools and non-essential shops in Leicester, central England, have been ordered to close after a localised outbreak.— AFP



Although many countries have made some progress, globally the pandemic is actually speeding up.

TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS,
WHO CHIEF

IN BRIEF

EU AND UN HOLD SYRIA CONFERENCE

BRUSSELS: The European Union and the United Nations are to hold a conference to support fundraising efforts for the millions of Syrians forced into exile or living with food insecurity. “The needs of the Syrian refugees remain acute, not least in view of the potentially devastating socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis,” EU Neighbourhood Commissioner Oliver Varhelyi said ahead of the event. The conference, to be held in virtual format, is to bring together actors from Syrian civil society, international organisations and countries that host refugees. On paper, the underlying aim is to work towards a political solution in the war-torn country, now entering its 10th year of conflict.

Beijing passes Hong Kong national security law

BEIJING: China’s top legislative body has passed a national security law for Hong Kong, the South China Morning Post reported on Tuesday. The national security law targets secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces in Hong Kong. Critics say its purpose is to quash dissent in the financial hub, which has been roiled by protests for the past year. Sources told the Post the law was approved unanimously by the National People’s Congress Standing Committee within minutes of the start of its meeting on Tuesday morning. The law, which is expected to come into effect on July 1, carries a maximum penalty of life in jail, sources told the Post.

Vietnam grounds Pakistani pilots over licence concerns

HANOI: Vietnam’s aviation authority said on Monday it had grounded all Pakistani pilots working for local airlines, amid concern from global regulators that some pilots may have been using “dubious” licences. Pakistan said last week it will ground 262 airline pilots whose credentials may have been falsified, after global airlines body IATA said that irregularities found in pilot licences at Pakistan International Airlines represent a “serious lapse” in safety controls. “The head of the Civil Aviation Authority of Vietnam (CAAV) has ordered a suspension for all Pakistani pilots working for Vietnamese airlines,” the CAAV said in a statement.

— Agencies

WORLD

TRUMP BRIEFED ON RUSSIAN BOUNTIES IN FEBRUARY: REPORT

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump received a written briefing about alleged Russian bounties offered to Afghan militants to kill American troops as early as February, *The New York Times* said in a new report undercutting the US president's assertion that he was not told of the threat.

Trump has come under increasing pressure to explain mounting media reports saying he was informed that Russian military intelligence had offered and paid cash to Taliban-linked militants for US soldiers' deaths — and did nothing in response.

The Times, citing two unnamed officials, said the claim had been included in a written version of the president's daily briefing in late February. CNN confirmed the story but cited an official saying the document was produced "sometime in the spring".

Trump has denied being informed of the assessment



US President Donald Trump walks to Air Force One as he departs on a day trip to Arizona and a visit to the US-Mexico border. — Reuters

while the White House said on Monday the claim had been kept from him because the intelligence underpinning it was unverified.

The president is known for not regularly reading the daily brief, preferring to rely on conservative media reports on the day's big issues — but he is reportedly orally briefed by intelligence officials up to three times a week.

Crucially, the officials told *The Times* the Russia assessment was considered sufficiently serious and credible to include in a May 4 article in the CIA's classi-

fied World Intelligence Review, its flagship intelligence product.

The White House briefed a small group of Republican lawmakers on its position on Monday but top congressional Democrats have demanded that all members of Congress be briefed by the intelligence community.

"The questions that arise are: Was the president briefed, and if not, why not, and why was Congress not briefed", House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a letter to Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe and CIA Director Gina Haspel.

The Times previously reported that US intelligence officers and special forces in Afghanistan began raising the alarm as early as January, and that the National Security Council (NSA) held an interagency meeting in late March to discuss possible responses — but the White House didn't authorise any action. — AFP

IN BRIEF

Ferry owner charged over Bangladesh collision

DHAKA: Police in Bangladesh have charged the owner and captain of a passenger ferry with homicide after the vessel hit a smaller ferry, leading to the deaths of at least 32 people near the capital Dhaka. Officer Shah Zaman said Mosaddek Hanif Swad, the owner of the Mayouri-2 that hit the Morning Bird ferry, and six of his employees had been charged with causing death by negligence. All seven are on the run. "We are trying to capture all of them", Zaman said. The ferry capsized and sank after the collision on Monday morning on the Buriganga River. Three children were among the dead.

Maduro gives EU envoy 72 hours to leave

CARACAS: Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro gave the head of the European Union mission in Caracas, Isabel Brilhante Pedrosa, 72 hours to leave the country after the bloc announced sanctions against 11 Venezuelan officials. "Who are they to try to impose themselves with threats?" said Maduro. "We will sort it out in 72 hours... she will be given a plane to leave, but we will arrange our things with the European Union". Venezuela's airspace is currently closed to commercial airplanes due to the coronavirus pandemic. Maduro also accused the EU of getting down on its "knees" to US President Donald Trump, who has taken a hard line against the leftist leader, and copying "erratic policies" against the Latin American nation.

New Zealand says Apec 2021 to be virtual summit

WELLINGTON: The annual APEC summit of Asia-Pacific leaders will be virtual next year to avoid travel risks associated with the global coronavirus pandemic, 2021 hosts New Zealand said on Tuesday. Foreign Minister Winston Peters said holding the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit online, instead of in Auckland, was a "pragmatic" response to the crisis. "COVID-19 has seriously impacted how we conduct international diplomacy", he said in a statement. "Given the current global environment, planning to have such a large volume of high-level visitors in New Zealand from late 2020 onwards is impractical."

— Agencies



A girl skates her board past members of a local electoral commission wearing face masks as they wait for local residents at an outdoor polling station in Saint Petersburg. — AFP

On buses, benches and picnic tables, Russians vote on reforms

MARINA KORENEVA

The rickety plastic table beneath a row of towering apartment blocks in Russia's second city Saint Petersburg does not look much like a polling booth. But as Russians cast votes this week on constitutional reforms that could extend President Vladimir Putin's rule until 2036, the picnic furniture has taken on official status. Makeshift polling stations popped up throughout the country last Thursday, when Russians started voting outdoors, online and in municipal buildings to greenlight the changes proposed by Putin earlier this year. "It's practical. People can vote as they're passing by and it also minimises the risk of coronavirus infections," says a local election official, Ekaterina Vesselkova, as she waits for voters in a district of

Saint Petersburg. A blue cardboard screen occasionally swept away by gusts of wind is on hand to ensure privacy for the slow trickle of around 50 people per day who stop at the table to vote. In the city centre, another improvised polling booth was not equipped with the paper partition, but voters can vote "behind the ballot box," an official says. "We had a screen, but the wind kept blowing it over," says Yury Chursov, an administrator who urged passers-by to come and vote. He says the outdoor placement of the booth isn't to protect voters from being infected with coronavirus, but to make it as easy for large numbers to participate. Putin insisted that Russians vote on the reforms that were hastily approved by parliament, even though it is not legally required, arguing a plebiscite would give the amendments legitimacy. — AFP

