

COVID-19 CASES RISE

MEDICS CALL FOR CAUTION AS MORE PEOPLE TURN UP WITH COUGH AND COLD

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Hospitals in the sultanate are once again reporting an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases. Although those getting infected are reporting mild symptoms, doctors urge caution and observance of tried and tested precautionary measures, such as wearing mask and social distancing, to avoid another wave.

Last week, the World Health Organization said that COVID-19 continues to be a matter of concern with almost 22.5mn confirmed cases and more than 344,000 deaths reported as of July 24 in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Confirming the rising casing, Dr K P Raman, chairman of Al Hayat International Hospital, said, "Our hospital has indeed been seeing an increase in COVID-19 patients recently, though there are no severe cases in the ICU or on ventilator. But we must not take things for granted. Precautions like social distancing and wearing masks in crowded places and in airports must be observed again."

He noted that "though most of us are vaccinated, we must remember that the anti-bodies produced in our body due to the vaccine fade away with time and thus we will once again be prone to the virus. So the best option is precaution".



We must remember that the anti-bodies produced in our body due to the vaccine fade away with time

DR K P RAMAN

Dr Basheer A, head of Internal Medicine & Infectious Diseases of Badr al Samaa Hospital in Ruwi, urged all to follow precautionary measures despite the lifting of restrictions. "We are seeing an increase in the number of patients presenting with flu symptoms; some of these cases could be COVID-19. Do not ignore any cough and fever. The virus hasn't been totally eradicated. Always wash hands and try to wear masks in closed spaces."

The current trend shows that the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, according to Dr Ahmed al Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

"We try to forget COVID-19, but the virus has not forgotten us. In fact, it is taking advantage of our complacency to spread and mutate. I call on all countries to maintain compliance to effective public health and social measures and increase vaccination coverage."

Reinfection adds risk of long COVID

Los Angeles, US - Emerging evidence suggests that catching the coronavirus a second time can heighten long-term health risks. Earlier, it was assumed that getting infected afforded some degree of lasting protection.

As the virus mutates, though, that's no longer a given and each individual infection carries the risk not only of acute illness but the potential to develop long COVID.

"Reinfection absolutely adds risk," said Dr Ziyad al Aly, clinical epidemiologist at Washington University.

Agencies

The Ministry of Health recently called on citizens and residents to take the third dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

"Due to increased activity of the COVID-19 virus in many parts of the world, the Ministry of Health calls upon all those who did not receive the third dose of COVID-19 vaccine to do so," a statement said.

It added that those who received the booster more than nine months ago, need to take another dose.

Israel bombs Gaza, 15 killed, 120 wounded

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories - Israel's military warned on Saturday that deadly aerial operations against Palestinian fighters in Gaza could last a week, as cross-border fire reverberated for a second day in the worst escalation since last year's war.

Israel has said it was forced to launch a "pre-emptive" operation against Islamic Jihad, insisting the group was planning an imminent attack following days of tensions along the border with Gaza, a Palestinian enclave.

Health authorities in Gaza, controlled by the Islamist group Hamas, said a five-year-old girl was among 15 people killed by the Israeli bombardment, adding that more than 120 others have been wounded.

Israel's strikes were met with barrages of rockets from the Palestinian side, and cross-border fire continued in both directions on Saturday, stoking fears of a repeat of an 11-day conflict in May 2021 that devastated Gaza.

Daily life in the enclave has come to a standstill, with streets largely deserted and most shops closed. Its sole power station ground to a halt due to a lack of fuel after Israel closed its border crossings days earlier, according to the electricity distributor.

Civilians on the Israeli side meanwhile repeatedly fled to air shelters, but there were no immediate reports of casualties.



Palestinians inspect ruins of a collapsed building destroyed by an Israeli air strike in Gaza City on Saturday; (bottom) a fireball erupts and smoke billows as a result of an Israeli air strike on a building in Gaza City also on Saturday

Declaration of war

An Israeli military spokesman said its forces were "preparing for the operation to last a week," and told AFP that the army is "not currently holding ceasefire negotiations".

Sources within Islamic Jihad ruled out a ceasefire soon, with one saying, "for the movement the focus is on the battlefield".

Israel and Islamic Jihad confirmed the killing of Taysir al Jabari, a key leader of the group,

in a Friday strike on a building in the west of Gaza city.

Islamic Jihad is aligned with Hamas, but often acts independently. It declared that the initial Israeli bombardment amounted to a "declaration of war".

"Israel isn't interested in a wider conflict in Gaza, but will not shy away from one either," Prime Minister Yair Lapid had warned in a nationally televised address on Friday.

AFP

► NEWS BRIEF

PRESIDENT BIDEN TESTS NEGATIVE AFTER SECOND BOUT OF COVID-19

Washington, US - US President Joe Biden on Saturday tested negative for COVID-19, days after coming down with a second bout of the illness.

"The President continues to feel very well," Biden's physician Kevin O'Connor said in a statement. "This morning, his SARS-CoV-2 antigen testing was negative."

Biden, who at 79 is the oldest person to hold the US presidency, has been in quarantine for the past week, after testing positive for the virus following an initial recovery in what is known as a "rebound" case.

O'Connor said Biden will continue to isolate pending a second negative test "in an abundance of caution."



31% workforce don't have GED qualification



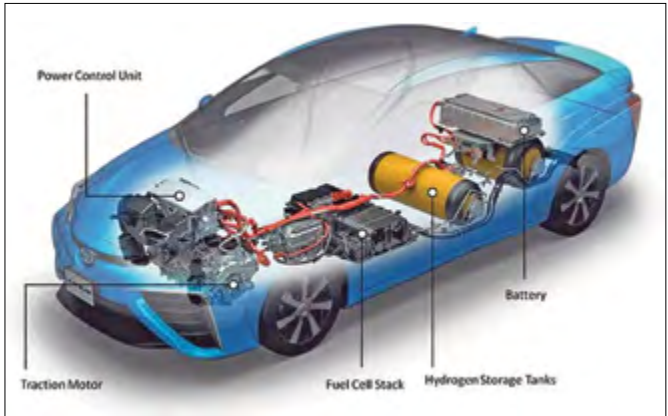
Profits of Oman's listed firms increase to RO388mn in H1

SHABAB OMAN II AWARDED FRIENDSHIP TROPHY IN DENMARK



Royal Navy of Oman's Shabab Oman II was awarded the prestigious Friendship Trophy at the closing festival of the Tall Ships Races 2022 in Aalborg, Denmark, on Friday. The trophy is awarded to the vessel - based on the votes of all captains and ship crew - which has contributed the most to promoting international friendship and understanding during the Tall Ships Races. The races this year saw the international fleet of Tall Ships and Small Ships return to the North Sea following visits to Esbjerg, Harlingen, Antwerp and Aalborg (Supplied photo)

MoCIIP issues standard for hydrogen cars



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has issued the Omani specification standard for hydrogen-fueled vehicles.

The standard specifies performance requirements related to safety, which will help reduce damages and loss in the event of an accident.

Nadia bint Mohammed al Siyabiya, Director of Specifications Department, MoCIIP, said that preparation of this standard is part of the government's efforts to encourage and support

sustainable clean energy.

The specifications have been set based on the global regulations of hydrogen vehicles issued by the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations in coordination with the major industrialised countries.

Nadia said hydrogen-fueled vehicles have three basic systems - the hydrogen supply and storage system, the fuel cell system, and the electric propulsion system.

She added that the success of hydrogen-fueled vehicles in Oman will lead to reduction of pollution-related issues resulting from petrol and diesel fuels.

Muscat among cities with least number of Airbnb stays in the world

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat is among the ten cities with the least number of Airbnb properties in the world, according to a study titled *Global Airbnb Capitals 2022 - The Best Global Destinations for an Airbnb Stay*.

Muscat is placed tenth on the '10 cities with the least Airbnb stays in the world' with 288 properties; Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, is ranked first with 115 rentals.

