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A RAY OF HOPE

Oman Transplantation Society formed, to operate under umbrella of Oman Medical Association

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Thousands of patients in the sultanate with renal failure and others needing organ transplant have a reason to cheer with the formation of Oman Transplantation Society (OTS).

The society was established in June 2021 and operates under the umbrella of Oman Medical Association. Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Ahmed al Busaidi, one of the founders of OTS, informed that it is an important step towards organ transplantation in the country as it will contribute to supporting national efforts to develop an integrated programme for organ transplantation. Members include a group of specialised doctors and those interested in organ transplantation.

Organ transplantation is the only hope for many patients with organ failure, including children, adolescents, young people and the elderly. These patients are sometimes forced to travel abroad and use illegal methods to obtain organs and endanger their lives in order to obtain a donated organ.

According to the Ministry of Health, the list of patients awaiting organ transplant is long owing to a severe scarcity of donors. Statistics of the ministry reveal that there are 2,500 chronic renal failure patients in the country, of which more than 600 are in the Governorate of Muscat.

"OTS will aim to conduct awareness and educational campaigns for various segments of society on the importance of organ donation and organise meetings, seminars and scientific



OTS will contribute to supporting national efforts to develop an integrated programme for organ transplantation

AHMED AL BUSAIDI

conferences for medical staff to inform them of everything new in the field of organ transplantation. It will cooperate with the Ministry of Health and various relevant authorities to support the national programme for organ transplantation and people who have donated their organs and patients who have undergone a replacement organ transplant. The society will also issue proto-

cols and treatment guidelines for organ transplantation, and work to provide an alternative organ transplant for patients with organ failure at the earliest opportunity," Busaidi said.

"We welcome volunteers, residents and citizens, to participate in the society through its website to alleviate the suffering of patients with organ failure."

Citing examples and signifi-

cance of organ transplant, Dr Hamad bin Khalifa al Kalbani, resident physician in Cardiac Surgery Department at Sorbonne University, Paris, said, "A brain dead patient in southern France, by God's grace, saved six patients from death in different French cities. A few days ago, we performed a heart-transplant operation for a 19-year-old patient and saved his life.

"Organ donation is important as there are many Omani patients who need urgent transplants. Once a person is laid to rest after death, his body withers which doesn't benefit anyone. So people should volunteer to donate organs to save patients suffering from organ failure."

Continued on Page 03

TRA mulls regulations to safeguard interests of telecom customers

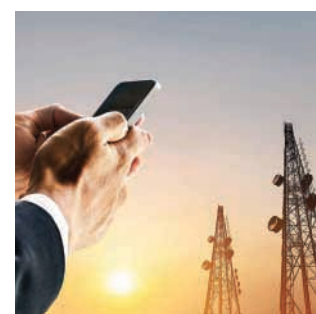
Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has launched a public consultation and survey on the 'Draft Regulation of Telecommunications Services Beneficiaries' Rights'.

The consultation document contains a set of provisions and principals regulating the rights of beneficiaries of telecommunications services.

Through the consultation, the authority aims at regulating the relationship between beneficiaries and telecom service providers, in addition to safeguarding the interests of beneficiaries, and encouraging them to exercise their rights effectively.

The regulation also aims to raise beneficiaries' awareness of



their obligations, and to determine the obligations of the service providers towards the beneficiaries.

Some of the queries that TRA seeks a response to from the public in the survey concern reducing the period for solving customer complaints, amending the billing objection period, and reducing the time period from two days for individuals and one week for enterprise customers to

transfer a customer's number to another operator.

Some other questions pertain to the service providers' obligation to stop sending marketing or promotional messages of third parties within a day of receiving a customer's request to stop such messages.

Additionally, the survey seeks feedback on provision of special plans for children under the age of 15 years that need to be registered in the name of the legal guardian, and determining the time period for service providers to collect unpaid bills before they lose the right of claim.

TRA has invited the public to participate in the survey and to provide comments and feedback on the draft regulation before September 8.

Plans afoot to make vaccination mandatory to enter public places

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the developments resulting from COVID-19 pandemic on Thursday announced that it is considering taking appropriate measures to make COVID-19 vaccination as a prerequisite for people to enter public places, government sector institutions and for travel to and from the sultanate.

The Supreme Committee expressed happiness over the noticeable decrease in the number of COVID-19 infections, hospitalisations and the gradual decrease in the number of deaths.

On Thursday, the Ministry of Health (MoH) announced 322 new confirmed cases, bringing the total number of patients in the sultanate to 295,857. The total number of death cases in the country on Thursday reached 3,814 after 12 people died on Thursday and a total of 278,195



out of the COVID-19 patients in the sultanate have recovered.

The Supreme Committee urges all members of the society to continue to adhere to the precautionary measures approved, stressing that this commitment will be supported by the progress of the national campaign for immunization against the virus.

2nd dose from today

Starting from today, MoH will start the second dose of COVID-19 vaccination for those who

have completed 10 weeks from the date of the first dose. In a statement issued, MoH said the online booking must be done prior to taking the dose.

Looking at the decrease in number of new cases, the committee decided to continue with the decision to close commercial activities and prevent the movement of individuals and vehicles but reducing its timing to be between 10pm to 4 am until further notice. Earlier, the night movement ban was from 5pm to 4am.



Oman at the forefront of building relations in the world



Barakat, Khanjari bow out with their heads held high

Mandatory e-payment option to fight tax evasion, hidden trade

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The decision to implement an electronic payment option in shops and for commercial activities starting from January 1, 2022, is aimed at fighting hidden trade and tax evasion, according to Mubarak Mohammed al Dohani, director general of Commerce in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

Dohani confirmed that with e-payment as an optional service, customers will have the choice to use cash for smaller transactions.

"Unfortunately, some shops

The decision will help concerned authorities know who is the real owner, which will reduce hidden trade. The decision also aims to tackle tax evasion and counterfeit currency

MUBARAK AL DOHANI

are run by expatriate workers. They are not the shop owners. The decision will help conce-



red authorities know who is the real owner, which will reduce hidden trade. The decision also

aims to tackle tax evasion, bankruptcy and reduce counterfeit currency, in addition to providing

more payment options to consumers."

Dohani added that in the first stage, the decision will be implemented for the most popular commercial activities in the sultanate, most of which do not offer an option to pay electronically. "So it is an exercise to reduce hidden trade and the exit of funds from the sultanate without the national economy benefiting from it. For example, trade in gold and silver is one of the high-risk activities. The decision will help reduce money laundering in this activity."

Dohani confirmed that the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), in coordination with banks and

service providers, has provided point-of-sale devices to merchants without installation fees or monthly or annual fees to private sector institutions. Only the fees for transactions specified by CBO will be applicable.

"The fees must not exceed 1.5 per cent of the transaction amount or a maximum of RO10 for payment via debit cards or exceed 0.75 per cent for mobile payments via QR code. The Consumer Protection Authority, in coordination with banks, will receive complaints related to electronic payments through the authority's communication channels," said Dohani.



Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the unaudited interim financial statements of ahlibank for the six-month period ending 30 June 2021.

The emergence of COVID-19 variants is exacerbating the impact of the pandemic on the global economic outlook and overall financial conditions. As a result, the Sultanate's economic recovery was as well subdued, impacted by fresh restrictions following the increased number of COVID-19 cases during the current period. Several key indicators; however, give us confidence and a more positive outlook over the medium-term. The steadfast implementation of the governments' Medium-Term Fiscal Plan (MTFP) will ensure that fiscal vulnerabilities are reduced and that the Sultanate's debt are going on a firm downward path.

As an important financial institution that plays a significant role in the economy's development and progress, ahlibank remains fully supportive of the initiatives of the Oman government and the Central Bank of Oman in their goals to achieve and fulfil its Oman Vision 2040. This is reflected in a number of targeted initiatives adopted by the Bank over the past period, with the aim of consolidating its position in the market as well as maximizing value for its stakeholders, consequently driving market growth.

Financial Performance

ahlibank continues to grow steadily in terms of its asset portfolio, customer deposits and most of its key financial indicators:

	30 June 21	30 June 20	Growth %
	RO Million		
Net Loans, Advances and Financing	2,286.8	2,148.1	6.5%
Total Assets	2,848.3	2,497.2	14.1%
Customer Deposits	1,968.1	1,639.7	20.0%
Equity	415.8	377.1	10.3%
Operating Income	39.47	36.32	8.7%
Operating Expenses	16.47	15.30	7.6%
Profit for the Period	13.31	12.50	6.5%

The Bank recorded 14.1% growth in total assets amounting to RO 2,848.3 million as of the end of June 2021. Customer deposits increased by 20.0%, reaching RO 1,968.1 million compared with the same period in 2020. Net loans, advances and financing grew by 6.5%, reaching RO 2,286.8 million. Operating income increased by 8.7% to RO 39.47 million as of the end of June 2021. The Bank's operating expenses also increased by 7.6%, and profit recorded during the period increased by 6.5%.

Highlights

During the first half of 2021, the Bank raised a share capital of RO 30 million through a rights issue, strengthening the Tier I capital of the Bank and meeting the Bank's capital requirement to support business growth. We are pleased to share that despite a challenging local and global economic environment, there has been an overwhelming response from

shareholders. The issuance reaffirms the Bank's positive market position and strong investor confidence.

ahlibank continues to develop and strengthen its digital and traditional banking products and services, and has taken a proactive step in adopting VAT-compliant solutions to ensure operational efficiency.

Stemming from its commitment to offer customers with diverse and customized product choices, ahlibank celebrated the launch of Al Nukhba to its premium banking customers, which provides a range of financial and non-financial concessions that fulfil the banking needs of the wealth management segment and enhance their access to in-value investment solutions.

As part of our digital transformation vision, providing a convenient and secure banking experience for our customers is paramount. Ahli Islamic recently launched its new mobile and internet application to ensure that customers are able to easily access their bank accounts anytime, anywhere and do all their transactions swiftly and with ease.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

ahlibank is committed to corporate social responsibility and continues to strengthen and deepen its support of various social, educational, cultural, health and sports activities in Oman. Alongside this is its commitment towards ensuring the health and safety of individuals and the society as a whole. ahlibank complemented the efforts of the esteemed Ministry of Health, and launched a full-fledged vaccination drive for its employees and their families, securing their health and enabling a safe work environment.

Looking Ahead

ahlibank seeks to achieve greater sustainable value in the country with the combined participation of individuals, institutions and society. The Bank continues its efforts to provide dedicated, highly efficient and effective banking solutions to its individual, corporate and SME clients. It also looks to fully leverage its digital potential to enhance customer experience, increase operational efficiency, and ensure stakeholders' safety under these circumstances.

The Bank also continues to attach great importance to providing jobs for the Omani youth and is committed to contributing to Oman's vision to develop their skills and enhance their talent and capabilities. Our comprehensive learning, training and development programs enable us to do so, benefiting students who aspire to join the banking workforce in the country.

Acknowledgments

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our stakeholders for their continued faith in our vision and initiatives. Their support has been instrumental in helping us protect the interests of our customers and retain the confidence of our employees.

The Bank remains true to its pledge to support His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in continuing the Sultanate's renaissance journey and contributing towards the fulfillment of its economic development agenda.

I would also like to thank the Bank's Executive Management team and the employees for their commitment, dedication and contribution to the overall success of the Bank especially during these challenging times. Lastly, I would like to thank our clients and customers for their continued loyalty and trust in our services.

Hamdan Ali Nasser Al Hinai
Chairman

INTERIM CONDENSED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 30 JUNE 2021

	Unaudited 30-Jun-21 RO '000	Unaudited 30-Jun-20 RO '000	Audited 31-Dec-20 RO '000
ASSETS			
Cash and balances with Central Bank of Oman	65,842	59,457	79,020
Due from banks	50,107	20,771	46,174
Loans & advances and financing, net	2,286,796	2,148,143	2,218,897
Investment securities	386,757	225,444	306,368
Other assets	34,300	21,561	29,154
Property and equipment	24,542	21,870	22,864
TOTAL ASSETS	2,848,344	2,497,246	2,702,477
LIABILITIES			
Due to banks	234,069	198,603	135,244
Customers' deposits	1,968,088	1,639,714	1,924,654
Borrowed funds	130,900	188,650	159,775
Deferred tax liability	307	231	286
Other liabilities	90,214	75,927	82,168
Subordinated liabilities	9,000	17,000	12,000
TOTAL LIABILITIES	2,432,578	2,120,125	2,314,127
EQUITY			
Share capital	194,966	164,966	164,966
Legal reserve	34,143	31,632	34,028
Subordinated debt reserve	8,700	15,385	11,400
Fair value reserve	(4,646)	(8,439)	(4,066)
Special reserve	998	1,893	998
Impairment reserve	10,127	9,434	10,127
Retained earnings	47,478	38,250	46,897
TOTAL SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE EQUITY HOLDERS OF THE BANK	291,766	253,121	264,350
Tier 1 Perpetual subordinated bonds	124,000	124,000	124,000
TOTAL EQUITY	415,766	377,121	388,350
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	2,848,344	2,497,246	2,702,477
Net assets value per share (baizas)	150	153	160
Contingent liabilities and commitments	232,061	290,746	239,738

INTERIM CONDENSED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
FOR THE SIX MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

	Three month period ended		Six month period ended	
	Unaudited 30-Jun-21 RO '000	Unaudited 30-Jun-20 RO '000	Unaudited 30-Jun-21 RO '000	Unaudited 30-Jun-20 RO '000
Interest income	29,748	27,712	58,553	55,516
Interest expense	(16,830)	(15,753)	(33,348)	(31,785)
NET INTEREST INCOME	12,918	11,959	25,205	23,731
Income from Islamic financing and investments	5,466	4,918	10,390	9,956
Unrestricted investment account holders' share of profit and profit expense	(2,584)	(1,591)	(5,006)	(3,135)
NET INCOME FROM ISLAMIC FINANCING AND INVESTMENTS	2,882	3,327	5,384	6,821
NET INTEREST INCOME AND INCOME FROM ISLAMIC FINANCING AND INVESTMENTS	15,800	15,286	30,589	30,552
Fees and commission income	3,592	1,637	5,158	4,278
Fees and commission expense	(276)	(167)	(453)	(271)
Net fees and commission income	3,316	1,470	4,705	4,007
Other operating income	732	704	4,176	1,764
OPERATING INCOME	19,848	17,460	39,470	36,323
Net impairment on financial assets	(3,675)	(5,160)	(7,676)	(7,552)
NET OPERATING INCOME	16,173	12,300	31,794	28,771
Staff expenses	(5,426)	(4,464)	(10,658)	(8,920)
Depreciation	(702)	(609)	(1,387)	(1,219)
Other operating expenses	(2,214)	(1,963)	(4,422)	(5,156)
OPERATING EXPENSES	(8,342)	(7,036)	(16,467)	(15,295)
PROFIT BEFORE TAXATION	7,831	5,264	15,327	13,476
Tax expense	(875)	224	(2,020)	(975)
PROFIT FOR THE PERIOD	6,956	5,488	13,307	12,501
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME / EXPENSE - NET OF TAX				
<i>Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss</i>				
- Equity investments at FVOCI - net changes in fair value	321	251	(89)	(188)
<i>Items that may be reclassified to profit or loss</i>				
Changes in fair value of cash flow hedge - net	274	(304)	607	(2,168)
Changes in fair value of FVOCI debt investments - net	2,120	13,292	557	(1,846)
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME/ (EXPENSE) FOR THE PERIOD	2,715	13,239	1,075	(4,202)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD	9,671	18,727	14,382	8,299
Basic and diluted earnings per share (baizas)	4	3	7	8

Citizens rally to maintain falaj in Jalaan Bu Hassan

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To preserve Falaj al Suwaiqia and support farmers, citizens of Jalaan Bani Bu Hassan have come together to maintain the ancient irrigation system in South Sharqiyah.

Salim bin Amer al Masrouri, who is supervising the maintenance work of the falaj, said, "We are constantly working on fixing it. Falaj al Suwaiqia is a Ghaili type of falaj which receives water from ponds or running water. The flow of water in the falaj is disrupted by mud from Wadi al Batha."

Citizens rallied and coordinated efforts to remove the mud and blockages, including felled palm trees, from the falaj. Following heavy rains in the governorates of North and South Sharqiyah recently, waste had accumulated in the falaj obstructing its flow. Maintenance work was carried out four times over the period of a month.

"Aflaj are a traditional water



(Supplied photo)

source for irrigation on which Omanis have depended for ages," Masrouri noted.

Talking about the challenges the citizens faced in their effort, Masrouri said, "Following rains, the falaj is filled with mud as deep as 4m. The falaj needs a month and a half to repair. We spent approximately RO8,000 to repair it. Around ten youngsters worked in teams to remove the mud and blockages from the falaj."

The work required heavy equipment to dig an alternative course for the water in order to speed up the maintenance work. Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan has seven aflaj systems of which four are Ghaili and three Dawoodi.

"Citizens are appealing to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources to maintain Falaj al Suwaiqia in order to end their suffering," Masrouri said.

There are 4,112 aflaj in the sultanate. The aflaj are categorised into three main types - Dawoodi, Ghaili and Ayni.

Cancer cases go up in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Non-Communicable Diseases Department of the Directorate General of Primary Health Care, represented by the National Cancer Registry, has issued the Cancer Incidence Report in Oman for 2018.

The 2018 statistics showed that the total number of cancer cases recorded in the sultanate was 2,118, including 1,911 cases among Omanis (836 among males and 1,075 among females).

Cancer incidence among the age group 20-49 years is 34.9 per cent of the total number of cases. The report indicates an increase in the incidence rate to 112.4 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2018 compared to 105 per 100,000 of population in 2015.

The global prospects estimate that the number of new cases diagnosed with cancer will reach 24mn in 2030 worldwide. The global increase of cancer incidence is likely due to the population growth, population ageing, as well as the economic and social developments such as unhealthy food and lack of physical activity.

