



Heavy rains to continue in parts of Sultanate

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: Oman Meteorology reported heavy to moderate rains, thunderstorms, sometimes accompanied by active winds, over the Hajar mountains and the surrounding areas and Dhofar Governorate.

Heavy rains accompanied by strong winds were reported from some places, including Shinas. It is likely to spread towards the coastal areas overlooking the Sea of Oman, a statement said.

"The forecast for Wednesday is clear to partly cloudy skies with a



chance of isolated rain occasionally thundershowers along with the coastal areas and adjoining mountains of Dhofar Governorate and coastal areas of Al Wusta Governorate," it said.

It added, "Mainly clear skies over rest of the

Sultanate with chances of late night to early morning low clouds or fog patches over parts of South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta governorates and chances of clouds development and isolated rain over Al Hajar Mountains towards tomorrow afternoon."

Supreme Committee meeting today

FROM PAGE 1

As per the wilayats, Muscat has 3,254 cases, including 18 deaths, Bausher 1,272 including 3 deaths, Amerat 212 cases with one death, Seeb 1,363 cases with seven deaths.

Some of the keenly-awaited decisions from Wednesday's meeting include that of returning to work both in the public and private sectors, allowing tourists to Dhofar during khareef season, easing restrictions in Muscat Governorate, which is under lockdown until May 29.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Futaisi, Minister of Transport and a member of the Supreme Committee, last Thursday said commercial and industrial activities cannot remain closed for a long time. "We are gradually reopening them. Failure to comply with protocols will lead to closure again".

The restoration of public transportation will be gradual, and with new regulations, Dr Futaisi said.





OMAN  DAILY

Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team

Mohd Al Rashdi : Head Office	99841230	m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com
Ali Al Maashari : Head Office	99639264	wadialmeeh@yahoo.com
Bakhit Al Shihri : Salalah Office	92998577	bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com
Abdullah Al Abri : Nizwa Office	99429094	nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om
Musalam Al Saidi : Suhar Office	99429192	sohardaily@outlook.com



MAWALEH MARKET TO RESUME TRADE TODAY

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: The Muscat Municipality has announced the opening of the Central Market for Fruits and Vegetables in Mawaleh but the retail division will remain closed, according to a spokesperson at the civic body.

The largest fruits and vegetable market closed its doors days prior to Eid in view of large crowds flocking

in the market premises, which might have been against the COVID-19 preventive steps.

“The wholesale division at the Central Fruits and Vegetables Market in Mawaleh will resume its operations after a week’s closure from Wednesday. But the retail division will remain closed until further notice,” he told the Observer.

The Muscat Municipality announced the second time closure

of the market on May 18 after a large number of people were seen with no or less precautionary measures even after repeated requests to follow safety measures. The first closure was on April 24, on the eve of the beginning of the holy month after a similar crowd was reported.

“The Central Fruits and Vegetable market will be operational only for wholesale trade, from 4am to 10am, from Wednesday,” he added.

FISH FROM OMAN EXPORTED TO 57 COUNTRIES

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries said that fish from the waters of Oman were exported to 57 countries around the world, compared to 49 countries in 2015. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) accounted for 35 per cent of those exports, followed by 41 per cent to Asia (non-Arab countries), four per cent to South America, four per cent to other Arab countries, seven per cent to African countries, two per cent to European Union, one per cent to North and Central America, and three per cent to other countries.

The UAE was the top most fish importer last year, with 22 per cent of the total Omani fish exports, with a quantity of 45,590 tonnes, with a value of RO 24,816 million, followed by Bangladesh with 16 per cent with a quantity of 32,600 tonnes, with a value of RO



8,715 million, Thailand (11 per cent) and Saudi Arabia (9 per cent), Vietnam (6 per cent), Egypt (5 per cent), Brazil (4 per cent), three per cent each to Taiwan and the same to India. The list also included countries including the Republic of Benin, Iraq, Turkey, South Korea, Libya, Malaysia, Switzerland, Canada, China, Spain, the Netherlands, Russia, Mauritius, and the Marshall Islands. The ministry said in its annual report on fish statistics that the Sultanate’s fish exports during the past year amounted to about 205,367 tonnes, down from 16 per cent from 2018 with a total value of RO104,357 million. The South Sharqiyah came first in the list of fish exports accounting for 40 per cent of the Sultanate’s total exports during the past year, with a quantity of 81,994 tonnes, while Muscat accounted for 32 per cent of total exports. — ONA



Oman Qatar Insurance Company SAOG
PO Box 3660, PC 112, Al Khuwair, Sultanate of Oman.
Tel: +968 2476 5333 Fax: +968 2476 5399 Email: contact@oqic.com
Oman Qatar Insurance Company SAOG

Invitation for the Extraordinary Meeting and Annual General Meeting

The Board of Directors of Oman Qatar Insurance Company ‘SAOG’ (the “Company”) has the pleasure to invite all Shareholders to attend the Extraordinary Meeting (“EGM”) and the Annual General Meeting (“AGM”) proposed to be held on Tuesday 9th June 2020 at 3:00 pm, through the online platform of the General Meetings, which you can access through the Muscat Clearing and Depository website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum is not complete for the Extraordinary Meeting and/or Annual General Meeting to convene, the second general assembly meeting will be held on Sunday 14th June, 2020 at 3:00pm via the abovementioned electronic platform, to consider and decide on the following agenda:

First Meeting: Extraordinary Meeting:

1. To consider and approve the amendments to the Articles of Association of Oman Qatar Insurance Company SAOG to be in line with the Commercial Companies Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 18/2019. (as per the attached annexure)

Second Meeting: Annual Ordinary General Meeting:

1. To consider and approve the Board of Directors’ Report on the activities of the company and its financial status during the financial year ended on 31 December 2019.
2. To consider and approve the Corporate Governance Report on the organization and management of the company during the financial year ended on 31 December 2019.
3. To consider the auditor’s report on the company’s audited financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2019.
4. To ratify the distributed cash dividend to the shareholders as of the date 23rd March 2020 for the financial year ended 31st December 2019 at the rate of 5% of the share capital (5 Baizas per one share).
5. Approval of the payment of sitting fees for the Board of Directors and Board Sub-Committees meetings held during the financial year ended 31st December 2019 and determine the sitting fees for the financial year 2020. (as per the attached annexure 1).
6. To consider and approve the proposal to distribute remuneration fees of an amount of OMR 6,000 to the Board of Directors for the financial year ended 31st December 2019.
7. To brief the General Assembly of the related party transactions during the financial year ended 31st December 2019. (as per the attached annexure 2)
8. To consider and approve the transaction which the Company will carry out with the related parties during the financial year ended by 31st December 2020. (as per the attached annexure 3).
9. To brief the General Assembly of the contributions made to support community services during the financial year ended on 31 December 2019. (as per the attached annexure 4)
10. Consideration and approval of the allocation of an amount of OMR 2,000 for voluntary and support social services for the financial year ending on 31st December 2020.
11. To brief the General Assembly with the donation of an amount of OMR 10,000 under CSR activities that were disbursed during this year to contribute to efforts to combat the outbreak of the Corona Virus (COVID 19) (as per the attached annexure 5).
12. To appoint the auditor for the financial year ended 31st December 2020 and approve their remuneration.

Pursuant to the company’s articles of association, general assembly regulations, using modern technology issued by the authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- A. A legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the general assembly meeting and vote on his behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in the MCDC.
- B. Voting on any of the items on the agenda shall begin no more than three days before the date of the meeting, until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting. In the event that the shareholder balance changes with increase or decrease, the voting process will be cancelled, and he will have to vote again at the assembly meeting.

If you have any queries, please call Mr. Omar Bakhit Al-Shanfari on phone number 9320 3945.

Deputy Chairman

External Auditor

Legal Advisor

Adopt balanced methods to raise children by combining old and new

THERE ARE PARENTS WHO TREAT THEIR CHILDREN WITH THE TRADITIONAL METHODS AND THERE ARE THOSE WHO TREAT THEIR CHILDREN WITH MODERN UPBRINGING METHODS. CHOOSING ONE OF THE METHODS AND STICKING TO IT CAN AFFECT THE CHILDREN'S LIVES NEGATIVELY

MUSCAT: The Social Observatory Research Programme of The Research Council (TRC) recently hosted a webinar on "Parenting Techniques during Home Quarantine". The webinar was moderated by **Dr Said al Dhafri**, Director of the Social Observatory, and involved the participation of 65 researchers, academics and parents from inside and outside the Sultanate, including the participation of **Sayyidah Dr Taghreed al Said**, Assistant Professor at the Department of Psychology, College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), and **Sayyidah Basma al Said**, a Mental Health Consultant and Owner of Whispers of Serenity Clinic.