The second edition of the study - the first was in 2019 - was

conducted by Inkifi, a photo printing and wall art portal, to find out which global destinations had the largest offering of Airbnbs, making these great options for the traveller on a budget.

"Since then (2019), the world has experienced all the effects of the pandemic, closing borders and preventing people from travelling. This has had an enormous impact on the travel industry, which is only just starting to recover," stated the report.

The new, up-to-date, data reveals the travel destinations that



are ready for tourists with the largest offerings of potential Airbnb stays.

Since 2019, the number of active Airbnb rentals has fallen across the board, with the total

number of listings for the top ten destinations falling from 303,535 to 209,682 - down 30.92 per cent.

With almost 10,000 more Airbnbs than any other city, London has by far the most choice for travellers with active rentals at 34,135. It is followed by Paris (24,940), making the City of Love a great destination for travellers who don't want to shoulder the expense of costly hotel rooms, and New York City (22,586), taking the third place. Ankara, Turkey, has the

cheapest average daily rate for Airbnbs, with travellers paying as little as US\$21.05 per night. Bengaluru, India, is second cheapest and Kathmandu, Nepal, third.

Las Vegas, USA, is the most expensive place to stay in an Airbnb, with average daily rates of US\$224.95. The other two costliest cities - Miami and San Francisco - are also in the US.

The city with the highest density of Airbnbs is Pattaya, Thailand, where there are 79.25 active rentals on the market for every 1,000 people living there.

31% workforce don't have GED qualification

1.5mn - of all nationalities - were employed in private sector in 2021: NCSI

Our Correspondent
Muscat

There were 392,872 employees in the sultanate's government sector, inclusive of all nationalities, compared to 1,482,180 workers in the private sector, and 283,567 in the family sector in 2021.

According to the 2022 Statistical Yearbook issued by National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) listing data for 2021, 82 per cent of the 2,158,619 workers employed in various sectors in 2021 were men - 1,773,744 - while the number of female workers was 358,545.

The number of Omanis work-



ing in the government sector was 351,231 (male and female), compared to 41,641 expatriate workers, while the Omanisation rate in the private sector was 89 per cent.

According to the data for 2021, educational qualifications of more than half of the workers in the Omani labour market were less than General Education Diploma. Of the total, 18,140

were illiterate, 492,431 could only read and write and the largest segment of workers (688,091) didn't have a General Education Diploma (GED), constituting more than 31 per cent of

the total workers in the sultanate. The number of workers with a Bachelor's degree was 269,645, while 27,809 held a Master's degree.

Among expatriate employees,

there were 131,273 with higher qualifications (Bachelor's, Master's and PhD), including 17,754 foreign workers in the government sector.

According to the 2022 Statis-

tical Yearbook, 40 GCC nationals, 18,159 Indians, 9,449 Egyptians, 1,513 Sudanese, 382 Jordanians, and 2,372 other Arab nationalities worked in the public sector.

Tenders floated for projects to address traffic jams in Salalah

Muscat - Dhofar Municipality has announced three tenders, in cooperation with the Secretariat General of the Tender Board, for development projects to expand carriageways that experience traffic jams in the Governorate of Dhofar.

The first project, for the construction of Ittin Roundabout

Tunnel, has been designed to deal with traffic congestion on Ittin Road and 18 November Road. The second and third projects involve dualisation of Sultan Taimour Road and Al Farooq Road. The projects, which include erecting streetlights for the two roads, will factor in future traffic growth.

The projects comprise part of Dhofar Municipality's strategic plans, which lay emphasis on raising the efficiency of the road network, addressing traffic jams - notably during khareef - and enhancing the flow of vehicular movement in areas with high population density and urban development.

Oman, Australia review cooperation in green energy, education, agriculture

Canberra, Australia - Oman and Australia reviewed bilateral relations at a meeting held by H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, with Tim Watts, Australian Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, in Canberra on Friday.

During the meeting, bilateral relations and joint cooperation between Oman and Australia, and the existing cooperation in various fields, were reviewed.

The two sides showed keen interest to enhance bilateral cooperation, as well as to exploit the potentials available in both countries in a manner that enhances economic relations and common benefits.

"A pleasant and productive meeting with Tim Watts, high-



lighting growing bilateral cooperation including on green energy, climate change, agriculture and education. We shared views on

current regional and international developments as well," H E Sayyid Badr tweeted.

The meeting was attended by

A pleasant and productive meeting with Tim Watts, highlighting growing bilateral cooperation including on green energy, climate change, agriculture and education

H E SAYYID
BADR AL BUSAIDI

Dr Hamoud bin Amer al Wardi, Consul General of Oman in Australia, and several officials from both sides.

**PAPER
RECYCLING
PROGRAMME**

Attention all corporate offices!

**DO YOU HAVE ANY PAPER
TO RECYCLE?**

Our team will collect it from your office

BIGGER, BETTER, BRANDED
RECYCLING BOXES ALSO AVAILABLE

For details contact us at recycle@apexmedia.co.om or call us on toll free no: **80076000**

MUSCAT DAILY

BEYOND WORDS

VAISHALI HAMLAI

The columnist is a certified MBTI coach and author, and writer who delves into the complexities of the mind and soul to guide and interpret social behaviour

What are your cherished childhood memories of summer? Is it sweltering in the summer heat, not concerned about waking up in the morning, or going to school, or finishing assignments, or clearing that one last examination, with the best grades, or just scarping through. What else does summer remind you of? Pickles, grandparent's house, summer camps, getting plain bored, honing your drawing skills, or anything that one can't do at school time. For me the winner was always summer camps. That once eventful and hustling school now organising a summer camp for a small number of kids. That school was once filled with innumerable kids; and now filled with just a handful of kids. It feels like a wonderland, a huge lawn equal to four football fields, where now play maybe only 40 kids.

Cycling on the streets carefree, from one park to another, where we didn't have to worry about being run over by some careless inconsiderate driver. Climbing trees, playing many outdoor games or just staying in and listening to music.

But things have changed and those summer memories are replaced. Going to a friend's house in the summer afternoon to play board games is now replaced by playing online Snapchat impersonal games. Drawing and sketching on fresh crisp A4 sized new drawing books are replaced by another random app on your iPhone. Singing songs and fighting for that one lyric that everyone debates on, has turned into singing along YouTubed songs with perfect error-free lyrics, like a pro. Staying up late watching that one movie that was rented for the night from the video parlour to having a million choices to watch on Netflix but dissatisfied with them all. From numerous relatives visiting for over a month, having no personal space, cramping a large number of children in one room to sleep, to being alone in a nuclear family with no one to visit and all the space to yourself.

But having said that, and being abreast with change, when it comes to fun and bonding, I don't think this generation was short changed. Their summer is full of fun and frolic too. Their summer is also about visiting grandparent's house, watching reruns of their favourite Netflix show, playing their best sport throughout the summer, without having to miss it. Their summer is about learning absolutely anything they want under the sun; if they wanted they also could learn martial arts and take lessons on YouTube, and mind you, they can even excel at it. They could doodle their way through summer feeling blessed and calmer than anyone else. They could sing, chat and play along with their friends who are not even in their country at that time. Their horizon is broader and choices galore. They could connect with a person miles away, connecting over that one odd hobby very few are interested in. They could learn about the whole world with a click of their fingers and connect to any information, not possible in a large library too. They no longer need to wait the whole summer to chat with that cousin who lived miles away, and finally they can connect since they all have summer break and time is on their side. They have it all!

If ever you feel that this generation doesn't have what you had, then you have no idea what they have! They have this and that and they have it all!

