

HM greetings
to Portuguese
President

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa of the Portuguese Republic on the occasion of his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to President De Sousa and the friendly Portuguese people further progress and prosperity.

– ONA

HM directives to execute projects worth RO 300m



MUSCAT: The Private Office on Tuesday issued a statement reading as follows: "Pursuant to the Royal attention of His Majesty the Sultan to foster the Sultanate's sustainable and enhanced economic growth and development march, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has issued his Royal directives to execute developmental projects to the tune of RO 300 million.

"May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan, guard him as a valuable resource for this dear homeland and perpetuate the riches of progress and prosperity on Oman and those who live on its territory under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan." — ONA

TOURIST SITES LOCKED DOWN

More commercial activities to open

MUSCAT: The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic held a meeting on Tuesday under the Chairmanship of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior.

The meeting, held at the Interior Ministry, followed up updates on COVID-19 and procedures to protect the public against the pandemic, curb its spread and alleviate its impacts.

In view of the advent of

The committee prohibited any gatherings or activities in tourist areas from June 13 till July 3

summer tourism in the Sultanate and in light of precautionary measures endorsed by the Supreme Committee to stem the spread of the disease, the committee decided to lockdown Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Jabal Shams, Wilayat of Masirah and Dhofar Governorate. The committee also decided to prohibit any gatherings (assembling/ assemblies) or tourism activities in these areas with effect from 12 noon on June 13 (Saturday) till July 3 (Friday).

TURN TO P2

Sultanate's GDP to grow by 2pc in 2021

WASHINGTON: The World Bank expected that the Sultanate's gross domestic product (GDP) to grow by 2 per cent in 2021 compared to a contraction of 4 per cent in 2020 due to the implications of COVID-19 pandemic and low oil prices.

In its June report (Global Economic Prospects), the World Bank pointed out that the Sultanate's GDP growth in 2021 will be the highest during the past five years. The Sultanate recorded a growth of 0.3 per cent in 2017, 1.8 per cent in 2018 and 0.5 per cent in 2019.

The Bank expected that the economic activity in the MENA region to shrink by



4.2 per cent in 2020, as a result of the pandemic and oil market developments. The Bank explained that the pandemic and the efforts to contain it weakened the economic activity in the region in the short-term.

— ONA

OMAN

Clear coronavirus violation fines before travelling abroad

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

MUSCAT: Driving in Oman has been going through many measures and witnessed many changes due to novel coronavirus, COVID-19.

But those on the wheels still have a lot of concerns as they started going to work following ease in the lockdown measures that include removal of checkpoints at several places.

Their concerns varied from the number of passengers in a vehicle and the need to wear a mask while driving.

"What do we do as our driving licence expired?" has been a common question from the drivers.

Observer spoke to Major Mohammed al Hashami, Royal Oman Police and he said, "As of now it is fine for the drivers to continue with the expired licence and there will not be a fine issued when they eventually go for the renewal of the licence. So drivers can continue to use their current licence until the ROP Service Centres open".

The Director General of Traffic carries out the task of vehicles' inspection and testing as well as licensing of drivers in addition to investigation of traffic accidents as well as installation of road signs.

During the pandemic ROP has also been assigned with the monitoring and

issuing fines for coronavirus violations such as appearing in public without masks and gathering.

Fines for traffic and coronavirus violations, which are spearheaded by the health authorities but monitored by the Royal Oman Police, have to be cleared prior to their departure if individuals are travelling out of Oman.

"Both the traffic and coronavirus violation fines can be paid online through the ROP App. When a person accesses the ROP app they will be able to see the violations if any. Individuals cannot travel unless they clear their fines," explained Major Al Hashami.



Tourist sites locked down to contain spread of coronavirus

FROM PAGE 1

The situation will be assessed in accordance with epidemiological data for each area, separately.

Also, acting in coordination with the departments concerned in public and private sectors, the committee decided to open a new set of commercial and industrial activities with effect from Wednesday (June 10). The departments concerned will announce the details of the business activities set for resumption, along with the necessary health terms and conditions for practising these activities.

The committee underscores the necessity of total commitment to precautionary measures specified by the departments concerned to avoid infections and stem the spread of the disease.

— ONA

COVID-19: 712 new cases, 2 more deaths reported

MUSCAT: As many as 712 new cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) were registered in the Sultanate today, in addition to 2 new COVID-19 related death cases.

362 of the new cases were Omanis whereas 350 cases as non-Omanis. This brings the total

number of positive COVID-19 cases to 18,198 in the Sultanate, in addition to 83 death cases, the Ministry of Health said.

The Ministry also pointed out that 359 new cases have recovered, bringing the total number to 4,152 cases.

The Ministry also

pointed out that 2,688 tests of COVID-19 were conducted over the past 24 hours, adding that 47 cases were hospitalised today, out of a total number of 291 hospitalised COVID-19-infected patients, of them 85 are in intensive care units (ICU). — ONA

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HM’s supreme effort to protect citizens, residents praised

STATE COUNCIL BUREAU REVIEWS PROPOSAL TO STUDY IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON OMANI ECONOMY

MUSCAT: The State Council Bureau praised Sultanate's efforts to limit the spread of the COVID-19 in accordance with the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik -- may God protect and preserve him. It expressed gratitude for the generous follow-up of His Majesty that affirms the supreme keenness to protect the citizens and residents living in Oman, in the face of the pandemic and limit its impact on all sectors.

The Council's Bureau expressed its gratitude to His Majesty for the establishment of the Central Public Health Laboratories to keep pace with the technical development and modern systems with their competence and expertise to enhance national healthcare.

The intensive measures adopted by the Supreme Committee in charge of nationwide decisions to manage the developments resulting from the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and its continuous endeavours to address the pandemic, protect the citizens and residents and work to provide necessary and appropriate care of infected cases, was praised



by the Bureau. The meeting stressed the necessity to continue to inform all segments of society with precautionary measures aimed at reducing the spread of the pandemic.

This came during the sixth Bureau meeting of the State Council for the first annual session of the seventh term which was chaired by Dr Yahya bin Mahfoudh al Manthri, Chairman of the State Council, in the presence of Bureau members and the Secretary-General of the Council.

The Bureau discussed the proposal to amend the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Law

promulgated by Royal Decree No 114/2001. The meeting hosted Walli bin Nasser al Shukaili, Deputy Head of Committee and Salim bin Khuwaiter al Maqbali, to conduct discussions. Following the discussion, the Bureau agreed to the proposal to study the subject.

At its meeting, the Bureau added to the discussions, the desire submitted by the Economic Committee to “study the stability of the Omani economy as a result of decline in oil prices and the effects of the pandemic and decided to refer it to the next ordinary sitting.”

‘Status and future of teachers’ discussed

MUSCAT: The Education and Research Committee of the State Council on Tuesday hosted Dr Said bin Hamed bin Amed al Rubaii, Secretary-General of the Education Council and several officials, within the framework of its study titled “The status and future of teachers in the Sultanate”.

During the meeting, chaired by Mohammed bin Hamdan bin Sulaiman al Toobi, Committee Head, several important topics related to the study were discussed.

This included: Legislations related to selection, qualification, appointment and promotions, the acceptance ratios for colleges of education, training programmes and plans for on-the-job work for teachers, ethics and values of the profession, and the laws regulating them, in addition to informing about education policies and strategy.

It is worth noting that the Education Committee’s study aims to study the mechanisms for selecting, preparing, training, operating and motivating the teacher and proposing ways to develop them, reviewing the current legislation and laws regulating the education profession, and proposing new legislations that guarantee upgrading the education profession and the social status of the teacher.



Muscat Municipality

Advertisement No.(35/2020)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tenders documents for the website through the following link:

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	No. E.Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/20/039	(2020/MM/QS-21)	Asphalt resurfacing of Water stagnation areas at different locations at Governorate of Muscat -2 (Re Call) (E-Tender)	Rial 47	30/06/2020	20/07/2020	Excellent
PRE/20/047	(2020/MM/QS-36)	Electrical Works for Public Park at Boushar (E- Tender)	Rial 25	30/06/2020	12/07/2020	Specialist
PRE/20/044	(2020/MM/QS-36)	RFP for Network Hardware & Software Maintenance Service 2020 (E- Tender)	Rial 25	30/06/2020	20/07/2020	Specialist
PRE/20/032	(2020/MM/Qs-37)	Roads Maintenance at Muttrah & Muscat 2020/2021 (E- Tender)	Rial 82	30/06/2020	20/07/2020	Excellent

Tender Conditions :-

1- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission.Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.

2- Original Tender Bonds will be requested later on to be submitted to Muscat Municipality, and A soft copy of the same must be uploaded in the E-tendering System.

3- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .

4- Fortechnical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@ita.gov.om) or call (+96824166670).

LIST OF COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

In implementation of the decision taken by the Supreme Committee for tackling COVID-19, the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources on Tuesday announced the list of the activities that have been exempted from the shutdown measures. The ministry said the reopened activities are required to follow health standards.

THE ACTIVITIES THAT ARE ALLOWED TO REOPEN ARE:

- 01

Sale of foodstuff
- 02

Food stores
- 03

Mobile restaurants and cafes (for delivery and takeaway)
- 04

Clinics and vet clinics
- 05

Pharmacies
- 06

Optical shops
- 07

Petrol filling stations
- 08

Cooking gas cylinder stores and vehicles
- 09

Bakeries and bread shops
- 10

Water factories and water stores
- 11

Halwa and confectionery stores
- 12

Food industries
- 13

Animal feed, grain stores, agricultural products and pesticides
- 14

Meat and poultry shops
- 15

Fish stores
- 16

Ice-cream and corn shops
- 17

Fruits and vegetable stores
- 18

Juice shops
- 19

Mishkik and barbecues
- 20

Grinders
- 21

Honey shops
- 22

Dates shops
- 23

Livestock and poultry sheds
- 24

Shipping, customs clearance offices and insurance offices
- 25

Sanitary and electrical materials
- 26

Non-food materials shops (for storage only)
- 27

Sale of fishing tools and equipment
- 28

Vehicle and fishing boat repair workshops
- 29

Vehicle and fishing boats spare parts stores
- 30

Motor electrical, vehicle oil, vehicle brake repair, tyre repair
- 31

Electrical appliances and satellite shops (for order and delivery only)
- 32

Computer sale and maintenance
- 33

Stationary stores
- 34

Printers (for order and delivery only)
- 35

Quarries crushers (for order and delivery only)
- 36

Sanad offices
- 37

Rent of vehicles and equipment
- 38

Money exchange
- 39

Steam laundries and machine laundries (two customers are allowed at a time)
- 40

Honey-bee supplies stores (for order and delivery only)
- 41

Construction materials and cement stores
- 42

Bricks and cement blocks factories (for orders and delivery)
- 43

Ready-made concrete (for orders and delivery only)
- 44

Ceramic, tiles, marble, and granite shops (two customers are allowed inside the shop)
- 45

Ceramic, tiles, marble, and granite cutting workshops (for order and delivery)
- 46

Car wash
- 47

Vehicle care stores (two customers at a time are allowed inside)
- 48

New car dealers (two customers at a time are allowed inside)
- 49

Water filters sale and repair shops
- 50

Water pumps sale and repair (for orders and delivery)
- 51

Modern irrigation systems sale and maintenance (two customers at a time are allowed inside)
- 52

Pets (birds, fish and their feed) (two customers are allowed inside)
- 53

Nurseries and agricultural supplies (two customers are allowed inside)
- 54

Carpentries (orders and delivery)
- 55

Blacksmith workshops (orders and delivery)
- 56

Turning workshop(order and delivery)
- 57

Aluminium workshops(order and delivery)
- 58

Metal welding shops (orders and delivery only)
- 59

Consultancy officers, lawyers offices, account auditing(remote services only)
- 60

Sale and maintenance of watches
- 61

Mobile phones sales and maintenance (order and delivery)
- 62

Yacht marina
- 63

Car driving learning
- 64

Floristries (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 65

Perfume shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 66

Cosmetics shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 67

Watches and accessories shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 68

Women ready-made apparel and boutiques (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 69

Car wash (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 70

Key duplication (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 71

Footwear stores (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 72

Shoe repair shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 73

Jewellery (gold and silver stores), (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 74

Goldsmiths (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 75

Herbal medicine shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 76

Transaction offices (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 77

Translation offices (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 78

Photography shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 79

Automotive glass sale and installation (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 80

Decoration stores (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 81

House utensils and kitchenware stores (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 82

Tailoring accessories (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 83

Bikes and motorcycle sale and repair (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 84

Scrap shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 85

Digital printing (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 86

Calligraphers shop (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 87

Paper plastic (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 88

Glass making (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 89

Photos and photo frames shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 90

Security devices sale and installation (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 91

Repair of vehicle exhaust (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 92

Used cars showrooms (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 93

Kitchenware workshops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 94

Car paint stores (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 95

Furniture stores (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 96

Bill collection and payment offices (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 97

Accessories stores (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 98

Sportswear stores (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 99

Cosmetics shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 100

Ready-made women apparel (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 101

Ready-made garments (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 102

Oman masar and kuma shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 103

Children's clothing (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 104

Artificial lawn shops
- 105

Perfumes and incense shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 106

Carpet cleaning (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 107

Curtain making stores (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 108

Wallpaper stores (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 109

Children's toys stores (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 110

Earthenware shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 111

Antiques and gifts shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 112

Bags and leather products (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 113

Carpet selling shops (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 114

Patent and trademark registration offices (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 115

Rent of construction materials and equipment (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 116

Telecom companies' halls (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 117

Auto accessories (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)
- 118

Equestrian equipment stores (customers will be allowed into the shop with 2-metre social distancing rule and health guidelines to be followed)



HILLTOP RESCUE

A man sustained minor injuries after falling from a hilltop in the Wilayat of Ibri. Search and rescue teams of the Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance (PACDA) in Al Dhahirah Governorate in cooperation with the police aviation managed to locate and transfer the victim to a hospital.

A WELCOME DECISION TO CLOSE TOURIST DESTINATIONS

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

SALALAH: “Life is far more precious than business and tourism”, is a general reaction from people when asked about the Supreme Committee’s decision to close Dhofar Governorate from 12 noon on June 13 until July 3 for tourism.

The decision soothed the people’s apprehension of arrival of tourists from different parts of the GCC and complicate the COVID-19 situation in the governorate, which is in a better position than many other places in the GCC and even the Sultanate.

Dhofar has 61 confirmed COVID-19 cases with 22 recoveries, 38 currently sick and one death.

“No doubt Salalah is summer capital of the GCC countries and people love to drop into the city to explore places, which turn out completely green, cool and serene under the influence of monsoon season (khareef). Arrival of tourists for us is business, which we are going to miss, but health is far more important than business”, said Abdullah, a citizen of Taqah who owns an apartment and does very good business during the season.

“The season in terms of weather, may be as usual as previous years, but Salalah is going to miss those tourists, who make the season livelier. It is beyond anybody’s imagination as to when such a situation cropped up last,



at the same time they did not have any clue when they faced a pandemic last. So we have to make a compromise and abide by the call of the nature which wants us to maintain some restraint”, he said.

It is difficult, however, for small businesses like the vendors of local fruits and vegetables and more popularly the tender coconuts, the demand for which is very high among the visitors.

“Every season we have shortage of coconuts, but this season we will not have buyers. We, however, have to manage keeping in mind the pandemic, which is a global phenomenon”, said a local vendor while understanding the sense behind the Supreme

Committee decision.

The entire healthcare machinery is on its toes during the season every year due to influx of a large number of tourists. With so many people arriving in the governorate, most of the health units have to expand services and facilities.

“We manage it with support from the Ministry of Health. But in today’s situation every health unit across the governorate is busy handling the pandemic situation. It would be tough for Salalah to manage so many footfalls, that too with the conditions of pandemic protocols of social distancing, hygiene, etc”, said an employee who works in health sector in Dhofar.

OMAN

Oman honey market to go online



KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: The 14th edition of the Omani Honey Market, organised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MoAF) in cooperation with the Riyadhah Digital Company, will be held online this year, according to the ministry sources.

Titled 'Shahad', the most-awaited event among the scores of Omani beekeepers and honey enthusiasts, will be on in the virtual world from June 28 to July 4.

"All the beekeepers are welcome to register their interest to participate in the honey festival, registration for which ends on Tuesday,

June 10," a source at the MoAF said.

STRINGENT MEASURES

The participation will be subject to some strict terms and conditions. "The honey should be filled and displayed by the participants in translucent glass packages of different sizes bearing the poster of the participant. It should also indicate all data pertaining to the quality of honey along with marketing identity."

All the participants must supply the types, quantity and quality of honey to be sold in the market to the headquarters of Al Madinah Logistics Company, Barka,

during June 11 to 15, to take samples for laboratory tests and to ensure that the products conform to the Omani standard specifications for honey.

WIDER RECEPTION

He added that the only festival for the local honey enthusiasts has been growing from strength to strength. The 13th Oman Honey Market held at the Muscat Grand Mall last year attracted 62 beekeepers who showcased some 6.5 tonnes of the best quality local honey.