Words that went viral



Samuel Kutty
samkuttyobserver@gmail.com

Six months ago, none of us could have imagined how our world – and our lives – would be thrown into turmoil by coronavirus. Our language too has changed and added words and acronyms that have gone viral! Some of us 'Quarantinis' (people staying at home) have either become vidiots (binge-watcher of Netflix or those who use Zoom and tweet to make us laugh at times) or gained COVID weight (become obese after being locked up at homes) while others turned parents of 'coronials' (babies born during the pandemic). Many terms like social distancing and self-isolation, although they were randomly used years ago, are now in common parlance. Words like contact tracing, community spread, super-spreader are now trending. If Aids was the fastest acronym to enter Merriam-Webster in a record period of two years, COVID-19 shattered this record to find its way to the Oxford English Dictionary in weeks. Dictionary's executive editor Bernadette Paton says, "It is a rare experience for lexicographers to observe an exponential rise in usage of a single word in a very short period of time, and for that word to come overwhelmingly to dominate global

discourse, even to the exclusion of most other topics." The dictionary resumes its role particularly during times of crisis as new jargons start appearing and people search for them. Interestingly, an analysis of more than eight billion words of online news stories found that coronavirus and COVID-19, short form of 2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV, are now dominating global discourse. And what is COVID-19? An acute respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus, which is capable of producing severe symptoms and death, especially in the elderly and others with underlying health conditions. Coronavirus is a category of viruses that can cause fever, breathing difficulties, pneumonia and diarrhea. The name comes from the Latin word "corona," which means crown. Under a microscope, these viruses are characterised by circles with spikes ending in little blobs. Whether the new coronavirus words will stay in use depends on how long the pandemic lasts. Even so, some words have more staying power. "It is a consistent theme of lexicography that great social change brings great linguistic change, and that has never been truer than in this current global crisis," says Paton.

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INVESTMENTS IN SOHAR, SALALAH FREEZONES TOTAL RO 3.7 BILLION

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Middle East's comprehensive logistics provider, Asyad, has announced the number of investment projects at Sohar Freezone and Salalah Freezone last year reached 120 with an estimated value of RO 3.7 billion in various industrial and logistic activities.

In line with the Sultanate Logistics Strategy (SOLS2040) and Oman 2040 Vision to attract local and foreign investments and to develop an integrated logistics system allowing local products to reach international markets, Asyad Group is working, in cooperation with the relevant government entities, towards improving the competitive advantage of the Sultanate's Freezones.

Omar Mahmood al Mahrizi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar Freezone, said: "Today, Sohar Freezone is a home to 44 industrial projects in various sectors such as metals, petrochemicals, food industries, etc., and witnesses an increase in

Sohar Freezone hosted 44 industrial and logistic projects in 2019.

OMAR AL MAHRIZI,
CEO, Sohar Freezone

the number of companies occupying the warehouses and offices that is part of the package of innovative solutions offered to the investors."

"The occupancy of the total leasable areas of the three development phases has reached 301.4 hectares by the end of 2019, with 63 per cent occupancy of the areas in the first phase" Al Mahrizi added.

The CEO of Sohar Freezone also stated that the focus of Sohar Freezone is on integrated downstream projects that offer business opportunities and grow ICV, such as attracting industries that depend on the polyethylene product which will be produced in Liwa Plastics Industries Complex (LPIC).

He stressed that Sohar Freezone encourages investors to benefit from the integrated logistic system of the Port and the Freezone. We also target the manufacturers who consider their proximity as a key value proposition to reach their consumer markets regionally.

TURN TO PAGE 12

24 usufruct agreements signed in 2019 by Salalah Freezone (SFZ).

ALI TABOUK,
CEO, Salalah Freezone

nhi

المعهد الوطني للضيافة
national hospitality institute

PO Box 854, PC 131, Al Hamriya. Tel: 2481 6313 Fax: 2481 7125

Notice of the Annual General Meeting

The Board of Directors of National Hospitality Institute SAOC (the 'Company'/'NHI') invites all shareholders to attend the Annual General Meetings, which will be held on 14th July 2020 at 2.00 pm via the online platform for general meetings, which can be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD) website (www.mcd.gov.om).

However, in case the AGM was not held on the said date, the Company will hold a second AGM on Thursday, 16th July 2020 at 2.00 pm to discuss the same following agenda:

Agenda of the Annual General Meeting

- To consider and approve the Board of Directors report for the financial year ended 31st December 2019 (as per Attachment 1).
- To consider the Auditors' report and approve the Auditors Report, Balance Sheet and the Profit and Loss Account for the year ended 31st December 2019 (as per Attachment 2).
- To approve the sitting fees and remuneration being availed by the members of the Board of Directors and members of the Board's sub-committees for the financial year ended 31st December, 2019 and to specify the sitting fees for the next financial year (as per Attachment 3).
- To bring to the attention of the Shareholders the transactions entered into with related parties during the financial year ended 31 December 2019 (as per Attachment 4).
- To approve the appointment of the Auditors for the year financial year ending 31st December 2020 and approve their remuneration.
- To elect a new board member to fill vacant Board seat.

Any person wishing to nominate himself/herself to the Board of Directors may fill out the Nomination Form. The completed form should be delivered to the Company 2 working days prior to the Annual General Meeting i.e. not later than Thursday, 11th July 2020. Any Nomination Form delivered after the aforesaid deadline shall not be accepted.

In accordance with the Articles of Association of the Company and the rules for convening general meetings using modern technology issued by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- A juristic person shall, exclusively, have the right to authorize a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on his behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD).
- Voting on any of the agenda items shall begin no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting. In case a shareholder's share balance has increased or decreased after voting, his voting will be cancelled, and this shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For further information please contact **Mr. Hatim Hilal Al Hilali – Company Secretary**, on phone No (00968- 247 96636 Extn. 346) or email address: hatim@tawoos.com.

Chairman

Al-Dhahira

Under Liquidation

Invitation to attend the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of Al Dhahira Colas SAOC (under liquidation) (Company)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN by the liquidator of the Company inviting all of the shareholders to attend the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the Company to be held at 3 pm on Thursday, 16th July 2020 at Beach One offices, in Shatti Al Qurum, Office No 402.

In the case of an incomplete quorum at the first EGM, a second meeting shall be held on Thursday, 23 July 2020 at 03:00 pm to discuss the following agenda:

Agenda of the Meeting:

- To approve the write off the amount owed to the Company which the liquidator could not collect from the debtors.
- To present and approve the final report of the liquidator and the auditor's.
- To approve the completion of the liquidator's tasks, pay shareholders final amount (OMR 1.567 per share) and cancel the commercial registration of the Company.

Each shareholder is entitled to give a written proxy to another person, who need not be a shareholder, to attend the meeting and vote on its/his/her behalf at the EGM.

If you wish to appoint a proxy, please complete and submit the attached proxy form to n.alhabsi@aglaw.com.

If you wish to attend the meeting, please contact Nasser Al Habsi on 24950700 a day prior the meeting.

For further information, please contact 24950700.