SUMMER RE-RUN

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Press & Publishing

Oman based Indian writer's book podcast on Spotify

Our Correspondent
Muscat

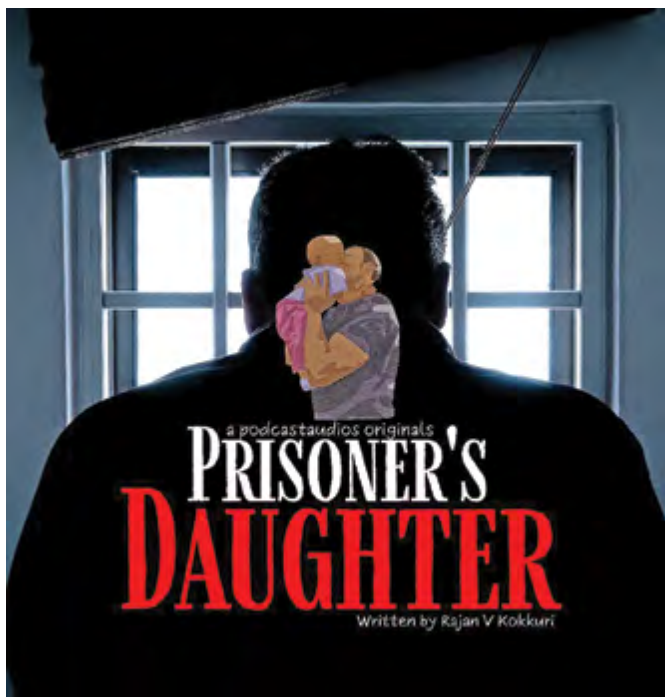
Loaded with dramatic narration, music and foleys, a podcast of a novel by an Oman based Indian author is now available on Spotify.

Rajan V Kokkuri's *Prisoner's Daughter* was rendered into a podcast by producer and director Ajay Tambe of creativeaudios.in. The audio drama is of around 21-minute duration and features voice artists from all over the world, including the UK, the US and India.

"In March 2021, my first audio book was released by the name *I Remain Forever Yours*, which is how the idea of a podcast with an international cast emerged. The director wanted an original story for the podcast," Kokkuri said.

"I was overwhelmed by his offer and wrote this story based on a true incident that happened long back in a village in Kerala. It was narrated to me by my mother's retired teacher and I took inspiration from it."

Set in 1984 in a village in Thrissur, in the southern Indian state of Kerala, the story narrates the tale of a 16-year-old girl Swati who discovers that her father, long believed to be dead, is alive.



In March 2021, my first audio book was released by the name 'I Remain Forever Yours,' which is how the idea of a podcast with an international cast emerged

RAJAN V KOKKURI

"It is always a proud moment for any writer when his story is made into another creative expression like a movie or drama. This may perhaps be the first time ever that an Indian author's

story is being podcast and streamed globally in over 60 countries. I played my part by providing the script to the director and the rest was managed by him," Kokkuri said.



(Supplied photos)

He claimed the podcast (https://open.spotify.com/episode/4CGfd3jQKbLYrF7dW6ghmC?si=UkdMYXa_SbyTg8AK7CviZ&utm_source=copy-link) became one of Oman's top ten in

the last few weeks.

Kokkuri's debut Malayalam novel *Nan Ennum Ninde Swantham* is in the pipeline. He writes regularly for *Taare Zameen Par* magazine.

Phishing attacks up 192% in Q2 2022

Muscat - Attacks related to data loss threats - phishing and scam/social engineering - increased significantly in the second quarter of 2022 at 192 per cent compared to the previous quarter in the sultanate.

Analysis by the global cybersecurity and digital privacy company Kaspersky has indicated that its security solutions detected 865,691 phishing attacks in Oman in Q2 2022.

During vacation season, in particular, scammers try to lure travellers looking for interesting places to go, cheap places to stay and reasonably priced flights, the company stated.

Kaspersky researchers observed intensified scamming activities, with numerous phishing pages published under the guise of airline and booking services. The number of attempts to open phishing pages related to booking and airline services in the first half of 2022 was 4,311 in META region.

"Planning a vacation is not easy. People can spend weeks, even months, looking for the perfect place to stay and the tickets to get them there. Fraudsters use this to lure users that have grown tired of searching for great deals. After two years of flight restrictions imposed by the pandemic, travelling is back. But so are travel scams - with intensified scamming activity targeting users through fake booking and rental services. Such attacks are totally preventable, which is why we urge users to be skeptical about overly generous offers. If an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is," said Mikhail Sytnik, security expert at Kaspersky.

Social engineering - sometimes called 'human hacking' scams - are used in many ways, and for different purposes, to lure unwary users to the site and trick them into entering personal information. The latter often in-



Such attacks are totally preventable, which is why we urge users to be skeptical about overly generous offers. If an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is

MIKHAIL SYTNIK

cludes financial credentials such as bank account passwords or payment card details, or login details for social media accounts. 'In the wrong hands, this opens doors to various malicious operations, such as money being stolen or corporate networks being compromised,' the company said.

Phishing is a strong attack method because it is done at a large scale. By sending massive waves of emails under the name of legitimate institutions or promoting fake pages, malicious users increase their chances of success in their hunt for innocent people's credentials.

Phishers deploy a variety of tricks to bypass e-mail blocking and lure as many users as possible to their fraudulent sites. A common technique is HTML attachments with partially or fully obfuscated code. HTML files allow attackers to use scripts, obfuscate malicious content to make it harder to detect, and send phishing pages as attachments instead of links.

Sohar Aluminium to provide medical equipment in Musandam



(Supplied photo)

Khasab - Sohar Aluminium signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Directorate General of Health Services in Musandam Governorate on Thursday for the supply of medical equipment in the governorate's health establishments.

The signing was held under the auspices of H E Sayyid Ibrahim Said al Busaidi, Governor of Musandam.

The MoU was signed by Dr Nawal Ibrahim al Shuhi, acting director general of Health Services in Musandam, and Ahmed Mohammed al Kharousi, general manager of HR and Corporate Affairs in Sohar Aluminium.

Addressing the gathering at the signing ceremony, H E Busaidi praised Sohar Aluminium's contributions and the role it plays in supporting various sectors, including health, education and environment.

Dr Nawal emphasised the importance of partnerships between the public and private sectors in serving the public interest. "Provision of these devices will be a real addition to health services in Musandam."

minium's contributions and the role it plays in supporting various sectors, including health, education and environment.

Dr Nawal emphasised the importance of partnerships between the public and private sectors in serving the public interest. "Provision of these devices will be a real addition to health services in Musandam."

OQ signs agreement to provide medical equipment for persons with disabilities

Muscat - Integrated energy group OQ has signed an agreement with Omani Association for Persons with Disabilities to purchase medical equipment for those with motor disability.

The agreement was signed by Maryam al Shaibani, vice-president for IT, Technology and Digital Transformation, and acting vice-president of Corporate Identity at OQ, and Haider bin Muhammad Jawad al Lawati, vice-chairman of Omani Association for Persons with Disabilities.

Commenting on the agreement, Maryam said, "OQ is proud of its continuous contributions in supporting NGOs that provide exceptional services to persons with disabilities to inte-



grate these groups into society and to empower them to lead a better life. This support also aims to alleviate the suffering of people dealing with such disabilities by providing medical supplies and assistance that help them to

lead a better life."

She added that the provision of such equipment to the association's beneficiaries will enable them to enhance productivity, which will ultimately have a direct and indi-

rect benefit on society.

"While we at OQ aim through such initiatives to empower persons with disabilities and enhance their contribution, we call upon all institutions to extend the required support to this important section of our society."

She informed that OQ pays close attention to social aspects within the framework of its social investment programme.

On his part, Lawati expressed his gratitude for OQ's assistance to the association. He also pointed out the importance of the support in helping this section of society overcome disabilities, and called on all to join hands and contribute to supporting associations that care for people with special needs.

Over 100 media professionals to attend Gulf Sports Media Forum in Salalah

Salalah - An introductory meeting on the Gulf Sports Media Forum was held at Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah on Saturday.

The forum will be organised by Omani Journalists Association (OJA) in Salalah, represented by its Sports Media Committee, later in August.