A wide selection of Omani honey was on display at the market including wild honey

which was sold at a record RO 120 per kilogramme while a 1 kg honeycomb fetched RO 70.

BIG BOOST TO LOCAL HONEY FARMING

Held twice a year, the events associated with Omani honey market aim at spreading knowledge about indigenous honey and bring together honey makers and consumers under one roof.

According to the statistics available with the MoAF, the Sultanate has 5,336 Beekeepers, while the number of honeycombs is 112,068 that produced 672,208 kg of honey in 2018.

CIVIC STAFF DONATE BLOOD PLASMA

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: As many as 33 employees in the Muscat Municipality donated blood plasma to help current COVID-19 patients.

The humanitarian gesture followed appeals from the Department of Blood Bank Services to people who have recovered from COVID-19 to donate plasma to others who are battling with the coronavirus.

As posted online, the civic body confirmed that a number of employees and workers in the Muscat Municipality, who recovered from COVID-19, donated blood plasma.

"The blood donation was made at centres designated by the Ministry of Health in accordance



with the conditions set by the relevant authorities", the statement said.

The municipality wished that the initiative will contribute to immuno-plasma treatment, which has proven its effectiveness in treating COVID-19 cases," the municipality added.

The Blood Bank Services Department said that anyone who wants to donate will be able to do so at its headquarters in Bausher.

Dr Feryal al Lawati, Head of Infectious Diseases Unit at the Royal Hospital, last week said coronavirus patients who were transfused with convalescent plasma donated by recovered patients have shown significant improvement.

She said that the immune plasma used with 40 patients has proven effective in moderate and critical cases.

PALESTINIAN PREMIER SUBMITS ‘COUNTER-PROPOSAL’ TO US PLAN

RAMALLAH: Palestinians have sent the diplomatic Quartet a response to the US Mideast plan which sees parts of the West Bank being annexed by Israel, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh said on Tuesday.

“We submitted a counter-proposal to the Quartet a few days ago,” he said, referring to the group mediating in the conflict, made up of the United Nations, United States, Russia and European Union. He said that it proposed the creation of a “sovereign Palestinian state, independent and demilitarised” with “minor modifications of borders where necessary”.

The Palestinian text foresaw possible land swaps between the two future states on a like-for-like basis, he said at a press conference.

Announced at the end of January in Washington, US President Donald Trump's peace plan provides for the annexation by Israel of its settlements and of the Jordan Valley in the occupied West Bank.

The Palestinians have rejected in its entirety the plan, which also provides for the creation of a Palestinian state but on reduced territory and without east Jerusalem as



its capital, denying a core Palestinian demand.

The European Union opposes it and is demanding that Israel abandon its annexation ambitions, which it has said it will reveal after July 1.

EU member states are weighing options such as economic sanctions or recognition of Palestinian statehood to dissuade Israel from going ahead with the plan, and what measures to take in the event that it is not deterred, diplomatic sources say.

“We want Israel to feel international pressure,” Shtayyeh said.

“For the first time the European political allies are discussing sanctions against Israel because we asked for them,” he added.

In recent days, demonstrations against the annexation project have multiplied in the West Bank and also in Israel without, however, drawing large crowds on the Palestinian side. “The anger is there, the dissatisfaction is there, the frustration is there and all that is a recipe for more problems,” said Shtayyeh, assuring however that the Palestinian Authority, led by Mahmud Abbas, wanted to avoid widespread disruption. — **AFP**

ONE IN FIVE
IRANIANS MAY
HAVE HAD VIRUS:
OFFICIAL

TEHRAN: Nearly one in five Iranians may have been infected with the novel coronavirus since the country’s outbreak started in February, a health official said on Tuesday. “According to results (of studies) about 15 million Iranians may have experienced being infected with this virus since the outbreak began,” said Ehsan Mostafavi, a member of the task force set up to combat COVID-19. This meant the virus was “much less lethal than we or the world had anticipated”, the semi-official ISNA news agency quoted him as saying.

WHO SAYS
CORONAVIRUS
SITUATION
‘WORSENING’
WORLDWIDE

GENEVA: The World Health Organization said that the coronavirus pandemic situation was worsening around the globe, as it warned against complacency. The WHO said it had recorded its highest daily tally of new infections, with COVID-19 raging in the Americas. And as mass protests for racial justice sweep across the United States and beyond, the United Nations’ health agency urged anyone demonstrating to do so safely. The novel coronavirus has killed more than 403,000 people out of at least

seven million infected since the outbreak emerged in China last December, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP.

HUGE FIRE BREAKS
OUT AT INDIA GAS
WELL BLOWOUT

GUWAHATI: A huge fire broke out at an oil field near popular ecotourism spots in northeastern India on Tuesday, after gas that had spewed for two weeks from a blown-out well ignited, officials said. The gas well at an oil field managed by state-owned Oil India started leaking in late May in Tinsukia district of Assam state, and the firm said late last week gas was still flowing “uncontrollably”. — Agencies

WORLD

Hong Kong cannot afford more protest 'chaos', says leader

HONG KONG: Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam warned on Tuesday that the Chinese-ruled city cannot afford further "chaos" as activists marked a year of pro-democracy rallies with lunchtime protests in several shopping malls.

The global financial hub is on alert for unrest with larger gatherings planned for the evening to mark the first anniversary of a mass rally that galvanised the anti-government protest movement.

That demonstration, which drew an estimated more than one million protesters in a city of 7.5 million, was triggered by proposed legislation to allow extraditions to mainland China, where the courts are controlled by the Communist Party.

Lam later withdrew the bill but widespread concern lingered doubts over Beijing's control over the former British colony which returned to China in 1997 with the promise of a high level of autonomy, sparking months of often-violent unrest.

"All of us can see the diffi-



Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam, wearing a face mask, holds a news conference in Beijing, China.
— Reuters

culty we have been through in the past year, and due to such serious situations we have more problems to deal with," Lam told a weekly news conference.

"We need to learn from mistakes, I wish all lawmakers can learn from mistakes — that Hong Kong cannot bear such chaos."

Almost 9,000 people, aged between 11 and 84, were arrested in the protests

over the past year, police said late on Monday. More than 600 were charged with rioting.

A 21-year-old lifeguard, the first protester to plead guilty to rioting, was sentenced to four years' jail last month.

After a lull during the coronavirus outbreak, demonstrators have returned to the streets as Beijing drafts national secu-

rity laws activists fear will further undermine Hong Kong freedoms, including its much-cherished independent legal system.

Dozens gathered in several shopping malls across Hong Kong at lunchtime, chanting slogans such as "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times," before dispersing peacefully after an hour.

— Reuters

IN BRIEF

Turkey orders arrest of 275 military personnel

ISTANBUL: Turkish authorities have ordered the detention of 275 people, mainly military personnel, over suspected links to the network that Ankara says orchestrated a failed coup in 2016, police, security sources and state media said on Tuesday. Authorities have carried out a sustained crackdown on alleged followers of US-based cleric Fethullah Gulen since the coup attempt in July 2016, when 250 people were killed. Gulen denies any involvement. The police operation was coordinated from the western city of Izmir and targeted people in 22 provinces, state-owned Anadolu news agency said. The police have already detained 145 of the suspects, it said.