Liquidator

OMAN AIRPORT CITIES OPEN FOR INVESTMENT

CONRAD PRABHU

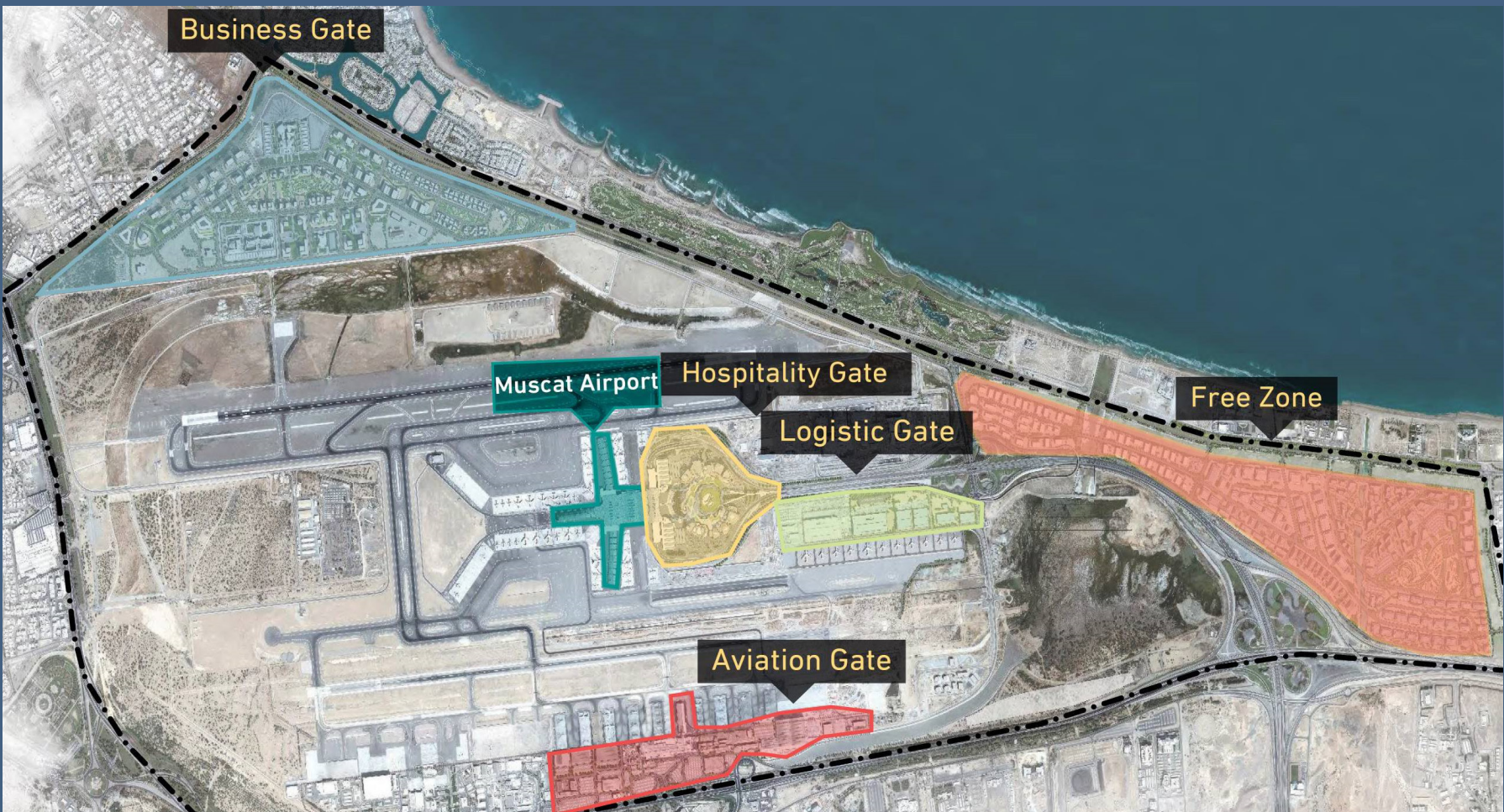
MUSCAT: Oman Airport Cities, an ambitious initiative by Oman Aviation Group (OAG) to create new economic clusters around the nation's international and domestic airports, opens up an array of investment opportunities encompassing logistics, cargo storage, light manufacturing, processing, hospitality and ecommerce, among other areas.

An overview of the broad range of opportunities linked to the landmark project was presented during a webinar organised by the US Embassy Oman last week. The event, focusing on the theme, 'Oman's Logistics Industry: Ports and Aviation – Opportunity for investment for US Companies', was hosted by US Ambassador to Oman, Leslie M Tsou.

Oman Airport Cities will offer world-class commercial, retail, hospitality, MICE, leisure and logistics hubs and clusters in close proximity to Muscat International Airport, Suhar International Airport and Salalah International Airport, according to Mustafa al Hinai, CEO, Oman Aviation Group.

Al Hinai was joined by a panel of speakers that included Azzan al Busaidi, CEO, Public Authority for Investment Promotion & Export Development (ITHRAA); Mark Hardiman, CEO, Port of Salalah; Robert Bartstra, Executive Commercial Manager, Suhar Port & Freezone; and Saleh al Hasani, Director General of Investor Services, SEZAD.

Oman Aviation Group was set up by the government to spearhead the development of a thriving national aviation ecosys-



“

Investments targeted within the Freezone cluster include general light industry and assembly operations that are dependent on air transport, high value fish processing, pharmaceutical distribution hubs, ecommerce activities, and regional distribution hubs for aircraft manufacturers.

MUSTAFA AL HINAI,
CEO, Oman Aviation
Group

tem in the Sultanate in alignment with the nation's long-term economic development. Part of its broad-based strategy is to build Airport Cities

SIGNATURE PROJECT:

Oman Airport Cities will offer world-class commercial, retail, hospitality, MICE, leisure and logistics hubs and clusters in close proximity to Muscat International Airport, Suhar International Airport and Salalah International Airport.

around Muscat and Salalah international airports, harnessing investments already made by the government in state-of-the-art passenger terminal and air-cargo infrastructure, while also leveraging Oman's strategic location in the region.

Muscat Airport City — the Group's signature project — features as many as five different clusters each centring on a specific investment theme. The biggest of these is the Freezone set on a 152-hectare site extending along the southern boundaries of the airport complex.

Investments targeted within the Freezone cluster include general light industry and assembly operations that are dependent on air transport, high value fish processing, pharmaceutical distribution hubs, ecommerce activities, and regional distribution hubs for aircraft manufacturers.

Also envisioned within the Airport City are dedicated clusters for Logistics (24 hectares), Hospitality (12 hectares), Aviation (53 hectares), and Business (114 hectares).

In his presentation, Al Hinai also outlined opportunities for investment in regional hubs for ecommerce, office space for Freezone tenants, and day-to-day facilities and services required by companies operating across the Airport City.

Wholly government-owned Oman Aviation Group's broad mandate encompasses national carrier Oman Air, Transom (which oversees five companies focusing on ground-handling, catering, hospitality, cargo services and Muscat Duty Free), and Oman Airports (which is responsible for the management and operation of Oman's civil airports). The Group will also serve as the National Tourism Operator (NTO) of the Sultanate.

BUSINESS

Investments in Sohar, Salalah Freezones total RO 3.7 billion

FROM PAGE 10

Al Mahrizi added: "The investors can benefit from the proximity of the Freezone to Sohar Port and Sohar Airport that facilitates and ease import and export operations.

In addition, Sohar Freezone has direct land routes with neighbouring countries such as the United Arab Emirates and soon with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Sohar Freezone also has direct shipping lines with Asia, Europe and America.

As the CEO of Salalah Freezone (SFZ), Ali bin Mohammed Tabouk, said: "Our goal is to position Salalah Freezone as a leading regional and global logistics and industrial hub and the investment projects in SFZ is a testimony for our efforts to attract foreign investors and our successful relationship with the Freezone's strategic partners."