Salem bin Hamad al Jahwari, vice-chairman of the Board of Di-

rectors of OJA, informed that the conference will be attended by over 100 media professionals from Gulf and Arab countries. "It will include seminars, presentation of working papers and dialogue sessions on sports."

A photography exhibition and an exhibition match featuring Omani football stars held be held on the sidelines of the forum.

"In addition, participating delegates will be taken to cultural

sites and landmarks in the governorate," Jahwari said.

The introductory meeting was attended by Muhammad bin Saeed al Shasha'i, Director General of Directorate General of Information in Dhofar, Muhammad bin Mubarak al Araimi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of OJA, several media professionals and representatives of Oman Football Association.

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.18am
Sunrise	5.39am
Duhr	12.18pm
Asr	3.42pm
Maghrib	6.51pm
Isha	8.08pm

SEND YOUR
COMMENTS TO

[muscatdaily@
apexmedia.co.om](mailto:muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om)

DANUBE GROUP

REQUIRED URGENTLY

We are looking to hire below experienced Male & Female staffs for our building material division.

- Asst. Manager - HR. - 1
- Asst. Manager Audit - 1
- Outdoor Sales Executive - 3 (Female)
- Outdoor Sales Executive - 4 (Male)

Outdoor Sales Executive (Plywood & Timber/ Tiles /Sanitary Ware/Hardware tools)

- With 3 - 5 years' experience in the same field, with good communications skills & Computer literate
- Must possess Bachelor's & Degree holder.
- Candidate should be aggressive and result oriented with ability to close deals/sales.
- Should have excellent communication and presentation skills
- Candidates must possess NOC from the existing Sponsor

Candidates who meet the above-mentioned criteria may apply along with their detailed CV and recent passport-size photograph to: hroman@aldanube.com

Profits of Oman's listed firms increase to RO388mn in H1

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Total net profits of companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) increased by 4.6 per cent to RO388.7mn in the first half of 2022 compared to RO371.6mn combined profits recorded in the corresponding period of 2021.

Recently announced financial results of Oman's public shareholding companies showed that most of the firms reported improved financial performance this year.

As many as 74 companies made profits while 24 companies recorded net losses for the January - June period of 2022, according to a report published by Oman News Agency on Saturday.

The data indicated that five companies moved from losses (in 2021) to profits this year and another five moved from profits (in 2021) to losses in the first half of 2022.

Among all the listed entities, Bank Muscat reported the biggest profit of RO99.2mn for the first half of 2022, accounting for more than 25 per cent of total profits of the listed companies at MSX.

Omantel came at second place after recording a net profit of RO37.3mn, followed by National Bank of Oman at RO22.1mn net profit and Sohar International Bank at RO18.4mn



Among listed firms, Bank Muscat reported the biggest profit of RO99.2mn for the first half of 2022, accounting for more than 25 per cent of total profits of the listed companies at MSX

net profit.

In terms of losses, Raysut Cement Company recorded the highest loss in the first half of this year at RO2.6mn.

Financial sector companies recorded a growth of 7 per cent in combined net profits for the first six months of 2022 while profits of services sector firms

grew by 11 on year-on-year basis, according to a research report from U-Capital.

'The largest improvement in combined net profits within the financial sector was witnessed by the banking sub-sector (10 per cent year-on-year growth). The banking and leasing sub-sectors saw continued recovery in their combined net profits on the back of lower provision expenses this year as compared to last year, further supported by rise in operating income of most

banks,' the report said.

The insurance sub-sector, however, continued to remain under pressure.

The combined net profits of insurance sub-sector fell by 34 per cent year-on-year for the first half of 2022.

Industrial sector also saw an year-on-year decline of 28 per cent in combined net profits, largely due to a significant drop in profits of food and beverage, engineering and construction companies.



Over 620mn barrels of Oman crude traded in first half of 2022: DME

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) announced that more than 620mn barrels of Oman crude oil was traded at the exchange in the first half of 2022, reflecting the growing interest in Oman crude by regional oil producers and importers in Asia and the world.

'In the first half of this year, the exchange witnessed an 18 per cent increase in the trading volumes of Oman crude oil contract, reaching 361mn barrels compared to 296mn barrels for the same period in 2021,' DME said as reported by Oman News Agency.

DME said noted global oil prices and demand volumes witnessed sharp fluctuations during 2020 due to the pandemic. The oil prices, it added, returned to an upward trend at the beginning of 2022 as a result of increased demand and Russian's invasion of

Ukraine.

The exchange delivered 90mn barrels of Oman crude in the first half of 2022 and the average monthly delivery stood at 15mn barrels, an increase of 23 per cent over the first half of 2021.

Raid bin Khalifa al Salami, director general of the Dubai Mercantile Exchange, said that Oman crude oil prices witnessed a remarkable rise of 51.48 per cent between January 2021 and June 2022.

The rise in oil prices was due to continued recovery of markets, increase in demand in Asia and Russia-Ukraine conflict.

He added that the strong performance of Oman crude future contract reaffirms the importance of this benchmark in the oil markets in the Middle East and Asia.

'Oman crude plays a pivotal role in discovering oil prices and pricing more than 5mn barrels of oil per day,' Salami added.

Saudi Arabia records \$20bn surplus after oil price surge

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia said it had achieved a rare budget surplus of over US\$20bn in the second quarter of 2022, as oil revenues surged 90 per cent compared to a year ago.

Despite being among the world's top crude exporters and the largest Arab economy, Saudi Arabia has failed to balance its books since the 2014 oil price slump, forcing the Gulf state to borrow to make up for shortfalls.

In the second quarter of 2022, Saudi Arabia earned more than it spent, with a surplus of SAR78bn (US\$20.8bn), the Finance Ministry said. The surplus is largely due to oil revenues rising to more than SAR250bn, compared to around SAR132bn during the same period in 2021, a jump of 89 per cent.

Saudi Arabia has benefited



from both an economic bounce after restrictions imposed to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic were eased, and then again as oil prices surged following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In December, Saudi Arabia approved its 2022 budget projecting a surplus for the first time since oil prices slumped in 2014.

Economists had said the kingdom needed a crude price of around US\$80 a barrel to balance the budget.

Prices have exceeded US\$100

in recent months, though they have since fallen.

On Wednesday, the OPEC+ oil cartel, led by Saudi Arabia and Russia, decided to undertake a small production increase for September.

The cartel led by Saudi Arabia and Russia decided to raise production by 100,000 barrels per day for September, much lower than previous increases, according to a statement issued after a ministerial videoconference.

AFP

ahlibank's net profit rises 18.6% to RO15.8mn in first half of 2022

Muscat - ahlibank has augmented its successful first quarter financial performance with an impressive net profit of RO15.8mn for the first half of 2022, recording an increase of 18.6 per cent over the same period in 2021.

While the operating environment is gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels, Oman's banking industry also reported positive growth. ahlibank also substantiated its strong growth trajectory with stable key performance indicators, the bank said in a press release.

The bank recorded 7 per cent growth in total assets, amounting to RO3.046bn as of June 30, 2022 compared to the same period of last year. Its operating income rose by 13.3 per cent to RO44.72mn and operating ex-



Said Abdullah al Hatmi

penses increased by 17.3 per cent to RO19.32mn.

While ahlibank's customer deposits increased by 12.4 per cent to RO2.212bn, its net loans, advances, and financing witnessed a 9.1 per cent growth, amounting to RO2.494bn for the period ending June 30, 2022, over the corresponding period in 2021.

Attributing the bank's growth

to its steady focus on top-quality assets and effectively managed liquidity, Said Abdullah al Hatmi, CEO of ahlibank, said, "Our strength lies in our core competencies. We have, time and again, delivered what we promised and have maintained a consistent customer-centric approach to business. We are expecting to gain further traction following the mitigation of risks associated with the pandemic and the gradual recovery of local economic activity. In the coming days, our strategic perspective will help us strengthen our market position and validate our credentials to be the leading bank in the sultanate."