In Oman, breast cancer is the most common cancer among females, followed by colorectal cancer and thyroid cancer.

The average age at diagnosing women was 48 years for breast cancer, 58 years for colorectal cancer, and 37 years for thyroid cancer. Furthermore, 32 per cent of breast cancer cases were diagnosed in the third and fourth phases and 49 per cent of colorectal cancer cases in the third and fourth phases.



(Supplied photo)

27,000 tonnes of waste collected during Eid holidays

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Over 27,000 tonnes of municipal waste was collected during the Eid al Adha holidays, according to Oman Environmental Service Holding Company (be'ah).

Fatima Ibrahim al Mujaini, manager of Municipal Solid Waste Strategies in be'ah, said that the past few weeks have been exceptional looking at the Eid al Adha festival and the lockdown during which be'ah doubled its efforts to continue to effectively manage municipal solid waste operations.

She said, "The partial and total lockdown period in most governorates was marked by a significant increase in municipal waste volume, calling for stepped-up collection and transportation operations to engineered landfills. The main contributing factor was Eid al Adha, a time to which be'ah attaches special importance and develops proactive plans to adequately and

smoothly meet requirements of each governorate. The plans identify the extra manpower and machinery required to ensure service continuity and avoid waste accumulation. These core plans are backed up by emergency plans and plans that operating companies in each governorate have developed."

According to Fatima, be'ah's engineered landfills received more than 27,000 tonnes of waste from various governorates during the Eid al Adha holiday from July 19 to July 23, with the daily average recorded at over 5,000 tonnes. Muscat governorate was the highest in terms of waste quantities with about 7,500 tonnes, while Musandam was the lowest with 186 tonnes.

"We have developed a clear and comprehensive plan incorporating the Supreme Committee for COVID-19's decisions on movement restriction. These special plans were implemented alongside with our regular plans to avoid waste from accumulating during the holidays."

Inflated bills: APSR directs electricity companies not to disconnect supply

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In light of the growing discontent among consumers regarding inflated electricity bills, the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) has directed all electricity distribution and supply companies not to cut off electricity supply of any subscriber.

The authority further asked the distribution companies to restore the connections of those whose services have already been disconnected.

The authority has urged subscribers to submit their complaints when the service is cut off or any other matter to the offices of licensed companies in governorates or its call centres.

Complying with the APSR's order, Muscat Electricity Distribution Company, Majan Electricity Company, Mazoon Electricity Company, and Dhofar Integrated Services Company confirmed that they had implemented the directives of the authority not to disconnect the electricity supply due to the accumulation of dues of subscribers.

In view of the inflated bills, the Nama Group said that it has extended the period for updating subscriber data until the end of August. The Nama Group called on subscribers to update their data through the websites of the electricity companies, which will ensure application of relevant tariff.

A ray of hope

Continued from Page 01

Islam permits organ donation

"Organ donation is permissible in Islamic law because it saves lives," Sheikh Dr Kahlan Nabhan al Kharusi, Oman's assistant grand mufti, has stated in a fatwa.

"Organ donation must be free of charge; an organ must not be sold. Islam urges saving lives and donating organs is one way of doing so. God has said in the Holy Q'uran, 'And whoever saves a live one, it is as though he has saved the lives of all mankind,'" Dr Kharusi said.

National programme for organ transplant

In March this year, H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, issued a ministerial decision to develop a national programme to regulate human organ and tissue donations.

The National Programme for Regulating Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues will

contribute to clinical and scientific research and implementation of a technical committee's recommendations in regulating the practice of human organ and tissue transfer and transplantation.

The national programme is also proposing priority standards to perform organ and tissue transplantation, control mechanisms and inspection of medical practices in this area, besides developing a plan to enhance community awareness about the significance of tissue donation and encourage organ donation.

Veteran blood donor Ahmed bin Hamad al Kharusi, who has donated 170 times, said, "The sultanate finds it difficult to provide human organs for donation and has to rely on imports. Organ transplants outside Oman are expensive as these involve the cost of searching for a donor, travel and accommodation abroad for extended duration of time during the operation and recovery."

He called on all to accept the idea of donating organs.

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Literary group to organise cultural event on Aug 15

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Poetry and Literary Group (PLG), a global forum of international poets, writers and artistes that holds weekly online literary programmes to offer positive growth and solace during the lockdowns and pandemic, will be organising a day-long online poetry and cultural event aired from five different continents from 11am until 12 midnight on August 15. Ambassador of India at UN, Shri Indramani Pandey will be the chief guest for the inaugural ceremony.

PLG Global president Tufail Ahmad said PLG's quest and responsibility to celebrate platinum jubilee of independence of India known as India @75 years celebrations is evident in the form of special children's programme, *Azaad parinde* and unique *Triveni Sangam*, a culmination of arts by PLG artistes, actors and singers.

"PLG tagline is connecting people with literature. PLG tries to achieve this objective by conducting weekly literary meets," he said.

PLG community is heading for world book record of maximum



Tufail Ahmad

number of poems on children by inviting poets from all over the world to write poems in collaboration with World Book London. All participants and volunteers of this campaign will be issued certificates. This is an effort of PLG to motivate the children who are worst affected during lockdown and social distancing due to COVID-19. The programme will include Poet's Lounge - a programme in which poets recite their own poems as well as celebrating the legends where all participants recite the poems and discuss about life and work of a chosen famous poets of Hindi, Urdu or English language.

Sultanate responds to vessel incident beyond its waters

Muscat - Oman was part of a rescue mission launched on Thursday to safeguard an oil tanker - *MT Mercer Street* - outside its territorial waters.

An official at the Maritime Security Centre (MSC) said that thanks to an existing system of joint maritime action and, acting in coordination with maritime security centres in the region, the MSC was prompt in responding to a mayday signal from *MT Mercer Street*. The vessel, flying the Liberian flag, had met with an incident outside Omani regional waters, he said.

The MSC official told ONA that, as soon as the centre received the call, it immediately took necessary action in coordination with military, security and civil authorities to handle the situation. As part of the action, the Royal Air Force of Oman sent sorties to the incident site while the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) operated a vessel.

The vessel owners and the crew told the authorities that the vessel would proceed to its destination without the need for further assistance, the official said.



The sultanate has affirmed its constant keenness on providing all resources to maintain safe passage for all in Omani regional waters. The sultanate also reiterated the preparedness of its departments to undertake any action deemed necessary for safe navigation along Omani regional waters.

Two killed on-board
An AFP report stated that two

Incident on-board MT Mercer Street killed one Romanian and a UK national

crew members of *MT Mercer Street*, managed by a prominent Israeli businessman's company,

were killed in what appears to be a drone attack, the vessel's London-based operator and the US military said on Friday, with Israel blaming Iran.

Zodiac Maritime, owned by Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer, said the incident on board the *MT Mercer Street* on Thursday killed one Romanian and a UK national, who was a guard for British maritime security firm Ambrey. The vessel was in the northern

Indian Ocean, travelling from Dar es Salaam to Fujairah with no cargo onboard when the attack occurred, it said.

'We are not aware of harm to any other personnel,' it said in a statement, adding that the Japanese-owned tanker was back under the control of its crew and was steaming to an undisclosed 'safe location' under US naval escort. Agencies



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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT
FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021**

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of National Aluminium Products Company SAOG (NAPCO), I am pleased to present you the unaudited financial reports for the half year ended 30 June 2021 and an overview of the performance of the Company.

Economic environment:

The global economies including the Oman are in recovery phase from Pandemic recession where the downside risks prevail in the form of further resurgence of the virus, vaccination delays, imposed restrictions and financial stress. To deal with all these, has become a real challenge for the aluminium industry worldwide.

The aluminum industry in the GCC region is one of the major non-oil industrial sector and contributor to the economic growth of the region. It not only supports the development of respective countries and secure supplies, but also act as a major diversification move and a future revenue stream. The region is now a major economic contributor to a growing global demand for aluminium.

Performance Review:

The financial performance of the company during the half year ending 30 June 2021, as compared to half year ending 30 June 2020, is summarized in the table below:

Summary of Income Statement		
Particulars	6-months 2021	6-months 2020
	Unaudited	Unaudited
	RO in 000's	
Sales and other income	15,388	15,372
Net (loss)/profit before tax	(1,212)	(1,049)
Income tax	174	157
Net (loss)/profit after tax	(1,038)	(891)

The Company realized revenue and other income of RO 15.39 million as compared to RO 15.37 million during the previous period and reported a net loss of RO 1.038 million as compared to RO 0.891 million previous period. Which is a result of reduction of total despatch quantity by 11% and the escalation of LME prices.

The following are the most important factors that contributed to this loss:

- Rising in financing rates
- Increasing competition due to additional capacities in the neighboring countries which effected on metal margin.
- The absence of clear Omani Measurements and specifications for aluminium profiles which allowed low thickness and low prices aluminium section to enter the local market.
- Introduction of tariff of RO 35 per MT on the export of scrap.
- Increase in billet premium by the suppliers.
- Further provision of IFRS-9
- Increase in Energy cost.
- Increase in Govt. tariffs e.g., visa charges, logistics, VAT etc.
- Continued adverse impact of COVID 19 Pandemic on the operations since second quarter of last year has brought various challenges to the Company in the form of less demand, regulatory restrictions, logistic issues, etc., which has resulted a drop in production and dispatches.

However, despite the difficult economic environment, the Company endeavor to maintain its business activities by continuing to implement its business strategy to minimize the negative impact of above-mentioned factors.

Future outlook:

The aluminum extrusion industry in Oman shall continue facing a challenging environment with added impacts of pandemic on the economy for an uncertain period of time. Much of the uncertainty since last year is expected to continue during the year 2021, with the speed of economic recovery, both domestically and globally shall remain unclear.

To overcome these challenges, the company is exercising all available options effectively utilize the operational resources, cost curtailment initiatives and improving efficiencies to sustain operating margins. Further, the company is in process of diversifying its risk by establishing a subsidiary company in UAE for more cost-effective operations. NAPCO will remain keen to meet all the challenges ahead to enhance the Company's image and financial strength to generate returns on the shareholder's funds.

Compliance with internal regulations and control system:

The Company is committed to maintain a high standard of internal regulations and control system commensurate with the size and nature of the operations.

Acknowledgement and Appreciation:

I would like to extend my deep thanks to our honorable shareholders and to all my colleagues on the Board of Directors for their valuable contributions. I would also like to thank the Management and staff for their loyalty, hard work, dedication, and contribution in the achievement of our goals and acknowledges, with sincere gratitude, the support extended by all the investors, clients, vendors, banks, regulatory and government authorities, MSM and CMA and look forward to having the continued support from all of them.

I wish to place on record, personally and on behalf of the Board of Directors and employees, our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tareq bin Taimour and his wise government for continued support, encouragement, and guidance for our company and wish him all success in leading Oman to achieve greater progress and prosperity.

For & on behalf of the Board of Directors
National Aluminium Products Co. S.A.O.G.

Saud Bin Sulaiman Al Riyami
Chairman

Condensed interim statement of financial position As at 30 June 2021

	Unaudited period ended 30 June 2021 RO	Audited Year ended 31 December 2020 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets:		
Property, plant and equipment	12,423,533	12,744,203
Intangible Assets	97,924	109,120
Right-of-use asset	1,000,920	1,019,181
Investment properties	475,000	475,000
Deferred tax asset	28,887	-
Total non-current assets	14,026,264	14,377,504
Current assets:		
Inventories	2,991,578	3,479,881
Trade and other receivables	14,565,252	18,089,511
Cash and bank balances	153,759	447,231
Total current assets	17,710,589	22,016,623
	31,736,853	36,394,127
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Shareholders' equity:		
Share capital	3,357,145	3,357,145
Legal reserve	1,119,048	1,119,048
Revaluation surplus	1,842,165	1,939,354
Retained earnings	833,183	1,756,598
Total Shareholders' equity	7,151,541	8,172,145
Liabilities:		
Non-current liabilities:		
Lease liability	1,022,752	1,022,752
Borrowings	-	-
Deferred tax liability	-	163,112
Employees' end of service benefits	285,848	351,277
Total non-current liabilities	1,308,600	1,537,141
Current liabilities:		
Lease liability	65,128	65,128
Borrowings	19,011,873	20,981,839
Trade and other payables	4,199,711	5,637,874
Total current liabilities	23,276,712	26,684,841
Total liabilities	24,585,312	28,221,982
Total equity and liabilities	31,736,853	36,394,127
Net assets per share	0.213	0.243

Condensed interim statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the period ended 30 June 2021

	Unaudited period ended 30 June 2021 RO	Unaudited period ended 30 June 2020 RO
Revenue	12,976,095	12,904,953
Scrap sales	2,104,911	2,337,051
Cost of sales	(14,433,196)	(14,574,076)
Gross Profit	647,810	667,928
Other income	307,389	130,184
Expenses:		
General and administrative expenses	(516,848)	(482,174)
Selling and distribution expenses	(515,359)	(586,206)
Allowance for credit losses	(377,713)	(80,191)
Net finance costs	(757,591)	(698,215)
Loss before tax	(1,212,312)	(1,048,674)
Income tax	174,557	157,301
Loss for the period	(1,037,755)	(891,373)
Other comprehensive income for the period	-	-
Total Comprehensive loss for the period	(1,037,755)	(891,373)
Basic loss per share	(0.062)	(0.053)

NOTE

- The Company does not have items under other comprehensive income.
- Certain comparative figures have been reclassified to confirm to presentation adopted in these financial statements.
- The complete accounts will be sent to any shareholder who requests them either in Arabic or English as required within 7 days of receipt of the request.

111 arrested for wildlife offences in 2020: EA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Environment Authority said its specialists arrested 111 people for wildlife offences in 2020.

In 2020, an official said, "the authority received 887 complaints, including 174 violations of environmental requirements, 70 reports of marine pollution, and 35 other violations."

In May this year, the Environment Authority announced that Thumrait Court of First Instance issued a ruling convicting three citizens for hunting wild birds protected by the Natural Reserves and Wildlife Conservation Law (No. 6/2003), and imposed a fine of RO1,100 in addition to confiscation of weapons and imprisonment for a period of one



(Supplied photo)

month and a suspended prison term for one of them as pre-trial detention was sufficient.

According to Article 15 (b) of the Law on Nature Reserves and Wildlife Conservation, anyone who deliberately kills, hunts or

smuggles any animal or bird will be imprisoned for a term not less than six months and not more than five years. The law also stipulates a fine not less than RO1,000 and not more than RO5,000 (either of the two).

Taxi drivers are 'Facebook' of Oman

The other day, I was pleasantly surprised to see the camaraderie that exists among the taxi drivers. Have you noticed how well and thoughtfully they spend their interval time at the waiting spot?

While waiting for passengers, they sit together on a large mat near their cars with a thermoflask filled with kahwa and indulge in exchange of pleasantries. Sitting around, they serve kahwa and dates to one another, laugh together wholeheartedly and share one another's sorrows and joy. The strain of COVID-19 induced recession and resultant loss of clientele was not seen on their faces. They seem to enjoy every moment together. The pandemic had not dwindled their enthusiasm for life and they find happiness in their own unique way.

It looks as if they valued this gathering more than a passenger fare or an 'engaged ride'. Such is the bond and bonhomie they shower on one another that their conversations remain filled with frequent bursts of laughter and quizzical glee, as if they were teenage buddies.

Such gatherings are therapeutic and will do wonders to your body and mind than any other modern day medicines can provide for. Besides, they are authentic and reliable source of outlets through which you pour your heart out!

In the process, they also display a wonderful message - that by caring for one another only man would understand his real worth and create a society based on love and friendship.

No doubt, knowledge, wealth, fame, etc may

help you lead a better life, but only up to some extent. But think about a life sans such moments. Is it not hollow or empty devoid of any meaning?

No wonder, the taxi drivers are the torchbearers of Oman's celebrated hospitality and friendship. They epitomise the wonderful people that Omanis are. The people of Oman are well known for their selfless helping hand to anyone who is in need. Instances are legion - you are forlorn in a desert drive or have lost your way, got a flat tyre on a long drive and lost all hopes for help when suddenly an angel in the form of an Omani appears from nowhere with a friendly smile to help you out.

Again, have you not been the recipient of umpteen heartfelt and heartwarming invitations for a cup of kahwa with dates, or an invite to partake of a sumptuous meal to be shared from a huge plate. Such are the legendary hospitality tales and kindness of the people of Oman who have created a niche for themselves in the amity of nations who have built their tradition and culture on selfless love, brotherhood and cooperation.

It is indeed fortunate and blissful to be part of this wonderful country and the fabulously kind people for close to three decades and share in their joy and selfless love - the unique characteristic of this wonderful country, that is Oman!

No wonder, the taxi drivers are the true 'Facebook' of Oman!

Mohan Anandan
Banking sector employee, Ruwi

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Shaddad al Musalmey
Muscat

The significance of Oman's role at the forefront of efforts to spread peace and friendship came into focus as the world celebrated International Day of Friendship on Friday. The sultanate's friendly policies are a result of the strong pillars laid down by its leaders.

The International Day of Friendship is celebrated on July 30 annually and to mark the occasion, *Muscat Daily* spoke to diplomats about Oman's friendly ties with their countries.



H E Leslie M Tsou

H E Leslie M Tsou, US Ambassador to Oman, said, "On behalf of the US Embassy and the American people, it is my pleasure to wish Oman a happy International Friendship Day. The partnership between the United States and Oman is deep and historic. In 1833, the United States signed a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Oman. Since then, the relationship has grown exponentially based on the strong economic, cultural and security cooperation between our countries, and the strong bonds of friendship between our peoples."

The US and Oman's treaty of friendship and navigation of 1833 was replaced in 1958 by the Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations and Consular Rights, and the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1972.



