

Alba employee’s training and development goes virtual

TDT | Manama

Aluminium Bahrain (Alba), announced successfully adopting virtual platforms for training employees and contractors since April 2020 amid coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

“COVID-19 has dramatically changed the global training & education sector, giving a distinctive rise to virtual platforms. As we find our balance in the new norm, Alba has re-shaped its training and development programmes so that our people continue to learn and grow, which in turn will help Alba stay ahead of the curve,” said Alba’s Chief Executive Officer Ali Al Baqali.

“In the wake of COVID-19 Pandemic, the Company’s Human Resources & Training Department quickly transitioned from in-person learning to virtual and online training sessions for Alba employees as well as contractors.”

Alba said it has been con-



Alba’s Chief Executive Officer Ali Al Baqali

ducting numerous short courses and multiple-days training by in-house instructors and technical experts as well as well-known external training providers.

The company said will continue to expand its virtual and online training portfolio to fulfil the objectives of its Master Training Plan, which was announced in October 2019.

Flipkart raises \$1.2 billion in Walmart-led funding

Reuters | Bengaluru

Flipkart said yesterday it raised \$1.2 billion in an investment led by its majority owner Walmart Inc, valuing the Indian e-commerce firm at \$24.9 billion.

The investment round included other existing Flipkart shareholders, and the funding will be made in two tranches over the remainder of the fiscal year 2021, Flipkart said.

The Bengaluru-headquartered firm would use the funds for the “continued development of its e-commerce marketplace as India emerges from the Covid-19 crisis,” it said.

Walmart in 2018 paid \$16 billion for a more than 70% stake in Flipkart, one of India’s best known startups, to better compete with Amazon.com Inc in an important growth market.

Flipkart did not disclose de-



tails on the size of Walmart’s stake in the company following the latest deal. It did not immediately respond to a request seeking further details.

Several Indian companies including e-commerce startups have lost weeks of revenues this year as the COVID-19 crisis resulted in lockdowns that restricted business activities.

Coronavirus cases have surged rapidly in recent weeks, making India the third worst hit nation, behind Brazil and the United States.

OPEC sees record rise in global oil demand in 2021

Reuters | London

Global oil demand will soar by a record 7 million barrels per day in 2021 as the global economy recovers from the coronavirus pandemic but will remain below 2019 levels, OPEC said in its monthly report.

It was the first report in which OPEC assessed oil markets next year. It said the forecast assumed no further

downside risks materialised in 2021 such as U.S.-China trade tensions, high debt levels or a second wave of coronavirus infections.

“This assumes that COVID-19 is contained, especially in major economies, allowing for recovery in private household consumption and investment, supported by the massive stimulus measures undertaken to combat the pandemic,” OPEC said.

Saudi Arabia permanently cancels licence of beIN Sports

Reuters | Dubai

Saudi Arabia’s General Authority for Competition (GAC) said yesterday it has permanently canceled the licence of Qatari broadcaster beIN Sports, which has been barred from broadcasting in the kingdom since mid-2017

under a dispute with Qatar.

GAC said in a statement carried on its website and by state television that it was also fining beIN Sports 10 million riyals (\$2.67 million) for practices “that restrict competition”.

There was no immediate comment from beIN or Qatar.

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CONNOR CAMPBELL  
ANALYST, SPREADEX

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ED BREWSTER  
HUAWEI UK SPOKESMAN

Britain to purge Huawei from 5G service

● Huawei called the decision “disappointing”

● The British review was triggered by new US sanctions in May that blocked Huawei’s access to US chips and semi-conductors

AFP | London

Britain yesterday approved the phased removal of Chinese telecoms giant Huawei from its 5G network despite warnings of retaliation from Beijing. The policy reversal hands a major victory to US President Donald Trump’s administration in its geopolitical and trade battle with China.

But it threatens to further damage Britain’s relations with the Asian power and carry a big cost for UK mobile providers that have relied on Huawei equipment for nearly 20 years.