Salalah Freezone achieved exceptional results in 2019 that included signing of 24 usufruct agreements that worth RO 1.4 billion. Tabouk indicated that the Freezone will provide job opportunities for locals. He added that the percentage of Omanisation has reached 36 in the companies operating at SFZ.

Ali Tabouk highlighted that Salalah Freezone plans to develop Salalah Freezone Food Processing Plant that will provide commercial warehouses, logistic services and storage facilities for the food and beverage industries. In addition to a 20,000 square metres trading and services complex that will include number of offices and service facilities for businessmen in an integrated business environment.

An international allied medicine training centre will also be founded in an area of 96 square metres to provide training programmes for various specialties of allied medicine including, but not limited to, radiology, laboratories, occupational and physical therapy. This comes within the framework of developing the national skills and capabilities in the medical specialisations.

ITHRAA, PDO SIGN COOPERATION PACT

MUSCAT: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and Ithraa, the Sultanate's inward investment and export development agency, came together to sign a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) on Tuesday. Capitalising on Ithraa's investment and export expertise and leveraging PDO's global energy network and pioneering work in renewables, the agreement is designed to enhance the competitiveness of Oman's business ecosystem.

Speaking at the signing, PDO External Affairs and Value Creation Director Abdul-Amir al Ajmi remarked: "PDO is delighted to sign this agreement with Ithraa to share knowledge and experiences as well as promote research and development."

He added: "By combining Ithraa's experience in attracting foreign investment to the sultanate as well as promoting local goods and services overseas, with PDO's energy expertise and impressive ICV track record, we're creating a platform that can help meet the objec-



tives of Vision 2040 in fostering home-grown climate and clean technology industries. Indeed, we look forward to putting today's MoC into action."

Azzan al Busaidi, Ithraa's CEO said: "Oman's green economy is evolving rapidly and really does have great growth potential so we're delighted to be working alongside PDO, who will help us drive this exciting and fast moving sector. By working together, we'll be able to identify opportunities to collaborate and create a stronger voice to encourage further foreign investment in delivering a more prosperous, equitable

and greener future for Oman."

Al Busaidi went on to say: "PDO's pioneering work on renewables is directly contributing to Oman's growing eco-business reputation. By developing strong and competitive green industries we can generate employment opportunities across Oman, particularly on PDO's industrial and logistics park – jobs that offer good salaries and long-term, sustainable career prospects. And together we can nurture innovative in-demand green services to add to Oman's export offer as well as promote the sultanate's green growth aspirations."

NBC INCUBATES MAJAZ ARCHITECTURAL CONSULTANCY

MUSCAT: The National Business Centre (NBC), an initiative of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), signed on Tuesday an incubation agreement with Majaz Architectural Consultancy, a local firm specialising in residential and commercial architecture.

NBC is an initiative launched by Madayn at the Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM) to offer promising



Omani entrepreneurs a platform to develop their business ideas and advance them into growing ventures. The centre offers a premier platform for Omani entrepreneurs by providing business development support and guidance, training and mentoring, access to markets and industry experts, and state-of-the-art and fully equipped office space, meeting rooms and presentation facilities.

SMEs need to adapt to survive

LIJU CHERIAN

Many of the business owners in Muscat revealed their real stories and called for urgent attention from the industry and government for help.

MUSCAT: Small companies are most vulnerable during an economic crisis, in part because they have fewer resources with which to adapt to a changing context.

According to the data provided by the International Council for Small Business (ICSB), Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) make up over 90 per cent of all firms and account, on average, for 70 per cent of total employment and 50 per cent of GDP.

The United Nations' General Assembly declared June 27 as Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day, to raise public awareness of their contribution to sustainable development and global economy.

The start of the pandemic due to COVID-19 earlier this year offered MSMEs a new set of challenges beyond the normal challenge small businesses deal with daily. And the Sultanate was no exception to this.

Businesses had to adapt to new



norms as quickly as possible amidst following regulations for health and safety.

Booma, a local photo and video production company, launched a CSR-based project at the start of business closures in March to mobilise the MSME community in Oman.

On Instagram as @COVID19preneurs_oman, many local business owners shared stories in the hope of alleviating the impact on Oman's MSME community by bringing fellow entrepreneurs together, and informing the wider society of the diverse MSMEs in Oman that need support.

Sarah Hale, co-founder and photographer at Booma, says, "Upon hearing

of the closures that our business and many others were in grave danger for the next many months, I thought to create a platform with my skills as a videographer to share local business owners' stories."

Many of the business owners in Muscat revealed their real stories and called for urgent attention from the industry and government for help.

Ali Husain, owner of Husaak Adventures, says SMEs have taken a huge risk and it is not an easy way out, from their comfortable lifestyles but now feel left alone.

"SMEs are a major shareholder of the economy providing stability, but now it is a major cripple to the ecosystem," he reasons.

However Rebecca Olson, Executive Director, Oman American Business Centre (OABC), suggests it is time to innovate and feels that any strong economy needs strong SMEs.

"Buy things, hire SMEs to reach out to them in this hour of need," she counsels.

Based on Royal Orders announced last week, issuance of interest-free loans has offered some respite to SMEs and entrepreneurs who have faced particularly difficult circumstances.

Business will not go back to 'normal' so businesses need to adapt to local market conditions while keeping staff and the public safe and healthy.

INFINITI OMAN
OFFERS TEST DRIVES

MUSCAT: Continuing to create new benchmarks in customer service, Infiniti Oman is offering test drives on all its models with prior appointments. In accordance with the stipulations of the Supreme Committee, Infiniti Oman is offering test drives while keeping the health and safety of its customers and employees as its top priority.

For test drive enquiries, please contact Renjith on +968 9533 4246 or email renjith@sbigh.com.

A spokesperson for Infiniti Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, said, "During this unprecedented situation of the COVID-19 outbreak we want to assure customers that Infiniti Oman is focused on delivering them a seamless service with their safety in mind. For all test drives, they just have to make an appointment prior to arriving at our showroom. We want to guarantee our valued customers that we will take whatever precautions necessary to ensure their safety and well-being. Following and before every test drive, the vehicle will be fully sanitised."

Ooredoo's B2B app offers digital solutions

MUSCAT: During these uncertain times, Ooredoo's B2B App has been a constant support to businesses across Oman, offering convenience and functionality they can rely on. With ongoing upgrades and enhancements, the digital self-service app is helping companies navigate their way through the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, providing a range of innovative solutions that helps them work from home.

Sultan bin Ahmed al Wahaibi (pictured), Chief of Business and Wholesale Officer at Ooredoo, "As a data experience leaders,

our aim is to keep our B2B customers connected at costs suitable for all sizes of business, allowing them to channel more cash and resources into growing and thriving. As the pandemic continues to unfold, access to high quality digital services is even more critical, and we are making sure that our features and services evolve along with our customers' needs. Our B2B App is simple to use and can be accessed by multiple members of the company, helping them best when they're working away from the office and apart."

BUSINESS



Workers using a crane can be seen inspecting part of the roof of the Houses of Parliament in London. — Reuters

UK economy suffers worst quarterly slump since 1979

LONDON: Britain's economy has suffered its biggest quarterly contraction for more than 40 years as the coronavirus pandemic slashed activity, revised official data showed on Tuesday.

Gross domestic product shrank 2.2 per cent in the first quarter, or January-March period, compared with the prior three months, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement giving a second estimate.

The initial figure given by the ONS showed a GDP contraction of 2.0 per cent in the first quarter, or worst reading since the global financial crisis in 2008.