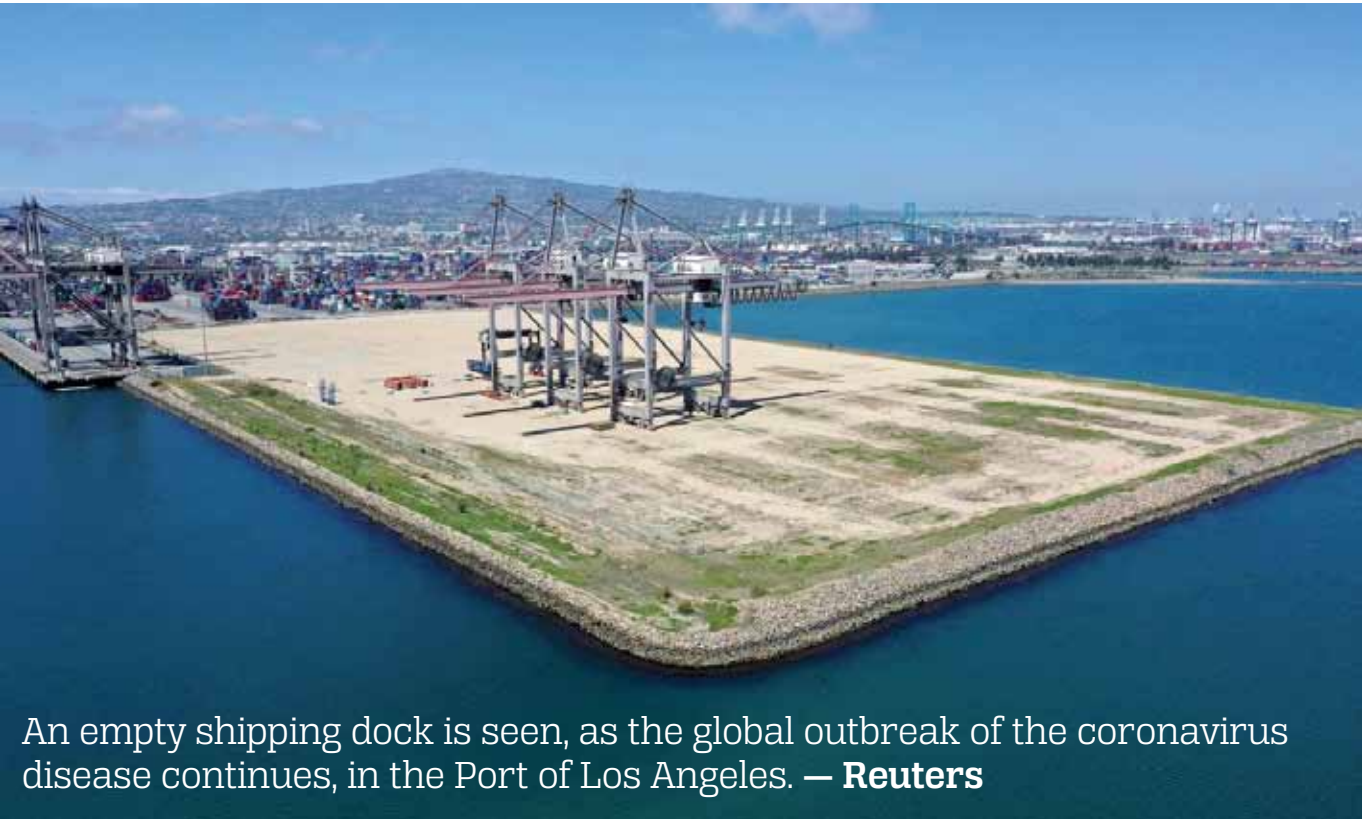
Iran to execute spy who helped US target general

TEHRAN: Iran said on Tuesday it will execute a man whose conviction for spying for the US and Israel by helping target a top Iranian general has been upheld by the supreme court. Mahmoud Mousavi Majd was convicted of spying on Iran's armed forces "especially the Quds Force and on the whereabouts and movements of martyr General Qasem Soleimani" for large sums of money from both Israel's Mossad and the US Central Intelligence Agency, judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili told a televised news conference. Majd's death sentence has been upheld by the supreme court and "will be carried out soon", he added.

Experts see risks in online voting for US states

WASHINGTON: An online voting system approved in three US states is vulnerable to manipulation by hackers and may not protect ballot secrecy, according to an analysis by security researchers. Scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and University of Michigan said in a research paper released on Sunday that Democracy Live's OmniBallot platform represents "a severe risk to election security and could allow attackers to alter election results without detection." The report comes with election officials scrambling following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic to enable remote voting in the November election to limit risks from crowded polling stations. — Agencies

ANALYSIS



An empty shipping dock is seen, as the global outbreak of the coronavirus disease continues, in the Port of Los Angeles. — Reuters

An unprecedented chance to ‘hear’ oceans as they once were

MAURICE TAMMAN

Eleven years ago, environmental scientist Jesse Ausubel dreamed aloud in a commencement speech: What if scientists could record the sounds of the ocean in the days before propeller-driven ships and boats spanned the globe? They would listen to chit-chat between blue whales hundreds of miles apart. They would record the familiar chirps and clicks among a pod of dolphins. And they would do so without the cacophony of humankind - and develop a better understanding of how that undersea racket has affected sea life. It was a flight of fancy, more aspirational and inspirational than a plan. At first, Ausubel says, he (very fancifully) suggested a year of a “quiet ocean”, during which shipping would come to a halt, or at least slow down. Then a month. And finally, just a few hours. As far-fetched as even that was, a small fraternity of about 100 similarly curious scientists

picked up on his vision. In 2015, they published a plan of how to conduct the International Quiet Ocean Experiment, should the opportunity ever present itself. When the COVID-19 pandemic sparked an extreme economic slowdown in March, sending cruise ships to port and oil tankers to anchor, they mobilised. Last month, they finished cobbling together an array of 130 underwater hydrophone listening stations around the world - including six stations that had been set up to monitor underwater nuclear tests. “Well, we’re not excited that COVID happened, but we’re happy to be able to take advantage of the scientific opportunity,” says Peter Tyack, a professor of marine mammal biology at the University of St Andrews in Scotland and one of the early instigators. “It would have just been impossible any other way.” Tyack says the recordings should give scientists a never-before glimpse of the ocean with little human interference. It’s a bit like looking at the night sky if most of the world’s lights were turned off. — Reuters

Learn to live with the virus



Samuel Kutty

samkuttyobserver@gmail.com

Preparing for a new way of life to live with the coronavirus is the emerging call from our authorities and medical experts. With no signs of tapering off of the spread of the pathogen in sight, social distancing, wearing masks and frequent hand washing could become part of our everyday life for more time. What is essential now is to make certain behavioural changes so that we will get accustomed to live with the virus. What I mean is adjusting ourselves to the new policies and procedures to be followed at public places, offices or elsewhere. I think it is important we become realistic as nobody can predict when this disease will disappear from the earth. Its elimination is not very likely, but we can at least reduce the level of transmission through the measures being implemented by the authorities. No doubt, the COVID-19 crisis has taught us how intertwined our lives are, and how our actions impact others. Even our children, after watching how we responded to this exasperating time, learnt to live in closed rooms with limited facilities. So why cannot we the elders keep social

distancing or stay at home by limiting our outdoor activities? The coronavirus is not going to go away so we must learn to live with it. Social distancing and reduced level of outing along with other sanitation measures are the only solution to keep the virus away. Listen to what our Health Minister Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, says “I consider every person in Oman is responsible. We appreciate every person who helped us. The virus is still here and we have to learn how to live with it.” Although there are people who are recovering day by day, but the spread of the coronavirus is still unstoppable. Even people who have recovered are getting infected again! In a situation like this it is normal to feel sad, confused, scared or angry. We should not forget the fact that there is evidently no cure to coronavirus except quarantine and isolation. It is a disease from which a human body can get infected again and again whenever it comes in contact with the virus. As experts advocate it is impossible to end the coronavirus infection, but to learn to live with it just like we have learned to live with the lockdown!

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

Muttrah will soon make a comeback

KABEER YOUSUF

Resplendent in the crimson of the setting sun, the huge column right in front of this traditional souq facing the Arabian ocean stood as a mute spectator to bygone times of hustle and bustle that enlivened this area.

Today, the souq is totally shut keeping hundreds of workers and shop keepers indoors or their homes as part of protecting themselves and others from the pandemic.

The narrow walkways that were once lit by neon bulbs on either side and echoed with solicits of the salesmen are today silent to the core except for the feline friends that perambulate the covered, dark allies of the traditional souq.

The roads that once throbbed with vehicles and people are today longing to have rubber tyres to feel them. The sea road that once welcomed visitors is in slumber before it's called dawn.

Yes, Muttrah is sleeping... but while it took a cat nap, it can wake up and come back with a bang. Nearly 75 days of lockdown will not make it fall into a permanent coma and before we know it, it will get up before the sun rises. This is quite evident from the hopeful murmurs of the people who live in Muttrah.

"Muttrah is my home and I cannot imagine a life without the hustle-bustle of the souq and the roaring vehicles on the corniche", said Diesel al Balushi, one of those who popularised football among the past generation.

"Be positive even if you're tested positive and all these dark days will be over and we will welcome brighter days ahead", he added.

For the business communities in and around Muttrah, hopes are high well.

"I've not stepped out of home for last 2 months but now have a new lease of hope", said Jignesh Surti, one who is running his business inside the Muttrah Souq.

"The hope that we can all go back to our shops and start our lives anew. We really appreciate the steps taken by the government in containing the pandemic and all the efforts of the government and other authorities aimed at bringing life back to normalcy are laudable", adds Surti.

"I'm jobless since April 10 and was supported by the government food supplies and provisions given by some NGOs and friends. I'm looking forward to resuming work inside the Muttrah souq again", an expat laborer said.