Digital minister Oliver Dowden’s announcement followed a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Boris Johnson of his cabinet and National Security Council. “From the end of this year, telecoms providers must not buy any 5G equipment from Huawei,” Dowden told parliament. He said the new guidelines also required all of Huawei’s existing 5G gear to be stripped out “by 2027”.

Huawei called the decision “disappointing” and motivated by politics.

“Regrettably our future in the UK has become politicised, this is about US trade policy and not security,” Huawei UK spokesman Ed Brewster said.

“This disappointing decision is bad news for anyone in the UK with a mobile phone.”

US sanctions

Johnson infuriated Trump and upset some members of his own Conservative party by allowing the Chinese leader in global 5G technology to help roll out Britain’s speedy new data network in January.

But the Trump administration told the UK government that its decision imperilled intelligence sharing and could even result in the relocation of some US fighter jets from England.



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‘Outages’

Johnson had come under growing political pressure to not only dump Huawei but also adopt a tough line with China for its treatment of Hong Kong and repression of ethnic Uighurs in the western Xinjiang region.

But he also pledged to voters last year to bring broadband access to all Britons by 2025.

British telecoms companies have warned that stripping out all existing Huawei equipment could cost them billions and take years to implement.

BT chief executive Philip Jansen even raised the possibility of Britain suffering service “outages”.

Dowden conceded that Tuesday’s announcement means more Britons will have to wait longer to get full access to the speedy new network.

“This means a cumulative delay to 5G roll-out of two to three years and costs of up to £2 billion (\$2.5 billion, 2.2 billion euros),” he said.

“This will have real consequences for the connections on which all our constituents rely.”

Diversification

Johnson has challenged the Trump administration to come up with a reliable and cost-effective alternative to the Chinese firm.

Britain is pushing for the creation of a 5G club of nations that can pool their resources and provide individual components for an alternative solution that could be applied across the world.

Dowden said South Korea’s Samsung and NEC of Japan were frontrunners, and talks were already at a “technical level”.

“Put simply, countries around the world -- not just in the United Kingdom -- have become dangerously reliant on too few vendors,” Dowden said Tuesday.

Tuesday’s announcement does not cover the older 3G and 4G networks because their equipment is not impacted by the US sanctions.



Washington believes the private Chinese company could either spy for Beijing or shut down rival countries’ 5G networks in times of war.

The British review was triggered by new US sanctions in May that blocked Huawei’s access to US chips and semi-conductors at the heart of 5G networks. The restriction raised the possibility of Huawei having to switch from trusted US suppliers to alternatives whose safety could not be guaranteed by UK security agencies.

Nokia says ready to replace Huawei in UK ‘at scale and speed’

Reuters

Finnish telecom gear maker Nokia is ready to replace Huawei equipment in Britain, the head of Nokia Britain said yesterday following the UK’s decision to stop using the Chinese manufacturer.

“We have the capacity and expertise to replace all of the Huawei equipment in the UK’s networks at scale and speed, and are ready to step up to support the implementation of the UK government decision with minimal impact on the people using our customers’ networks,” Cormac Whelan said.

Nokia rolls out software upgrade to 5G



Reuters

Finnish telecom equipment maker Nokia launched yesterday software which enables mobile operators to upgrade their 4G radio stations to new 5G technology without visiting the site or replacing equipment.

“This solution will save the telecommunications industry potentially tens of billions of euros in site engineering and re-visit costs,” Nokia said in a statement.

Nokia said the software upgrade was immediately available for about one million radios, and the reach would grow to 3.1 million by the end of the year and to over 5 million in 2021.

India wholesale prices contract for third month in June by 1.81pc year-on-year

Reuters | New Delhi

India’s wholesale price gauge contracted for a third month in June, data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed yesterday, with prices falling 1.81 per cent from a year earlier.

The annual wholesale price index fell in June, mainly because of a fall in fuel prices, from a year earlier, compared to 2.40pc fall predicted by analysts in a Reuters poll.

The annual retail inflation, the main gauge for the central bank to monitor prices, however, rose to 6.09pc in June, data released on Monday showed.