Second-quarter data will show the full impact of coronavirus because Britain's nationwide coronavirus lockdown was only imposed on March 23.

Recent official figures had showed UK economic activity crashed by a record 20.4 per cent in April.

"Our more detailed

picture of the economy in the first quarter showed... the largest quarterly fall since (the third quarter of) 1979," said ONS deputy national statistician Jonathan Athow.

ECONOMISTS MEANWHILE ANTICIPATE A DOUBLE-DIGIT SLUMP IN OUTPUT DURING THE SECOND QUARTER OR APRIL-JUNE PERIOD, PLACING BRITAIN IN A TECHNICAL RECESSION.

"All main sectors of the economy shrank significantly in March as the effects of the pandemic hit."

Athow added however that "the sharp fall in consumer spending at the end of March led to a notable increase in households' savings".

This has been helped

further by the government paying the bulk of private-sector workers' wages during the pandemic to keep them in jobs.

Economists meanwhile anticipate a double-digit slump in output during the second quarter or April-June period, placing Britain in a technical recession.

"It is evident that the UK economy witnessed a record GDP contraction in the second quarter," said Howard Archer, economist at EY, which is forecasting a 17-per cent slump before a 10 per cent rebound in the third quarter.

The Bank of England has warned that COVID-19 paralysis could spark the nation's worst recession in centuries, after the coronavirus slammed economies worldwide.

Earlier this month, the BoE unveiled an extra £100 billion (\$126 billion, 112 billion euros) of cash stimulus to prop up Britain's coronavirus-hit economy. — AFP

OIL PRICES DROP ON PROSPECT OF RETURNING LIBYAN SUPPLIES

LONDON: Oil prices slipped on Tuesday amid rising COVID-19 cases and a possible return of Libyan oil production, which has been down to a trickle since the start of the year.

The more-active September contract for Brent fell 22 cents, or 0.5pc, to \$41.63 a barrel by 08:32 GMT, paring Monday's 92 cent gain. The August contract, which expires on Tuesday, fell 26 cents to \$41.45.

US crude was down 27 cents, or 0.7pc, at \$39.43 a barrel.

"Attempts to push prices higher are capped by growing concerns about the second cycle of the coronavirus or the inability to contain the current one," Tamas Varga of oil brokerage PVM said.

Coronavirus cases continue to rise in southern and south-western US states. Investors are watching to see whether Libya is able to resume exports, which have been almost entirely blockaded since January amid the country's civil war.

"If we do finally see a resumption in Libyan output, this would make the job of OPEC+ a little bit more difficult, as Libya pumped at around 1 million barrels per day (bpd) prior to the disruptions," ING said. Investors will also be looking for signs of demand recovery in data due on Tuesday from the American Petroleum Institute industry group and from the US government on Wednesday. — Reuters



A view of the Mellitah Oil and Gas complex in Libya is seen in this image.

— Reuters



SQSC REVIEWS SAFETY MEASURES FOR HOSTING ATHLETES

SAFETY OF PLAYERS IS TOP PRIORITY, SAYS **SAUD AMBOSAIDI**

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Sports Affairs, represented by the Directorate of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex (SQSC), is conducting a study and reviewing the safety precautionary measures for athletes prior to using the facilities of the complex in direct coordination with the domestic associations and adhering to the instructions from international federations and Ministry of Health.

The national sport teams and sport lovers are looking forward to the opening of the complex to resume daily training programmes in order to get ready for the upcoming season competitions. The domestic sporting events were stopped from mid of March over the COVID-19 pandemic.

Saud bin Badar Ambosaidi, Director of the SQSC, told *Oman*

Daily Observer that safety of the athletes and members of SQSC is the top priority when resuming the sporting activities. "Resuming the sporting season will depend on the decision by the Supreme Committee. We need special preparation to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 among the sportsmen. Everyone is looking to be back to the fields and indoor halls to have their daily training and exercises with full confidence about their safety. This is our top target and will ensure all the precautionary and preventive measures in all our facilities," he added.

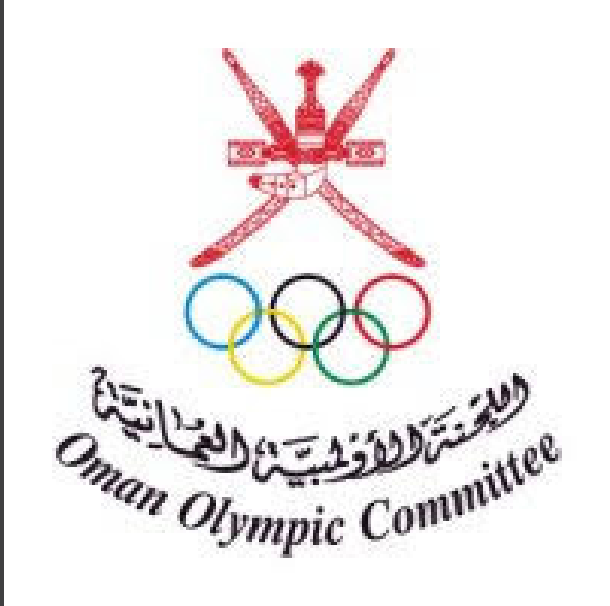
SQSC, which was opened in 1985, includes the football stadium, Olympic swimming pools, hockey field, tennis courts, indoor halls, sand beach courts, squash courts besides other facilities including a gymnasium and training halls.

"Full sanitisation will

be done prior to the reopening of the SQSC. We are working closely nowadays with all the domestic associations to follow the international federations' rules and regulations before starting any competitions. We are also arranging medical team at the complex for any emergency requirement," he added.

The top official of the SQSC affirmed that all the instructions from the Supreme Committee, the Ministry of Sports Affairs and Ministry of Health will be implemented before resuming any sports events taking into consideration safety of the athletes. "We request full cooperation from the local associations, committees, clubs and our members to all the rules and instructions raised by the Ministry of Health and the related entities to prevent spread of the novel coronavirus," he concluded.

OOA HOLDS ONLINE SPORTS MEDIA COURSE



MUSCAT: Sports media course in the digital time 2020, organised by the Oman Olympic Academy (OOA) 'remotely', started on Tuesday and will continue until Thursday.

The course aims to provide media professionals and all connected to sports media, including athletes, technicians and administrators, with modern aspects in sports media coverage and available publishing platforms, and the characteristics of producing sports content for each, in addition to providing them with the skills of dealing with media.

Dr Saba Naguib Jarrar, Head of the Sports Sciences Department at the Arab American University in Palestine, will lecture in the course, and 15 media representatives from Oman Olympic Committee, sports federations and committees, and various media institutions will participate.

The course includes many topics including a map of global, regional and national sports media, new sports publishing platforms on social media, basic skills in covering sports affairs for different publishing platforms, basic skills in writing for sports publishing platforms, in addition to the skills of athletes and those responsible for sports in different media.

‘WIMBLEDON WILL BE GREENER NEXT YEAR’

THE CHAMPIONSHIPS, DUE TO START ON MONDAY, WERE CANCELLED FOR FIRST TIME SINCE WORLD WAR II

LONDON: Neil Stubley should have been nervously appraising how the grass he and his fellow Wimbledon ground staff had nurtured was faring on the first day of the Grand Slam.