H E Munu Mahawar

International Day of Friendship

Oman: A friend to the world

At the forefront of building relations with the world



On the occasion, **H E Munu Mahawar**, Ambassador of India to Oman, said the two countries share a special and deep friendship that is rooted in millennia-old historical links and based on mutual trust and respect. "Today, India-Oman relations have evolved into a vibrant, multifaceted and strategic partnership. There is strong desire among the leadership and peoples of both countries to nurture and further strengthen these bonds of friendship," he said.

Oman has been working tirelessly to promote good and equal relations with other countries, adopt a policy of good neighbourliness and non-interference in others' internal affairs, and respect international law, conventions and customs.

According to Embassy of Italy in Muscat, the sultanate's stance and approach of friendship comes from the Late Sultan Qaboos bin Said's vision of Oman as a friend of all. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has promised to follow the same vision for the promotion of 'peaceful coexistence between nations'.

"With its firm foundations and principles to support right and justice and a desire to work together with other peace-loving countries to promote peace and stability in the region, Oman built a foreign policy that countries of the world admire and respect," **Alessandro Garbellini**, chargé d'affaires at the Italian embassy, said.

"The partnership and friendship between Italy



Alessandro Garbellini

and the sultanate is based on the respect and promotion of these same principles. Italy and Oman share an established tradition of collaboration in culture, heritage preservation and the arts as well as at the economic level in the fields of engineering, infrastructures, energy and transport. Such cooperation is broadening to more and more sectors, including fisheries, technology, education, manufacturing, environment and tourism, further fostering the ties between the two friendly countries," he added.

H E Kim Chang Kyu, Ambassador of South Korea to Oman, said, "The Republic of Korea has

been deeply grateful for all the support and assistance offered by the sultanate. The benevolence, tolerance and passion for peace of the sultanate are the foundation of our amicable partnership.

"Under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham, the bilateral relations between our two friendly countries will further develop for the benefit of our peoples."

Being an active member in all international organisations of the United Nations, Oman prioritises respect for international laws and



H E Kim Chang Kyu



H E K K Ahsan Wagan

conventions, and supports cooperation between countries and regions.

H E K K Ahsan Wagan, Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman, said, "As Thomas Aquinas said, 'There is nothing on this earth more to be prized than true friendship'. On this occasion, let me state that Omani people are the most friendly and welcoming people on earth. They are kind, honest, courteous, polite and helpful and their relations with expatriates are exemplary.

"I have the honour of enjoying their unmatched hospitality. With these unique characters, Omani people hold a special place in the community of nations. During these challenging times when the world is suffering from a global pandemic, I pray for everyone's safety and well-being."

The sultanate's strategic geographical location has an impact on linking it with many countries that overlook the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. This in turn outlines its foreign policy and relations with neighbouring and other



H E O L Ameer Ajwad

countries, reflecting on safety of navigation and freedom of transit, thus preserving the security and stability of the region.

On the occasion of International Day of Friendship, **H E O L Ameer Ajwad**, Sri Lankan Ambassador to Oman, said the visionary leadership of the Late Sultan Qaboos followed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq in adopting a consistent and cordial approach has helped the sultanate establish friendly relations with the entire world. "The relations between Sri Lanka and Oman are deep rooted and characterised by bonds of friendship," the Sri Lankan envoy said.

JOB VACANCIES

Oman Electricity Transmission Company SAOG (OETC) has a vital role in the Oman Electricity Sector, as it owns and operates the main transmission network as well as transmission network in Dhofar through which electricity is transmitted from the generating stations to the distribution load centers in all governorates of the Sultanate. The main electricity transmission network operates at high voltage of 132kV and above. Also, OETC has the responsibility of balancing generation and demand at all times as part of its responsibilities for the economic dispatch of power in the Sultanate, and are currently looking for motivated Omani candidates for the following position:

Job Title	Job Code
1. Document Controller	IRC13409
2. Economic Compliance Specialist	IRC13408
3.Operation Technology Cyber Security Senior Engineer	IRC13416
4.Telecommunication Engineer	IRC13410
5. Control Engineer	IRC13410
6.Environmental Specialist	IRC13414
7.Communication Specialist	IRC13417
8.Budgeting & Reporting Specialist	IRC13413
9.EMS Engineer	IRC12019
10.Operational & Planning Chief Engineer	IRC13419
11.Senior Technical Auditor	IRC13420
12.Cyber Security Engineer	IRC13407

Interested candidates may apply for this post through www.omangrid.com/vacancies by not later than 12th August 2021.

Note: only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.



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وظائف شاغرة

إن للشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء ش.م.ع. دوراً حيوياً في قطاع الكهرباء بالسلطنة، حيث أنها تمتلك وتشغل شبكة النقل الرئيسية وكذلك شبكة النقل في محافظة ظفار. حيث تقوم الشركة بنقل الأحمال الكهربائية من محطات الإنتاج إلى مراكز توزيع الأحمال في جميع محافظات السلطنة. وتعمل شبكة نقل الكهرباء الرئيسية بجهد عالي 132 كيلو فولت فيما فوق. كما أن الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء مسؤولة عن تحقيق التوازن بين إنتاج الكهرباء والطلب عليها في جميع الأوقات كجزء من مسؤوليتها من تحقيق التشغيل الاقتصادي لوحدات الإنتاج ذات الكفاءة العالية في السلطنة. وتبحث حالياً عن المرشحين العمانيين المحمسين للوظائف التالية:

رمز الوظيفة	الوظائف
IRC13409	١ - مراقب مستندات
IRC13408	٢ - إحصائي تنظيم إقتصادي
IRC13416	٣ - مهندس أول الأمن السيبراني لأنظمة التشغيل
IRC13410	٤ - مهندس إتصالات
IRC13410	٥ - مهندس تحكم
IRC13414	٦ - إحصائي بيئي
IRC13417	٧ - إحصائي تواصل
IRC13413	٨ - إحصائي الميزانية والتقارير
IRC12019	٩ - مهندس نظم إدارة الطاقة
IRC13419	١٠ - كبير مهندسي التخطيط التشغيلي
IRC13420	١١ - مدقق أول - فني
IRC13407	١٢ - مهندس الأمن السيبراني

على من لديه الرغبة في التقدم إلى الوظائف أعلاه، يرجى زيارة موقع الشركة www.omangrid.com/vacancies في موعد أقصاه 12 أغسطس 2021.

ملاحظة: سيتم التواصل مع المرشحين الذين استوفوا الشروط ومتطلبات الوظيفة.



الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء ش.م.ع. م.
ص.ب. : ١٣٨٩، الخوض، الرمز البريدي : ١٣٢، سلطنة عمان
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الموقع الإلكتروني: www.omangrid.com



ONEIC wins RO10mn contracts from electricity companies

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman National Engineering & Investment Company (ONEIC) has been awarded new contracts worth RO10.4mn by two electricity distribution companies.

ONEIC has won a RO7.565mn worth of contract from Dhofar Integrated Services Company for recovery and defaulter management services.

'We would like to inform our steemed shareholders and investors that Dhofar Integrated Services Company has awarded ONEIC, on July 29, the contract for recovery and defaulter management services in Dhofar Governorate for the sum of RO7,565,477,' ONEIC said in a disclosure filed to the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

The company said the contract duration is three years, commencing on August 1, 2021. Dhofar Integrated Services Company serves the people of Dhofar governorate, covering electricity, water and wastewater.

'This contract from Dhofar Integrated Services Company is considered to be one of the most



important contracts in the billing sector. It shall enhance ONEIC's presence and support its strategic approach including digital collection transformation,' ONEIC added.

ONEIC on Thursday also won a RO1.520mn contract from Majan Electricity Company, a member of Nama Group, for upgrading and reconstruction of SIET-2 PPS with one new 33KV feeder from Liwa-2 grid station at North Batinah Governorate.

Majan Electricity Company's contract is for a period of 13 months commencing on the date of the receipt of engineer's order, ONEIC said in a separate disclosure to the MSX.

Additionally, Majan Electricity Company also awarded a RO1.280mn contract to ONEIC for upgrading Fizah PPS with 33KV feeders interlinks from Shinas grid at North Batinah Governorate.

The contract is for a period of 12 months commencing on the date of receipt of engineer's order, ONEIC said.

ONEIC last week posted a consolidated net profit of RO657,000 for the six months period ended June 30, 2021 compared to RO612,000 net profit reported for the same period of 2020.

In the company report submitted to the MSX, ONEIC said

its profit has improved compared to the same period of the previous year but the factors on costs front continues to remain a challenge.

'Travel ban has drastically impacted the operations and many contractually required resources could not travel, impacting revenue of the company. The COVID-19 impact is continuing, this is impacting progress of work of many jobs, resulting in idling cost, delayed revenue recognition, delay in work execution and non-compliance of contractual terms,' ONEIC said.

ONEIC said it is in the process of diversifying.

The company is expecting during the coming quarter that the Central Bank of Oman shall issue initial approval to create electronic wallet. 'This shall open a new gateway for electronic payment and collection,' ONEIC said in its report.

ONEIC is also in the process of establishing integration with other major government and private customers across multiple business segments, expecting substantial volumes from the integration.

Ooredoo posts RO8mn profit in H1; postpaid subscriptions up 62%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ooredoo Oman has reported a net profit of RO8mn for the six months period ended June 30, 2021 compared to RO10.1mn in the same period of last year, an year-on-year decrease of 20.8 per cent.

The company's revenue for the first half of 2021 decreased by 5.1 per cent to RO126.5mn compared with RO133.3mn in the corresponding period of 2020.

'The reduction is primarily driven by lower handset sales and decrease in prepaid mobile revenue,' Ooredoo said in the company report submitted to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Ooredoo noted that its mobile postpaid customer base grew by 61.7 per cent to 509,283 customers at the end of June 2021 compared to 315,040 customers a year ago.

On the other hand, mobile prepaid customer base increased by 1.2 per cent to



2,153,670 customers at the end of June 2021 compared to 2,128,438 customers a year ago. Ooredoo's fixed service customer base marginally decreased by 0.5 per cent to 171,368 customers at the end of June this year compared to 172,296 customers at the end of June 2020, mainly due to lower fixed wireless customer base.

Commenting on the financial results, Ooredoo Oman's CEO Noor al Sulaiti said, "This quarter has been challenging due to the increasing competition and ongoing pandemic situation in the market. We continue to focus on

our digital services, Shahry postpaid, Shababiah prepaid and home broadband services to keep customers connected.

"Our digital customer care, multi award-winning application and enhanced eShop give customers access to everything they need to work, study or conduct business, wherever they are in Oman."

Noor said that Ooredoo's 5G roll-out continues at a pace, adding, "With some fantastic offers and promotions, such as our 5G Super Data, we are seeing great take-up as we expand into more areas."



Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles. CO. SAOG

P.O. Box No 143, Al Harthy Complex, P.code 118, Sultanate of Oman
Tel No: 00968 24649093, 24649095, Fax: 00968 24649097
Email: ceramics@omantel.net.om, www.alshams.org

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 2021

Dear Shareholders,

It is my privilege to present to you the operating results for the half year ended 30th June 2021.

Review of Operations & Finance Performance:

Revenue for this period stood at RO 13.2 M and net profits at RO 3.5 M signifying an increase of 21% and 154% respectively.

Overall the performance in the first half of this year has been very satisfactory. The imposition of the antidumping duty in KSA has resulted in strong order flows from there. UAE too has started to implement the antidumping duty which means we can expect an increase in our business there as well. We continue to be market leaders in our home market in Oman.

We continue to focus on cost competitiveness which we believe is the key to superior profitability.

Corporate Governance:

I am pleased to report that your company has adhered to all the regulations covering corporate governance in Oman. We remain committed and aspire to becoming model corporate citizens.

Future Outlook:

Our expansion plan is on track to be completed by the end of this year. We believe that the timing is correct as the markets can absorb the additional output. This expanded capacity will help us to both reduce costs by way of better amortization of fixed costs and improve realisations by the introduction of new sizes at higher price points. Our medium term outlook continues to be encouraging.

We are grateful to the government of Oman and all the support that we receive from them and wish Oman further progress under the leadership of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

Hussain Ali Habib Sajwani
Chairman

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME (unaudited) for the half year ended 30th June 2021

	2021 RO	2020 RO
INCOME		
Revenue from contract with customers	13,208,267	10,885,038
Cost of Revenue	(7,529,952)	(7,170,948)
Gross profit	5,678,315	3,714,090
Other income	63,159	13,133
	5,741,474	3,727,223
EXPENSES		
General and Administrative Expenses	(1,175,755)	(1,130,279)
Selling and distribution Expenses	(1,364,171)	(1,201,306)
Net finance charges	(5,786)	(6,690)
	(2,545,712)	(2,338,275)
Profit from Operation	3,195,762	1,388,948
Investment Income	923,391	248,215
Profit for the year before taxation	4,119,153	1,637,163
Taxation	(620,875)	(259,273)
Net profit for the year	3,498,278	1,377,890
Fair value changes in fair value through other comprehensive income investments	57,214	(109,451)
Total comprehensive income for the year	3,555,492	1,268,439
Basic earnings per share	0.014	0.005

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (unaudited) at 30th June 2021

	30th June 2021 RO	30th June 2020 RO	31st Dec 2020 RO
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	13,493,131	13,640,062	13,392,335
Right of use of Asset	528,882	600,694	528,882
Fair value through other comprehensive income investment	2,252,343	2,119,257	2,167,089
Non Current portion held to Maturity Investment	4,236,651	3,851,504	7,321,004
Total non-current assets	20,511,007	20,211,517	23,409,310
Current assets			
Debt instruments at amortised cost	3,964,143	8,008,483	10,299,989
Inventories	3,882,556	4,550,348	3,555,424
Trade & Other receivables	9,523,675	8,224,517	8,022,770
Bank balances and cash	833,018	1,948,719	789,280
Total current assets	18,203,392	22,732,067	22,667,463
Total assets	38,714,399	42,943,584	46,076,773
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Equity			
Share capital	22,000,000	29,621,368	29,621,368
Legal reserve	7,100,236	6,665,959	7,100,236
Retained earnings	3,683,476	1,653,480	4,184,083
Equity Investment reserve	(657,182)	(732,223)	(714,396)
Total equity	32,126,530	37,208,584	40,191,291
Liabilities			
Non-current liabilities			
Non current portion of lease liabilities	461,931	490,476	461,931
Employees' end of service benefits	908,970	803,416	869,818
Deferred tax liability	326,198	399,110	326,198
Total non-current liabilities	1,697,099	1,693,002	1,657,947
Current liabilities			
Current portion of lease liabilities	92,597	124,624	92,597
Accounts and other payables	4,171,448	3,657,305	3,310,847
Taxation	626,725	260,069	824,091
Total current liabilities	4,890,770	4,041,998	4,227,535
Total liabilities	6,587,869	5,735,000	5,885,482
Total equity and liabilities	38,714,399	42,943,584	46,076,773
Net assets per share	0.146	0.126	0.136

Intensified competition to weigh on GCC insurers' earnings: S&P

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The 'very high' competition in the overcrowded GCC insurance market will continue to weigh on earnings of the insurance firms in 2021, S&P Global Ratings has said.

In a report released on Thursday, S&P said that unlike in the corporate sector, where the pandemic led to widespread downgrades in 2020, its credit ratings on Islamic (takaful) and conventional insurers in the GCC have remained broadly stable over the past 18 months, supported by relatively strong capital buffers.

'Indeed, we have taken several positive rating actions on takaful companies so far this year. Our outlook on the sector for the next 12 months remains stable.

However, given that risks related to the pandemic persist, we could take rating actions in the event of a sharp decline in asset prices, unexpected and severe technical losses, or governance and internal control failures,' the ratings agency said.

S&P said gross written premium/contribution growth will



likely remain weak in most GCC markets in 2021. Amid weaker economic conditions, gross written premium growth has been relatively modest in most GCC markets, partly from lower business activity and increased competition among takaful and conventional insurers in recent years.

'This has particularly been the case in motor and medical lines, which together make up more than 60 per cent in most GCC markets.

Slowing population growth across the GCC, ongoing pressure on rates, and a drop in new car sales in 2020 led to reduced insured values. Based on current market conditions and first-quarter 2021 results, we expect this downward trend to continue throughout the year,' S&P said.

S&P expects an economic recovery in the GCC in 2021, supported mainly by the increase in oil prices and the vaccine roll-out. However, slow vaccination progress in some parts of the world and new variants could dampen the recovery.

An uneven recovery, ongoing cost-saving measures in many industries, and a shift to less business travel has further increased the pressure in key sectors such as real estate, retail, transportation, and hospitality, S&P said.

'We believe these factors, combined with very intense competition in the insurance sector, are weighing on growth prospects for gross written premiums of both takaful and conventional insurers,' the ratings agency said.

AstraZeneca says COVID-19 vaccine sales top \$1bn

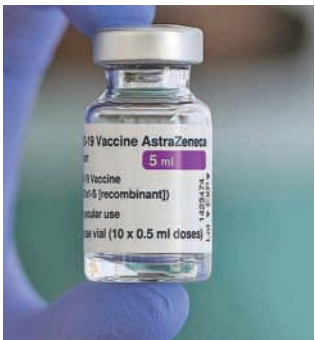
London, UK - British pharmaceuticals giant AstraZeneca said that its COVID-19 jab generated US\$1.2bn in sales in the first half of the year as global vaccination programmes accelerated.

Sales more than tripled to US\$894mn in the three months to June, from US\$275mn in the three months to March, it said in a statement.

AstraZeneca shipped 319mn doses in the first half, including US\$572mn of sales in Europe and US\$455mn in emerging markets.

The job is one of the world's leading vaccines and has been vital in the UK's speedy vaccination drive - which enabled England's economy to fully reopen this month.

AstraZeneca's news came



"As of today, AstraZeneca and our partners have released one billion doses to more than 170 countries."