The webinar started with Sayyidah Dr Taghreed highlighting the issues of parenting among Omani families while in home quarantine in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to being confined to their homes, she stated that many challenges arise among the families, whether between the parents themselves or between the parents and their children. She added that parenting methods can vary due to different factors such as the size of the family, the extent of its connection to the extended family, its geographical location, place of residence and other factors.

In regards to the most common parenting techniques in Oman, Sayyidah Basma mentioned that there are parents who treat their children with the traditional methods drawn from customs and traditions (extreme firmness, children having no word, etc.) and there are those who treat their children with modern upbringing methods (dialogue with the child, children hav-



ing the right to make decisions, children expressing their feelings freely, etc.). She maintained, how-

ever, that choosing one of the methods and sticking to it can affect the children's lives negatively; therefore, she suggested that the parents should adopt balanced methods in raising children by combining the old and the new.

Sayyidah Dr Taghreed stated that there are four main factors that affect the methods adopted by parents in their dealings with children, and they are personal factors (personalities, ideas, issues and previous experiences), family factors (divorce, domestic violence and marital disputes), societal factors (intervention of the extended family, the media, social media, customs and traditions and religion) and global factors (the Internet and the virtual world).

With the COVID-19 circumstances, Sayyidah Basma believed that home quarantine is an opportunity for parents to get to know their children closely. She hoped that the atmosphere will be appropriate to adopt positive methods of dealing with children, which combines firmness and softness. She indicated that home quarantine is an opportunity for parents to review and correct many matters of how they raise their children. It is also an opportunity to examine the dynamics of the relationships among family members and to provide a space for creativity and achievement.

Sayyidah Basma emphasised the importance of having a daily routine during home quarantine. She pointed out that home quarantine can create chaos in households with the all the free time, such as continuous sleeping during the day, not organising regular meals and not spending the days like usually.

TIME TO GIVE A BOOST TO OMANI MEDICINAL PLANTS

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: At a time when body immunity has become major factor to deal with a pandemic like COVID-19, this is right time for a country like Oman to look at its own strength of medicinal plants, which are in abundance and spread all over – from north to south.

Omani herbal medicines have been tested and they were in use on a large scale until recently in the community for cure of many diseases. Researchers Shahina A Ghazanfar and Ahmed Mohammed Ali al Sabahi have rightly mentioned that “traditional medicine, which comprised healing by using plants, religious and other methods, have become less popular still they are in use.”

At the time doing their research they found that though major diseases were treated in hospitals, many minor ailments such as headache, stomach upset, colds and fever were treated by medicinal plants. “Herbal medicines are dis-



pensed by healers who may be family elders or professional healers called Ghazanfar,” they said.

The above statement is strong indication towards a system that was prevalent in the traditional Omani society. Under the influence of modern developments and setting up of super specialty healthcare system, that knowledge has been sidelined but that strong potential of the country

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE, WHICH COMPRISED HEALING BY USING PLANTS, RELIGIOUS AND OTHER METHODS, HAVE BECOME LESS POPULAR STILL THEY ARE IN USE

needs to be preserved developed in a scientific manner.

An Ayurvedic doctor from India who practiced in Oman for a long time also threw light on the availability of medicinal plants in Oman and said convincingly that “among some 1,400 plant species there are several rare medicinal plants, which are yet to be documented in terms of their value. Some experts find the land natural home of many medicinal plants with high potency and purity.”

Dr Kapil came across 60 plants species which are loaded with medicinal value but he did not find them documented for the purpose of medicinal use.

The expert, however, was surprised to know that many of those plants were in use in Old Omani houses in Dhofar to address many day-to-day health issues. He also reminded that many of these plants were helpful in boosting body immunity and thus keeping many diseases at bay.



Libyan Coast Guard rescues 300 illegal immigrants

TRIPOLI: The Libyan Coast Guard has rescued more than 300 illegal immigrants and brought them back to the capital Tripoli, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said.

“Today at dawn, Libyan Coast Guard returned to Tripoli 315 refugees and migrants after being intercepted/rescued at sea aboard several boats”, the UNHCR tweeted.

Two persons lost their lives and their bodies were recovered. UNHCR partner IRC (International Rescue Committee) was on site to provide urgent medical care to all survivors”, Xinhua news agency quoted the Agency as further saying. — **IANIS**

IRAN RESTAURANTS, CAFES REOPEN AFTER 2 MONTHS

TEHRAN: Restaurants and cafes reopened in Iran on Tuesday after over two months of closure due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Mohsen Farhadi, Deputy Health Minister, on Tuesday said that all the restaurants will restart their activities observing certain health protocols, reports Xinhua

news agency.

Besides, the cafes will begin their services without offering tobacco, said Farhadi in a video press conference.

Tourist sites across the country reopened on Sunday. Meanwhile, all workers in the country will return to work from May 30.

Iran has gradually eased restrictions on economy and

cultural activities since early April. The country suspended economic, sports and cultural activities since early March following the reports of first COVID-19 cases on February 19.

As of Tuesday, the country, one of the worst-hit in the Middle East, reported 137,724 COVID-19 cases, with 7,451 deaths. — **IANIS**

New wave of locusts raises fear for crops

NEW DELHI: A new wave of locust attacks has alarmed India's farmers and experts warn of extensive crop losses if authorities fail to curb fast-spreading swarms by June when monsoon rains spur rice, cane, corn, cotton and soybean sowing.

Desert locusts have engulfed around 35,000 hectares in India's seven heartland states, threatening some vegetable and pulse crops, government officials and farm experts said.

Despite large-scale infestations, the government and agricultural experts do not foresee



Desert locusts have engulfed around 35,000 hectares in India's seven heartland states. — **Reuters**

major crop damage for now as it is the lean sea-

son - the gap between the previous harvest and the

next planting season.

But experts warn that the federal and state governments will have to stop locusts in their tracks in the next couple of weeks to ensure that swarms do not end up devouring summer crops.

“Despite the unprecedented scale of the locust attack, we haven't seen any major crop loss, but we've got a very short window to tackle the problem. Otherwise, we won't be able to save our summer crops”, said Bhagirath Choudhary, Director of the South Asia Biotech Centre, a non-profit scientific society. — **Reuters**

UK MINISTER QUILTS OVER CUMMINGS LOCKDOWN TRIP

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government was hit by its first resignation on Tuesday over the controversy surrounding his top aide Dominic Cummings' cross-country trip during the coronavirus lockdown.

Undermining attempts by ministers to try and move on from the crisis which has dominated British politics for days, Douglas Ross, a minister for Scotland, quit in protest.

"I have constituents who didn't get to say goodbye to loved ones; families who could not mourn together; people who didn't visit sick relatives because they followed the guidance of the government", he said in a Twitter statement announcing his departure.

"I cannot in good faith tell them they were all wrong and one senior adviser to the government was right".

He added that Cummings' interpretation of government rules was "not shared by the vast majority of people".

The resignation will pile more pressure on Cummings, who held an extraordinary press conference on Monday to justify driving his wife and young son on a 425 km trip from London to Durham in the northeast of England during the height of the coronavirus crisis.

Cummings has said he



Dominic Cummings, special adviser for Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson. — Reuters

had the virus around the time of the trip, and his wife was confirmed as having contracted COVID-19.

Not long after Ross quit, Harriet Baldwin joined a growing list of Conservative MPs calling on Cummings to resign.

Another MP, Mark Pawsey, said Cummings had acted "against the spirit of the lockdown" and should be sacked, while MP William Wragg tweeted that the government was throwing away "political goodwill" over the scandal.

Tory party grandee Michael Heseltine told Sky

News that "the lack of credibility" in Cummings' version of events was "damaging the government".

A YouGov poll taken after Cummings' press conference found that 59 per cent of respondents thought he should resign, up from 52 per cent.