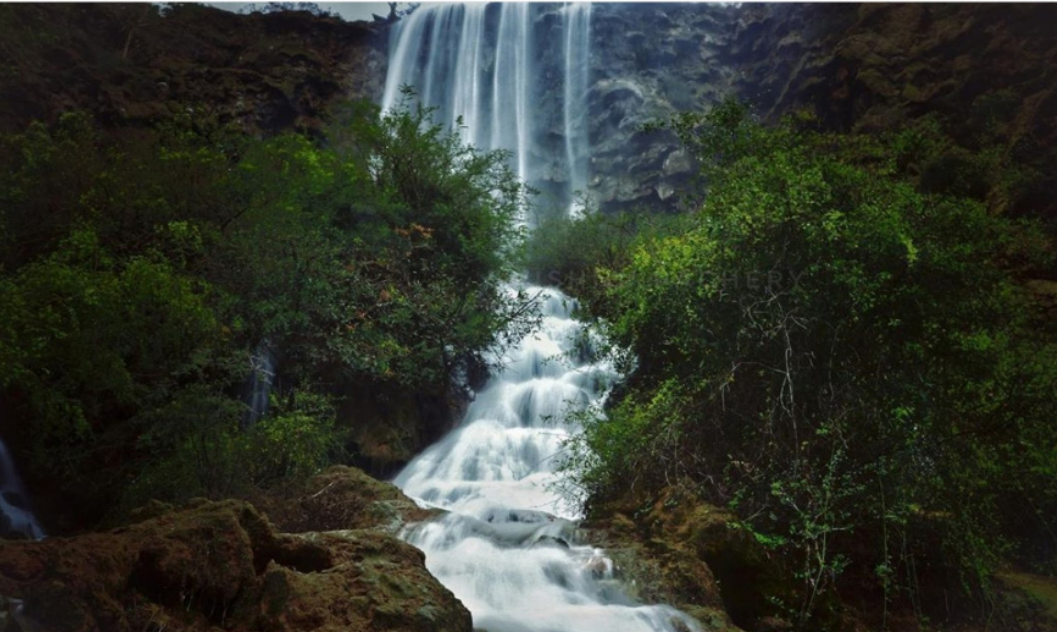
FEATURES

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



vishnupachery • Follow

Gogob





stress_shutters • Follow

Muscat, Oman





comrade_i • Follow

Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque



Post-lockdown cinema trip in Portugal is blast from the past



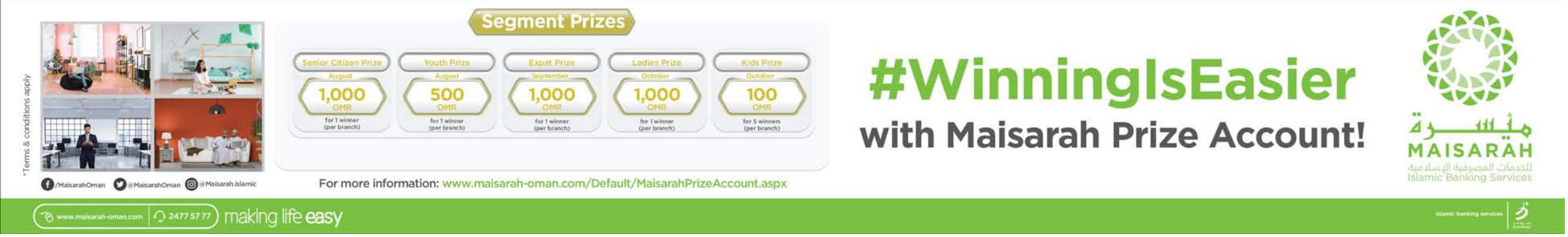
FOR MANUELA FIGUEIREDO, going out with her family to see her first movie after weeks of lockdown was a trip down memory lane. For her 24-year-old son Joao, it was a completely new experience. They sat two metres (six feet) apart, in separate cars at a pop-up cinema which launched on Monday in a beach area near Lisbon - the latest sign of a revival of drive-in movies as countries emerge from corona-

virus lockdowns. “It’s a bit like going back to the past,” said 57-year-old Figueiredo, reminiscing about her first drive-in cinema experience in Portugal around four decades ago. “We thought it was a cool experience to share with our children.” Joao, sitting at the wheel of his own car, welcomed something out of the ordinary. “I had never been to a drive-in so it’s an opportu-

nity to get out of the routine a bit at this point,” he said. Drivers tuned in on their radios to hear the movie, My Spy, starring former wrestler Dave Bautista, which began when the sun went down in Oeiras, a municipality near the capital Lisbon. “This is one of the formats we found so people can stay safe, be with friends and family and enjoy good times as we try to return to a new normal,”

said Paulo Cardoso, chief executive of Comic Con Portugal which organised the week of showings. Drive-in movie theatres are seeing a revival in other parts of the world as the leisure industry figures navigate the constraints of the outbreak. Portugal, which has recorded 32,700 COVID-19 cases and 1,424 deaths, began lifting restrictions imposed during a six-week lockdown from May 4.— **Reuters**

BUSINESS



LOW-CARBON AMBITIONS:
14 GROUPS LED BY INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPERS ARE COMPETING FOR THE PRESTIGIOUS CONTRACT



AWARD FOR SOLAR-DIESEL HYBRID POWER PROJECTS IN Q3

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: An award for the development of a portfolio of small-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) / diesel hybrid projects in remote areas of the Sultanate will be finalised by the third quarter of this year, according to the Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer), which is overseeing the procurement of the scheme via a competitive tender.

Tanweer, a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Electricity Holding Company (Nama Group), is responsible to electricity generation (and water desalination), transmission, supply and distribution in areas that are not connected to the country's main grids. These areas encompass the Governorates of Musandam, Al Wusta, parts of Al Dakhliyah and Al Sharqiyah and most of Dhofar.

As many as 14 international groups and their local partners are competing for the contract to develop the hybrid power projects in 11 different locations across Tanweer's sprawling

licence. The selected bidder will implement all 11 small-scale ventures as one Independent Power Project (IPP) with Tanweer as the offtaker of electricity output under a 15-year Power Purchase Agreement.

"The financial bidder selection and evaluation are expected by Quarter 3 of 2020 (subject to approval of the Authority for Electricity Regulation (AER) Oman," said Tanweer in its newly published 2019 Annual Report.

Competing for the prestigious award are: (1) EDF Renewables AS with Petroleum Development Oman and Alawi (2) Alfanar (3) Voltaia (4) Fotowatio Renewable Ventures with Aggreko (5) Total Solar with Altaaqa (6) Scatec Solar (7) Mainstream Renewable Power with Tesla and FG Wilson (8) Engie with Multitech (9) Mytilineos SA (10) Jinko Solar (11) Bahwan Renewable Energy with Canadian Solar (12) Wartsila with MB Holding and Arket International (13) Shell with Entertech, Enerwhere and HTC, and (14) NTPC Limited.

TURN TO PAGE 13



الشركة الوطنية العمانية للهندسة والاستثمار (ش.م.ع.)
Oman National Engineering & Investment Co. (S.A.O.G.)

Company Report 1st Quarter of 2020 ended on 31/03/2020

The company after achieving good financial results for the year 2019 has posted Profit after Tax of RO 379 k for the three months period ended 31 March 2020 versus RO 356 k for the same period of last year.

The company was awarded contract worth more than OMR 8.8 million during the first quarter of 2020. The company is doing well with very strong order book.

Multiple other contracts are under pipeline and company is very much confident that multiple new Major Value contract will be awarded soon.

The company is in process of diversifying, new customers like ROP has been on boarded and customers can now print Mulkiya ONEIC Kiosk, in addition, Passi collection, utilities, postpaid and prepaid collection s are already happening.

ONEIC is also in process of developing new mobile application for maintenance services. We are also working on AMR solutions, new geographies are also getting explore for further diversification.

The company is also focusing on its recovery front and expected to fetch improved results by year end 2020. ONEIC is also claiming interest against delayed payments by clients.

Company has taken provisions upfront on sales as per IFRS 9 requirements.

Due to ongoing, corona lock down, the offices were functioning with limited resources, resulting in delayed compilation of results.

Because of corona, ONEIC collection centers were closed, and other businesses were also impacted due to non-availability of material. Management has tried level best to minimize the cost, but certain fixed costs and delayed revenue recognition, is expected to have some financial impact. Management is trying level best to minimize the impact.

The above issues are temporary in nature, your company is taking strong measures to overcome these issues, we are confident of improving these issues.

Your company is strengthening the existing activities and proceeding with diversification to sustain positive growth, which shall play a remarkable role in our future profits.