Soriot led the charge to make AstraZeneca one of the first pharmaceutical companies in the world to produce a vaccine against COVID-19.

The development of the vaccine with scientists at Oxford University - and their decision to make it available at cost without making a profit - has made the Anglo-Swedish firm a household name.

AstraZeneca added Thursday that group's net profit jumped 40 per cent to US\$2.1bn in the first half of 2021. Total revenues increased by almost a quarter to US\$15.5bn.

AFP

US economy reaches pre-pandemic size

Washington, US – The US economy has returned to its pre-pandemic level in the second quarter, giving President Joe Biden a political win as Congress moves closer to passing a long-debated plan to improve the country's infrastructure.

However the 6.5 per cent annualized rate of expansion in the April-to-June period was slower than expected, and the Commerce Department report confirmed that inflation spiked as customers vaccinated against COVID-19 returned to businesses that suffered throughout the pandemic last year.

"Make no mistake: this growth is no accident, it's a direct result of our efforts to deliver economic relief to families, small businesses, and communities across the country," the Democratic president tweeted following the release of the data.

After taking office in January, Biden won passage of a massive



US\$1.9tn spending bill to help the economy's recovery from the historic downturn the pandemic caused last year.

However, the disruptions of the preceding months have made getting production and employment back to normal challenging, while prices have

surged as businesses face renewed demand, shortages of components and supply chain delays.

Biden has called for even more spending to reshape the world's largest economy, and on Wednesday evening, the Senate voted to advance a trillion-dollar

infrastructure package that would pump historic levels of federal funding into fixing US roads, bridges and waterways as well as expand broadband internet and expand clean energy programs.

Complicated recovery
The pandemic caused a sharp

downturn in the United States last year, with the economy ultimately shrinking 3.5 per cent, its worst collapse since modern record-keeping began in 1946.

The country's COVID-19 vaccination campaign along with emergency spending packages passed under both Biden and his

above its level in the fourth quarter of 2019, before the virus broke out.

"The peak may be behind us, but we expect the economy to carry strong momentum into 2022, with growth underpinned by strong consumer and corporate fundamentals and a

Make no mistake: this growth is no accident, it's a direct result of our efforts to deliver economic relief to families, small businesses, and communities across the country

US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

favourable fiscal impulse," Lydia Boussour of Oxford Economics said.

Forecasters predicted the economy would grow 8.5 per cent, and Boussour blamed supply chain challenges for the undershoot, while calling the data a "key milestone in the recovery"

and predicting strong economic growth later in the year fuelled by consumer demand.

Second-quarter growth was above the 6.3 per cent expansion in the first quarter, and driven by increases in consumer spending, exports and local government spending, the data said.

The expansion was undercut by the end to a government program to give loans and grants to small businesses hurt by the pandemic, and less overall federal government spending.

The data also showed the personal consumption expenditure (PCE) price index rising 6.4 per cent in the second quarter from 3.8 per cent in the period before, confirming that inflation is spiking as demand returns from its depressed levels a year ago.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, the PCE price index rose 6.1 per cent.

AFP

Shell profits surge from recovery in oil prices

London, UK – Royal Dutch Shell logged bumper second-quarter profits as oil prices recovered from COVID-19 fallout, and rewarded investors with a buyback and dividend hike.

Net profit hit US\$3.4bn in the three months to the end of June, the Anglo-Dutch energy major said in a results statement on Thursday.

That contrasted sharply with a colossal loss of US\$18.1bn last time around, when it made massive asset writedowns due to the pandemic-ravaged oil market.

The performance was boosted by 'higher realised oil prices, one-off favourable tax impacts, higher marketing margins and lower operating expenses', the group added.

Shell had also rebounded into net profit in the prior three months. "This quarter we had another strong set of results," said chief executive Ben van Beurden.

"The resilience of our operations and unmatched cash-flow show that we are delivering on our strategy. The strength of our performance means that we can step up shareholder distributions."

Shell will target US\$2bn in share buybacks this year, and



hiked its shareholder dividend to 24 cents per share.

"Patience has been the name of the game for Shell investors," said Hargreaves Lansdown analyst Susannah Streeter.

"That stoicism was sorely tested, but is now being rewarded with a slap on the back of rising returns."

Revenues almost doubled in the second quarter to US\$60.5bn, while production declined slightly to 3.25mn barrels of oil equivalent per day.

Global oil demand is recovering but supply still remains constrained due to persistent efforts by OPEC producers to limit output. However, OPEC and its allies decided earlier this month to in-

crease production.

OPEC+ nations agreed to pump an extra 400,000 barrels per day from August to meet rising demand as economies reopen.

At the same time, markets are increasingly nervous that the spreading Delta virus variant could undermine recovery.

Shell struck a cautious tone over the outlook.

"As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there continues to be significant uncertainty surrounding how quickly macroeconomic conditions will recover, and the associated impacts on demand for oil, gas and related products," it said.

AFP

Eurozone economy rebounds strongly as restrictions recede

Brussels, Belgium – The eurozone economy rebounded by a strong two per cent in the second quarter, according to official data released on Friday, as reopened businesses lifted activity out of the pandemic doldrums.

The expansion in Europe was stronger than in the United States, where the economy grew by 1.6 per cent compared to the previous quarter and China, which saw a 1.3 per cent expansion in the period.

Some of the biggest rates of growth were seen in Italy and Spain, the countries worst hit by the first wave of the COVID-19 crisis. Portugal posted a stellar increase of 4.9 per cent.

"The eurozone economy continues to perform like a diesel engine: it takes a while to get going but don't underestimate it once it's picked up steam," said Bert Colijn, senior economist at ING bank.

Growth in Germany, the EU's biggest economy, however disappointed at 1.5 per cent while



France renewed with solid growth after a period of stagnation in the winter.

As an automaking powerhouse, "Germany suffers much more severely from international shortages, because it is much more dependent on imported inputs from Southeast Asia, from China," said Selin Ozyurt, economist at credit insurance firm Euler Hermes.

The 19 countries that use the euro are still trying to catch up the ground lost during the COVID-19 pandemic in which its economy suffered the most in the developed world.

"Germany should reach that

benchmark in the second half of the year, but we don't expect the southern economies to do so until well into 2022," warned Andrew Kenningham, chief economist at Capital Economics.

All eyes are now on whether the momentum can hold, with the Delta variant of the virus seeing countries consider new orders to limit activity that could put a brake on the economy's growth dynamic.

Eurostat, the EU's official data agency, also said that inflation rose to 2.2 per cent, above the European Central Bank's target of near, but below, 2 per cent.

Higher consumer prices, brought on by energy costs and clogged supply chains, are becoming a political hot potato.

Influential voices from Germany are calling for the ECB to cool the economy by tapering down its historic levels of stimulus, but the central bank has made it clear that money taps will keep flowing.

AFP

الغاز الوطنية National Gas		NATIONAL GAS COMPANY (S.A.O.G) AND ITS SUBSIDIARIES			
		PO Box 95, PC 124, Rusayl, Sultanate of Oman, Tel : +968 24446073, Fax : +968 24446307, Website: www.nationalgasco.net			
Directors Report		Separate and consolidated statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021			
Dear Shareholders, On behalf of National Gas Company SAOG's Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the Directors Report for the half year ended on 30 June 2021.					
At the group level, the total revenue for the half year ended on June 30, 2021 was RO 42.29 million as compared to RO 32.96 million for the same period in the previous year. The group however saw a net loss position of RO 332k in the wake of various forms of movement restriction orders as the COVID pandemic spread resurfaced in most of our geographies. This period also saw a full period impact of COVID19 pandemic versus the same period last year when the lockdowns in various geographies came into effect only towards the later part of March 2020.					
The parent company's total revenue was RO 5.41 million compared to RO 5.09 million for the same period in the previous year. While the business continues to push higher quantities reflecting increase in revenue, the adverse impact of falling realizations affected the bottom-line negatively. The non-operating investment income was also significantly lower in the current period versus the same period last year and impacted the bottom-line. Various cost control measures continue to be operated by the business which helped keeping direct and indirect overheads lower than the previous period. The parent company posted an after-tax profit of RO 114k for the half year as compared to RO 81k for the same period last year. It may be noted that these profits are after accounting for the finance costs on the borrowings for the investment into India project. The COVID related challenges continue with the project sites seeing suspension of work on and off, site labor getting infected, delays in project awards etc. Our efforts with the governmental authorities to push for cylinder pricing/ branding rules continue and the improved engagements in the recent times with the various governmental offices has rekindled our hopes of new rules being announced soon, the details however remain unknown.					
The UAE business sold 52% more quantities than the same period previous year however dropping realizations in the wake of the pandemic and tough business conditions set-off the good work done.					
The KSA business which is primarily a projects business continued to be affected with travel restrictions, site suspensions, award delays, site approval delays etc. Though the project pipeline in the Kingdom looks promising and we continue to be actively engaged in following up with many other high value projects, the execution delays are expected to continue until the pandemic situation stabilizes.					
The COVID situation in Malaysia also continued to impact businesses beyond expectations with repeated movement control orders and restrictions. Our Malaysia operations also saw a similar situation and an adverse margin impact due to significant drop in the hospitality business with inter-state movement restriction and control orders in place in Malaysia for most part of the half year of 2021.					
India project construction activity is in progress and after the recent severe second wave of COVID infections in India, the construction activity is back on track. The import and storage terminal in India is expected to commission in the second half of 2022.					
We remain committed to ensure that our operations remain secure and consistent, that our projects are delivered flawlessly, timely and conscientiously and that our business conduct and internal procedures are at par with international standards of excellence.					
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimur, various government ministries, the Capital Market Authority, the Muscat Stock Exchange and other regulatory bodies for their valued guidance and support. We also thank our able Shareholders, Employees, Distributors, Customers and Vendors for their unstinted trust and support to the Company. I hope that we shall continue to have their faith and encouragement in the coming quarters.					
Abdulla Suleiman Hamed Al Harthy Chairman					
		Separate and consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the half year ended 30 June 2021			
		Parent		Group	
		2021 RO	2020 RO	2021 RO	2020 RO
Revenue		5,013,289	4,820,718	42,103,586	32,536,987
Cost of revenue		(4,487,077)	(4,248,734)	(38,001,339)	(28,343,377)
Gross profit		526,212	571,984	4,102,247	4,193,610
Administrative expenses		(443,770)	(425,665)	(2,391,156)	(2,355,439)
Operating profit before depreciation		82,442	146,319	1,711,091	1,838,171
Depreciation expenses		(168,269)	(187,578)	(1,593,302)	(1,568,580)
Operating profit after depreciation		(85,827)	(41,259)	117,789	269,591
Other income-net		160,479	262,187	172,587	401,697
Finance costs		(183,881)	(135,735)	(500,789)	(465,638)
Dividend income		238,700	-	-	-
Share of (loss)/profits from joint ventures		-	-	8,929	18,402
Provision for expected credit losses		-	-	-	90
Profit before tax		129,471	85,193	(201,484)	224,142
Taxation		(15,227)	(3,738)	(130,665)	(23,079,822)
Profit after tax		114,244	81,455	(332,149)	51,504
Other comprehensive (loss)/income					
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss		-	-	-	-
Surplus on revaluation of property-net of tax		-	-	-	-
Changes in fair value of investments carried at fair value through other comprehensive income		49,103	(148,871)	49,103	(148,871)
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss		49,103	(148,871)	49,103	(148,871)
Exchange difference on translation of foreign operations		-	-	(423,409)	(750,519)
Other comprehensive (loss)/income for the half year		49,103	(148,871)	(374,306)	(899,390)
Total comprehensive income for the half year		163,347	(67,416)	(706,455)	(847,886)
Profit attributable to:					
Equity holders of the Parent		114,244	81,455	(365,756)	(39,390)
Non-controlling interest		-	-	33,607	90,894
Total profit for the half year ended		114,244	81,455	(332,149)	51,504
Total comprehensive income attributable to					
Equity holders of the Parent		163,347	(67,416)	(786,368)	(824,452)
Non-controlling interest		-	-	79,913	(23,434)
Total comprehensive income for the half year ended		163,347	(67,416)	(706,455)	(847,886)
Basic and diluted earnings per share attributable to ordinary equity holders of the Parent (2020 - restated)		0.001	0.001	(0.004)	(0.000)
Note: The complete accounts, either in Arabic and English as requested, will be sent by mail within 7 days of request to any unitholder who requests the Company at the address: PO Box 95, PC 124, Rusayl, Sultanate of Oman, Tel : +968 24446073, Fax : +968 24446307					

OAB announces latest winners of its Hasaad Savings Scheme draw

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) recently announced the names of the winners of its Hasaad Savings Scheme for June 2021.

The draw saw 101 customers winning prizes of RO500 each and two winners of RO10,000 as part of the Big Prize Draw. As for the Elite account holders, one customer was the winner of the Elite Grand Prize of RO25,000 from the Al Khoud branch.

Commenting on the June winners, Rashad al Shaikh, head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB, said, "We are proud to see an increase in the number of overall savings, especially since we have reached the first half of the year. OAB continues to promote the culture of saving across all its customer segments while ensuring that they are well rewarded for their efforts. We strive to encourage our customers to save as well as generate awareness regarding sound financial management practices, especially during the current un-



precedented situation."

The Hasaad Savings Scheme 2021 will see 101 lucky winners from 53 branches win RO500 each per month, as well as five winners of RO1,000 each. This is

in addition to a Big Prize draw, which will see two winners of RO10,000 each every quarter.

The Elite Draws will see two winners every month of RO10,000 each. This is replaced

by an Elite grand prize draw conducted every three months with one lucky winner of RO25,000.

"I congratulate all the winners of this month's draw and extend my gratitude for their trust and loyalty to OAB. I encourage all our customers to continue to save so that they can increase their chances of winning for the remainder of the draws of this year," Shaikh added.

Oman Arab Bank has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the sultanate.

Today, the bank operates a nationwide network of 53 branches and representative offices with 160 ATMs spread across Oman.

OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services through its OAB Online App. Customers can now digitally open an account and benefit from several other services, directly from the convenience of their mobile phones.



MEC inaugurates IEOM student chapter in virtual ceremony

The Department of Management Studies, Middle East College (MEC), inaugurated the student chapter of Industrial Engineering and Operations Management (IEOM) in an online ceremony recently.

The event was attended by Dr Kiran G. R, dean of MEC, members of the Deans Council, Salim al Busaidi, vice president Human Resources at Asyad Group, heads of departments at MEC, students, alumni, staff members and various guests

from the industry.

The IEOM Society is a global organisation dedicated to the advancement of industrial engineering and operations management for the betterment of humanity. The MEC IEOM Student Chapter joins over 140 IEOM student chapters from across the globe. This initiative will provide students with unique opportunities for professional networking, expert mentoring and expanding their professional knowledge which will help them

prepare for their career and long-term success.

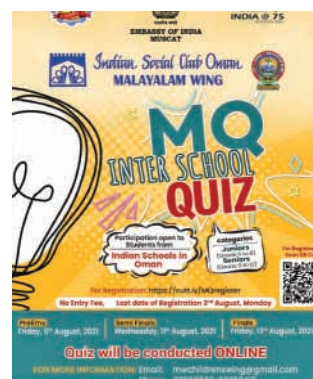
During the event, Salim al Busaidi, vice president, Human Resources at Asyad Group, emphasised that this Student Chapter would not only facilitate closer collaboration between academia and industry, but would also allow students to engage with professionals to stay abreast with the latest trends and developments in the market for advancing their skills and knowledge.

ISC Malayalam Wing conducts MQ quiz for Indian school students

Indian Social Club (ISC) Malayalam Wing is conducting an online quiz in association with Indian Embassy to commemorate its silver jubilee. It will also mark the 75th year of Indian independence.

Students from all Indian schools in Oman are invited to participate in the quiz. Grades 6 to 8 will participate in the junior category while grade 9-12 will participate in the senior level. The quiz will be completely online where each category will go through three subsequent rounds marked for preliminary, semi final and finals.

Top 20 participants from the preliminary round will move on to semi final round. Maximum of two members from each school, six toppers of Indian schools will take the virtual stage on August 13 for the grand finale. The finale will go live on Facebook and YouTube. The main sponsor of



the programme is Modern Exchange. Questions will be of international and regional nature on a variety of subjects including travel, movies, literature, sports, geography, politics, music, TV show, science, history, language, comics, food, current affairs, mythology and wild life. The questions will be in text, visual, audio or video format.

Sri Hala Jamal, Oman's well known quiz master and host of 'Muscat Codex' will conduct the

show. The grand finale on August 13 is scheduled to go live at 5pm. Indian Ambassador to Oman, H E Munu Mahawar will inaugurate the programme.

ISC chairman Dr Satish Nambiar, general secretary Sri Babu Rajendran, Indian School board chairman Dr Shivakumar will be among the chief guests.

Top three performers shall win trophies, while all those who reach the final round will receive consolatory awards. Convener Shri P Sreekumar along with co convener Smt Lekha Vinod, treasurer Sri Ajit Kumar, Children wing secretary Smt Tina Babu announced that Malayalam wing stands proud in being of service to the socio-cultural setting.

Students can register by signing up on <https://cutt.ly/MQregister>

For more information contact 92050530, 99762415 or e mail at mwchildrenswing@gmail.com

Emirates Mars Mission 'Double Moon' campaign bags award

The 'Double Moon' campaign, which was organised in the run-up to Hope Probe's arrival to Mars, bagged an Outdoor Silver Lion at the prestigious Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity.

The campaign, which brought Mars' twin moons Phobos and Deimos to the skies of Dubai earlier in February using new technologies for the first time in the Middle East, was selected from 29,000 entries across 90 countries by a jury panel of leading advertising and media professionals. Organised by the UAE Government Media Office, the creative campaign aimed to engage UAE citizens and residents and generate excitement a few days ahead of Hope Probe's historic entry to the Red Planet's orbit. The sight of rare two moons in Dubai's skies was widely shared on social media by onlookers astonished at the scene.