More than two-thirds — 71 per cent — thought he had broken the government's lockdown rules.

Some members of the clergy have also called on him to stand down as well as opposition party members, who will meet later today regarding the crisis.

Downing Street said it "regrets" the decision by Ross. The resignation came after a cabinet heavyweight defended Cummings and said the controversial aide did not break the law.

Michael Gove, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, said Cummings had acted reasonably in driving from London to Durham and then taking a separate journey to a local beauty spot, Barnard Castle, to — as Cummings claimed — test his eyesight.

"What's clear is that he didn't break the law, he didn't break the rules, he sought to protect his family and he also sought to ensure that the risk of anyone in his family infecting anyone else was absolutely minimised", Gove told the BBC on Tuesday. — AFP

COULD A SPACE CONGESTION CHARGE CLEAR UP JUNK-RIDDEN SKIES?

UMBERTO BACCHI

Countries should levy an "orbit congestion charge" on satellite operators to tackle the growing concentration of space junk cluttering the skies, researchers said on Monday, but with some doubting the practicalities of such a fee.

From dead satellites to bits of rockets, the amount of debris orbiting the planet is already so great that space agencies often have to alter the

course of satellites to avoid collisions. With the world increasingly reliant on orbital infrastructure to maintain communications links and steer new generations of autonomous vehicles, scientists warn that the danger posed by debris is growing exponentially.

The best way to deal with it would be to charge satellite operators an annual orbital-use fee for every satellite launched, according to an economics analysis by research-

ers at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

"Space is a common resource, but companies aren't accounting for the cost their satellites impose on other operators when they decide whether or not to launch", Matthew Burgess, who co-authored the study, said in a statement. "We need a policy that lets satellite operators directly factor in the costs their launches impose on other operators". — Thomson Reuters Foundation

WORLD

China's virus campaign offers glimpse into surveillance system

BEIJING: The coronavirus outbreak in China has given unprecedented glimpses into how an extensive system of surveillance cameras works, as monitoring stations are rebranded epidemic "war rooms" helping to check people's movements and stifle the disease.

China is trying to build one of the world's most sophisticated surveillance technology networks, with hundreds of millions of cameras in public places and increasing use of techniques such as smartphone monitoring and facial recognition.

This year, cities and villages across the country have used the system for what the government has labelled "an all-out people's war on coronavirus".

While authorities have primarily used mobile location data



CHINA IS TRYING TO BUILD ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST SOPHISTICATED SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY NETWORKS, WITH HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF CAMERAS IN PUBLIC PLACES AND INCREASING USE OF TECHNIQUES SUCH AS SMARTPHONE MONITORING AND FACIAL RECOGNITION

and ID-linked tracing apps to flag people coming back from abroad for quarantine, the camera surveillance system has played a crucial role, according to officials, state media and residents.

The network has been used to trace the contacts of people confirmed as infected with the virus, and to punish businesses and individuals flouting restrictions.

"This is a war situation", said a civil servant surnamed Wang in Tianjin city, who was involved in trac-

ing thousands of people linked to a coronavirus cluster at a department store.

"We must adopt war-time thinking".

Despite the hi-tech ambitions of the system, it is heavily dependent on a lot of people watching footage on screens.

Known as "grid members", they sit in monitoring rooms or squint over smartphone feeds from the networks of cameras.

"This type of surveillance is far more human driven than it is tech driven, said James Leibold, associate Professor at Australia's La Trobe University, who researched similar systems in China's far-west Xinjiang.

State media, officials and local governments have given accounts of the system in action in the campaign against the coronavirus.

— Reuters

Duterte says no school until there is a vaccine

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said he will not allow students to go back to school until a coronavirus vaccine is available, even as some countries resume in-person classes. Children were due to return to school at the end of August after classes for more than 25 million primary and secondary students were shut down in March as the contagion took off in the Philippines. But in a speech aired late on Monday, Duterte said the risk was too great, even if it held students back academically. "Unless I am sure that they are really safe it's useless to be talking about opening of classes", the president said.

SAUDI TO END VIRUS CURFEW FROM JUNE 21

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia will end its nationwide coronavirus curfew from June 21, except in the holy city of Mecca, the interior ministry said on Tuesday, after more than two months of stringent curbs. Prayers will also be allowed to resume in all mosques outside Mecca from May 31, the ministry said in a series of measures announced on the official Saudi Press Agency. The kingdom, which has reported the highest number of virus cases in the Gulf, imposed a full nationwide curfew during Eid al Fitr. The ministry said it will begin easing restrictions in a phased manner this week, with the curfew relaxed between 6 am and 3 pm between Thursday and Saturday.

Afghanistan to free 900 more Taliban prisoners

KABUL: Afghan authorities plan to release 900 more Taliban prisoners, as calls grew for the militants to extend a ceasefire on its third and final day. The pause in fighting — which came into effect from Sunday to mark Eid al Fitr — was, for the most part, holding across the country, officials said.

The government responded to the Taliban's three-day ceasefire offer on Sunday by announcing plans to release up to 2,000 insurgent prisoners. On Monday they freed 100, and will release another 900, the government said — the biggest group of Taliban prisoners to be freed so far.

— Agencies

ANALYSIS



Men wearing protective masks walk inside a hospital in Mumbai, India. — Reuters

More patients than beds in Mumbai as virus surges

ABHIRUP ROY AND ADITYA KALRA

When Manit Parikh's mother tested positive for the new coronavirus, she was rushed by ambulance to Mumbai's private Lilavati Hospital, but officials told the family no critical-care beds were available. Five hours and dozens of phone calls later the family found a bed for her at the private Bombay Hospital. A day later, on May 18, Parikh's 92-year-old diabetic grandfather had breathing difficulties at home and was taken to the city's Breach Candy Hospital, another top private facility, but there were no beds. "My dad was pleading with them," Parikh said. "They said they didn't have a bed, not even a normal bed." Later that day, they found a bed at Bombay Hospital but his grandfather died hours later. His test results showed he was infected with the virus.

Parikh said he believes the delays contributed to his grandfather's death. Officials at Lilavati and Bombay Hospital declined to speak with Reuters. Representatives of Breach Candy hospital did not respond to requests for comment. For years, India's booming private hospitals have taken some of the strain off the country's underfunded and dilapidated public health network, but the ordeal of Parikh's family suggests that as coronavirus cases explode in India, even private facilities are at risk of being overrun. India on Sunday reported 6,767 new coronavirus infections, the country's biggest one-day increase. Government data shows the number of coronavirus cases in the world's second-most populous country are doubling every 13 days or so, even as the government begins easing lockdown restrictions. India has reported more than 131,000 infections, including 3,867 deaths. — Reuters

An unforgivable behaviour



Samuel Kutty
samkuttyobserver@gmail.com

It is saddening, rather horrifying to see the reckless and selfish behaviour of some people who break the laws and guidelines issued by the authorities to combat the coronavirus pandemic. Even heartfelt appeals from all the corners have fell on their deaf ears as they simply refuse to change their behaviour. Gathering for marriages, organising get-togethers, playing cricket and going out even without masks should definitely be seen as inconsiderate actions which need to be handled strictly. Why are these people finding it difficult to act in accordance with the minimal demands of responsibility? Why are they not standing together while keeping a distance in the combat against the pandemic? Why don't all acknowledge the fact that this distancing will help them move forward? I don't think those who were caught for playing cricket or others who assembled to organise parties lacked basic knowledge or elementary education to understand the perils behind their actions. The fact is they knowingly ignore the severity of the pandemic — a

crime that doesn't deserve any forgiveness. Any explanation to the hazardous act is not an excuse. Any one of us could be carrying the coronavirus. We are all distracted and needing to cope with a different daily life now. By going out, we might be unwittingly infecting others. Personal responsibility is often based on the ability to relate emotionally to other human beings — their hopes and fears, their pain and suffering. It also involves morality. If helping a person involved in an accident is our moral responsibility, ensuring the safety of others while we are at the wheels is also equally important. The same law applies in the current situation of the pandemic when acts of social commitments like distancing can make a big difference. It is easy to flout the call for stay at home, social distancing or wearing masks. But if we try to live and guided by our instincts, we will be putting ourselves and others at risk. Every one of us is having the trouble adjusting to a world in which leaving our own house for frivolous reasons carries the risk of a homicide.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this page are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the opinion of the Observer.