UN AUDITED STATEMENT OF INCOME FOR THE THREE MONTHS ENDED 31st MARCH 2020

	31 st Mar 2020 R.O.	31 st Mar 2019 R.O.	31 st Dec 2019 R.O.
Revenue	12,478,742	12,014,432	54,433,954
Other Income	210,564	191,313	748,880
Total Revenue	12,689,306	12,205,745	55,182,834
Staff cost	(6,507,978)	(6,499,942)	(24,826,419)
Operating cost	(4,011,430)	(4,243,384)	(23,189,034)
General and administrative expenses	(561,611)	(217,678)	(1,230,756)
Impairment loss on trade receivables	(265,164)	(166,965)	(935,404)
Depreciation	(407,471)	(327,888)	(1,408,071)
Finance Cost - Net	(489,353)	(343,008)	(1,234,078)
Profit before Tax	446,299	406,880	2,359,072
Income tax expense	(66,877)	(50,555)	(345,231)
Profit after tax	379,422	356,325	2,013,841
Basic and diluted earnings per share	0.003	0.003	0.017

UN AUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31st MARCH 2020

	31 st Mar 2020 R.O.	31 st Mar 2019 R.O.	31 st Dec 2019 R.O.
ASSETS			
Non-current assets:			
Property, plant and equipment	16,843,796	12,929,881	16,139,145
Investment properties	3,695,502	3,842,694	3,724,940
Investments	1,128,848	1,229,751	1,261,972
Deferred income tax assets	1,011,147	896,778	963,502
Long term receivables	460,059	-	-
Retention on contracts	358,618	-	-
Total non-current assets	23,497,970	18,899,104	22,089,559
Current assets:			
Inventories	2,347,313	292,979	1,546,177
Debtors, prepayments and other receivables	70,661,053	73,340,976	69,968,935
Cash and bank balances	1,325,884	1,559,378	2,133,748
Total current assets	74,334,250	75,193,333	73,648,860
Total assets	97,832,220	94,092,437	95,738,419
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Shareholders' equity:			
Share capital	12,000,000	11,000,000	11,000,000
Share premium	2,002,469	2,002,469	2,002,469
Legal reserve	2,953,871	2,750,178	2,915,929
General reserve	300,000	300,000	300,000
Fair value reserve	1,020,101	1,121,003	1,153,225
Land and buildings revaluation reserve	3,022,707	3,077,400	3,036,306
Retained earnings	2,885,309	2,637,720	4,077,831
Total Shareholders' equity	24,184,457	22,888,770	24,485,760
Non-current liabilities			
Staff terminal benefits	2,007,162	2,012,853	1,967,146
Deferred tax liability	557,723	585,440	560,122
Total non-current liabilities	2,564,885	2,598,293	2,527,268
Current liabilities:			
Bank overdraft and other borrowings	44,750,142	45,529,784	39,869,877
Trade payable and accruals	26,218,214	22,993,518	28,412,042
Provision for tax	114,522	82,072	443,472
Total current liabilities	71,082,878	68,605,374	68,725,391
Total liabilities	73,647,763	71,203,667	71,252,659
Total equity and liabilities	97,832,220	94,092,437	95,738,419
Net assets per share	0.202	0.208	0.223

Chairman

Note:

1. Details of Accounts are available with MSM

2. The complete Accounts will be sent by mail to any Shareholder who requests them, in either Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of the request."

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Oman’s fisheries sector e-commerce platform wins FAO praise

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

MUSCAT: An e-commerce platform that helps Omani fishermen secure customers for their fresh catch is proposed to be expanded to cover a number of wholesale markets in the Sultanate.

Behar, launched by an Omani tech start-up with financial assistance from Oman Technology Fund (OTF) and with the backing of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, has also been praised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) as illustrative of digital innovation being fuelled in the Sultanate in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

In an article published on its website, the UN agency lauded the Omani government’s “innovative approach of transforming the fish auction markets—the backbone of Oman’s fish supply chain – from a physical marketplace to a digital platform”.

Rome-headquartered FAO cited in particular the example of Behar, which came on stream just when



Digital innovation: Behar to be expanded to cover other wholesale fisheries markets in the Sultanate

pandemic containment measures forced the shuttering of, among other commercial activities, wholesale fish markets around the Sultanate.

“The establishment of the Behar e-commerce tool allows for the smooth functioning of the Al Fulajj fish market, while simultaneously safeguarding the health and safety of fisherfolk, market workers, as well as customers,” said FAO in its report.

“The market workers now upload photos and details of the catch to the Behar platform, where

wholesalers, retailers and restaurants can view the daily offer and place their orders via online auction. Following the electronic bidding by the buyers and merchants, invoices are automatically issued to previously registered personal accounts, thereby completing the electronic payment process,” it explained.

The article quoted Saud al Habsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, as saying that the scope of the platform is proposed to be dramatically

enlarged. “It is anticipated that this platform will have a positive impact in facilitating seafood trade in the country and boosting the economy,” said Al Habsi.

“There is a plan for a second stage during the upcoming weeks and months to market and sell internationally. There’s also the idea to expand to other wholesale fish markets in fishing ports around the country.... Hopefully before the end of this summer, three more markets can join the platform,” he further noted.

For its part, the FAO has vowed to support Oman in the digitalisation of its fisheries value chain. FAO’s Representative in Oman, Nora Ourabah Haddad, stated: “Technological and organisational innovations such as the Behar platform are a testimony to the great capacity of countries such as Oman to adapt rapidly and meet the needs of both food producers and consumers. FAO’s role in documenting these initiatives and supporting their scaling up to other contexts is of utmost importance.”

Omani start-up wins WEF award



MUSCAT: Cubex Global, an Omani start-up supported by Oman Technology Fund (OTF), has won won the UpLink Ocean Solutions Sprint (Marathon of Innovative Oceans’ Solutions award), a competition launched by the World Economic Forum, to recognise the best innovative technology-based ideas to save oceans.

As many as 50 participants representing 15 countries took part in the competition with more than 300 applications. Cubex Global, set up by the Omani team including Hood al Hawqani, Hamza al Kharousi and Shaikh Ihsan Tariq, was cited for its mission to reduce global shipping emissions by up to 20 per cent through buying and selling unused container space on existing cargo ships routes.

Around 50 per cent of an estimated 100 million shipping containers are empty while moving from port to port, a massively wasteful practice that results in 280 million tons of carbon emissions and costs \$25 billion every year.

Cubex is an innovative opportunity for world’s traditional shipping and shipping companies, which uses a real-time blockchain-enabled online marketplace to optimise empty cargo space on any container heading to any destination.

Award for solar-diesel hybrid power projects

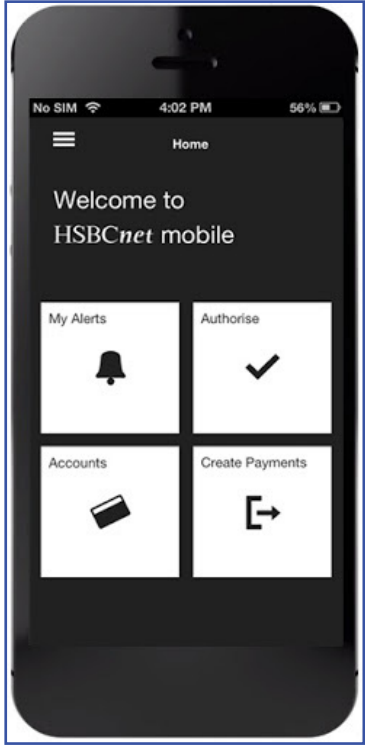
FROM PAGE 12

The successful developer will install a total of 37 megawatts-peak (MWp) of solar photovoltaic capacity at the 11 sites, in addition to 28 MW of battery energy storage capacity. Selected sites are: Madha (Musandam Governorate), Masrooq (Al Dhahirah), Al Khuwaimah and Masirah (Al Sharqiyah South), Al Hitam and Al Khadrah (Wusta), and Mittan, Al Mazyunah and Farshat Qatbeet (Dhofar).

The successful bidder will also be responsible for the financing, operation, maintenance and despatch of the complete hybrid system. The construction timeline for all 11 sites is 24 months, Tanweer added.

BUSINESS

HSBCNET MOBILE APP LAUNCHED



MUSCAT: HSBC Bank Oman SAOG has launched the HSBCnet Mobile App, giving corporate customers access to their HSBCnet account while on the move. In a first for the Oman market, companies can now manage their cash flow

and trade finance, and get real-time transaction reporting, from the convenience of their mobile device.

"In these challenging times, much credit goes to the Omani government and the Central Bank of Oman for leading the transition to a more digitally-based payments ecosystem. The launch of the HSBCnet Mobile App underlines our commitment to providing our customers with a seamless and secure digital banking experience. HSBC is focused on building a strong and sustainable business in Oman, and we will continue investing in digital solutions to

help customers stay even better connected to their finances," said Simon Adcock, General Manager and Country Head, Commercial Banking, HSBC Bank Oman.