Saeed al Eter, chairman of the UAE Government Media Office, said, "In our media campaigns and activations, we integrate between traditional and modern



media platforms to involve different target audiences in UAE's projects and bring them together in celebration of the country's inspiring projects that aim to build a better life for future generations." Alia al Hammadi, vice chairperson of the UAE Government Media Office, stressed that innovation has become an integral part of the communication industry and key to raising public awareness on prominent national scientific missions.

Two moons

The Double Moon high-tech projection was part of an extensive media campaign carried out by the UAE Government Media Of-

fice under the slogan 'Arabs to Mars' to celebrate the Emirates Mars Mission, the Arab world's first interplanetary exploration.

The nationwide campaign saw a series of creative and ambitious activations including the Martian Ink passport stamps for visitors arriving in Dubai and baby astronaut suits for newborns on February 9, the day the Hope Probe arrived to Mars. The two moons that lit up Dubai's skies, were the product of new advanced technologies, used for the first time in the Middle East, that utilised a 40m screen and two 100m cranes to create the illusion of Deimos and Phobos—the names of Mars' moons.

MUSCAT INSURANCE COMPANY SAOG		BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT			
ON THE UN-AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE SECOND QUARTER ENDED 30 June 2021		BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT			
Dear Shareholders, After Compliments,		I am pleased to present on behalf of the Board of Directors of Muscat Insurance Company (SAOG) Interim Report on the Company's activities and the un-audited financial statements for the six months ended 30th June 2021.			
General Overview of the Business Environment:		The overall business environment for 2021 in the Sultanate has been impacted by the global pandemic, with the Insurance Industry continuing to grow on back of Non-motor and health insurance, though market conditions remained highly competitive. MIC like its marketplace competitors is facing an exceptional situation as well as the whole world is in a dilemma of the spread of the pandemic of Coronavirus (COVID - 19). The Board of Directors has advised management and the staff to adhere with Supreme Committee decisions and adapt the business plan if needed in line with the efforts made to limit the developments resulting from the spread of the pandemic of Coronavirus (COVID- 19). Our operational resilience has been strong with the safety and health of our staff and customers as primary concern as well as continuation of essential customer services made available through the Supreme Committee recommended work from home guidance and implementation of alternative digital and other mediums. The investment sector remained bearish on the back of COVID -19 and continuing closure of many sectors. Despite the slight improvement in the oil sector which reflected into the performance of both the local & global markets. Pursuant to the prospectus, the oil prices are expected to recover comparatively during 2021. This matter encourages the focus on the profitable sectors. The Gross Premiums decreased by 11% to OMR 9.86 Million from OMR 11.05 Million in 2020. On the General Insurance side, the gross written premium was OMR 8.16 Million as compared to OMR 9.36 Million for the same period last year primarily as a result of lower volumes in Motor premiums written by 21% comparatively due to a highly competitive market impacted by the spread of the pandemic of Coronavirus (COVID- 19). On the Life & Medical Insurance side gross written premium was OMR 1.696 Million as compared to OMR 1.692 Million for the same period last year. Our underwriting results decreased to OMR 1.39 Million from OMR 1.43 Million for the same period last year, a decrease of 3%. The company has put in place the infrastructure in terms of the diversify the business portfolio and facilities in terms of new products expansion for the profitable growth and this will continue during the remaining period with our focus on profitability and provision of the best insurance products. Accordingly, General and Administrative Expenses are at OMR 1.61 Million compared to OMR 1.50 Million for the same period in 2020, increase of 7%.			
Investments		Investment income for the period increased from OMR 29K to OMR 954K this is mainly due to unrealized gains on local equity. Realized investment income decreased by 33% from OMR 870K to OMR 586K while unrealized gains increased from a loss of OMR 839K to gains of OMR 368K compared to the same period in 2020.			
Corporate Governance		The Company continues to implement the code of Corporate Governance as required by the Laws and Regulations of the Capital Market Authority and other regulatory authorities. The Company maintains a high standard of compliance and best practice as required by the Code of Corporate Governance and the Company's Corporate Governance policies.			
Human Resources		The company adopts the encouragement of national cadres and sustains its survival in all areas of the company's activities. The company provides internal training to meet the needs of Omani employees, motivate and increase the participation of employees in various activities at the head office and branch network. The Board of Directors is keen to encourage the national cadres. I am honoured to inform the shareholders that the Omanization rate in 19 branches of the company is 100%. This is in addition to the company's commitment to work together with the Capital Market Authority and the Ministry of Manpower to implement the guidelines of Omanization in Insurance Sector.			
Internal Control Systems		The Company, through its Audit Committee reviews the adequacy, effectiveness, and compliances of the internal control procedures. Further, internal auditors and external auditors submit their reports with their observations and recommendations for enhancement of the existing internal control systems. Management reviews those recommendations and takes all necessary steps for continuous improvement.			
Acknowledgement		The Board of Directors conveys its thanks to our Customers, Reinsurers, Bankers and Shareholders for their continued and ongoing support. The Board of Directors especially appreciates the continued support and determined efforts made by the Management and Staff of the Company. On behalf of the Board, I would like to take this opportunity to express our most humble gratitude and loyalty to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq bin Taimour Al Said's vision and support for private enterprise in the Sultanate of Oman and pray to the Almighty to shower His everlasting blessing on His Majesty for his good health and long life to allow him to continue to lead us on an enlightened path to future prosperity and development for Oman and its people. For and on behalf of the Board of Directors,			
Ranjit Singh Chairman					
UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE SIX MONTHS ENDED 30 JUNE 2021		30 June 2021 Unaudited RO	30 June 2020 Unaudited RO	31 December 2020 Audited RO	
ASSETS					
Bank balances and cash		1,112,838	1,652,657	2,302,054	
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	9	3,404,380	2,931,783	3,035,798	
Premium and insurance receivables	10	5,040,281	5,262,240	3,061,600	
Available-for-sale investments	11	660,826	556,815	660,826	
Other receivables and prepayments	12	1,045,392	895,247	885,074	
Reinsurance contracts	21	14,810,996	15,539,897	13,809,091	
Deposits	8	9,155,000	9,905,000	9,155,000	
Investments held to maturity	13	2,260,586	2,271,086	2,265,836	
Deferred tax asset		334,832	376,862	334,832	
Right-of-use asset	16	55,754	55,353	70,078	
Investment properties	15	9,268,420	9,738,725	9,421,278	
Property and equipment	17	1,236,272	1,347,748	1,307,338	
Intangible assets	18	89,781	84,421	81,771	
Total assets		48,475,358	50,617,834	46,390,576	
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY					
Liabilities					
Accruals and other payables	19	5,227,258	4,453,936	4,308,331	
Reinsurance payable	20	4,407,789	5,680,950	4,683,627	
Lease liabilities		43,589	—	49,969	
Provision for taxation		214,965	161,833	181,212	
Insurance contracts	21	21,292,083	24,227,252	20,446,586	
Total liabilities		31,185,684	34,523,971	29,669,725	
EQUITY					
Capital and reserves					
Share capital	22 a)	11,025,046	11,025,046	11,025,046	
Legal reserve	23 a)	3,500,541	3,408,405	3,443,659	
Capital reserve	23 c)	25,207	25,207	25,207	
Contingency reserve	23 b)	3,036,505	2,701,605	2,854,658	
Fair value reserve		331,419	215,431	331,419	
Accumulated losses		(629,044)	(1,281,831)	(959,138)	
Total equity		17,289,674	16,093,863	16,720,851	
Total equity and liabilities		48,475,358	50,617,834	46,390,576	
Net assets per share		1.568	1.460	1.517	
UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE SIX MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2021		30 June 2021 3 months Unaudited RO	30 June 2020 3 months Unaudited RO	30 June 2021 6 months Unaudited RO	30 June 2020 6 months Unaudited RO
INCOME					
Gross premiums written	6	2,619,277	3,333,972	9,862,463	11,053,645
Underwriting results	6	770,349	1,142,988	1,393,922	1,438,194
Investment income – net	7	424,826	(92,895)	954,697	29,503
		1,195,175	1,050,093	2,348,619	1,467,697
EXPENSES					
General and administration		837,102	732,321	1,616,625	1,508,816
Other operating expenses		47,315	29,752	110,028	64,717
		884,417	762,073	1,726,653	1,573,533
Profit / (loss) before taxation		310,758	288,020	621,966	(105,836)
Taxation		(44,300)	(100,033)	(53,143)	(52,625)
Net profit / (loss) and total comprehensive income for the period		266,458	187,987	568,823	(158,461)
Basic earnings / (loss) per share		0.024	0.017	0.052	(0.014)
Director Chairman		The accompanying notes forms an integral part of these condensed interim financial statements.			

Israel pushes for UN action against Iran over deadly ship attack that killed two

Jerusalem - Israel is pressing for international action against Iran over a deadly attack on a ship managed by an Israeli billionaire, branding Tehran an 'exporter of terrorism' after the likely drone strike.

The *MT Mercer Street* tanker was struck on Thursday in the northern Indian Ocean, killing two crew members, in what the United States said was a drone-style attack.

There has been no claim of responsibility for the strike, but maritime industry analysts Dryad Global said, "This latest attack has the hallmarks of the ongoing Israel/Iran 'shadow war'."

On Friday Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said he has ordered the nation's diplomats to push for UN action against 'Iranian terrorism'.

"I've instructed the embassies in Washington, London and the UN to work with their interlocutors in government and the relevant delegations in the UN headquarters in New York," Lapid said on Twitter.



The Mercer Street, an oil products tanker, was travelling from Dar es Salaam in Tanzania to Fujairah in the UAE

"Iran is not just an Israeli problem, but an exporter of terrorism, destruction and instability that are hurting us all," he said.

Lapid said he had also spoken to his British counterpart Dominic Raab, stressing 'the need to respond severely to the attack on the ship in which a British citizen was killed'.

Zodiac Maritime, the tanker's London-based operator owned

by Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer, said a Romanian national also died in the attack. The *Mercer Street*, an oil products tanker, was travelling from Dar es Salaam in Tanzania to Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates with no cargo aboard when it was struck, Zodiac Maritime said.

No 'wider escalation'
The US military said early indica-

tions 'clearly point' to a drone strike on the *Mercer Street*, a Japanese-owned tanker flying a Liberian flag.

Iran's Arabic-language Al-Alam state TV channel, citing 'informed regional sources', said the attack was in 'response to a recent Israeli attack' targeting an airport in central Syria where Iran is backing the regime.

Israeli retired Brigadier Gen-

eral Shlomo Brom said the attack appeared to copy elements of a reported Israeli exploding drone strike on a centrifuge manufacturing site in Iran in June.

Israel, Brom told AFP, 'started developing drones and is among the first (countries) to develop the concept of a kamikaze'.

"The Iranians are imitating us and adopting the same techniques," said Brom, now a senior

research fellow at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies.

"Iran's strike marked 'a certain escalation' but aimed at avoiding a full-scale war," he said.

"They are not interested in a wider escalation, just as we are not interested in a wider escalation," Brom added.

In June, Iran said it had foiled a sabotage attack on an atomic energy agency building near the city of Karaj west of Tehran.

But aerial photographs obtained by private Israeli intelligence firm The Intel Lab revealed damage to the site.

Nuclear talks

Several unmanned Iranian drones are aboard to ensure there is no additional danger to the crew, and are prepared to support an investigation into the attack,' it added.

By Friday afternoon, Zodiac Maritime said the ship was 'sailing under the control of her crew' to a safe location under the protection of a US naval escort.

The strike on the tanker comes as European powers meet with Iran in an effort to shore up a 2015 agreement to curtail the Islamic republic's nuclear programme in exchange for lifting sanctions. The accord was strained when in 2018 former US President Donald Trump withdrew the US unilaterally and reimposed sanctions.

Negotiations in Vienna, where the US is indirectly taking part, have stalled ahead of next week's inauguration of newly elected ultra-conservative Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi.

AFP

7 members of Kurdish family killed in Turkey

Ankara, Turkey - Seven members of a Kurdish family were killed on Friday in central Turkey by armed assailants who tried to burn their house in what rights activists said was a racist attack.

The Dedeoglu family had been seriously injured in another attack in the middle of May by neighbours who warned them that they 'will not let Kurds live here' in the region of Konya.

One of the dead members had complained in mid-July that the police and judges had been partial towards the May attackers who had been freed, and said the family feared for their lives.

Abdurrahman Karabulut, their lawyer, said the liberation of the perpetrators of the first attack signalled impunity.

"This was an entirely racist attack ... the judiciary and the authorities are responsible for what has happened," Karabulut told Arti TV.

"This was a case we were following. The youngest family member told me 'We are very scared'," tweeted Eren Keskin, the vice president of the Human Rights Association.

According to Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu, a years-long feud between two families was behind the tragedy.

He said describing the attack as a racist crime was 'a provocation'.

"This attack is not connected to the Turkish-Kurdish issue. Making a link to this is as dangerous as the attack," he said on television.

But the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) said there had been several attacks on Kurds over the years.

"The hate speech and provocation of the authorities is the main cause of this massacre," said Mithat Sancar, HDP's co-president.

It was the second deadly attack on Kurds in Konya in a month.

On July 21, a Kurdish farmer was killed in a village in Konya by attackers who shouted 'We don't want Kurds here'. Local authorities however said it was a result of a fight over grazing rights.

AFP

EU ready to sanction ruling elite of Lebanon over crisis

Brussels, Belgium - The European Union said on Friday it was ready to impose sanctions on Lebanon's ruling elite over the political crisis wracking the country, after adopting a legal framework for such measures.

The crisis has left Lebanon without a functioning government since the last one resigned after a massive explosion killed dozens and destroyed swathes of Beirut in August 2020.

The country has plunged into what the World Bank described as one of the worst economic crises since the 1850s, and political players continue to squabble.

"This framework provides for the possibility of imposing sanctions against persons and entities who are responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law in Lebanon," the EU said in a statement.

The bloc's 27 member states must still vote unanimously for the list of people and entities to be sanctioned.

The United States welcomed the EU's steps to use a 'powerful tool to promote accountability on a global scale', Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in



This file photo shows a helicopter putting out the fire at the scene of an explosion at the port of Lebanon's capital Beirut on August 4, 2020 (AFP)

a statement.

"Sanctions are intended, among other things, to compel changes in behaviour, and promote accountability for corrupt actors and leaders," they added, saying they were ready to cooperate with the EU on Lebanon.

On Monday, Lebanese lawmakers tasked ex-premier and billionaire Najib Mikati with forming a government, days after fellow veteran politician Saad Hariri threw in the towel.

EU sanctions would target people obstructing this process, the statement read.

They 'consist of a travel ban to

the EU and an asset freeze for persons, and an asset freeze for entities', it said.

"In addition, EU persons and entities are forbidden from making funds available to those listed."

The EU could also sanction people 'obstructing or undermining the implementation of plans approved by Lebanese authorities and supported by relevant international actors, including the EU, to improve accountability and good governance in the public sector or the implementation of critical economic reforms'.

AFP

Doctors in Saudi separate Yemeni baby from twin

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - A team of doctors in Saudi Arabia has separated a Yemeni baby from her parasitic twin, authorities said, marking their 50th successful operation on conjoined twins.

Aisha Ahmed Saeed was born fully developed but with an extended pelvis area and an extra pair of lower extremities, the Saudi English-language Arab News daily reported.

The procedure to separate her took seven hours and 45 minutes and involved a team of 25 medical staff including doctors, technicians and nurses, said the state-run King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center.

"The surgery went very well... the coordination between the team was excellent," Dr Abdulrah al Rabeah, head of the team, told Arab News.

"We managed to get the baby awake and she is opening her eyes... she even interacted with her mother just at the exit of the operating room."

"We are happy, we are celebrating the 50th success and we will continue to help those who are in need."

A parasitic twin occurs when a twin embryo begins to develop



The father of the Yemeni baby Aisha expresses his gratitude to the surgeons after the successful operation, in Riyadh on Wednesday (AFP)

in the mother, but ultimately does not separate. This results in a semi-formed twin adjoined to the body of the developed twin.

The official Saudi Press Agency said Aisha is from Al-Mahra province in war-torn Yemen, where a Saudi-led military coalition is backing the government against the Iran-backed Huthi rebels.

Yemen has been mired in a devastating war for over six years which has left it on the brink of famine and with a healthcare system in ruins.

The fighting has killed tens of thousands and left some 80 per cent of Yemenis dependent on aid, in what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

AFP

Super cruise ship sets sail from Saudi for first time

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - A super cruise ship has departed Saudi Arabia for the first time, setting sail for regional waters as the kingdom seeks to expand its tourism industry and diversify its oil-dependant economy.

The *MSC Bellissima*, a vessel longer than three football fields, departed for the first in a series of voyages from Jeddah Islamic Port to Aqaba in Jordan and Safaga in Egypt.

The launch of the service on Friday comes two days after Saudi Arabia opened its first cruise ship terminal at the port in Jeddah, on the kingdom's west coast.

"The inauguration of the first cruise ship port represents an important step... to support the growth of the tourism sector in the kingdom," Cruise Saudi managing director Fawaz Farooqi said, quoted by Saudi Press Agency.



The MSC Bellissima, a vessel longer than three football fields, departed for the first in a series of voyages from Jeddah Islamic Port to Aqaba in Jordan and Safaga in Egypt

Developing the tourism and leisure sector is one of the foundations of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's 'Vision

2030' plan to prepare the Arab world's largest economy for the post-oil era.

The Gulf country enacted a

landmark decision in 2019 to offer tourist visas, relaxing rules that had largely restricted visits to business travellers and Mus-

lim pilgrims.

Citizens from 49 countries - mostly European - had become eligible to apply to visit the kingdom, which has a population of around 35mn.

Constructed in France, the *MSC Bellissima* is 315m long and has a capacity of 4,500 passengers, making it one of the world's largest cruise ships.