FEATURES

Inspiring young Omanis to innovate and dream big

YERU EBUEN

The people who changed the world are the crazy ones who chase after their dreams and make their ideas into reality. For Ahmed al Kindi, a young Omani entrepreneur, he wants to be that for Oman.

Ahmed believes that many of the innovations we see in the world today are because of people like Elon Musk, Steve Jobs, and Mark Zuckerberg who did not settle down to follow the common path.

"If I'm not crazy enough, then I will not change the world. If I want to change it, I should be crazy enough as an entrepreneur," he said.

Ahmed said that he has studied the outline of Oman's Vision 2040 and he believes that it is only achievable if the young people of Oman started taking it seriously as well.

"We have so much catching up to do from our neighboring countries of Qatar and the UAE. When it comes to innovation, we are lagging. We have to improve the quality of the things we do if we are ever to catch up to them and make Vision 2040 a reality," he said.

At a young age, Ahmed is yet to graduate from his business course at the German University of Technology in the last quar-

ter of 2021. But just because he doesn't have his diploma yet doesn't mean that he is incapacitated to put some of his projects to work.

"I have so many ideas covering different aspects of the Oman society that needed improvement. I'm looking into nanotechnology and pioneer it in Oman. I'm looking at improving crop production through greenhouses but bringing the latest state-of-the-art technology to the country," he said.

"One of our problems right now is that a lot of the businesses in the country, they are a commercial copy of everything else. By this I mean, there is no innovation. A simple case study is a burger joint. There's a lot of burger joint being built but nothing extraordinary from one restaurant to another. Our young people especially those who are in small and medium businesses must start at looking things from a different perspective — from an innovative perspective," he said.

"We can create crazier ideas for restaurants. Part of what I do is to share and foster this crazy ideas to inspire growth within the community," he said.

Ahmed includes being a life coach, a business mentor, and a communications trainer in his resume.

He has organized more than 50 seminar-workshops teaching businesses and entrepreneurs like himself to be successful in their

endeavors.

"I create and customize the program depending on who the target audience is. It covers almost everything, from how to create a sustainable business model, to the fundamentals of digital marketing, to how to take their business to the next step," he said.

As of today, Ahmed is already the CEO of his very own company AK Enterprise that focuses on his passion for e-commerce, business motivation, leadership training, and entrepreneurship workshops. Simultaneously, he has founded 1-2 All Webinar and LightTk, the former focused on creating a seamless experience for webinars and the later, focused on enhancing commercial spaces lighting technology incorporating modern smart technology into the product.

"I get all my ideas from everywhere. I have a connection with people who are experts in their fields. I study the latest innovation from Iran and other countries with the hope of bringing and making it a reality in Oman," he said.

"I wouldn't quantify myself as a normal entrepreneur. A normal entrepreneur will not change anything. But I see myself as a crazy one who is not afraid to take things to the next step. We need more crazy business ideas in Oman so that we can make the Vision 2040 a reality," he said.

Follow Ahmed:

 @ceo_ahmed

FEATURES

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



patrycja.ryba.photography • Follow
Ras Al Hamra Beach, Muscat



kumkum_nature_capture_sl • Follow
As Salalah, Zūfār, Oman



halfdevil_ • Follow
Mutrah Cornich



JK Rowling publishes fairy tale so children can dream in lockdown

LONDON: J.K. Rowling published the first chapters of a fairy tale about a monster known as the Ickabog on Tuesday, an allegory about truth and abuse of power that is free online so that children can read it during coronavirus lockdown.

The story concerns rumours of a fierce child-eating monster with extraordinary powers which lives in the northern tip of an imaginary land known as Cornucopia.

Further chapters will be published every weekday until July 10, Rowling said on Twitter, adding in capitals: "THIS IS NOT A HARRY POTTER SPIN-OFF".

Rowling got the idea for The Ickabog when she was writing Harry Potter and she intended it to be published after "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows", the last of her seven-book Potter series.

But the mostly handwritten manuscript ended up in her attic and stayed there for a decade until a few weeks ago. She has rewritten parts of it in recent weeks.

"The Ickabog is a story about truth and the abuse of power," said Rowling, 54. "The themes are timeless and could apply to any era or any country."

"To forestall one obvious question: the idea came to me well over a decade ago, so it isn't intended to be read as a response to anything that's happening in the world right now," she said.

The first chapters of the fairy tale were published on The Ickabog website on Tuesday.

"I've decided to publish The Ickabog for free online, so children on lockdown, or even those back at school during these strange, unsettling times, can read it or have it read to them," Rowling said.

She will donate her royalties to projects and organisations helping the groups most impacted by COVID-19.

The Harry Potter books tell the saga of a young wizard's battle with evil in the form of Lord Voldemort. The series has been translated into over 80 languages and sold more than 500 million copies worldwide. — **Reuters**

Global film festival aims to bridge coronavirus distances



THE CANNES FILM festival was canceled and the September jamborees in Venice and Toronto are uncertain but this week movie lovers are being offered a taste of the film festival experience from the comfort of their homes.

The 10-day "We Are One: A Global Film Festival," starting Friday on YouTube, will feature new and classic movies, talks with directors, and music and comedy curated by 21 festivals including those in Berlin, Cannes, Venice, Toronto and New York.

The coronavirus pandemic has forced the cancellation of multiple cultural events where independent movies are first launched.

"We Are One" will stream more than 100 movies representing 35 nations. The program includes the world premiere of documentary "Iron Hammer" about former Chinese Olympic volleyball star "Jenny" Lang Ping, talks with directors Bong Joon Ho and Guillermo del Toro, and a 20th anniversary reun-

ion of the cast of "Almost Famous."

"You'll be able to see a premiere of the film and during that premiere the filmmakers will come out and introduce it. There will be a talk afterward," said Jane Rosenthal, who organized the global event.

Rosenthal said she wanted not just to celebrate film but also to reach out to people who have never been to a film festival.

She said the idea sprang from the Tribecafilmfestival, which Rosenthal and actor Robert De Niro launched in 2002 to reinvigorate lower Manhattan after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center.

"We are all globally in the same place except this (coronavirus) is even harder. We can't physically gather. So I started thinking about how do we to pull the world together at a time of need," she said.

While the festival will stream for free, viewers will be asked to donate to the World Health Organization's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund. — **Reuters**

#It'sYourTurn with BankDhofar Savings Account!

Guaranteed monthly branch-wise prize
OMR 1,000
for one winner for each branch

Year-End Prize for Al Biddah Priority Banking customers
OMR 250,000 each
for two winners

Monthly Prizes for Al Biddah Priority Banking customers
OMR 25,000
for one winner (monthly)

Guaranteed Monthly Kids Prize
OMR 250
for each winner for each branch

Monthly Prizes
OMR 5,000 each
for 2 winners

National Day Prizes
OMR 10,000 each
for 5 winners

Monthly Youth Prizes
OMR 1,000 each
for 2 winners

Omani Women's Day Prizes
OMR 1,000 each
for 5 winners

Guaranteed prizes for every branch • Bigger prizes • More winners

Be a Winner with BankDhofar Savings Account

For more information www.bankdhofar.com/en-GB/Saving_Account.aspx


بنك ظفار
BankDhofar



the best bank for you

 2479 1111  www.bankdhofar.com

OMAN’S DEBT MARKET ‘BOOMED’ IN 2019: CMA

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's capital market witnessed a significant uptick in listed debt instruments in 2019, underscoring the increasing expanding role of debt in facilitating economic growth in the country, in parallel with the equity side of the capital market. New issuances ranged from corporate bonds and corporate sukuk to government



bonds and sovereign sukuk. According to the newly published

2019 Annual Report of the Capital Market Authority (CMA), there were as many as four corporate bond issuances (Sohar International Bank Perpetual Bonds, Al Omaniya Financial Services Bonus Stock Bonds, Ahli Bank Perpetual Bonds, and DIDIH Unsecured Subordinated Non-Convertible Bonds) in 2019 totalling RO 146.5 million in value. The sole sukuk issuance (Meethaq Sukuk Series 2) raised RO 45.6 million.

TURN TO PAGE 13

شركة المطاحن العمانية (ش.م.ع.)