Instead, the head groundsman at the All England Club has seen the “blood, sweat and tears” spent in preparing for the tournament come to nothing.

The championships, due to start on Monday, were cancelled for the first time since World War II due to the coronavirus pandemic, meaning Novak Djokovic and Simona Halep were denied the chance to defend their titles.

Stubley said it was surreal to walk around and see his 38 “babies”, as he calls the courts set in 42 acres in the leafy London suburb, not humming with action.

“A lot of blood, sweat and tears has gone in to showcase them,” he told an online press conference.

“But that disappointment is across the (All England) club. We are all very proud of the work we do and how well-received it is across the world.”

The grandly titled head of courts and horticulture at Wimbledon said the grounds felt bizarrely quiet for this time of year, similar to the atmosphere after the players had gone home.

“It is an odd time and the best way to really describe it is you kind of get a strange quiet feeling,” he said.

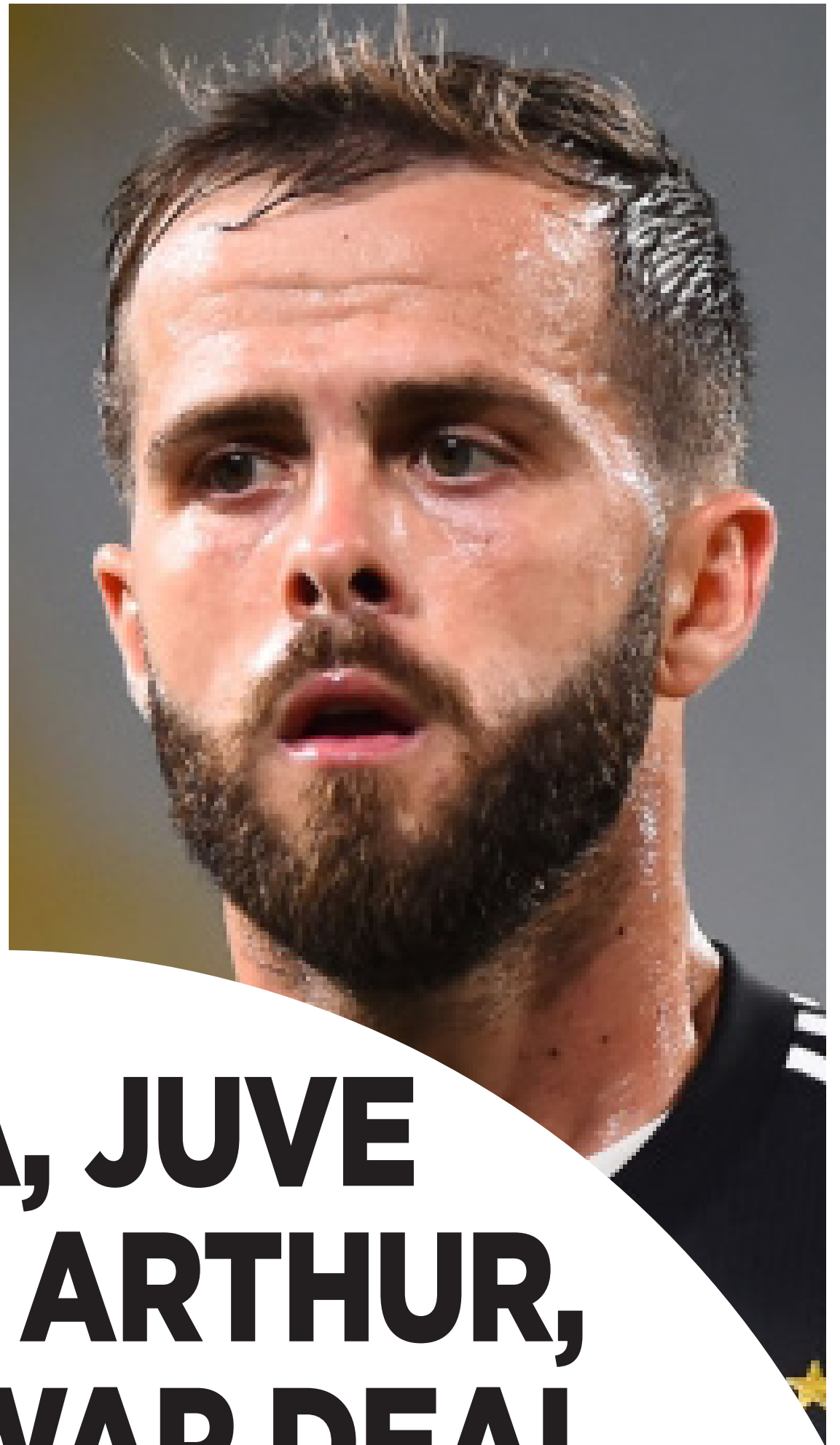
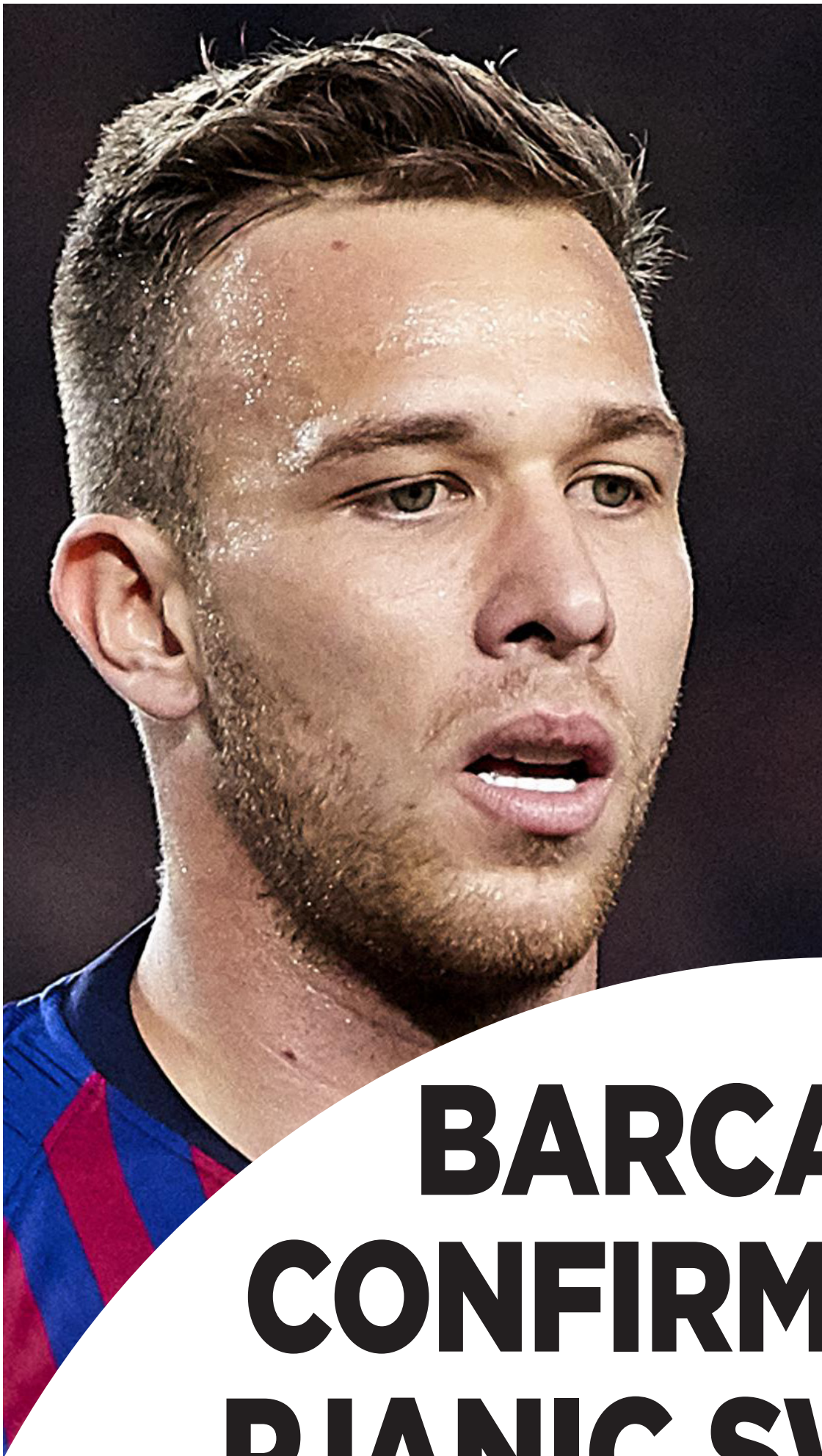
“I would equate it to having been to a concert - you get that ringing in your ears for a couple of days.”