Anirudh Nagarkatti, Country Head, Global Liquidity & Cash Management, HSBC Bank Oman, added: "HSBC is committed to using technology and innovation to provide clients with simpler, more convenient and even more secure banking services. Our app gives customers mobile-optimised access to their HSBCnet account, allowing them to manage their accounts anytime, anywhere."

Omantel staff support 'Fak Kurbah' initiative

MUSCAT: For the third consecutive year, Omantel employees participated in the "Fak Kurbah" (Redeeming Anguish) initiative in cooperation with Omani Lawyers Association (OLA) through collecting donations that help in the release of a number of insolvents whose difficult financial circumstances prevented them from paying off their defaulted loans. The aim of this initiative was to instill the "With You, For You and For Oman" Omantel Ramadhan campaign which coincided this year with the Sultanate's efforts in combating coronavirus.

Commenting on this initiative, Laila bint Mohammed al Wahaibi, Manager of Corporate Social Responsibility at Omantel said, "Omantel has launched a set of social initiatives that aim to address various social issues based on the company's vital role in the Omani society, showcasing its responsibility as a national company and its commitment to support government authorities and move the development process forward.

At the request of its employees, Omantel annually seeks to engage its staff in supporting social responsibility programs developed by the company. Such humanitarian contribution supports in enhancing the concept of community engagement in the Sultanate." Dr Hamad Hamadan al Rabie, Deputy Chairman of OLA, expressed his happiness for the support extended by Omantel employees.



BankDhofar shareholders ratify RO 1m CSR donation

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of BankDhofar conducted the Extraordinary & Annual General Meetings (EGM & AGM) through the electronic platform for holding general meetings. The online meetings were chaired by Eng Abdul Hafidh Salim Rajab al Aujaili, Chairman of the Board.

The EGM approved the amending of the Bank's Articles of Association in accordance with the new Commercial Companies Law, promulgated by Royal Decree 18/2019.

The AGM approved the Report of the Board of Directors of the Bank on the business and financial position of the Bank for the financial year ended December 31, 2019.

The shareholders ratified the donation of RO 1 million as a contribution to the efforts exerted to fight the outbreak of COVID-19. The meeting approved the proposed Directors' remuneration of RO 115,200 for the financial year ended December 31, 2019.

Additionally, the donations paid to support local community services were brought to the attention of the shareholders. The meeting also approved allocating RO 120,000 for supporting local community services for the financial year ending December 31, 2020.



Stream & Chat: Apprenticeships at Audi

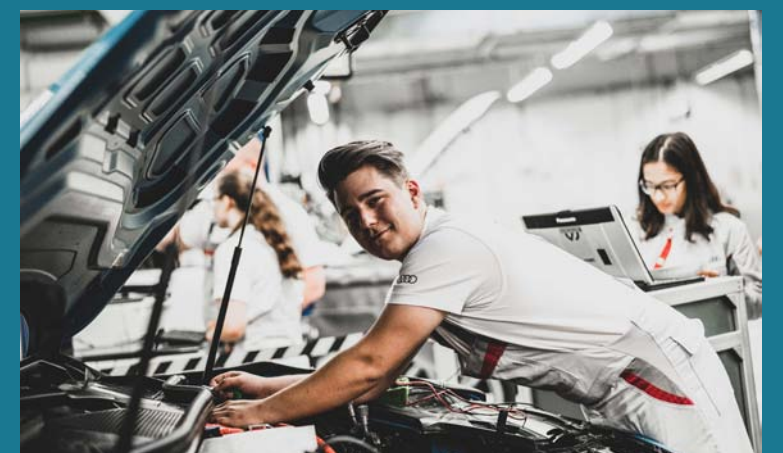
MUSCAT: From June 15 to 25, interested high school graduates will for the first time be able to get information about apprenticeships at Audi via live stream and chat.

Trainers and apprentices will provide insights into the various apprenticeship fields.

From mechatronics technicians and IT specialists to medical assistants – Audi has been helping young people start their careers at its Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm sites for more than 70 years.

Audi combines theoretical principles with practical knowledge transfer in 18 viable apprenticeship vocations. Interested high school students and graduates can apply via the Audi Careers site starting June 22, 2020. The programs for the young professionals will then start in September 2021. From June 15 to 25, interested young people will get early online insight into the range of careers at Audi and can learn about selected apprenticeships at the Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm sites.

In virtual sessions, apprentices and trainers will offer advice on all aspects of the career fields and answer all questions about training live.



GCC CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE FACE CHALLENGES



HAIDER AL LAWATI

haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The Chambers of Commerce and Industry play a major role in strengthening trade and economic relations with fellow institutions. They represent gateways to diplomatic relations between countries too. In the past three decades following the establishment of the WTO, these relations have boosted the volume of international trade, and moved a lot of international investments, raw materials and manpower around the world.

Chambers play an active part in facilitating the role of local and global companies in the world through international exhibitions, besides stimulating foreign investments and creating global partnerships, and attracting the means, technology and knowledge of new industries.

During the past seven decades, the Gulf States witnessed the establishment of these chambers, which are considered official representative institutions of the private sector of a particular country.

However, today they need more reforms in their regulations and laws according to Abdul Rahim Naqi, the former Secretary General of the Federation of the GCC Chambers. This is also the aspiration of many merchants and members in the area. They believe that the relations between the chambers and the ministries of commerce and industry must be complementary and not competitive, as is sometimes the case in the region.

Relations must be forged in the ultimate interest of the national economies of the Gulf countries and toward their social responsibility.

In the five decades the GCC chambers participated in establishing a number of joint stock companies, banks, factories and large projects in the area. Membership is compulsory for commercial organisations in their respective chambers. This has helped the chambers generate significant financial savings, whether from membership fees or other fees, while its role is advisory in issuing legislations and laws that concern merchants and owners of institutions and companies.

Today, these chambers face many challenges including their inability to represent all members in the commercial and economic sector because of their large memberships distributed across various disciplines and specialties – a challenge that surfaces particularly during the time of elections.

The other challenge lies in the job instability of workers in the Gulf chambers when changing the presidency and members of their boards of directors, while another challenge relates to representation

of small institutions. This leads to the occurrence of conflicts between members of the boards of directors and the elected members – which is a source of concern among the private sector owners in the Gulf. Some traders see that there is an absence in the appropriate representation in the membership of boards of directors and committees, as well as in regional and international meetings and in trade delegations travelling abroad.

Chambers need to activate their role during the next stage so that they can present their members on the government, private and civil society work. It is also necessary to involve small enterprises and even to finance them to play their desired role in the future

GCC chambers can build the required strategies, enhance the programmes of the private sector and small institutions, and re-examine the frameworks legislative to include all sectors, professions and services provided by institutions, so that they have their voice heard, whether internally or overseas.

Bank Muscat honoured for Channel Innovation

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the flagship financial services provider in the sultanate, has been recognised as a winner at the Infosys Finacle Client Innovation Awards programme. The bank topped the Channel Innovation category for its highly successful implementation of a new Omni-channel Internet and Mobile Banking experience with powerful features, greater convenience and simpler navigation.

Ahmed Omar al Ojaili (pictured), Group Deputy General Manager -

Technology, Bank Muscat, said: "Bank Muscat is a leader in using technology to make financial services more efficient, secure and convenient for our customers. Technology advancements in the financial sector are changing the future of banking, and Bank Muscat has seamlessly progressed from traditional to innovative digital



banking to enhance customer experience, re-engineer business operations and achieve growth. The bank's new Omni-channel Internet and Mobile Banking experience has been

well received and appreciated by our customers over the last few months since its launch. We are delighted that our successful implementation of this state-of-the-art technology

was recognised at the Infosys Finacle Client Innovation Awards 2020."

The new Omni-channel experience has been particularly helpful for the bank's customers in facing the challenges posed by social distancing during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Today, retail customers extensively use the various features available such as bill payments, mobile top-ups, payments within Bank Muscat and Oman and international transfers.

BUSINESS

Germany trade collapses as pandemic strikes Europe's biggest economy

BERLIN: German trade collapsed in April as the coronavirus pandemic ravaged Europe's biggest economy, with exports chalking up their biggest year-on-year fall since 1950.

While monthly German exports shrunk by a more-than-forecast 24 per cent, imports to the nation slumped by 16.5 per cent, leading to a dramatic contraction in the nation's trade surplus, the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) said on Tuesday.