Oman Flour Mills Co. (SAOG)

P.O. Box 566, P.C. 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman Tel: 24714300, Fax: 24714711

E-mail: info@omanflourmills.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

RESPECTED SHAREHOLDERS,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present Oman Flour Mills Company SAOG (the Parent Company) along with its subsidiaries (The Group's) un-audited financial statements for the three months ended 31 March 2020.

GROUP PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS:

Revenue: The Group achieved 1.6% growth in the total consolidated revenue. Major increase (value-wise) was made by the Milling segment, only one segment experienced a drop in revenue (3.6% drop in bakery segment). The total revenue recorded is RO 25.3m as compared to RO 24.9m recorded in the same period of previous year.

Expenses: Group total expenses decreased marginally by 0.8% compared to the same period in 2019, from to RO 22.2m to RO 22.1m. The main decrease was driven by the decrease in the overall cost of input materials (price factor).

Net Profit: As a result of the above, the net profit recorded for the period is RO 4,089,148 as compared to RO 2,311,519 recorded in corresponding period in 2019.

PARENT, SUBSIDIARY AND ASSOCIATES COMPANIES:

The performance of our subsidiaries and associate is as follows:

- Oman Flour Mills SAOG (OFM):** OFM recorded a profit totaling RO 4.35m as compared to previous year profit of RO 2.41m. Sales volume were up by 8.1% and this resulted in an overall increase in the revenue recorded by 7%. On the other hand, the raw material cost per ton decreased by 10%, this resulted in an overall increase in the profit.
- Atyab Food Industries LLC (AFI) (100%):** The bakery made a profit of RO 297 K as compared to previous year profit of RO 367 K. The bakery profitability has been affected due to decrease in sale due to the recent circumstances.
- Atyab FoodTech LLC (AFT) (100%):** AFT made a profit after tax of RO 118 K as compared to the previous year profit of RO 195 K. The decrease in profit is due to increased administration overheads. Staff count has increased in anticipation expansion of activities.
- Atyab Technical Services LLC (ATS) (100%):** ATS earned a net sponsorship fee of RO 58K as compared to RO 56 K in the previous year.
- Sohar Flour Mills LLC (SFM) (60%):** SFM In the current period SFM has incurred a loss of RO 669 compared to a loss of RO 274 in the same period last year. SFM commenced commercial production in March-19 and hence last year the operating loss was lower. The Grain Silo project (160Mt capacity) is progressing, this important addition will help improve the SFM position.
- Oman Oilseeds Crushing Company (30%):** is on schedule in implementing the project (Q1-2022), the project will be a good addition to the Group once the project is operational. In the current period the company has incurred RO 189 K in administrative expenses of which OFM Group's share is RO 42K.
- Atyab IFFCO Poultry (50%):**
 - Sohar Poultry Co SAOC (SPC):** SPC made a profit of RO 92k (previous year loss of RO 182k). The improved performance is due to better production performance and reduction of feed cost and own production.

Unaudited group statement of comprehensive income For the three months ended 31 March 2020

	Group		Parent Company	
	2020 RO '000	2019 RO '000	2020 RO '000	2019 RO '000
Revenue	25,293	24,897	21,082	19,726
Cost of sale	(19,605)	(20,053)	(16,822)	(16,940)
Gross profit	5,688	4,844	4,260	2,786
Selling & distribution expenses	(1,047)	(975)	(102)	(97)
Administration & general overheads	(1,156)	(1,068)	(647)	(373)
Profit from operations	3,485	2,801	3,511	2,316
Finance cost - net	(265)	(152)	-	-
Net investment income	1,283	271	1,283	228
Other income	142	-	84	-
	4,645	2,920	4,878	2,544
Share in Profit/(Loss) of subsidiary	-	-	66	242
Share in net Profit/(loss) of associates	10	(176)	(48)	-
Net profit before tax	4,655	2,744	4,896	2,786
Tax expense	(566)	(432)	(539)	(378)
Net profit for the year	4,089	2,312	4,357	2,408
Net profit for the period attributable to:				
Shareholders of the parent company	4,357	2,408	4,357	2,408
Non controlling interest in the subsidiary	(268)	(96)	-	-
Net profit for the period	4,089	2,312	4,357	2,408
Net profit margin	16.17%	9.28%	20.67%	12.20%

b. **Osool Poultry:** The project is in an advance stage, it is expected to be delivered Q1-2021

8. Arabian Food Production Company SAOC (AFPC) (33.33%):

- Modern Poultry Farms SAOC (MPF):** MPF has made a profit of RO 186k as compared to previous year profit of RO 119k. The increase in profit is due to higher sale and lower cost of sales. Following the resolution by the shareholders in the Ordinary General Meeting held on 13-Feb-2020, OFM's entire shareholding in MPF has been transferred to Arabian Food Production Company SAOC (an associate of Atyab Investments LLC) under a wider plan of investing in the poultry project in partnership with Gulf Japan Food Fund and IFFCO Group of UAE. Profit realized on transfer of the shareholding is included in the income of OFM.
- Emirates Poultry Farms (EPF):** The group (AFPC), completed the acquisition of EPF on 18th March 2020.
- Gulf Poultry Farms:** The new farm site section is under finalization

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

Several new initiatives were undertaken by the group featuring introduction of new products/ solutions.

During the current period the OFM has successfully completed two projects initiated last year. Implemented new ERP system and Lean Management.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR):

On the **Society** and **Environment** fronts, the Group has initiated several projects as part of its CSR program.

These projects covered a wide range of activities/beneficiaries such as sponsoring schools, youth training, sporting events, SME development, Ramadan initiatives, and other humanitarian aids.

Unaudited group statement of financial position as at 31 March 2020

	2020 RO '000	Group 2019 RO '000	Parent 2020 RO '000	Company 2019 RO '000
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	40,334	43,040	12,243	12,173
Investment property	37	37	37	37
Investment in Subsidiaries	-	-	16,868	17,878
Investment in associates	8,448	2,388	2,344	-
Intangible assets	173	153	-	-
Biological assets	-	1,428	-	-
Right to use asset	3,817	170	75	75
Investment available for sale, non-current	355	355	355	355
Total non-current assets	53,164	47,571	31,922	30,518
Current assets				
Inventories, net	21,328	20,289	18,413	17,245
Receivables and prepayments, net	21,696	18,794	15,171	11,816
Amounts due from subsidiaries-1	-	546	6,071	6,468
Amounts due from related parties	4,097	-	3,406	-
Investments available for sale	1,364	1,760	1,364	1,760
Short term deposits	5,000	9,053	5,000	9,053
Cash on hand and at bank	8,318	9,359	6,452	7,734
Total current assets	61,803	59,801	55,877	54,076
Total assets	114,967	107,372	87,799	84,594
Current liabilities				
Payables and accruals	12,347	5,304	10,155	2,853
Payable to related parties-2	-	-	134	-
Taxation	823	504	771	427
Dividend payable	-	7,875	-	7,875
Interest bearing loans	5,085	2,620	3,000	-
Total current liabilities	18,255	16,303	14,060	11,155
Non-current liabilities				
Interest bearing loans	17,419	14,508	-	-
Lease Liability	4,031	145	77	66
End of service benefits	952	1,009	463	438
Deferred tax	810	860	462	497
Total non-current liabilities	23,212	16,522	1,002	1,001
Minority Interest	627	1,972	-	-
Total liabilities	42,094	34,797	15,062	12,156
Net assets	72,873	72,575	72,737	72,438
Shareholders' equity				
Share capital	15,750	15,750	15,750	15,750
Legal reserve	6,467	6,263	5,250	5,250
General reserve	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Fair value reserve	105	105	105	105
Retained earnings	48,051	47,957	49,132	48,833
Total shareholders' equity	72,873	72,575	72,737	72,438

FUTURE OUTLOOK:

Macro factors that are affecting the globe, such as the outbreak of COVID-19 and the historical drop in the oil prices, caused extra turbulence on the overall Grain market which is going through a vortex.

Shifts in both demand and supplies balances also played a role in the overall market situation.

While raw material prices are flattening, managing the transportation and logistics still pose the key aspect to maintain smooth operations.

On the product offering front, OFM's plans to launch new products are progressing well, we expect these new products to hit the market in the upcoming months. In particular, the new rice line and, healthy breakfast and snacks are at an advance stage of finalizing the product design.