Adding further, he said, "While our financial performance for first half of 2022 reflects our strong reliance on innovative

products and services to stay on par with the global banking industry, our overall growth during the current year exemplifies our commitment to sustainable business practices."

"We will leverage the gradual easing of pressure on the operating environment to accentuate our vision of becoming a vibrant and innovative centre of banking for customers and for the community in which we operate. We will continue to monitor the elevated inflation levels and slowdown in various global economies, on account of global events. We believe innovation is the key to progress and we will continue investing our resources to exceed our customers' expectations with state-of-the-art products and services," Hatmi added.

India hikes interest rates to pre-pandemic level

Mumbai, India - India's central bank on Friday hiked interest rates for the third time in four months, as Asia's third-largest economy contends with a widening trade deficit and weakening currency.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised its key lending rate by 50 basis points to 5.40 per cent - a level last seen in August 2019 - three months after kicking off a monetary tightening cycle in May.

"Successive shocks to the global economy are taking their toll," RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said in a televised address, pointing to surging inflation and lower global growth.

"Disquietingly, globalisation of inflation is coinciding with deglobalisation of trade. The pan-

demic and the war have ignited tendencies towards greater fragmentation."

India bounced back strongly from the coronavirus pandemic with one of the world's fastest growth rates but is now grappling with rising costs as commodity prices remain elevated.

The International Monetary Fund last week slashed India's growth outlook for the ongoing financial year ending March 2023 to 7.4 per cent from the 8.2 per cent forecast in April.

A broad dollar rally in recent months has contributed to the Indian rupee depreciating sharply to below 80, its lowest level against the greenback on record. Das said the rupee has fared "much better" than other emerging market currencies and



The Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das (centre) speaks during a press conference at the RBI headquarters in Mumbai on Friday (AFP)

"moved in a relatively orderly fashion, depreciating 4.7 per cent against the US dollar" since April 1. He added that the Indian economy was "holding steady and progressing in an ocean of turbulence and uncertainty".

India's merchandise trade deficit widened to a record US\$31bn in July, compared to US\$10.6bn in the same month last year, provisional data released Tuesday showed.

Imports were more than twice as high as exports, led by petroleum products and coal.

India imports more than 80 per cent of its crude oil needs and the country's 1.4bn people have been hit with rising petrol costs.

Consumer inflation has consistently overshoot the central

bank's two-to-six percent target range in the first six months of the year, hitting an eight-year high of 7.79 per cent in April, before cooling to 7.01 per cent in June.

The RBI retained its growth forecast at 7.2 per cent for the 2022-23 financial year and retained its inflation forecast at 6.7 per cent.

Aggressive rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve have further exacerbated outflows, with foreign investors withdrawing a net US\$30bn from debt and equity in the first half of 2022.

India's benchmark Sensex index erased early losses to trade 0.56 per cent higher on Friday following the interest rate decision.

AFP

MARKET ANALYSIS - OMAN

MSX posts 3% weekly gains on improved outlook

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recorded nearly three per cent gains last week as improved economic outlook and second quarter financial results boosted investor sentiments.

MSX30 Index ended the week higher by 2.98 per cent supported by gains in all sectoral indices. Financial Index rose 1.45 per cent during the week, while Services Index and MSX Shariah Index gained 3.56 per cent and 0.47 per cent, respectively. The Industrial Index closed flat for the week.

Local news

►Oman's infrastructure investment fund Rakiza, a Muscat-based investment fund managed jointly by Oman Infrastructure Investment Management Co (OIM) and London-based Equitix, announced a capital commitment of SAR1.125bn (equivalent to RO115mn) from the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF). Rakiza Fund is a private equity fund and an investor in infrastructure projects, targeting investment in the Sultanate of Oman and Saudi Arabia. The fund focuses on renewable energy, electricity, water and social services, communications, transport and logistics infrastructure sectors.

►S&P Global Ratings assigned Energy Development Oman (EDO) a 'BB-' long-term issuer rating with a stable outlook. In a

research update released on Wednesday, S&P said its business risk profile assessment for EDO is supported by company's access to sizeable reserves, leading domestic share of Omani hydrocarbon production, and low operating cost structure, all of which support cash flow visibility. S&P views positively EDO's access to sizeable reserves via concession agreements until 2044.

►Maha Energy, a Swedish international upstream oil and gas company, announced the signing of an agreement with Gulf Drilling Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of MB Petroleum Services Worldwide, for the drilling of a minimum of six wells in Block 70 onshore Oman. Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals had awarded the exploration and development rights for the concession Block 70 to Maha Energy in October 2020. 'The drilling rig, Gulf Drilling 109, is a 1,000hp kelly rig and is currently located in Adam. The rig will now be prepared for the campaign and expected mobilisation is in October 2022. The drilling programme will consist of a minimum of six wells on the Mafraq structure,' Maha Energy said in a statement on its website.

►TotalEnergies and Veolia signed an agreement to start the construction of the largest solar photovoltaic (PV) sys-



tems providing power for a desalination plant in Oman, in the city of Sur. The power plant will be located on the site of the Sharqiyah Desalination plant, which is a reference in Oman and the Gulf region, supplying drinking water to more than 600,000 inhabitants of Al Sharqiyah region. This 17-megawatt peak (MWp) solar project will be the first of its kind to be installed in the region. It produces annually over 30,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) of green electricity, or more than a third of the desalination plant's daily consumption, enabling it to avoid close to 300,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions. This is in line with Oman's National Energy Strategy to convert 30 per cent of its electricity use to renewable sources by 2030.

►Islamic banking sector in Oman, which comprises of two Islamic banks and five Islamic banking windows, continued its double-digit growth in 2021 despite the adverse economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the Central Bank of Oman (CBO). The apex bank noted in its Financial Stability Report 2022 that the total asset base of Islamic banking sector in Oman reached RO5.9bn (versus RO5.2bn in 2020) with a growth of 13.6 per cent. This corresponds to market share of 15.2 per cent of total banking sector assets, thereby gaining systemic significance as a sector, the central bank stated.

►The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is seeking to revitalise the tourism sector in the coming years as one of the targets

of economic diversification and one of the priorities of Oman Vision 2040. The ministry is currently working to encourage tourism investments, expand the opening of tourism representation offices and enhance tourism promotion plans in the target countries, markets most exported to tourists. In addition, the government seeks to give diplomatic missions an important role in promoting trade exchange and promoting the Sultanate of Oman as a tourist destination and an attractive investment destination. The sultanate aims to raise the tourism sector's contribution to GDP to 5 per cent by 2030.

►The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) approved a decision to extend the 50 per cent reduction of the fees for the services provided in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) to SMEs. The reduced fee will apply for the next five years until March 20, 2027, according to the decision published in the Official Gazette on August 1, 2022. The decision explained that the 50 per cent reduction of the fees for the services provided by OPAZ targets small and medium enterprises operating in special economic zones and free zones, affiliated with the authority.

economic growth hit nearly 12 per cent for the second quarter, led by a surging oil sector, the government's statistics agency said last week. The Middle East's largest economy has benefited from a spike in oil prices triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and has largely resisted appeals from Western countries to raise output in order to bring prices down. Growth in the second quarter was 11.8 per cent compared to the same period last year, according to initial estimates published by the General Authority for Statistics. 'This dynamic growth was mainly due to the increasing in oil activities by 23.1 per cent,' the agency said. Non-oil economic activities grew by 5.4 per cent and government services grew by 2.2 per cent compared to the second quarter of 2021, it said.

The UAE's non-oil private sector grew in July at its second-fastest pace this year as business activity picked up on strong demand and higher sales amid some discounting, a business survey showed on Wednesday. The seasonally adjusted S&P Global UAE Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 55.4 in July from 54.8 in June, slightly lower than May's 55.6 reading - the fastest pace of growth this year. It remained well above the series average since 2009 of 54.1. The output subindex rose to 62.5 from

June's 60.7, the joint-highest for the year and above the series average of 57.5.