Stubley said he and his 17 staff plus three temporary workers, reduced from the usual nine, were getting on with the job despite the disappointment of the cancellation.

“Pride pushes you that way to carry on working,” he said. “Of course it is disappointing not to be playing but the bigger picture puts that into perspective.

“As much as we love our job it has to sit in the real world.” — **AFP**





BARCA, JUVE CONFIRM ARTHUR, PJANIC SWAP DEAL

MADRID: Barcelona midfielder Arthur Melo will join Juventus at the end of the current season, with Miralem Pjanic moving in the opposite direction, the two clubs announced on Monday.

Barcelona said they had paid 60 million euros (\$67.4m) plus a potential five million euros more in bonuses for Bosnian playmaker Pjanic after earlier confirming Juventus would pay 72 million euros plus 10 million in variables for Arthur.

The two deals have gone through separately, allowing both clubs to boost their profit figures ahead of the end of the financial year on June 30.

Pjanic's four-year contract includes a release clause of 400 million euros while

Juventus said Arthur's contract will run for five years, until June 2025.

Arthur and Pjanic will remain with their current teams until the end of the 2019/20 campaign, which will include the latter stages of the Champions League in August.

It raises the possibility that Arthur and Pjanic could yet face each other, and their future clubs, in the Champions League final eight in Portugal, should both sides win their outstanding last 16, second leg matches.

In a statement, Juventus said they had signed Arthur for "72 million euros payable in four years. The purchase value may increase by a maximum of 10 million euros on the fulfillment of certain conditions during the contractual term."

Arthur, a Brazilian international, only joined Barca from Gremio in 2018 and was hailed as a future star for the club, with many tipping him as the long-term successor to Xavi Hernandez in central midfield.

After an encouraging start, the 23-year-old has been one of several players to stagnate this season but the primary motivation for his sale is thought to be financial.

Arthur's departure puts more scrutiny on Barcelona's board and president Josep Maria Bartomeu. They have overseen a number of haphazard moves in the transfer market and have been accused of failing to implement any clear sense of direction for the club.

LIMITED GAME TIME
Barcelona have been hit

hard by the three-month suspension due to the coronavirus pandemic and they needed to bring in around 70 million euros to satisfy their budget for the current season.

By selling Arthur, the board can register the profits from the transfer immediately before spreading the payments for Pjanic over the length of the 30-year-old's contract.

Pjanic joined Juventus from Roma in 2016. He was brought up in Luxembourg and initially made his name in French football with Metz and then Lyon.

Last year, Barcelona carried out a similar transaction by exchanging goalkeeper Jasper Cillessen for Valencia's Neto, in deals worth around 30 million euros each. — **AFP**

SPORTS



F1 DEPLOYS WAR CHEST FOR AUSTRIAN GRAND PRIX

RED BULL RING WILL PLAY HOST TO FIRST RACE ON JULY 5 AND A SECOND A WEEK LATER

PARIS: The Formula One season roars into action at the Austrian Grand Prix in Spielberg this weekend with “military-like”, coronavirus-busting sanitary regulations.

Every single person who sets foot inside the Red Bull Ring, where the first two races of the rescheduled season take place, must adhere to strict health and safety protocols developed jointly by the organisers and teams, who have employed their genius for logistics to the task at hand.

“The meticulous approach of the teams to both logistics and engineering and procedures and protocols is what we’ve transferred into our approach to dealing with this challenge”, F1 chief Ross Brawn said.

The Red Bull Ring, nestling in the picturesque Styrian mountains, has been put into a fortress-like lockdown and will play host to a first race on July 5 and a second a week later.

Brawn predicted teams would be quick to adapt to all new measures.

“It suits our culture, our philosophy of working through every scenario, plan A, plan B, plan C”, said Brawn, who added there was a two-metre social-distancing rule and compulsory visors or masks.

Each team has been reduced to a maximum of 80 staff, they will be asked to refrain from mixing with other groups and even split into subgroups so as to limit any possible cross contagion.

The teams will travel in

motor-homes and once on site will use the facilities there to cook.

Anyone at the track must submit to coronavirus testing and regular temperature checks and no spectators will be allowed in the arena.

‘LIVE AND LEARN’

Organisers also say they will be ready to react and improve or adapt to developing situations in the same way they do with races.

“We will live and learn at each race”, Brawn said.

“That’s the nature of F1. It’s very military like in its approach”.

Ferrari’s Sporting Director Laurent Mekies says the strategies will make the sport more resilient to coronavirus, especially the sub-division

of teams to carry out activities, which he argued would mean having a limited number of people in isolation were there an outbreak.

“If necessary we will have replacements on standby at the factory”, Mekies said.

World champion Lewis Hamilton’s Mercedes team say they have entirely reorganised their garage, adding tents and canopies so as to avoid slowing down the work on their cars.

There will also be a tracing app which all team members must download, granting access to all their contacts.

Haas team principal Guenther Steiner said last week he was more than happy with the ongoing safety measures. — **AFP**

FEATURES

Spreading awareness on Covid—19 through art

An art competition launched by the Ministry of Arts Affairs received a large turnout coming not only from Omanis but also different nationalities in the Sultanate. These are the winners.... **page 20**

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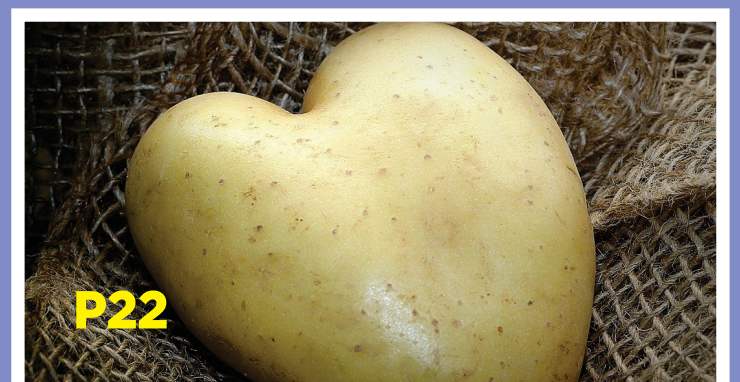
WHAT'S INSIDE

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Spreading awareness on Covid—19 through art

STAFF REPORTER

The Ministry of Arts Affairs recently announced the results of the art competition for Omani artists and residents of different age groups in the fields of fine arts, photography, theatre and cinema, and the field of oud, music and folklore. The contest was previously announced in line with the exceptional circumstances of the spread of the pandemic Covid19, and to encourage every one of different age groups and cultural levels to stay in their homes and to also discover artistic hobbies of youth.