THANKS AND APPRECIATIONS:

The Members of the Board of Directors would like to extend their most sincere appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq and his Government for their support to the Company.

Best Regards,

Salah Hilal Al Maawali
Chairman, Oman Flour Mills Board of Directors

The complete accounts in either Arabic or English will be sent by mail within 7 days to any shareholder who requests for them.
P. O. Box 566, P. C. 112, Ruwi, Oman.Tel: 24717300, Fax: 24714711, E-mail: info@omanflourmills.com



BIDS DUE
BY MID-JULY
FOR OMAN
CEMENT'S
\$212M DUQM
PROJECT

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Bids are due in by mid-July for two key tenders linked to the establishment of a new integrated cement plant in the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) at Duqm in Oman's Wusta Governorate.

The client is Al Sahawa Cement Company (ASCC), a subsidiary of Oman Cement Company, the Sultanate's first cement manufacturer.

Total investment in the cement mill, which is among an array of cement projects envisaged for development in Duqm over the next several years, is estimated at \$212 million.

At its heart is a 5,000 tons per day (tpd) clinker production unit, a contract for which is proposed to be awarded on an Engineering

EXPANDING CAPACITY: IN ADDITION TO A 5,000 TPD CLINKER UNIT, THE PROJECT ALSO INCLUDES A CAPTIVE THERMAL POWER PLANT

– Procurement –
Construction (EPC) basis.

In a filing to the Capital Market Authority (CMA) earlier this year, publicly traded Oman Cement had announced that the Duqm project will be implemented in "backward integration mode" with ASCC producing cement with clinker initially sourced from the Muscat-based parent company. In this phase, cement will be available in the local market as early as during September 2021, it said.

Work on the clinker production unit is expected to be pursued in parallel with the construction of a cement grinding unit, with

commissioning slated during March 2022, it noted.

Importantly, Oman Cement has also invited bids for the supply and installation of a Captive Thermal Power Plant featuring a pair of turbines each of 15 megawatts (MW) capacity.

The thermal power plant, which is expected to utilise waste gases from the cement mill to generate electricity, will dramatically reduce the new project's energy costs, as well as mitigate its carbon footprint.

Significantly, the new Duqm project will mark the parent group's first expansion beyond its flagship

plant at Misfah in Muscat Governorate. Majority-owned by the Omani government (represented by sovereign wealth fund Oman Investment Fund with a 53.67 per cent stake), Oman Cement was established in 1978 with a clinker capacity of around 600,000 tons per annum. Following a series of expansions and upgrades, its capacity has since grown to 3.6 million tons per annum.

MSM-listed Raysut Cement Company, the largest cement manufacturer in the Sultanate, has also announced an initial investment of \$30 million towards the construction of a new cement grinding unit at Duqm. The facility is coming up on a plot of land administered by the Port of Duqm Company.

FROM PAGE 12

By the end of 2019, a total of 16 corporate bond issuances totaling RO 556 million in value were listed on the MSM. So were five corporate sukuk totaling RO 169.7 million in value. Also during the year, three government bonds were issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) of a total value of RO 400 million. In addition, the state-owned Oman Sovereign Sukuk Company launched Sukuk Al Ijarah in favour of the Omani government rep-

Oman's debt market
'boomed' in 2019: CMA

resented by the Ministry of Finance.

Offered in two issues by way of private placements via the book-building process, they raised RO 300 million.

By the end of 2019, as many as 19 government bonds (totalling RO 2.63 billion in value) and three sukuk (RO 550 million) were listed on the MSM.

In recent years, the MSM has seen a significant increase in the number and variety of debt instruments listed on the exchange.

Once limited to a handful of government and corporate bonds, they now include government development bonds, US dollar denominated and Omani-riyal denominated

sovereign sukuk, perpetual bonds issued by both banks and non-banking entities, corporate bonds and corporate sukuk.

Bonds and sukuk, aggregating RO 3.92 billion in value last year, accounted for a 21 per cent share of the MSM's market capitalisation of RO 18.77 billion. This compares with a total value of RO 560 million in 2011, representing a roughly 5 per cent share of the MSM's capitalisation of just over RO 10 billion then.

BUSINESS

WINNING STRATEGY FOR SMES POST COVID - 19



A V MANOHAR

avm@wisdomoman.com

In the economic development of Oman, the SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) sector has been playing a positive role, be it in production or services or job creation. Having established steady growth over the years, now the number of SMEs has crossed 43,000-mark, thanks to the sizeable allocation made in the Annual Budget for SME development, training human resources, and also nurturing In-Country Value development.

The sudden manifestation of COVID - 19 with unimaginable magnitude has left industries, big or small, in a state of disarray.

SMEs, whose business model is compact and operating with a few hands, now face multi-dimensional problems in the form of falling sales, decline in collections, unsold inventory, supply-chain disruption, default in payments, cash flow and liquidity crises, erosion of profitability, and funding shortfalls.

Some smart solutions to overcome these challenges are as follows:

1. Integration of similar businesses by merger or acquisition enhances the revenue potentials, expands the product range, widens the clientele, opens up unexplored markets, tunes up the managerial skills and above all sets in place an upgraded business orientation matching to the changed environment.

SMES, WHOSE BUSINESS MODEL IS COMPACT AND OPERATING WITH A FEW HANDS, NOW FACE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL PROBLEMS IN THE FORM OF FALLING SALES, DECLINE IN COLLECTIONS, UNSOLD INVENTORY, SUPPLY-CHAIN DISRUPTION, DEFAULT IN PAYMENTS, CASH FLOW AND LIQUIDITY CRISES, EROSION OF PROFITABILITY, AND FUNDING SHORTFALLS.

2. Cutting down on loss-making activities and uneconomical products, though painful, but are prudent steps.

3. Owners need to understand the business basics more, especially the financial terms and figures and do a complete analysis of past data, sales pattern - product-wise, customer-wise and location-wise, cost structure of all products, gross margin and breakdown of costs. Such a deep analysis shall help in improving pricing decisions, competitiveness and profitability of products.

4. A serious review of costs, be it direct or indirect, variable or fixed, controllable or uncontrollable shall be undertaken on priority and appropriate actions initiated to remove unnecessary costs. The maxim "Minimise Costs; Maximise Productivity" shall keep the profit margin intact. "Work from Home" too has some cost

benefits.

5. Capacity utilisation is an open secret for success and any unutilised capacity is a sunk-cost that adds to company's burden. Hence, finding ways of utilising idle capacity, either by manufacture of additional products or pursuing contract manufacturing jobs, becomes a priority.

6. Marketing requires a face-lift and a new frame. Setting up a web-site, on-line marketing, digital promotions, web-oriented systems and procedures are some proactive actions needed to catch up new market.

7. A blueprint containing innovative strategies, realistic pricing, flexible payment options, revised sales terms and home deliveries should be ready for implementation.

8. The emphasis is on maintaining relationships, be it customers or suppliers and a flexible installment payment plan should pave the way for amicable settlements.

9. Preparation of financial projections for the next three years, under conservative assumptions and also arriving at working capital requirements shall reveal the peak and trough positions of profitability and liquidity. This will be helpful for accessing bank funds and new capital.

10. Seeking guidance from experts on the way forward is also indispensable.

[The author is CEO of Wisdom Business and Training Services.]

ECB prepares for the worst: Life without the Bundesbank



The European Central Bank (ECB) is drafting contingency plans to carry out its multi-trillion bond-buying programme without the Bundesbank in case Germany's top court forces the main participant in the scheme to quit.

In this worst-case scenario, the ECB would launch an unprecedented legal action against the German central bank, its biggest shareholder, to bring it back into the programme.

The moves would likely mark a moment of truth for the euro, testing Germany's commitment to a currency it played the biggest role in creating and forcing it to tackle some deep-seated reservations within the country about ECB policies.

Germany's constitutional court has given the ECB until early August to justify its massive buying of government bonds or continue the scheme without the Bundesbank, which is supposed to carry out more than a quarter of the bond purchases.

Most of the sources expect the legal challenge from the court in Karlsruhe to be resolved by the Bundesbank itself by demonstrating that the policy was appropriate and addressing concerns about its side effects.