Analysts had expected monthly exports in April to fall by 15.6 per cent on the previous month, during which they dropped by 11.7 per cent. The drop in imports was in line with forecasts.

The year-on-year fall of 31.1 per cent was the steepest drop in exports since Destatis began collecting foreign trade data in 1950, the agency reported.

"The only upside from ... [the] trade numbers is that, in terms of monthly economic data, the worst should now be behind us," said ING Bank chief euro zone economist Carsten Brzeski.

The hefty drop in monthly exports resulted in Germany's trade surplus narrowing to just 3.2 billion euros (\$3.6 billion) in April. A year ago it stood at 17.8 billion euros. Now German trade is exposed to the full force of the economic lockdowns and supply chain disruptions resulting from the coronavirus crisis both at home and around the world.

— dpa



Containers are seen at the loading terminal Altenwerder in the harbour of Hamburg, Germany. — Reuters



An employee walks in front of an Airbus A380 at the final assembly line at the Airbus headquarters in Blagnac near Toulouse, France. — Reuters

France pledges 15 bn euros of aid for aviation sector

PARIS: The French government will provide 15 billion euros (\$16.9 billion) to support the country's aviation industry, which has been hammered by travel restrictions imposed to blunt the coronavirus pandemic, Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said on Tuesday.

"We are declaring a state of emergency to save our aeronautics industry so that it can be more competitive," Le Maire said at a press conference in Paris.

"If we hadn't intervened right away, a third of the jobs in the sector would have disappeared... that's around 100,000 of the 300,000 direct and indirect jobs in the sector," he added.

The southwestern French city of Toulouse is home to the headquarters of pan-European aircraft maker Airbus, which for decades has supported hundreds of suppliers and service providers

in the region.

But orders have dried up as airlines worldwide warn they are facing catastrophe as the prospects for travel remain highly uncertain as the COVID-19 crisis takes its toll.

The French state and Airbus, as well as Dassault Aviation, Thales and Safran, will contribute 200 million euros each to a fund for small- and mid-size firms, in particular to help them invest in carbon-reduction technologies.

The government has already announced that Air France-KLM, which posted a 1.8-billion-euro loss in the first quarter, will get seven billion euros in loans either from, or backed by the state. That money will allow it to go through with a purchase of 60

Airbus A220 planes and 38 long-haul A350 jets.

The French state and Airbus, as well as Dassault Aviation, Thales and Safran, will contribute 200 million euros each to a fund for small- and mid-size firms, in particular to help them invest in carbon-reduction technologies.

The plan also includes 1.5 billion euros to spur research on a future "carbon neutral plane" over the next three years, with a goal of having the plane operation by 2035, Le Maire said.

Defence Minister Florence Parly, who attended the press conference alongside Environment Minister Elisabeth Borne, said 600 million euros of planned military orders would be accelerated, including the purchase of three Airbus A330s that will be converted to refuelling planes, and eight Caracal troop transport helicopters.

— AFP

SPORTS

Windies arrival in England huge step forward for cricket



LONDON: West Indies captain Jason Holder said international cricket will take a “huge step forward” following the coronavirus shutdown as his team arrived on Tuesday for a Test series in England.

Fans who have had to make do with months of television repeats can now look forward to the real thing again, with England captain Joe Root saying of the West Indies’ decision to tour: “It must be extremely scary and I think the whole cricketing world will be grateful to see some cricket again.”

The three-match contest was originally meant to be played in June but will now start on July 8 instead because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This is a huge step forward in cricket and in sports in general as we travel over to England for this series,” said Holder.

“A lot has gone into the preparations for what will be a new phase in the game.”

But rather than matches before crowds at The Oval, Edgbaston and Lord’s, a now back-to-back series will take place behind closed doors at the more ‘bio-secure’ Ageas Bowl and Old Trafford.

Whereas players usually spend evenings during a Test away from the

“

This is a huge step forward in cricket and in sports in general as we travel over to England for this series. A lot has gone into the preparations for what will be a new phase in the game.

JASON HOLDER,
WEST INDIES
CAPTAIN

ground, they will now instead find themselves in a protective bubble at two venues which both have onsite hotels.

Southampton’s Ageas Bowl will stage the series opener from July 8, with the next two Tests at Old Trafford.

All the West Indies players have tested negative for the virus, although they will be retested when they arrive in Manchester.

Health measures, including a ban on applying saliva to the ball set to be rubber-stamped at an International Cricket Council meeting on Wednesday, will be in place.

“Our main objective is to deliver a safe environment for all stakeholders,” said England and Wales Cricket Board events director Steve Elworthy. -- AFP



EX-CAPTAIN YOUNIS KHAN NAMED PAKISTAN BATTING COACH

KARACHI: Former Pakistan captain Younis Khan was named as batting coach for the upcoming tour of England on Tuesday as international cricket slowly returns after the coronavirus shutdown.

Younis, 42, is Pakistan's highest run-scorer in Tests with 10,099 runs in 118 matches in a career that stretched from 2000 to 2017.

Pakistan will also have the services of former spinner Mushtaq Ahmed as spin bowling coach to assist head coach Misbah-ul-Haq during the tour, where they are set to play three Tests and an equal number of Twenty20 internationals.

The national squad will likely kick off training in Lahore before departing for England in early July where they will be held in quarantine for two weeks.

Pakistan are set to play the first of three Tests in

Manchester from August 5 while the remaining two Tests will be in Southampton (August 13-17 and 21-25).

The three Twenty20 internationals will all be played in Southampton on August 28, 30 and September 1.

International cricket, halted like other sports because of the coronavirus pandemic, is finally coming back to life with the West Indies arriving in England on Tuesday for a rescheduled, three-Test tour.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said the two appointments were made to help Misbah and bowling coach Waqar Younis. "The appointments have been made to provide head coach Misbah and fast bowling coach Waqar the necessary and essential resources that can help them further uplift the performance of the side," said the PCB in a statement.— **AFP**

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PCB STATEMENT

"I've seen what's been proposed, the Six Nations moved, no more summer tours... If things are working in that direction it's for the good of French rugby and us, the players."

**Charles Ollivon,
France captain**



France captain Ollivon backs global calendar for rugby

PARIS: France captain Charles Ollivon has supported the idea of a global calendar as it will benefit the sport at Test level but questioned its positives domestically.

World Rugby chairman Bill Beaumont said in May that plans about aligning fixtures in both the northern and southern hemispheres were underway.

Discussions about its impact on sides in leagues such as Ollivon's Toulon in the French Top 14 are also ongoing.

"I've seen what's been proposed, the Six Nations moved, no more summer tours... If things are working in that direction it's for the good of French rugby and us, the

players," he said in an interview.

"I don't know how it will work for the clubs. It's hard to talk about because we don't know what's going to happen. I think that it's all being done for the good of rugby so why not," the 27-year-old added.

Last weekend Ollivon's les Bleus team-mate Jefferson Poirot retired from Test rugby because of a lack of motivation after losing October's World Cup quarterfinal.

Poirot, also 27, was his country's most used prop since 2016 and captained the side during last year's tournament.

"I respect his choice. Playing for France necessitates the maximum energy. It's the international level,

you have to give everything. You can't be there at 99 per cent," Ollivon said.

"I hope I can wear the blue shirt with Jeff again. It's a dream to be able to continue to play as long as possible for France because it's the highest level and I savour it so much."

'HOLY GRAIL'

Ollivon was named France skipper for this year's Six Nations despite Poirot being one of the favourites to be appointed.

But the back-rower has not been confirmed as the skipper for the coming months by head coach Fabien Galthie. — **AFP**

SPORTS



‘RED WARRIORS’

TO PLAY JORDAN FRIENDLY IN OCTOBER



ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: Oman national football team will take on Jordan in a preparatory match on October 7 in Muscat.

The recently-announced friendly match through OFA twitter account is part of the Red Warriors' preparations for the Joint Qualification matches for World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian

Championship in China in 2023.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) recently announced the proposed dates for resuming the World Cup qualification matches as the national team will face Afghanistan on October 13 in Tajikistan. In November, the Sultanate football team will take on Qatar on November 12 in Muscat in the top clash of the group

which will decide the topper of the group.

The last match for the 'Red Warriors' will be against Bangladesh on November 17 in the latter's home.

The Croatian coach Branko Ivankovic had said during the initial press conference, after appointing him as head coach of the national team, that advancing to the second round qualification for World Cup Qatar 2022 is the

top priority for him. He confirmed that Oman's players have the ability to be competent enough to take on any top team in Asia.

The 65-year-old had signed a two-year deal in January. The Croatian coach led the team at two domestic camps for the local players in February and he visited Oman's clubs to have a better idea on Oman's football organisation.