First launched in 2019 and operated by Swiss-based MSC Cruises, it will embark on 21 trips up until October 30.

The mammoth vessel has an array of amenities, including swimming pools, gyms, restaurants, cafes and ballrooms.

The price of journeys start at 2,195 Saudi riyals, according to travel agencies, with some itineraries including Luxor in Egypt and Petra in Jordan.

Cruise Saudi, owned by the kingdom's Public Investment Fund, also struck a deal in April

with MSC Cruises to launch winter voyages between November 2021 and March 2022.

These cruises will start out from Jeddah and Dammam on the eastern Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia in the hope of attracting 170,000 guests.

The global cruise industry has taken a severe hit as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, which has so far resulted in the death of more than four million people worldwide.

Saudi Arabia is accelerating a nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive as it moves to revive tourism and host sports and entertainment events.

On Thursday the kingdom announced that it will open its doors to fully-inoculated visitors.

MSC Bellissima's crew stayed in quarantine for 14 days before the trip on Friday, according to Saudi state television.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

UK urges pregnant women to get vaccinated given variant risks

London, UK - British health authorities have urged more pregnant women to get coronavirus jabs after a national study found the Delta variant appeared to increase their risk of severe symptoms.

England's top midwife on Friday urged pregnant women to get the jab as new data showed an increase in severe illness among pregnant women hospitalised with virus symptoms.

Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent, chief midwifery officer for England, wrote to GPs and midwives urging them to encourage expectant mothers to get a jab.

She said she was calling on pregnant women to 'protect themselves and their babies'.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) and the Royal College of Midwives have also recommended vaccination of pregnant women. Public Health England has said it recommends pregnant women get Moderna and Pfizer vaccines because they have been given to over 130,000 pregnant women in the US.

A paper based on national data compiled by the UK Obstetric Surveillance System, published online on July 25,



This file photo shows a pregnant woman getting a shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine at a centre in Medellin, Colombia on July 24 (AFP)

found that the proportion of pregnant women admitted to hospital with moderate to severe infection rose 'significantly' after the Delta variant became dominant in May.

The paper by University of Oxford researchers found that pregnant women hospitalised during the Delta wave were more likely to get pneumonia, with a third requiring respiratory support.

"It is very concerning that admissions of pregnant women to hospital with COVID-19 are increasing and that pregnant women appear to be more se-

verely affected by the Delta variant of the disease," said the study's chief investigator Marian Knight, professor of maternal and child population health at the University of Oxford.

None of more than 3,000 pregnant women admitted to hospital with virus symptoms since February was fully vaccinated, the study said.

The study did not look at pregnant women with mild infections who were treated outside hospital.

The UK has recommended vaccination of pregnant women since April but takeup has been

very low compared to the general population, the paper said, blaming misinformation fuelled by changing advice early in the vaccine rollout. "The findings of this study strongly highlight the urgent need for an international approach to tackle this misinformation and improve uptake of the vaccine during pregnancy," it said.

A survey by the RCOG in May found that 58 per cent of pregnant women offered the vaccine had declined it, with most saying they feared harming the baby.

AFP

China outbreak spreads as WHO sounds alarm on Delta

Beijing, China - Mushrooming outbreaks of the Delta variant prompted China and Australia to impose stricter COVID-19 curbs on Saturday, as the WHO urged the world to contain the mutation before it turns into something deadlier and draws out the pandemic.

China's most serious surge of coronavirus infections in months spread to two more areas on Saturday - Fujian province and the megacity of Chongqing - in an outbreak that now spans 14 provinces.

More than 200 cases have been linked to an original Delta cluster in Nanjing city where nine cleaners at an international airport tested positive.

"The main strain circulating at present is the Delta variant... which poses an even greater challenge to virus prevention



Feng Zijian (centre), deputy director general of the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, addresses a press conference in Beijing on Saturday (AFP)

and control work," said Mi Feng, spokesman for China's National Health Commission.

The nation where the disease first emerged has rushed to prevent the highly transmissible strain from taking root by putting more than one million peo-

ple under lockdown and reinstating mass testing campaigns.

Worldwide, coronavirus infections are once again on the upswing, with the World Health Organization announcing an 80 per cent average increase over the past four weeks in five of the

health agency's six regions, a jump largely fuelled by the Delta variant.

First detected in India, the strain has now reached 132 countries and territories.

"Delta is a warning: It's a warning that the virus is evolving

but it is also a call to action that we need to move now before more dangerous variants emerge," the WHO's emergencies director Michael Ryan told a press conference.

With the Delta variant spreading at speed, doubts are growing over the efficacy of vaccines against the strain.

The US Centers for Disease Control on Friday released an analysis that found fully immunised people with so-called breakthrough infections of the Delta variant can spread the disease as easily as unvaccinated people.

While the jabs remain effective against severe disease and death, the US government agency said in a leaked internal document that 'the war has changed' as a result of Delta.

AFP

Australia's Brisbane, parts of Queensland enter into lockdown

Brisbane, Australia - Australia's third-largest city of Brisbane and other parts of Queensland state have entered into a snap COVID-19 lockdown from Saturday as authorities race to contain an emerging outbreak of the Delta strain.

Millions of residents in the city and several other areas have been placed under stay-at-home orders from Saturday afternoon for three days, state Deputy Premier Steven Miles said. "The only way to beat the Delta strain is to move quickly, to be fast and to be strong," Miles said.

Six new cases were reported Saturday in a cluster of the Delta variant initially linked to a school student, resulting in pupils and teachers at two schools being placed into isolation.

Genome sequencing had connected the cluster to re-



A woman checks items after a last minute shopping in eastern Brisbane on Saturday (AFP)

turned overseas travellers in hotel quarantine but the exact source of transmission remained unclear, Chief Health Officer Jeannette Young said.

In the 'strictest lockdown' the city has enforced, residents will only be allowed to leave their homes for essential reasons, including buying groceries and exercising.

AFP

Malaysians stage anti-government protest defying virus restrictions

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - Hundreds of black-clad Malaysians staged an anti-government protest on Saturday in defiance of a ban on public gatherings under coronavirus curbs, piling pressure on the embattled prime minister to resign.

The protesters, wearing masks and keeping a distance from one another, waved banners reading 'failed government' as well as black flags.

It was the first sizeable demonstration in Malaysia for some time, as many had been reluctant to take to the streets

due to virus curbs and for fear of getting infected.

But anger is growing at the government's handling of the virus outbreak - which is escalating despite a lockdown - and Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's attempts to keep his crisis-riven administration in power.

"We fight because while the people are suffering, this government is busy playing politics," Karmun Loh, taking part in the protest in downtown Kuala Lumpur, told AFP.

"This government is... crip-

pling the economy and also destroying our country's democracy."

Muhyiddin 'is a terrible prime minister', added demonstrator Shaq Koyok.

"He needs to step down."

There was a heavy police presence and officers blocked attempts by protesters to enter a central square before the rally peacefully dispersed. Organisers said about 1,000 demonstrators took part but police put the number at around 400.

Police told local media that the protesters will be called in

for questioning as they had violated the ban on gatherings.

Muhyiddin took power at the head of a scandal-plagued coalition last year without an election following the demise of a reformist administration.

But his government is on the verge of collapse after allies withdrew support.

He came under renewed pressure to step down this week after parliament convened following a months-long suspension as part of a virus state of emergency.

AFP



Malaysians take part in a rare anti-government rally, despite a tough coronavirus order restricting gatherings and public assemblies, in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday (AFP)

11 killed in India's West Bengal as monsoon death toll swells

Kolkata, India - Eleven people were killed in eastern India after torrential rains swept away homes and triggered landslides, officials said Saturday, taking the country's monsoon death toll above 230.

Rainstorms that have swept across the nation lashed the eastern state of West Bengal causing widespread destruction.

Four people were electrocuted after rain gushed into their homes in Howrah and North 24 Parganas district, state disaster management minister Javed Khan told AFP.

Seven people died when their houses were washed away by downpours, he said, with several still missing.

In neighbouring Jharkhand state, scores of cars remain submerged in floodwaters after five



A man pushes his tricycle through floodwaters, in Kolkata on Friday (AFP)

days of heavy rain.

Experts say climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of annual monsoon storms between June and September.

Western Maharashtra state has been hit by severe rainstorms, with landslides sending torrents of mud onto villages and killing at least 200 people.

The northern Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have also been badly hit.

Seven people were killed in a landslide in Himachal Pradesh this week and another seven people died in an intense storm that hit the remote village of Honzar in Indian Kashmir.

AFP

Paris accord signatories need to be more ambitious in their climate goals: UN

Paris, France - Countries that have signed up to the Paris accord to tame climate change need to be more ambitious in their own national efforts, the UN's climate chief said on Saturday.

Only just over half of countries that are party to the accord have submitted updated proposals for limiting their carbon emissions, Patricia Espinosa said in a statement.

And 'the level of ambition reflected in those national climate action plans also needs to be enhanced', she said.

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change that was adopted by 196 countries in December 2015 with the aim of limiting global warming to well below 2°C and preferably to



A tractor with caterpillars moves waste at the waste management centre in the Ahr Valley, in Niederzissen, western Germany, on Friday (AFP)

1.5°C, compared to pre-industrial levels.

Under the accord, every participating country originally had until the end of 2020 to submit new or updated 'nationally determined contributions' or 'NDCs'.

But because of the global coronavirus pandemic and the postponement of the COP26 cli-

mate conference in Glasgow to November 2021, a number of governments said they would be unable to meet the deadline.

By the new cut-off date on Friday, 'the secretariat (had) received new or updated NDCs from 110 parties', Espinosa said, including the United States, which came back into the Paris

Agreement after former president Donald Trump pulled out.

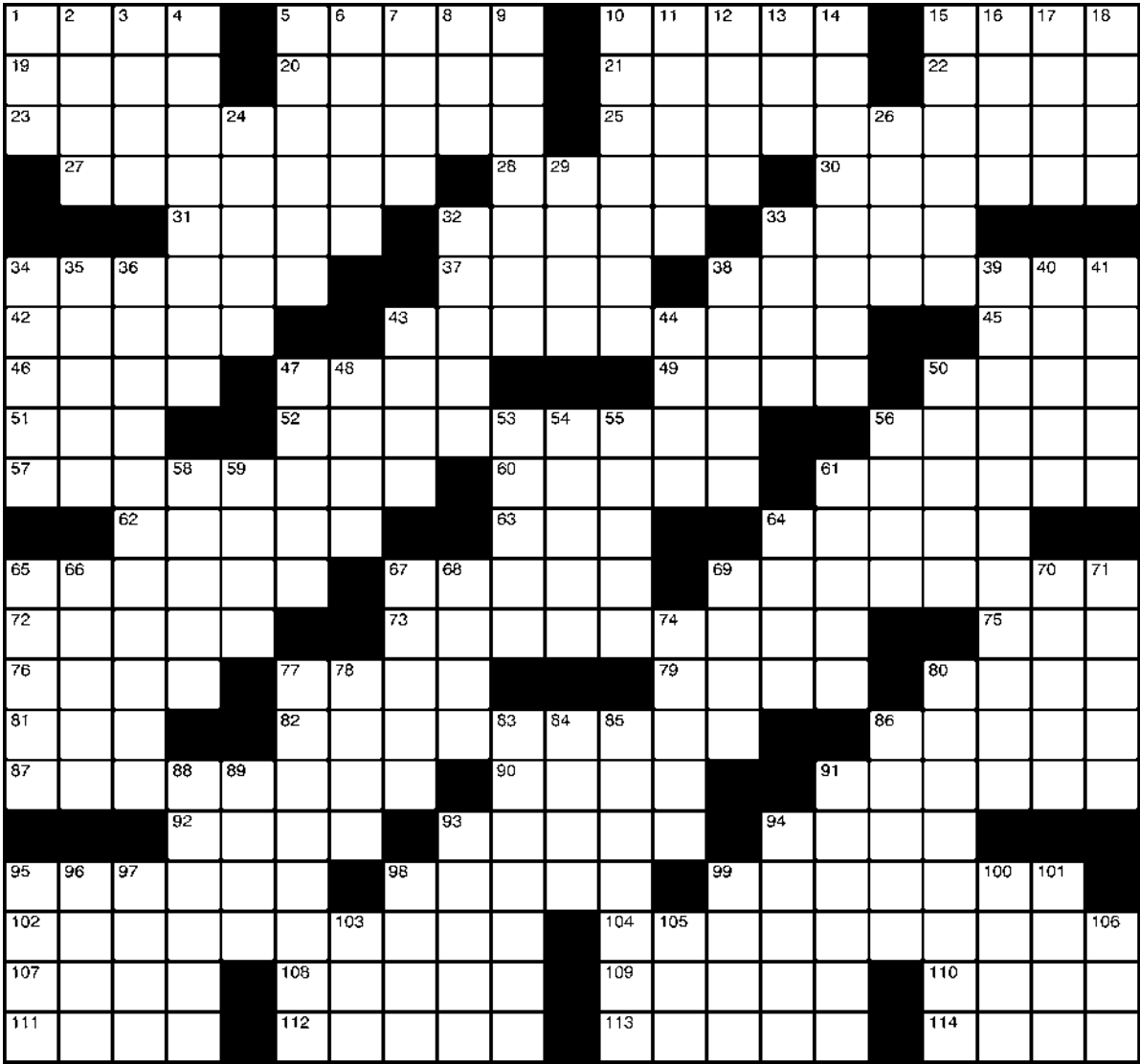
"This compares favourably with new or updated NDCs from 75 parties received up to the end of December 2020... but it is still far from satisfactory, since only a little over half the Parties (54 per cent) have met the cut-off deadline."

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has indicated that by the end of this decade, emissions must have been reduced by at least 45 per cent compared to 2010 levels.

"Recent extreme heat waves, droughts and floods across the globe are a dire warning that much more needs to be done, and much more quickly, to change our current pathway," Espinosa said.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 The Charles's pooch
5 Valuable violin, for short
10 "___ of Two Cities"
15 Brit baby buggy
19 Billy or nanny
20 Task
21 "Bring home the ___"
22 Olden days stringed instrument
23 Martini style?
25 Lobsters' destination?
27 Vendors
28 Word with level or infinitive
30 Gretel's companion
31 Popular name in Wales
32 Doles out
33 Sals canal?
34 Temporarily
37 Historic Algerian port
38 More cunning
42 Germanic alphabet characters
43 With it?
45 Gunners' gp.
46 Table scraps

- 47 Tightly drawn
49 City on the Oka
50 Adriatic seaport
51 Scrooge's word
52 Place for cleaning fluid?
56 Heredity transmitters
57 Atmosphere forces
60 Awaken
61 Refer to
62 Maugham's "___ and Ale"
63 A continent, for short
64 Voice abroad
65 Old Greek coin
67 Just the ___ ma'am
69 Demonstrations
72 Biblical weeds
73 Retton's balance locale?
75 ___ polloi
76 Egyptian snakes?
77 Pre-leaping precaution
79 Aretha's sis
80 Fall mo.
81 Resident of: suffix
82 Blackout condition?
86 Plant part
87 Debris
90 Observe

- 91 "In the Mood" maestro
92 Hubbubs
93 Ermine, in August
94 Far Eastern weight
95 Fan
98 Spin
99 Light TV fare
102 Sentry situation?
104 Pelota rebound?
107 Lotion ingredient
108 Mason's tool
109 Puppeteer Lewis
110 CSA's Robert ___
111 Colorist
112 Native of Stockholm
113 Reed instruments, colloquially
114 Colorful Cincinnatians
DOWN
1 In the past
2 Chips off the old block
3 London gallery
4 114 Across, for example
5 Shri! shout
6 Prickle
7 Mythical birds
8 Sacred chest
9 Sweet finale
10 Eisenhower hometown
11 Ancient Nile city

- 12 Eight, in Essen
13 Old card game
14 Captivate
15 Heavenly body
16 Furrows
17 Suits me to ___
18 Blackbird
24 Sprites
26 Homeless child
29 Egyptian deity
32 "A ___ in the Country"
33 Author Gardner
34 Investigation
35 Rustic
36 Up for discipline?
38 Bill of fare
39 Filbert domicile?
40 Made a booboo
41 Worker's wish
43 Ins' counterparts
44 Catcalls
47 Photo colorant
48 Hill dwellers
50 Contradict
53 Upright
54 Before Bend or Seas
55 Heavyweight's reward
56 Surfeit
58 Seagoing officers
59 ___ out: supplements
61 Bouquet
64 Author Stoker
65 Sedate

- 66 Flavor
67 ___ the bill
68 Egyptian cross
69 Fringe benefit
70 Pith helmet
71 Indian lute
74 Basque topper
77 Shore regions: var.
78 Burden
80 More pallid
83 Dub
84 Portal
85 Perplexed
86 Segment
88 News legend Dan
89 Pierre's idea
91 Crooner Johnny
93 Destroy documents
94 Solution strength, to chemists
95 A fork's in it
96 My one and ___
97 NB Native American
98 ___ come a long way
99 Tunisian port
100 One gender
101 Vehicle on runners
103 "Ben Hur" author
105 Govt. loan agency
106 "___ Sylphides"

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You really couldn't be feeling any better, and for a variety of reasons. Don't worry about that wonderfully blissful feeling going anywhere, either. You're all set for a nice, long, happy roll, so enjoy it. Your only responsibility right now is to make sure everyone around you feels just as good, which really shouldn't be a problem. After all, this kind of thing is contagious.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Getting too far from your money won't do you any good, but you certainly have some distractions to contend with. In fact, keeping your attention focused on anything right now will be far from easy. Daydreaming -- now, that will come easily, as will thinking about a certain someone who's inspiring those daydreams. Better hire an accountant. And someone to snap their fingers.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Let go of work matters -- at least until you get back there on Monday. You've done more than your part to take care of business. You're tired, you haven't had any fun in longer than you can remember and you can't really do any more than you've already done. There. Now that it's all been said, do you think you can actually give yourself a reprieve?