But staff at the ECB and the euro zone's national central banks are preparing for what one source described as the "unbelievable": a scenario in which the court bans the Bundesbank from taking part in the purchases. — Reuters

Singapore warns of worst economic contraction since independence



A water fountain is seen in an empty Merlion Park along Marina Bay in Singapore. — Reuters

SINGAPORE: Singapore's virus-hit economy could shrink by as much as seven per cent this year — the worst reading since independence — the government said on Tuesday, as it unveiled a fresh multi-billion dollar stimulus package.

The city-state is seen as a bellwether of the global economy, and the forecast historic contraction highlights the extreme pain being wrought on coun-

THE FINANCIAL HUB IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST OPEN ECONOMIES, AND IS USUALLY HIT HARDEST AND EARLIEST DURING ANY GLOBAL SHOCK.

tries by the killer disease. The warning came as

Singapore's deputy prime minister unveiled a fresh support package worth Sg\$33 billion (\$23.2 billion) for the troubled city, which has been crippled by months of lockdowns around the world

The trade ministry's forecast — which was a downgrade from the maximum four per cent contraction predicted in March — came as official data showed the economy shrank 0.7 per cent on-

year in the first three months of the year, while it reduced 4.7 per cent from the previous quarter.

The financial hub is one of the world's most open economies, and is usually hit hardest and earliest during any global shock.

The ministry said the new estimate was made "in view of the deterioration in the external demand outlook" and the partial lockdown imposed domestically.

A contraction of seven per cent would be the worst since the city's independence in 1965.

Shutdowns in major markets such as the United States, Europe and China have crippled demand for exports, and a halt in international air travel has hammered Singapore's key tourism sector.

Singapore has ordered the closure of most businesses, advised people to stay at home, and banned large gatherings.

While officials say they may start relaxing the rules from early June, many restrictions will remain in place. — AFP

Russia's Novak to discuss oil cuts extension with oil majors

MOSCOW: Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak (pictured) is due meet oil majors to discuss the implementation of global oil production curbs and the possible extension of the current level of cuts beyond June, sources familiar with the plans said.

The meeting is a further sign that Moscow is committed to supporting

any future joint steps to stabilise oil markets for as long as may be required, after slashing its production to close to its quota under the global deal.

The Organization of



the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other leading oil producers including Russia, a group known as Opec+, agreed last month to cut their combined output by almost 10 million barrels per day in

May-June to shore up prices and demand, which has been hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Sources said earlier this month that Opec+ wanted to maintain existing oil cuts beyond June, when the group is next due to meet and after which the output reductions are currently set to be eased to 8 million bpd until December. — Reuters



A LATAM Airlines Boeing 787-9 plane takes off from Los Angeles International airport (LAX) in Los Angeles, California, in this file photo. — Reuters

LATIN AMERICA'S LARGEST AIRLINE LATAM FILES FOR BANKRUPTCY

WASHINGTON: Latin America's largest airline LATAM Airlines Group SA said on Tuesday the company and its affiliates in Chile, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and the US have filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the United States.

LATAM is the latest corporate victim of the coronavirus pandemic that has brought a virtual halt to air travel, joining Colombia's Avianca Holdings SA and Australia's Virgin Australia Holdings Ltd in bankruptcy protection as it seeks to restructure its debt.

"We have implemented a series of difficult measures to mitigate the impact of this unprecedented industry disruption, but ultimately this path represents the best option," LATAM Chief Executive

Officer Roberto Alvo said in a statement.

The airline will continue to fly while it is in bankruptcy protection and its affiliates in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay were not included in the Chapter 11 filing.

US carrier Delta Air Lines Inc is the biggest shareholder in LATAM, having last year paid \$1.9 billion for a 20 per cent stake during better times for the industry.

LATAM said it had secured funding from other major shareholders, including the Cueto and Amaro families and Qatar Airways, to provide up to \$900 million in debtor-in-possession financing.

"To the extent permitted by law, the group would welcome other shareholders interested in participating in this process to provide

additional financing," the airline said, adding it had about \$1.3 billion in cash on hand.

LATAM listed assets and liabilities in the range of \$10 billion and \$50 billion, according to a filing with the US Bankruptcy Court in Southern District of New York.

The airline was downgraded by S&P and Fitch on Friday after the company confirmed it did not pay interest and principal on three tranches of 2015 \$1 billion enhanced equipment trust certificates.

LATAM, formed when Chile's LAN merged with Brazil's TAM in 2012, said its Brazilian affiliates are in discussions with the Brazilian government about the next steps and financial support for operations in the country.

— Reuters

Oil prices rise on supply cut hopes

MELBOURNE: Oil prices climbed on Tuesday, boosted by increasing faith in the market that producers will to stick to commitments to cut crude supply while demand picks up with more cars back on the road as coronavirus lockdowns are eased around the world.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures gained 3.2 per cent, or \$1.06, to \$34.31 a barrel as of 0429 GMT, just off an intra-day high of \$34.33.

There was no WTI settlement on Monday because of the US Memorial Day holiday.

Brent crude futures were up nearly 1.7 per cent, or 59 cents to \$36.12, adding to a 1.1 per cent gain on Monday in thin holiday trading.

The market was buoyed by comments from Russia reporting its oil output had nearly dropped to its target of 8.5 million barrels per day (bpd) for May and June under its supply cut deal with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and other leading producers, a grouping known as Opec+.

"There's definitely a feeling those cuts have come through as well as you could expect," said Daniel Hynes, senior commodity strategist at Australia and New Zealand Banking Group.

— Reuters

OPEC+ COUNTRIES ARE SET TO MEET AGAIN IN EARLY JUNE TO DISCUSS MAINTAINING THEIR SUPPLY CUTS TO SHORE UP PRICES, WHICH ARE STILL DOWN AROUND 45 PER CENT SINCE THE START OF THE YEAR.



Pumpjacks are seen during sunset at the Daqing oil field in Heilongjiang province, China. — Reuters



FFA MUST GET CREATIVE TO REVITALISE GAME: MOORE

MELBOURNE: Broadcasters have not been getting “bang for their buck” from Australian soccer in recent years and creative solutions are urgently needed to revitalise the game, former Socceroos defender Craig Moore has said.

Moore, who is spearheading the ‘Golden Generation’ group pressing for change in Australian soccer, said COVID-19 had heaped more pressure on administrators already battling to reverse declines in ratings and crowds.

“The numbers are telling us there’s such a huge concern with broadcast in terms of bang for buck”, Moore said in an interview.

“There’s not enough people watching and engaging with the product.

“There’s certainly been a lot of

ideas thrown around. But we really need to start seeing some positive changes to our game to make sure we keep moving forward — because it is a concern that people are losing interest”.

News Corp-owned Fox Sports is midway through a six-year rights deal with Football Federation Australia (FFA) worth A\$57 million a year, which covers the top-flight A-League and international matches.

The deal effectively bankrolls the game but Fox Sports, which has announced rounds of job cuts in recent months, is seeking to renegotiate terms following the suspension of the A-League in March due to the coronavirus shutdown.

The A-League, which has five

rounds of the regular season and the championship playoffs left to play, hopes to resume in July and wrap up the competition in August.

NEW WAYS NEEDED

Moore said the FFA had to find new ways of increasing the game’s exposure, whether by boosting air-time on free-to-air channels or by streaming its own content.

Some of the funding to enable that might come from slashing administration costs in a sport saddled with bureaucracy at state and regional level.

“We need to look at the member federations and look to work through the layers of administration that are currently there”, said Moore. — **Reuters**

SPORTS



MCILROY
HOPES RYDER CUP WILL
BE MOVED TO 2021

LONDON: Rory McIlroy believes the Ryder Cup will be moved back to 2021 under pressure from players to not lose the unique atmosphere of the biennial event behind closed doors. The coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc on the golfing calendar with the three US-based majors moved to later in the year and the British Open cancelled. The Ryder Cup is still scheduled to take place from September 25-27 in Wisconsin, but spectators would almost certainly not be allowed to attend if it did go ahead.