The competition received a large turnout of artists and talented people in those fields.

In the field of photography, participating photographers competed in two main themes: silent life and home moments. The number of participating photos accepted reached 43327.

In the silent life theme, Fatima al—Naabi won the first place, followed by Hanifa al—Jufaili in second place, and Aisha al—Hosni in third place.

In the theme of home moments, Ziad al Yahyahi won first place, and the second place went to Khadija al Mamaria, while the third place went to Mahmoud al Jabri.

In the field of fine arts, the competition presented six themes, for youth aged less than 18 years. The themes are digital art, Arabic calligraphy, drawing and photography, caricature and video art. The Ministry received 136 entries.

As for Folklore, five fields competed including musical composition, singing, chanting, solo playing, folk arts (maydan, Masba', Azi). Around 31 entries were received by the Ministry, the results of which were as follows:

In the field of solo playing, Mohammed Al Balushi won first place, playing the clarinet, and Saleh Al Abadi won second place by playing the guitar instrument, and Ghadeer Al Balushi won the third place by playing the piano.

In the field of singing, Ziyana wald Hassan won the first place, Razan Al—Saadi won the second place, while Hamad al—Kaf, Yemeni, won the third place.

In the field of theatre and cinema, two categories were presented: theatrical composition and short cinematography, and the ministry received no less than 25 strong theatrical texts, including surreal realistic and social scenarios, in addition to 25 short films.

In the field of theatre composition, Yahya Al—Siyabi won the first place for (Wood), and Lamia Al—Siyabi won the second place for (Hats Eid), while Badr Al—Nabhani won the third place for (King of empty cans).

In the field of producing short films, Mahmoud Al—Fazari won the first place for his short movie entitled Stay Home, and Tahira Al Omairi won second place for Reached Home, while Ashwaq Al—Siyabi won third place for "Can we return to normal life"?



FEATURES

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Bit of a stretch? Pandemic—era ‘yoga domes’ are now a thing



WHILE MOST YOGA studios around the world are closed or continuing lessons online, a group of yoga studios in Toronto are using plastic domes to continue their lessons in a way that reduces risk of infection.

With 50 clear, bubble—shaped domes with adequate space for standing and stretching, Toronto's Lmnts outdoor studio is hosting “responsible” pop—up hot yoga classes in collaboration with local fitness and hot yoga studios, closed

With 50 clear, bubble—shaped domes with adequate space for standing and stretching, Toronto's Lmnts outdoor studio is hosting “responsible” pop—up hot yoga classes in collaboration with local fitness and hot yoga studios, closed due to the spread of Covid—19

due to the spread of Covid—19.

Five to six events are taking place every day in June and July on an open square near the Hotel X Toronto by the city's Coronation Park and participants are temperature—screened before gaining access.

“Now more than ever, it's important that we work together to provide consumers with safe and creative ways that they can stay healthy and active while physical distancing measures are in place,” the studio's founder Steve Georgiev said in a press statement.

The sessions are likely to be particularly sweaty, however, as organizers of the hot yoga classes note that the temperatures inside the domes exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37 degrees Celsius).

It's unclear if plastic domes for yoga — largely unfamiliar to both amateurs and professionals — will be a better alternative to video chat platforms like Zoom, which have been the go—to for yoga studios around the world during the pandemic.

However, yoga instructors forced to resort to online classes have noted that classes on video chat, while improving privacy, lack group dynamic and make it hard for the instructor to give expert advice.

Even something as simple as a shared soundtrack during online classes is difficult due to rights issues.

“I cannot have full access to my students,” says Lun Piseth, whose Nataraj Yoga studio in Phnom Penh has been closed, saying that one camera angle isn't enough to see how a move is being done.

The instructor says she misses being able to adjust students' bodies by hand and ensuring they don't hurt themselves, especially when doing handstands or headstands.— **dpa**

FEATURES**PIMP MY POTATO:
GERMANS
GIVE TIPS ON
MAKING THE
ULTIMATE
POTATO
SALAD**

A potato salad is a potato salad, right? You couldn't be more wrong, says all of Germany. There are countless ways to make this classic side dish. We asked some German chefs how to make it the original way and then how to spice it up with some international fusion.

Nobody loves potato salad quite like the Germans. Be it part of Christmas dinner or as a side at a summer barbecue, "Kartoffelsalat" is a year-round dish in Germany, but also one that's far from the same across all regions.

"Many people have a specific idea of what potato salad is supposed to look like – there is only one variant that exists for them. But potato salad can be incredibly versatile," Martina Meuth and Bernd Neuner–Duttenhofer, who host a German cooking show, say.

The two have published a cooking book on 100 varieties of the classic garden party dish. Simply look at a map of Germany demonstrates that there's no "one" potato salad.

While those in the north prefer creamy mayonnaise as a dressing, the south usually seasons with vinegar, oil and broth.

Even when it comes to the choice of potato, the results couldn't be more different.

"The kind of potato makes all the difference," German food bloggers Chris Ackermann and Marie Wolgast say. The varieties sometimes differ widely when it comes to taste,

consistency and colour.

The couple prefers firm potatoes like Belana or Annabelle for making salads. "But the result will be entirely different, if you use blue–violet or red potatoes from time to time," the trained cook Ackermann explains.

Generally speaking, warm potatoes absorb liquid and aromas best, and waxy varieties stay in better shape. "If you use a warm floury potato for your salad, you get a mushy consistency," Neuner–Duttenhofer says.

If you are looking for clearly defined slices in your salad, you should therefore choose firm varieties and let them cool before further processing.

"It's important to boil the potatoes with the peel and only skin them afterwards," Ackermann explains. Otherwise the starch in the potato will get sticky – and the salad turns out slimy.

"You can also saute the potatoes for a salad – which adds great roasting aromas," Ackermann and Wolgast suggest.

Even mashed potato leftovers are suitable as a base for a potato salad. Simply warm them up and add

onions, strips of endive and a vinegar–oil dressing.

Spicy oils – for example made from walnuts or pumpkin seeds – also add a different taste. But you can also experiment with herbs. Dill fits just as well as cress, basil, wild garlic or lovage.

However, herbs should only be added right before serving, in order to preserve the freshness, Neuner–Duttenhofer advises.

And if that's not exotic enough, send your potato

salad on a trip around the world.

"You will get a Mediterranean variant if you combine potatoes, celery, dried tomatoes, olives and a vinegar–oil vinaigrette in your salad," Ackermann suggests.

And after a holiday on your own balcony, the Canarian potato salad by Meuth and Neuner–Duttenhofer might just be what you are craving for.

"We use very small potatoes that stay whole," Meuth explains. The potatoes are boiled in a lot of salt, awakening memories from your last visit to a tapas bar. They are then dressed with mojo, a creamy, spicy sauce made from garlic, chilli, peppers, olive oil and coriander.— dpa