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You're not usually this sentimental, but for days now, you've been surprising even yourself with how emotional you can be. It's good to allow yourself these feelings. Every now and then, even a sign as stoic as yours is allowed to do a bit of sniffing -- especially with what you've been going through lately. And if anyone decides to start kidding with you about it?



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Is this an instant replay of yesterday? It just might be -- as far as your heart is concerned, at least. You're still feeling extremely nostalgic, and particularly focused on the past. Don't be too upset about it, though. We're all entitled to take those emotional strolls down Memory Lane every now and then. Right now, it's your turn -- and not a moment too soon.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Don't worry, there's nothing unusual about how you're feeling. All you need is someone to talk to and snuggle up with -- and after all the times you've done just that for several dear ones, it really shouldn't be too hard to find someone who's willing to accommodate you. Oh, and if it is? Well then it's a good time to increase your circle with some more available friends.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You have romance on the brain -- and that's all you can possibly talk yourself into thinking about now. So that perma-smile you've been wearing is going to stay right where it is. Keep in mind that this can be annoying to others, though, especially if they haven't been quite so fortunate in that department lately. Don't let them take the fun out of this for you, but force yourself not to gloat.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You've been dealing with the erratic, unusual behaviour of friends, neighbours and family members for days now. You're tired of it, and you're just about done with babysitting them. You're even ready to mention that. Good for you. Now, since it's Saturday, you can probably find a place to hide that's anything but boring -- oh, and someone to hide with, no doubt about that.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Still in the mood for love? You bet you are. You're probably not having many problems with your sweetheart, either. And even if a bit of a tiff is on the evening's agenda, by the way, you can put an end to it in no time flat if you just remember one thing: They're on your side. They don't want to squabble, either. So go ahead. Do something devastatingly charming.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

It's not just your imagination. Everything really is happening in sets of two -- which just so happens to be your favourite number. And with things going along as well as they are, you're only too happy not just to share, but to cut everyone in on your happiness. So when a friend ambles by with a sad story you'll be happy to give them some time. And you'll make them feel better, too.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You're the best secret-keeper. When you say you won't utter a word, you mean it -- and you take that promise seriously. That quality will come in quite handy. You'll see why this evening, when someone close to you may let just a little something slip - - with less-than-thrilling results. Is there any way you might be able to give them a crash course on keeping their mouth shut?



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

It started just after you got up this morning, and you're hoping it will never end. Well, that may be a bit much to ask in the long run, but for today -- oh, and tomorrow -- go right ahead. You could always just pretend that these feelings won't end, which will definitely make the evening even more exciting -- if that's possible.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Washing soda is the common name for

- a. Sodium carbonate
b. Calcium bicarbonate
c. Sodium bicarbonate
d. Calcium carbonate

2. Quartz crystals normally used in quartz clocks etc. is chemical

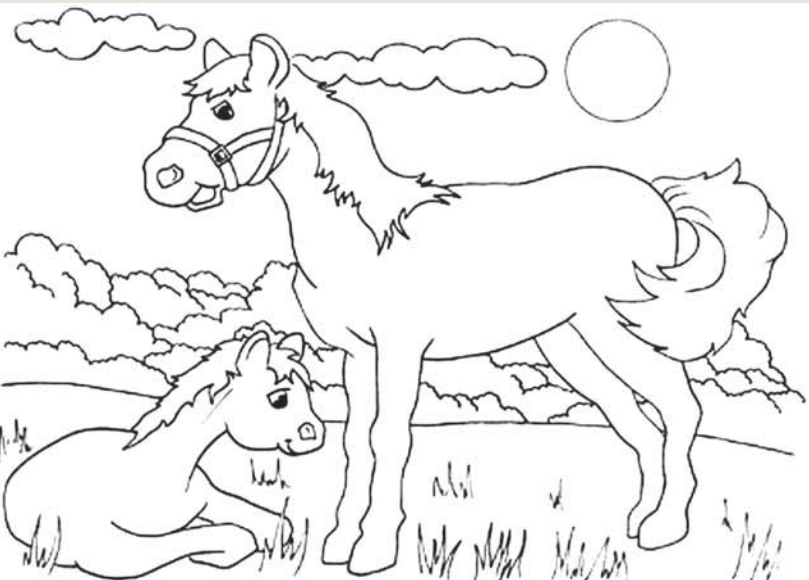
- a. silicon dioxide
b. germanium oxide
c. a mixture of germanium oxide and silicon dioxide
d. sodium silicate

3. Which of the gas is not known as green house gas?

- a. Methane
b. Nitrous oxide
c. Carbon dioxide
d. Hydrogen

Answers: 1.a 2.c 3.d

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

3	6		7	2		8	9	
			8	9	5	3	6	
								5
	2				4		3	
	8	3		9		4	5	
	7		1				2	
8								
		9	6	1	5	2		
	5	6		8	2		4	9

BOGGLER

S	S	E	O
M	E	C	N
S	B	Y	G
K	M	A	E

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

6	7	1	2	8	3	9	5	4
7	8	2	5	1	9	6	3	4
3	9	5	6	7	4	2	1	8
9	2	6	8	3	1	7	4	5
1	5	7	4	6	2	3	8	9
8	3	7	9	5	1	2	6	
5	1	3	9	7	8	1	6	2
7	9	3	5	6	8	4	1	
4	6	8	1	2	7	9	5	

MALLS	GRAM	CUES	STANK
ALLIAS	LEICHT	ANITE	GARAGE
TVSPECIALS	NITIA	ANDRE	
TATA	ATTI	ONYOURFMDTAL	
ZINGRAG	EGION	AFPE	
SIAM	DEY	BOON	ING
TRADER	PIERN	ABETS	LXI
YOYOS	ONES	IDEEM	CIATER
LIBRE	TOYS	DOT	MOUSSE
USE	BAVE	PEAR	SOUSA
SER	MARKS	STHESPOIT	NO
BEPEI	ANSO	MARS	DEW
TAYLOR	ERA	DINE	SWAIN
WORMS	TAPWATER	NOISE	
THE	BRITCA	NICK	DANGER
YEDS	ASH	HONK	DOT
CRIT	GOL	SCHOOL	
WASHINGTON	DO	LAS	ELLIE
ANATS	LANE	PITAME	EYTING
TERSE	OLOD	AURA	LINGO
SWIMS	PILOT	SITAR	KNEELS

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JULY 29)

WORD BUILDER

You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count



VIRTUAL EXHIBITION

Sketchbook storybeard

Hubert Vaz

From colourful seashells on the shore to a reclining mermaid, from a deadly serpent to an eerie haunted house, a unique collection of sketches by Indian artists in Oman now adorn a virtual exhibition which opened yesterday.

The exhibition is the seventh offering by Rangrez, a group of Indian artists in Oman, which is keeping the flame of art burning bright despite the spate of lockdowns and movement bans that hampers regular physical art displays.

The theme of this exhibition is based on an old indoor word game - Name Place Animal Thing - wherein artists were required to submit a minimum of seven sets of sketches done in a sketchbook. This exhibition by the Indian Social Club art wing is part of its 75 weeks of celebration of the 75th anniversary of India's Independence.

Sushmita Gupta, founder-member of Rangrez, said, "We felt extremely thrilled with the theme set for us by Debjani Bhardwaj (the curator), who is one of the best known artists of Indian origin in Oman. I, however, guided the participating artists of Rangrez by assisting them in choosing concepts if they felt overwhelmed with many different ideas and troubleshooting on mediums and styles to make their submissions stronger."

Debjani disclosed, "Name Place Animal Thing was a fun mind game many of us played as children in which the players had to list unique names, places, animals and things as per alphabetical prompts given to them. There are infinite thematic possibilities for turning this game into art books based on current world events or philosophical, or nostalgic cal, literature-based, imaginary, historical or nostalgic thoughts, which inspired me to choose it as a theme for this exhibition."

Every participating artist was given an A5 sized notebook and they had to fill its pages depending upon the approach they chose for making their books, using their own set of tools, be it pencils, colour pencils, water-colours, acrylic paints, inks, paper-cutting or collages, she said, adding, "I was interested to see how different artists would respond to this given theme and given book so as to transform it in their individual ways."

The interesting part about this project was that the participants were not aware of what the other participating artists were making. So, there was a degree of suspense, curiosity and excitement surrounding how other artists had interpreted this rather open-ended theme.

Every member that participated admitted that they were totally drawn into the challenge set for them. Around 28 sketchbooks got prepared by 28 artists - each unique in its own approach.

There are infinite thematic possibilities for turning this game into art books

DEBJANI BHARDWAJ
Curator

Imagination and animation

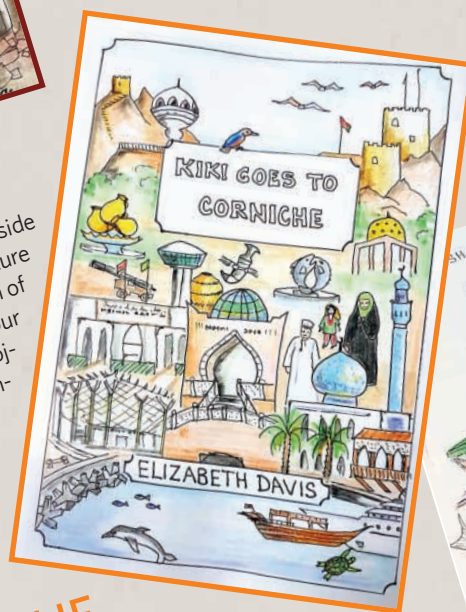
Here's how some of the participating artists described their work:



Aparna Deshmukh

THROUGH THE WINDOW

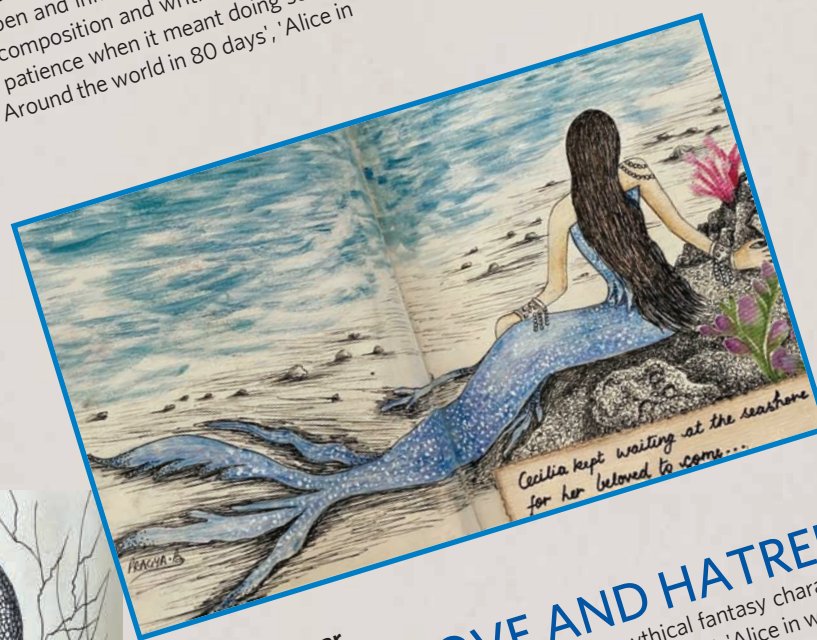
I feel a window tells us a story, whether we are looking outside through it or looking inward. The process was like an adventure and I truly enjoyed. I had an idea of creating a combination of animated characters and calligraphy. I used loose colour washes and some texturing with coloured pencils. This project trained my mind to keep creating multiple ideas on a single theme.



Elizabeth Davis

KIKI GOES TO CORNICHE

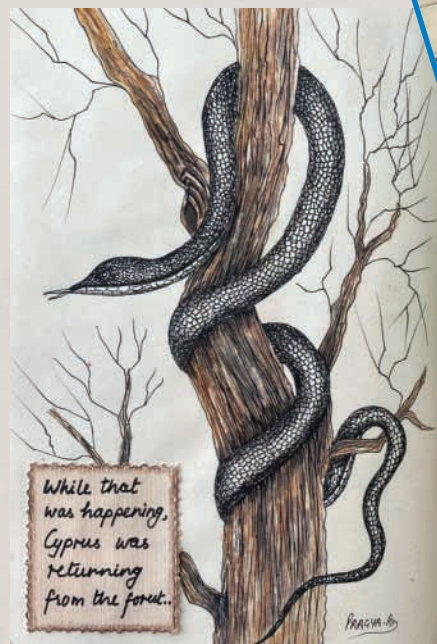
I created a travelogue for little children. This book is dedicated to my granddaughter, and I recorded her favourite places in Muscat in my book. I used the techniques of pen and ink and water-colours. The part that I enjoyed most was the composition and writing of this little book. I realised that I had a lot of patience when it meant doing something I like. My other ideas were 'Around the world in 80 days', 'Alice in Wonderland' and 'Fairy Tales'.



Pragya Bhatnagar

A TALE OF LOVE AND HATRED

I wrote an emotional story revolving around mythical fantasy characters. The other ideas I contemplated were 'Culture of Oman', 'Alice in Wonderland' and 'Indian heritage'. The challenges I faced were to first create my own original characters, then maintain uniformity and harmony throughout such diverse art frames while telling a story using so many illustrations. I used techniques like sketching with water-colours, pen, pencil colours and paper cut-outs. I used storytelling through multiple, continuous frames.



Rawahi wins third round of Jordan National Rally

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Top-seeded and former winner Abdullah al Rawahi secured a morale-boosting win in the third round of the Jordan National Rally Championship 2021 near Dead Sea in Jordan, on Friday.

Teaming up with his experienced and long-time co-driver Ata al Hmoud of Jordan, the duo claimed the title in their Subaru Impreza ST1 N14 nearly two and a half minutes ahead of Jordanian duo of Youssef al Asmar and Nabil Kayyal, also in a Subaru Impreza.

The championship featured a competitive grid of 13 cars and 11 of them finished the rally. Rawahi dominated the rally winning all the four stages to win the rally in a time of 40.39 minutes.

The first stage at Nebo was over a distance of 9.7km and after winning the stage one, there was no stopping Rawahi and Hmoud as they claimed the SS2 (16.97km), SS3 (9.7km) and the final SS4 Main stage (16.97.2km). The total distance of the rally was 166.59km that featured gravel stages for 53.34km.

Speaking after the win, Rawahi said, "I'm delighted to win in Jordan along with my co-driver Ata [al Hmoud]. After my disappointment during the Jordan Rally in the Middle East Rally Championships (MERC) in May [engine breakdown], I was determined to come back and get a good result here.

"It is a great feeling to have achieved it. A victory in a rally outside Oman is full of chal-



enges. To overcome it with a top position is definitely I will cherish for a long time."

The 24 year old Oman's rally star added, "The rally in Jordan offers a difficult challenge as the

terrain is very different around the Dead Sea area, especially in Nebo. I am proud to fly the flag of sultanate high and I hope to bring further glory for the sultanate."

The Jordanian pair of Ameer

Nassif and Musa Djyierian in Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X claimed the third position.

Rawahi and Hmoud were overall Jordan National Rally champions in 2019 and the duo

was seeded No 1 for this round.

It was a nice comeback for Rawahi after he retired during the Jordan Rally MERC due to a broken engine earlier in May.

The third round of Jordan National Rally featured quite a few former champions including Asmar and Khaled Juma, who was forced to retire on Friday.

Jordan's Shadi Shaban, who finished fourth in the MERC Jordan Rally 2021, also finished fourth on Friday.

Tareq al Taher and Samer Issa rounded off the top-five positions. Former Jordan champion Ihab al Shorafa with his co-driver Yousef Jumaa, came eighth.

@ashokmuscat



Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton poses with the pole position award at the Hungaroring race track in Mogyorod near Budapest on Saturday (AFP)

Hamilton takes pole position for Hungarian GP

FORMULA ONE
HUNGARIAN GRAND PRIX

Budapest, Hungary - Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton secured the 101st pole position of his career on Saturday as he went quickest in qualifying for Sunday's Hungarian Grand Prix.

Hamilton, who is aiming for his 100th Grand Prix victory and his ninth in Hungary, will be joined on the front row by Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas with championship leader Max Verstappen starting third alongside his Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez.

Hamilton was quickest during the final practice session on Saturday morning but the Briton bided his time and, unlike his rivals, sticking to the medium tyres in Q2 which saw him land just the sixth-quickest time.

Switching to the softs for Q3 he produced a blistering lap of

1min 15.419sec, over three-tenths of a second faster than Bottas, who had also used the mediums.

"It was an amazing qualifying lap and it has been amazing teamwork from everyone, Valtteri included, trying to push the car forward.

"The guys at the factory have left no stone unturned.

"The soft tyre is worth something like five metres into turn one. It was surprising to see everyone in the top-ten on the softs apart from us."

Verstappen, who crashed out of the last race after a first lap collision with Hamilton, had to make do with third, signalling a remarkable 20 consecutive top three qualifications.

Verstappen leads the title race with an eight-point lead over Hamilton.

AFP

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TOKYO 2020



MEDALS TABLE

(Only selected nations)



	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
China	21	13	12	46
Japan	17	5	8	30
USA	16	17	13	46
ROC*	11	15	11	37
Australia	10	3	14	27
Great Britain	8	9	11	28
South Korea	5	4	7	16
France	4	9	6	19
Netherlands	4	7	5	16
New Zealand	4	3	3	10
Germany	3	4	10	17
Canada	3	4	5	12
Switzerland	3	3	4	10
Czech Republic	3	3	1	7
Croatia	3	1	2	6
Italy	2	8	14	24
Chinese Taipei	2	2	3	7
Hungary	2	2	2	6

(ROC* - Russian Olympic Committee)

Gold for Bencic; Djokovic departs without a medal

TENNIS

Tokyo, Japan - Switzerland's Belinda Bencic downed Marketa Vondrousova of Czech Republic to claim the gold in the women's singles at the 2020 Olympic Games on Saturday while world No 1 Novak Djokovic said he was 'not sure' about his fitness for the US Open after pulling out of the Olympics mixed doubles bronze medal match with a shoulder injury on Saturday.