The hospitality industry in the GCC region will see steady growth following its sharp post-pandemic recovery, with revenues expected to reach US\$34bn by 2026, according to investment banking firm Alpen Capital.

The latest report by the advisory firm said the industry will return to pre-pandemic levels in 2022, registering 74.8 per cent year-on-year growth, with revenues of US\$26.3bn. The industry will record a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.6 per cent for the coming years, as hospitality adjusts to steady growth following a rapid post-pandemic recovery, the report said. Upcoming events such as the FIFA World Cup in Qatar and easing of visa restrictions will contribute to the sector's growth, Alpen Capital said, as regional governments actively support business, leisure and entertainment development.

The largest markets, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, will have CAGR of 8 per cent and 5.5 per cent in hospitality sector, said Alpen Capital. Kuwait is expected to record a 7.1 per cent growth, Oman 6.3 per cent and Bahrain 2.9 per cent. Qatar's growth is expected to normalise after the World Cup at 4.3 per cent between 2023 and 2026.

By special arrangement with U Capital

World food prices drop after Ukraine grain pact: UN

Paris. France - World food prices fell sharply in July, partly thanks to a deal between Ukraine and Russia lifting a sea blockade that had stopped Ukrainian grain shipments, a UN agency said Friday.

Food prices soared to a record high in March after Russia invaded Ukraine, raising fears that the conflict between two of the world's breadbaskets would spark hunger in countries relying on their exports.

While prices remain high, they have now dropped for a fifth straight month, falling by 8.6 per cent in July compared to June, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization's food price index.

The index, which measures the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities, was still 13.1 per cent higher than in July 2021.

The biggest drop was for vegetable oil prices, which fell by 19.2 per cent between June and



Malta-flagged bulk carrier M/V Rojen vessel, carrying tonnes of corn, leaves the Ukrainian port of Chornomorsk, before heading to Teesport in the UK, on August 5 (AFP)

July to hit a 10-month low.

The cereal price index logged a monthly drop of 11.5 per cent, the FAO said.

The decline for cereals was led by a fall in world wheat prices, "partly in reaction to the agreement reached between Ukraine and the Russian Federation to unblock Ukraine's main Black Sea ports", the UN agency said. Shipments under last month's UN-brokered deal began last week, with a first vessel carrying corn leaving Ukraine for Lebanon on Monday.

Three more ships loaded with grain set sail on Friday, on their way to Britain, Ireland and Turkey.

"The decline in food commodity prices from very high levels is welcome, especially when seen from a food access viewpoint," FAO chief economist Maximo Torero said in a statement.

"However, many uncertainties remain," he said, pointing to high fertiliser prices, a "bleak global economic outlook" and currency movements.

AFP

EU plans to cut use of Russian gas comes into effect this week

Brussels, Belgium - A European Union plan to cut gas use and help Germany wean itself off dependency on Russia will come into effect early this week, the bloc's presidency said Friday.

Last week, EU member states agreed to reduce their use of gas by 15 per cent over the winter, with exceptions for some countries and despite opposition from Hungary.

Officials have since been working on the legal texts of the plan, which will be voluntary unless the member states agree to give the European Commission

emergency powers.

The EU's rotating presidency, held by the Czech Republic, announced Friday the Council of the European Union - which represents member states - had formally adopted the plan.

"The text will be published in the Official Journal at the beginning of next week and will enter into force one day after the publication," the presidency said.

A diplomatic source told AFP that publication would take place on Monday and the plan would come into effect on Tuesday.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine

in February the EU has imposed a series of economic sanctions packages on Moscow, including a partial ban on oil imports.

But Germany, the EU's economic powerhouse, is hugely dependent on Russian gas. Berlin takes a major share of the 40 per cent of EU gas imports that came from Russia last year.

Russian gas is therefore not subject to sanctions, but Moscow has dramatically cut supplies anyway, in what Brussels sees as an attempt to blackmail the EU for concessions.

AFP



OMAN REINSURANCE COMPANY S.A.O.C

Post Box 1968, Postal Code 114, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman, Telephone: 24397700 Fax: 2439 7777

Directors' Report

For the 6 months ended 30 Jun 2022

Dear Shareholder,

After Compliments, The Board of Directors is pleased to present the unaudited results of Oman Reinsurance Company S.A.O.G. ("Oman Re" or "the Company") for the six months period ended 30 June 2022.

The Financial Highlights for six months ending 30 June 2022 are summarized below:

	30 June 2022 OMR	30 June 2021 OMR
Gross Written Premium (GWP)	21,945,531	18,217,934
Underwriting results	1,589,873	1,215,678
Investment and other income	1,095,957	1,032,123
Expenditure - General and Admin Expenses	(1,518,069)	(1,348,292)
Net Profit after tax	673,062	668,642

Premium and underwriting performance

The company continued to increase its Gross Written Premium (GWP) during the first half of 2022. The GWP for the six months ending 30 June 2022 was OMR 21.9 million which is 20% higher than OMR 18.2 million figure for same period last year. Underwriting performance has been resilient achieving an underwriting profit of OMR 1.6 million for H1 2022 compared to OMR 1.2 million for H1 2021. The net claims ratio in the first half of 2022 was 58.3% lower than 60.6% of same period last year. Overall combined ratio was 96.2% which is lower than 97.6% of the same period last year.

General and Administrative Expenses

During H1 2022, the total expenditure amounted to OMR 1.5 million as against OMR 1.3 million for the same period last year. The general and admin expenses as a percentage of GWP is 6.9% for H1 2022 vs 7.4% for H1 2021.

Investment Income

The Investment and Other income for the quarter amounted to OMR 1.1 million vs OMR 1.0 million for the same period last year. The main reason for the lower growth in investment income is that the company did not do trading during the period of its bond portfolio mainly on account of higher market volatility in debt markets.

Net Profitability

The Company's net profit after tax for the first half of 2022 was OMR 673k compared to OMR 669k for the same period last year. The volatile currency environment resulted in a foreign exchange loss of OMR 354k for the period ending 30 June 2022 compared to OMR 111k for the period ending 30 June 2021. The higher foreign exchange loss was the main contributor for dampening the growth in net profit after tax.

Acknowledgements and Appreciation

The Directors of Oman Re wish to acknowledge the valuable guidance and assistance received from the Capital Market Authority, and the support received from clients and business partners. We look forward to receiving their continued support and encouragement.

The Directors also wish to extend their thanks and appreciation and express their gratitude for the continuing commitment and dedication of its strategic shareholders, the Executive Management and employees at all levels. The Directors are thankful to the esteemed shareholders for their support and the confidence placed in the Company and the Board.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, the Executive Management and the Staff Members, we are honoured to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said for his visionary leadership during these difficult times and we pray to the Almighty God to grant him every strength to continue to lead the Sultanate on the path of sustainable development.

Dr. Juma Bin Ali Al Juma

Chairman of the Board

Condensed interim statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022 (Expressed in Omani Rial)

	30 June 2022 RO (Un-audited)	31 December 2021 RO (Audited)
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	116,053	137,643
Intangible assets	134,755	163,913
Investment property	1,900,000	1,900,000
Investment property under development	184,592	184,592
Investments at fair value through other comprehensive income	21,556,508	19,788,547
Non-current portion of bank deposits	15,109,268	12,288,000
Deferred tax asset	252,904	-
Total non-current assets	39,254,080	34,462,695
Current assets		
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	654,438	576,615
Insurance and other receivables	10,516,545	8,360,858
Accrued income	17,856,442	11,870,135
Deferred policy acquisition costs	4,987,708	3,081,338
Reinsurers' share of insurance funds	29,744,873	29,898,209
Current portion of bank deposits	9,038,000	11,165,268
Cash and cash equivalents	3,738,944	5,556,548
Total current assets	76,536,950	70,509,971
Total assets	115,791,030	104,971,666
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserves		
Share capital	32,615,926	32,615,926
Legal reserve	478,729	478,729
Investment fair value reserve	(1,989,793)	(102,368)
Contingency reserve	4,216,914	4,216,914
Accumulated losses	(7,241,123)	(7,948,515)
Total capital and reserves	28,080,653	29,260,686
Non-current liabilities		
Employees' benefit liabilities	273,374	243,373
Deferred tax liability	-	68,358
Total non-current liabilities	273,374	311,731
Current liabilities		
Technical provisions	69,937,410	62,460,289
Reinsurers' premium and other payables	17,123,415	12,581,149
Deferred commission income	376,178	357,811
Total current liabilities	87,437,003	75,399,249
Total liabilities	87,710,377	75,710,980
Total equity and liabilities	115,791,030	104,971,666
Net assets per share	0.085	0.088