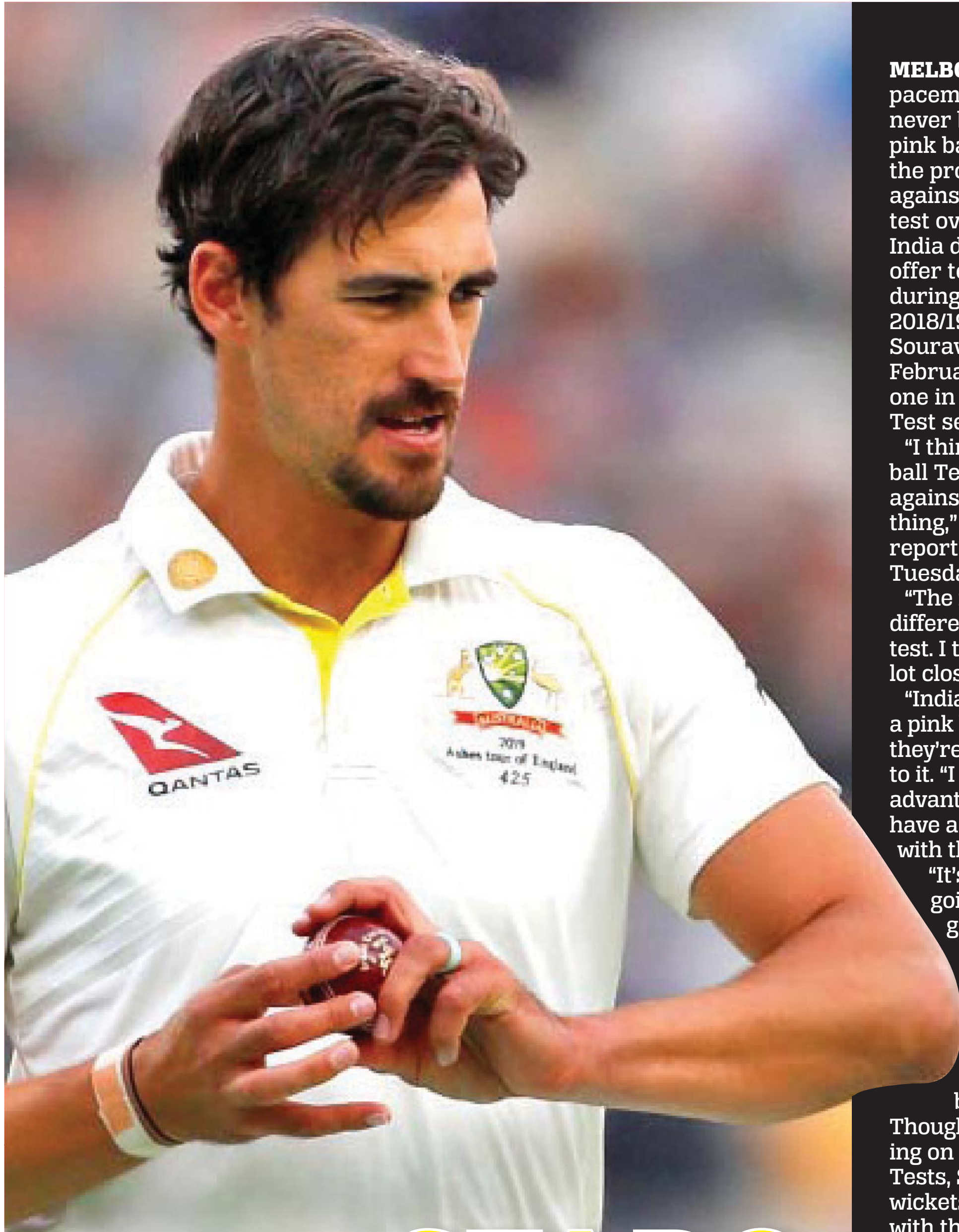
"I think the majority of players would like to see it pushed back until 2021 so that they can play in front of the atmosphere they want to play", McIlroy told BBC Northern Ireland. "They want to play in front of crowds, that makes the Ryder Cup so special. "At the end of the day the players are the ones that make the Ryder Cup and if they don't want to play then there isn't a Ryder Cup. "I see it being pushed back to 2021 and honestly I think that would be the right call". European Ryder Cup captain Padraig

Harrington has previously warned his players that they may have to sacrifice the thrill of playing in front of big crowds for the good of golf fans watching at home. "The players don't want it but we might have to take one for the world of team sport and put an event on that people can watch", said Harrington earlier this month. "It wouldn't be the same for us but we're craving sport on TV". McIlroy is facing a busy end to the year with the PGA Tour set to return from June 11. — AFP

Man City stalwart Pardoe dead at 73



LONDON: Manchester City's youngest-ever player Glyn Pardoe, who made his first team debut at 15 years and 314 days in 1962, has died suddenly at the age of 73, the Premier League club said on Tuesday. Pardoe, who started as a forward and ended as a defender, helped City win the league title in 1968, the FA Cup in 1969 and also scored the winning goal in the 1970 League Cup final against West Bromwich Albion. He was also in City's triumphant European Cup Winners' Cup team of 1970. City paid tribute to "one of our greatest servants" on their website. Pardoe spent his entire career at City, making his debut against Birmingham City as a centre forward but finding a more permanent role as a right-footed left-back from 1966. In 1970 he broke his leg in a tackle with Manchester United's George Best, an injury that took him nearly two years to recover from. He retired in 1976 after 380 appearances and 22 goals for the club. "He was a terrific defender and I'm sure that but for that bad leg break he suffered in 1970 Glyn would have played for England", former team-mate Colin Bell told the City website. Manchester City's teenage midfielder Tommy Doyle is his grandson. — Reuters



STARC WANTS PINK BALL FOR INDIA SERIES

MELBOURNE: Australia paceman Mitchell Starc has never been a huge fan of the pink ball but would welcome the prospect of bowling it against India in a day-night test over the home summer. India declined Australia's offer to play a day-night Test during their last tour in 2018/19 but board president Sourav Ganguly said in February they had agreed to one in the upcoming four-Test series.

"I think absolutely a pink ball Test in this series against India is a great thing," left-armers Starc told reporters in a video call on Tuesday.

"The fans love it, it creates a different aspect of the contest. I think bat and ball are a lot closer together.

"India have obviously played a pink ball Test at home so they're not completely foreign to it. "I guess in terms of the advantage if you like, we do have a good record at home with the pink ball.

"It's no different to us going to India and they've got the advantage there."

Australia have won all seven day-night Tests they have played and Starc's prowess with the pink ball has been key.

Though wary of it encroaching on traditional red-ball day Tests, Starc has taken 42 wickets at an average of 19.23 with the pink ball against an average of 26.97 in all Tests.

SALIVA BAN TO HIT BOWLERS

The 30-year-old also said he was concerned the International Cricket Council's recommendation to ban the use of saliva to shine the ball when the sport returns after the coronavirus shutdown would hand batsmen a big advantage.

Bowlers needed some help to get the ball to swing if saliva was banned, he added.

"Kids aren't going to want to be bowlers because as we saw in Australia over the last couple of years, there were some pretty flat wickets and if that ball's going straight, it's a pretty boring contest," he said. — Reuters

SPORTS

Injured Poulsen may miss season

RB Leipzig forward damaged ligaments in his right ankle

BERLIN: RB Leipzig forward Yussuf Poulsen could be out for the rest of the season after the Bundesliga club said on Tuesday he had damaged ligaments in his right ankle.

Leipzig said an MRI scan on Monday showed the Denmark international "suffered ligament damage to his right ankle in yesterday's win at Mainz and will be out for the

foreseeable future".

Poulsen, 25, was injured after a heavy tackle early in the 5-0 win at Mainz, which moved Leipzig up to third in the Bundesliga behind leaders Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund, who meet on Tuesday.

Despite the blow to his ankle, Poulsen played the full 90 minutes against Mainz, scoring with a powerful header and

setting up two more goals.

The injury leaves Poulsen at risk of missing the rest of the Bundesliga season, which is due to finish on June 27 after ending a two-month hiatus forced by the coronavirus pandemic.

In his absence, Czech Republic striker Patrik Schick, on loan from Roma, is set to partner Timo Werner up front against Hertha Berlin on Wednesday.

Under new coach Bruno Labbadia, Hertha won their two matches since the restart with a 3-0 romp at Hoffenheim and a 4-0 thrashing of Union Berlin last Friday.

Leipzig will face Brazil Under-23 striker Matheus Cunha, who has scored in Hertha's last four games following his January transfer from Leipzig for 18 million euros (\$19 million). — **AFP**