The Serb's withdrawal came after the 20-time major champion lost his cool on his way to a surprise 6-4, 6-7 (6/8), 6-3 defeat to Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta in the singles bronze-medal match.

In the women's final, the world No 12 prevailed 7-5, 2-6, 6-3 to become the first Swiss woman to win an Olympic gold medal. Bencic is in line for a golden double as she is scheduled to play in a women's doubles final on Sunday, partnering



Belinda Bencic poses with her medal after winning women's singles final



with Viktorija Golubic against the top-seeded Czech pair of Barbora Krejickova and Katerina Siniakova.

However, there was disappointment and injury concerns for Djokovic. The 34-year-old Serb could become the first man to complete a calendar

Grand Slam since Rod Laver in 1969 when the US Open gets under way on August 30. He admitted that his exertions in Japan have taken their toll but he still hopes to be fit enough to challenge at Flushing Meadows.

"The consequences physically hopefully will not create a problem for me for the US Open, but



Novak Djokovic reacts after his loss

that's something that I'm not sure about right now," said Djokovic. The International Tennis Federation (ITF) said Djokovic had withdrawn with from mixed doubles due to a 'left shoulder injury'. "Ashleigh Barty and John Peers receive a walkover against Djokovic and Nina Stojanovic and win the bronze medal for

Australia," the ITF said.

Djokovic had been eyeing two gold medals when he played the singles and mixed doubles semi-finals on Friday - but less than 24 hours after his hopes for gold were ended - he was preparing to leave the Ariake Tennis Park without a medal of any colour.

He lost a gruelling match to Carreno Busta which lasted two hours and 47 minutes in suffocating heat, despite saving five match points.

Svitolina wins medal

Elina Svitolina became Ukraine's first Olympic medallist in tennis on Saturday, securing bronze by beating Kazakh Elena Rybakina 1-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4. Also, Laura Pigossi and Luisa Stefani won Brazil's first ever Olympic medal with a 4-6, 6-4, 11-9 victory over Russians Veronika Kudrmetova and Elena Vesnina in the women's doubles bronze-medal match.

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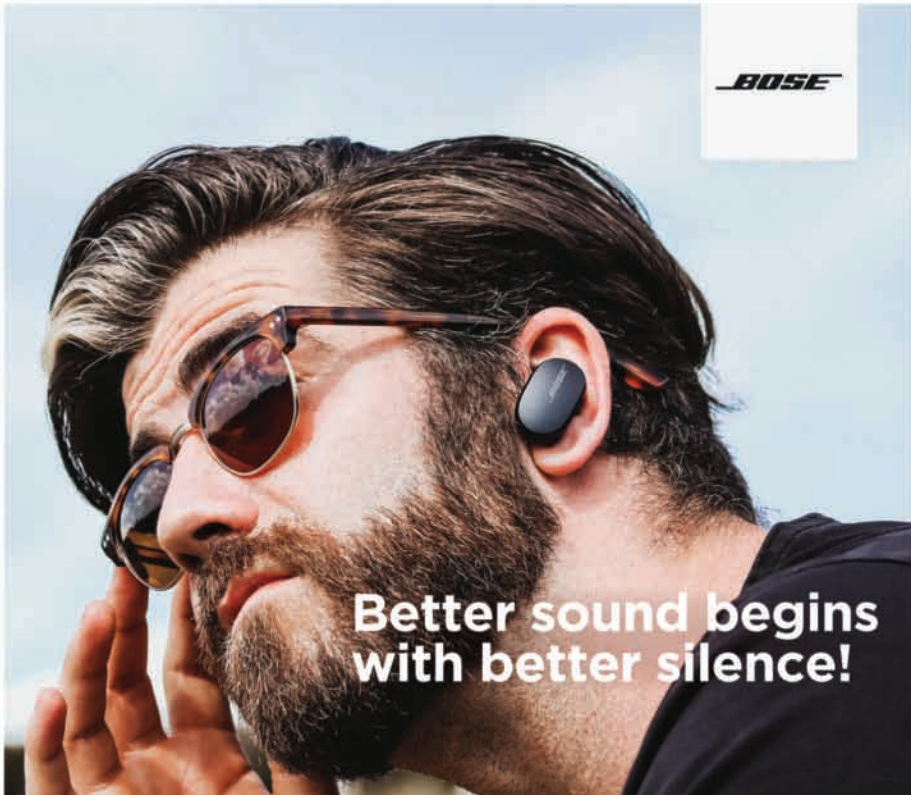
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Tai Tzu-ying celebrates after beating P V Sindhu on Saturday

Tzu-ying ends 'sad' Sindhu's gold hopes

BADMINTON

Tokyo, Japan - Women's world No 1 Tai Tzu-ying of Chinese Taipei ousted India's P V Sindhu in the Olympic semifinals on Saturday, ending her bid to become only India's second-ever individual gold medallist.

Tzu-ying made short work of world champion Sindhu, beating her 21-18, 21-12 to set up a final showdown with China's Anthony Sinisuka Ginting, Chen Yufei. Sindhu she still has a chance to claim bronze against China's He Bingjiao on Sunday. "It's sad that I couldn't go to the final," said Sindhu. "I'm sure a lot of people from India supported me and showed me their love. It just wasn't my day, but I'm going to try again tomorrow."

Yufei, the Chinese world No 2 beat compatriot and training partner He 21-16, 13-21, 21-12.

In men's singles, Denmark's world No 2 Viktor Axelsen

cruised into the semifinals, but compatriot Anders Antonsen was unable to join him. Axelsen beat China's Shi Yuqi 21-13, 21-13 to set up a clash with Guatemalan world No 59 Kevin Cordon, who kept his fairytale run going with a 21-13, 21-18 win over South Korea's Heo Kwang-hee.

But Antonsen stumbled in his quarterfinal against Indonesia's Anthony Sinisuka Ginting, going down 21-18, 15-21, 21-18. Ginting will face China's Chen Long in the final four, after the defending champion beat Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien-chen 21-14, 9-21, 21-14.

Childhood friends Lee Yang and Wang Chi-lin won men's doubles gold on Saturday, giving Chinese Taipei its first Olympic medal in the sport. They beat China's Li Junhui and Liu Yuchen 21-18, 21-12 in the final in just 34 minutes.

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TOKYO 2020

OMAN AT OLYMPICS

Barakat, Khanjari bow out with their heads held high

Oman’s ace sprinter posts season best 100m time; debutant weightlifter achieves personal best

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

The results were on the expected lines for Oman. The sultanate athletes are not in medal contention in any of the events they are competing. The hope of the athletes themselves, and of the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), is that they improve upon their personal best records and learn from the experience of participating at the world’s greatest sporting spectacle.

On Saturday, Oman athletes featured in two disciplines - athletics and weightlifting. While the 33 year old Barakat al Harthi is a seasoned campaigner, taking part in his third successive Olympics, it was baptism by fire for the 20-year-old Amur al Khanjari, who was making his debut in the Group B event of the 81kg class.



Unflustered by the grand stage at the Tokyo International Forum, a young Khanjari put in his best performance so far to lift 140kg snatch in his third attempt and then 177kg in clean & jerk for a combined 317kg, a personal best. His previous best total was 313kg at an Arab championship earlier this year.

He finished second in his group behind Albania’s Erkand Qerimaj (338kg) and was placed overall tenth in the competition after China’s Xiaojun Lyu bagged the gold with an Olympic record of 374kg (170kg in snatch and 204kg in clean & jerk).

Dominican Republic’s Zacarias Bonnat (367kg total) won the silver and Italian Antonino Pizzolato (365kg total) took the bronze.

Later Khanjari said, “I am proud to make my Olympics debut and come up with my



Oman’s Amur al Khanjari during a training session ahead of his 81kg Group B event in Tokyo on Saturday



Barakat al Harthi (second from left) during the 100m preliminary round heat in Tokyo on Saturday

personal best lift. It was a great experience and I will now start preparing for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. I hope to get the desired backing to ensure

good results in future.”

Barakat’s early morning 100m race on Saturday saw the former Asian bronze medallist win the preliminary round heat

two with his season-best time of 10.27s and qualify for the first-round heat later in the day.

Earlier, this season, Barakat had recorded his best of 10.37s

at a pre-Olympic training camp in Turkey. Following his season-best time, Barakat was lined up in heat five of the first round that had two of world’s leading sprinters in the heat - Canada’s Andre de Grasse and American Fred Kerley.

Barakat failed to repeat his early morning timing as despite a strong start he could clock 10.31s to finish sixth among the nine competitors.

Interestingly both the races that Barakat ran on Saturday witnessed disqualification of a sprinter due to a false start.

Grasse won the race with his season-best time of 9.91s followed by Kerley with 9.97s to advance to the semifinals. Kenya’s Ferdinand Omurwa was third qualifier with 10.01s. In fact, Grasse was the fastest qualifier in the seven heats featuring 46 athletes. Barakat’s timing ranked him at 41st spot.

Speaking after the round one heat, Barakat said, “To achieve my season-best time at the Olympics is a satisfying feeling. I thank my coach Mohammed al Hooti, who has been with me for long camps ahead of the Games.

“The round one heat was very tough with some of the world’s fastest runners in my heat. I am proud to have represented Oman at three successive Olympics and I am hopeful of using this experience in my career ahead.”

Earlier on Friday, Oman’s other sprinter, Mazoon al Alawi, competing in 100m women’s race, clocked a disappointing 12.35s to make an early exit as she finished sixth in the heat.

This was her second successive participation at the Games. Her timing on Friday was much below her recent performances during the preparatory camp in Turkey where she had recorded her personal best in April with a time of 11.84s, which was also the new national record.

Following the exit of Olympic debutant swimmer Issa al Adawi, who took part in the 100m freestyle last week, and now the departures of Barakat and Mazoon along with Khanjari, all that is left for Oman in Tokyo 2020 is experienced shooter Hamed al Khatri’s campaign in the men’s 50m rifle 3 positions on Monday at the Asaka Shooting Range.

Eight of the 50 shooters will advance to the final round.

@ashokmuscat



Kevin Durant (C) of the US shoots the ball during the game against the Czech Republic at the Super Saitama Arena in Tokyo on Saturday (AFP)

Durant leads US to knockouts

BASKETBALL

Saitama, Japan - Kevin Durant and Jayson Tatum turned on the style as the US men’s basketball team eventually shook off the Czech Republic to win 119-84 to reach the knockout phase on Saturday. Boston Celtics star Tatum scored 27 points and Brooklyn Nets forward Durant hit 23 points in a win that sent Gregg Popovich’s team into the quarterfinals.

During the game Durant took two records from Carmelo Anthony, becoming both the US Olympic men’s all-time points and all-time field goals leader.



The win guaranteed that the US will avoid any of the three group winners until at least the semifinals. They finished second behind France in Group A after the French eased past Iran 79-62 to seal top spot.

AFP

BMX rider out of critical care

Tokyo, Japan - Former Olympic BMX racing champion Connor Fields suffered a brain haemorrhage in a crash at the Tokyo Olympics but has been moved out of critical care in hospital, officials said on Saturday.

Fields, who was stretchered

off the course after his heavy fall in Friday’s semifinals, spent the night in the intensive care unit, a USA Cycling statement said. “The doctors reported that Fields sustained a brain haemorrhage at the venue,” it said.

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TOKYO 2020



THOMPSON-HERAH IS SPRINT QUEEN

Jamaican athletes complete clean sweep in 100m women's race

Tokyo, Japan - Elaine Thompson-Herah ran the joint second fastest time in history as she retained her Olympic 100m crown on Saturday ahead of pre-race favourite Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce in a Jamaican podium sweep.

Thompson-Herah, who won the sprint double at the Rio Olympics in 2016, had come into the blue riband event very much in the shadow of Fraser-Pryce.

At 34, and having had time out to have a baby, Fraser-Pryce was seeking to become the first woman to win a single individual Olympic event three times having previously triumphed in the 2008 Beijing and 2012 London Games. But Thompson-Herah was quick out of the blocks, hitting a top speed of 39.7km/h down the straight in a 68,000-capacity Olympic Stadium empty of fans because of coronavirus restrictions in the Japanese capital.

Fraser-Pryce reeled her teammate in at the 50m mark, but Thompson-Herah dug deep to pull away for a memorable victory in 10.61 seconds, beating by one-hundredth of a second the previous Olympic best set by American Florence Griffith-Joyner at the 1988 Seoul Games.

Only Griffith-Joyner has run faster than the Jamaican, having set the world record of 10.49 at the 1988 US Olympic trials - a



Jamaica's Elaine Thompson-Herah crosses the finish line to win the women's 100m final at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo on Saturday (AFP)

day before also timing 10.61.

Fraser-Pryce raced home in 10.74 for silver, while Shericka Jackson clocked a personal best of 10.76, with the first six sprinters all dipping below the 11-sec mark. "I knew I had it in me but obviously I've had my ups and downs with injuries," said Thompson-Herah. "I've been keeping faith all this time. It is amazing."

The first round of the men's 100m threw up some surprises as American Trayvon Bromell, who owns the fastest time this year of 9.77sec, only scraped through as a fastest loser. US teammates Ronnie Baker and Fred Kerley went through, while an Andre De Grasse of Canada topped times with 9.91sec.

Nigeria's Blessing Okagbare, who had won her 100m heat, was thrown out of the event for failing a drugs test - the first doping incident of the Games. Kenyan men's 100m runner Mark Odhiambo was also suspended for testing positive for steroids.

There was drama following the women's 100m semifinals as world 200m champion Dina Asher-Smith said she was pulling out of the event because of a hamstring injury.

Kajetan Duszynski produced a thrilling sprint from 200m out to surge from third place to help Poland to the gold medal in the inaugural Olympic mixed 4x400m relay. The quartet of Karol Zalewski, Natalia Kacz-



USA's Caeleb Dressel en route to his gold in the men's 100m butterfly swimming final on Saturday (AFP)

marek, Justyna Swiet-Ersetic and Duszynski clocked 3min 09.87sec. The Dominican Republic claimed a surprise silver in 3:10.21, with the US foursome, the pre-race favourites and reigning world champions, taking

bronze (3:10.22) without Allyson Felix in their ranks.

The third gold medal of the night went to world champion Daniel Stahl, who led training partner Simon Pettersson in a Swedish one-two in the men's

discus. A dominant Stahl threw a best of 68.90m, with Pettersson taking silver with 67.39m.

Biles' campaign on the brink

Meanwhile, ongoing mental

health problems left gymnastics superstar Simone Biles's Tokyo campaign teetering on the brink.

Biles's problems with the 'twisties', a mental block where gymnasts struggle to orientate themselves in mid-air, continued as she pulled out of the vault and uneven bars. The four-time Olympic champion now has just two more chances - the floor competition on Monday and the beam on Tuesday.

And in the pool, US stars Caeleb Dressel and Katie Ledecky added to their gold medal collections, while Great Britain won the Olympics' first mixed 4x100m medley relay.

Dressel won the 100m butterfly in a world-record 49.45sec and Ledecky bagging her third straight 800m title. But Dressel lost his chance of a Michael Phelps-style six golds when USA finished fifth in the mixed 4x100m medley relay behind Britain's world record 3:37.58.

Earlier, two-time individual triathlon medallist Jonny Brownlee won gold when he led Britain to victory in the mixed relay.

In other action, New Zealand beat France 26-12 to win the women's rugby sevens, and China's Ma Long became the first man to win two Olympic table tennis singles titles.

In the men's football, holders Brazil along with Japan, Spain and Mexico entered the semifinals. Brazil will meet Mexico for a place in the final after defeating Egypt 1-0 while Mexico edged past South Korea 6-3. Spain will meet Japan in the other semis after the hosts beat New Zealand on penalties and Spain defeated Ivory Coast 5-2 in extra-time.

AFP

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India in quarters after Britain defeat Ireland

WOMEN'S HOCKEY

Tokyo, Japan - India gained from Olympic debutants Ireland's 0-2 defeat to reigning champions Great Britain as the former booked a place in the quarterfinals of women's hockey on Saturday.

Ireland needed a win against Great Britain to secure a place in the knockout stages after three goals from Vandana Katariya helped India complete their Pool A campaign with a dramatic 4-2 win over South Africa earlier in the day.

The first match of the evening session saw the Netherlands

confirm their status as the winners of Pool A with a 3-1 triumph over Germany.

In the quarterfinals on Monday, India will meet Australia while Germany will play Argentina.

The other quarterfinal matches will witness the Netherlands take on New Zealand and Spain clash with Great Britain.

Other results

Pool B: China **3-2** New Zealand, Japan **1-4** Spain, Argentina **0-2** Australia. AFP



Great Britain players celebrate after their win over Ireland on Saturday (AFP)



Qatar's Fares El-Bakh competes in the 96kg competition on Saturday

Weightlifter El-Bakh wins Qatar's first Olympic gold

Tokyo, Japan - Weightlifter Fares El-Bakh shattered two Games records in Tokyo as he became Qatar's first Olympic champion in history on Saturday.

The 2019 world silver medallist dominated the men's 96kg, setting new marks for the clean and jerk (225kg) and total lift (402kg).

"I'm very honoured to have won a gold medal during these Olympics," said El-Bakh, 23. "I

hope that my performance was all right during these Games."

Venezuela's Keydumar Sanchez took silver with Anton Pliesnoi finishing third. El-Bakh attempted but failed a world-record 232 on his final lift. El-Bakh won Qatar's sixth Olympic medal and second in weightlifting, after Saif Asaad's 105kg bronze at Sydney 2000.

AFP