Condensed interim statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the six month period ended 30 June 2022 (un-audited)(Expressed in Omani Rial)

Income		
Gross premiums written	21,945,531	18,217,934
Net underwriting results	1,589,873	1,215,678
Investment and other income, net	1,095,957	1,032,123
	2,685,830	2,247,801
Expenses		
General and administrative expenses	(1,518,069)	(1,348,292)
Foreign exchange losses, net	(353,713)	(110,967)
	(1,871,782)	(1,459,259)
Net profit before tax for the period	814,048	788,542
Income tax expense	(140,986)	(119,900)
Net profit after tax for the period	673,062	668,642
Other comprehensive income:		
Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss:		
Valuation (losses)/gains on fair value through other comprehensive income on equity investments, net of deferred tax	(506,236)	299,720
Items that will or may be reclassified to profit or loss:		
Valuation losses on fair value through other comprehensive income on debt instruments, net of deferred tax	(1,346,859)	(179,321)
Other comprehensive (losses)/income for the period	(1,853,095)	120,399
Total comprehensive (loss)/income for the period	(1,180,033)	789,041
Earnings per share - basic and diluted	0.002	0.002

Ooredoo supports upcoming IoT projects in utilities sector

Continuing to transform Oman's digital landscape, Ooredoo recently joined Nama Holding at a pre-tendering roadshow for its upcoming Automated Meter Reading (AMR) project.

The event, which provided a high-level briefing on Nama Holding's upcoming plans for the project, marks the next step in a long-standing partnership between the two companies, which began in 2017.

As the only LoRaWAN network provider, Ooredoo said, it has provided its clients in the utilities sector with cutting-edge Internet of Things (IoT) technologies since 2016.

Securely hosted by Ooredoo's data centres and covering over 99 per cent of Oman's population with its multi technology access network, its IoT network enables AMR metres to send accurate meter readings digitally to energy and water suppliers, so there are no more estimated bills, Ooredoo stated.

The technology enables the development of smart applications and solutions, which can present historical, current and



predict future energy consumption.

Saied Mohammed al Lawati, Director of Business Marketing & ICT Solutions at Ooredoo, said, "AMR metres represent a technological breakthrough in utilities billing for both the consumer and Nama Holding. By using the system, Nama Holding is helping its customers to better understand their readings and make cost-effective changes to manage their utility bills."

"We're pleased to support



Saied Mohammed al Lawati

Nama Holding and the utilities sector service providers, and continue to fulfil our promise to

digitally empower the people of Oman in line with Oman's 2040 Vision," Lawati added.

A key partner in Oman's digital transformation, Ooredoo became the first telecommunications operator in Oman and the GCC to join the non-profit association LoRa Alliance, which enables it to collaborate with other IoT service providers, chip manufacturers, solution developers and other businesses serving the industry's requirement to push the technology forwards.

As well as its partnership with Nama Holding, in 2021 Ooredoo and its partners, the National Energy Center (NEC) and the Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Diam/Haya), successfully completed the installation of 330K IoT-enabled smart water meters, which now cover 50 per cent of Diam/Haya's customers.

Meanwhile, Ooredoo continues to reinforce its network and invest heavily in the latest solutions, helping position the country as an active player in IoT and digital innovation.



‘Lulu Exchange among top GCC exchange houses going digital’

In a major acknowledgment of the GCC region's move towards digitisation of financial services, Forbes Middle East on Friday unveiled its list of 'Top 5 GCC Exchange Houses Going Digital'.

The list shines the spotlight on remittance companies in the GCC region that have been driving digitisation of their services, in line with the efforts of their respective nations.

UAE based LuLu Exchange

and Al Ansari Exchange, Kuwait based Alfardan Exchange, and Oman based Purshottam Kanji Exchange are the top five companies in this list.

These companies are well established institutions, having provided high quality services to both retail consumers and businesses over several years. They have been in news recently for their aggressive digital push and

digital infrastructure investments.

Between them, these companies serve millions of customers in GCC, and have invested heavily in building state-of-the-art digital infrastructure to drive their next stage of growth.

The companies were evaluated by Forbes on the number of app downloads, number of users and annual volume of digitally conducted transactions.

Hyundai Motor announces export of XCIENT fuel cell trucks to Germany

Hyundai Motor Company announced the export of its XCIENT Fuel Cell heavy-duty trucks to Germany, the biggest commercial vehicle market in Europe.

Seven German companies in logistics, manufacturing and retail will put 27 XCIENT Fuel Cell trucks into fleet service with funding for eco-friendly commercial vehicles from Germany's Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport (BMDV).

"We are glad to now also officially enter the German commercial vehicle market with our heavy-duty fuel cell electric truck, the XCIENT Fuel Cell. Hyundai Motor, which is recognized as the leader in hydrogen fuel cell technology, will leverage this opportunity to expand our business into the wider European market by successfully supporting Germany's efforts to achieve its carbon neutral goals," said Mark Freymueller, Senior Vice President and Head of Commercial Vehicle Business Innovation of Hyundai Motor Company.

In August last year, BMDV rolled out its funding guidelines for commercial vehicles with alternative drive systems upon approval by the European



Commission. The funding is available for battery, fuel cell and (overhead line) hybrid electric vehicles, corresponding to refueling/charging infrastructure and related feasibility studies. BMDV will have a budget of €1.6bn available until 2024 to purchase eco-friendly commercial vehicles.

The aforementioned seven German companies initially applied for the funding with Hyundai's XCIENT Fuel Cells and successfully received approval from BMDV, again proving XCIENT Fuel Cell's product competitiveness.

Hyundai Hydrogen Mobility, a joint venture between Hyundai Motor Company and Swiss company H2 Energy, has also established Hyundai Hydrogen Mobility Germany GmbH (HHMG) to actively expand its entry into the hydrogen-powered commercial vehicle market in Germany. In order to establish a hydrogen ecosystem in the country, HHMG will operate local market sales and customer service as well as upfitter management in the market.

HHMG also plans to actively participate in the second funding programme.

XCIENT Fuel Cell specifications

The XCIENT Fuel Cell to be delivered is equipped with a 180KW hydrogen fuel cell system with two 90KW fuel cell stacks. The system's durability and the vehicle's overall fuel efficiency are tailored to the demands of commercial fleet customers. The 350KW e-motor with maximum torque of 2,237 Nm enables dynamic driving performance. XCIENT Fuel Cell's seven large hydrogen tanks offer a combined storage capacity of around 31kg of fuel, while a 72KWh-powered set of three batteries provides an additional source of power.

The maximum driving range is 400km per charge. Refueling a full tank of hydrogen takes about 8 to 20 minutes, depending on the ambient temperature.

Launched in 2020 by Hyundai Motor, XCIENT Fuel Cell is the world's first mass-produced hydrogen electric heavy-duty truck. The company has already deployed 47 units in Switzerland where they have accumulated more than 4mn kilometres in driving as of July 2022. The trucks are servicing 23 different customers in Switzerland.

Functional utility vehicle Renault Dokker which combines the best features of space, comfort, and dynamic performance is available on special offer, said Renault Oman.

Created to be exceedingly functional Renault Dokker is a harmonious and dynamic utility vehicle with great design. Offering easy loading, quick access to objects, side door, on-board multimedia system, and more Renault Dokker is super utility vehicle.

As part of the Renault Oman special scheme, customers who buy Renault Dokker can enjoy free registration, free periodic vehicle service package, three years/100000km manufacturer warranty, free AAA assistance card, and reference programme among others. Social media users who participate in the promotional campaign will also be eligible for attractive prizes.

The Renault promotion which has already begun will go on till August 19.

The unique offer boasts of a host of advantages for customers purchasing efficient Renault Dokker. All customers purchasing Renault Dokker from Suhail Bahwan Automobiles LLC will be eligible to participate in the campaign scheme. Vehicles purchased with commercial registration will not be eligible for the scheme. Vehicles bought for



taxi, driving school, ministries, fleet, and rent-a-car usage will not be eligible for this scheme.

Renault Dokker Van has everything to make owner's work easier: Cruise control with speed limiter, rear parking sensors, practical storage areas. To enhance efficiency, it provides owners with the 4x20W radio, audio streaming and Bluetooth hands-free calling.

Its 1.6MPI 85hp engine is efficient both in consumption and cost of usage. The engine allows for a very dynamic driving at a cost that is amongst the most frugal.

A spokesperson for Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles said, "Renault Dokker is a very efficient

and dynamic vehicle. This is the reason why it loved so much."

The 1.6L 85hp Euro 4 engine that powers Dokker shows consumption levels among the lowest in its class, without having to resort to expensive and complex technologies or sacrificing performance.

"It comes with one or two sliding side doors and the loading width stands at 703mm. The asymmetrical rear doors, meanwhile, open to a width of 1.08m which is especially useful. Its lashing rings on the floor holds fragile items perfectly in place. When fully removed, it frees up extra space, increasing the loading volume to 3.9m³."

Promo film for ‘The Rage on the Red Sea’ released before August 20 event

The build-up to Oleksandr Usyk's world heavyweight clash with Anthony Joshua in Saudi Arabia has moved up a gear with the release of the stunning cinematic promo for The Rage on the Red Sea.

The full two-minute film is available to view now at <https://youtu.be/OUXcvH9SWY8>.

Shot on location in both London and Jeddah, the film captures the epic intensity of the year's biggest fight, as well as the unique magic that Jeddah provides as its stunning backdrop.

Directed by Dominic O'Riordan, the promo brings to life the vision of Prince Khalid bin Abdulaziz, chairman of SCEE said, "The promo is stunning and we're delighted with how it reflects the excitement of the year's biggest fight taking place in our trans-forming country."

Speaking about the making of the film, Ravi Samani of Skill Challenge said, "The complexities of shooting the promo across multiple locations were overcome by incredible collaboration and hard work from everyone involved, including the local people in Jeddah who really bring the film to life."

The promo tells the story of



each fighter's preparations, both in their homelands and then Jeddah. The promo's conclusion is set in the city's magical Al-Balad

district located in its historic old town and features both fighters coming face-to-face, with over 300 local men and women looking on.

"It was an amazing experience to shoot in the historic location of Al-Balad for the face-off scene,"

said O'Riordan, whose CV includes films for the likes of adidas, BAFTA, Nike and Visa.

"It was really important to me that we give viewers a taste of Saudi culture that for so many, is still an unknown. I think you can tell in the film that both boxers fed off the awesome energy from the local people and their music and dancing."

O'Riordan added: "Part of what I love about being a director is getting the opportunity to shoot in locations I have never been before and Saudi Arabia has always been a place I have wanted to visit. I knew that this film deserved a very cinematic treatment to mirror the occasion of the fight being held in Jeddah."

Produced by Whisper and led by Exec Producer Jemma Goba, the film was shot over several locations in the UK and Jeddah and

employed some of the latest production technology and techniques. Working alongside local creative and production agencies, Whisper led a production crew of over 60.

To ensure cinematic quality, Whisper used Sony Venice cameras including very rare Panavision B series anamorphic lenses as well as a colorist to ensure the best possible picture quality.

The Rage on the Red Sea is the latest international sports event to take place in Saudi Arabia, which has recently emerged as one of the fastest transforming countries in world sport. Since the 'Clash on the Dunes' between Joshua and Andy Ruiz Jr in 2019, there has been a nearly 300 per cent surge in male and female boxers in the kingdom, with the number of boxing gyms growing from just seven to 59.

Saudi Maritime Congress to be held in September

The 3rd edition of Saudi Maritime Congress, one of the kingdom's largest gatherings of professionals from the maritime and logistics industry unveils speakers for the event scheduled to take place in Dammam on September 28 and 29 this year.

The two-day conference programme will take place alongside an exhibition that will comprise a show floor of 50+ exhibitors, including global leaders and niche suppliers from the regional and global maritime and oil and gas industries. Speakers will give macro updates on regional industry performance. They will also share insights on topics of significance including the fuel

revolution and the role the region plays in future fuels, innovation in technology and its application regionally, the organisers stated.

Speakers will include industry heavyweights such as H E Omar Hariiri, President, Saudi Ports Authority (MAWANI); Eng Ahmed Ali Alsubaey, CEO, Bahri; Fahad M al Abdul Kareem Vice President of Industrial Services Saudi Aramco; Abdullah al Ahmari, President and CEO, IMI; Esben Poulson, Immediate Past Chairman, International Chamber of Shipping; Mark O'Neil, President, INTERMANAGER; Omar N Omar, Partner, Head of Transport and Logistics - UAE, Al Tamimi & Co; Abdulaziz Sabri, President,



Chris Hayman of Seatrade

Bahri Ship Management; Eng Essam M Alammari, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the IMO; Lois K. Zabrocky, CEO, International Seaways; among others.

Chris Hayman, chairman of



Chris Morley of Maritime Events

Seatrade said, "The Saudi Maritime Congress 2022 will provide a platform for global leaders and stakeholders from the shipping, ports, ship construction, integrated logistics and offshore marine sectors."

"Our aim is to unite professionals from these key industries that are integral to the economic progress of nations, while also spotlighting key investment and cooperation opportunities within the kingdom. We also hope to highlight the industry's contribution to the Kingdom's Vision 2030 initiative and believe the event will play an important part in driving industry growth in Saudi Arabia and the GCC."

Chris Morley, Group Director - Maritime Events, Informa Markets said, "Saudi Maritime Congress is of strategic importance not only in the kingdom's NIDLP programme, but also to the maritime & logistics sector through

out the GCC. As an all-inclusive forum that ensures the exchange of ideas and experiences, we are committed to helping the sector achieve the goals and objectives of Saudi Vision 2030.

"Through this year's edition, we hope to facilitate interactions between industry experts and government representatives to discuss the state of affairs in the sector, thus accelerating the sustainable development of the industry."

As a knowledge-exchange platform, the Congress will also provide key insights on the rapidly progressing shipping and logistics sectors that are key economic pillars, paving the way

for economic diversification in the Kingdom.

Additionally, the two-day event will offer a platform for insightful discussions among regional and international stakeholders and decision-makers. Some of the key subjects that will be highlighted include logistics innovation and investment both inside the Kingdom and regionally, offshore marine industry & its focus and future, training and education, and the industry's rebound following the global impact of the Pandemic.

Experts will also highlight the updates on the Vision 2030 plan and the progress of key Vision 2030 objectives, beside others.

Bank Muscat's Visa Pre-Load Payment Card for Corporates

Bank Muscat, the leading financial institution in the sultanate, has announced the launch of its Visa Pre-Load Payment Card. Aimed at government and semi-government institutions, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and corporate customers, this new corporate card will give a boost to electronic payments and help reduce reliance on cash.

Bank Muscat's Visa Pre-Load Payment Card is a contactless card, which can be used for fast, convenient and secure transactions, the bank said. The card is accepted locally and internationally at Visa's 100mn+ merchant locations and is ideal for daily administrative expenses, employee travel expenses and online shopping as well as all types of operational expenses and payments thereby helping organisations to streamline their petty cash and cash expenses by enabling electronic record of all transactions, it added.

Some of the key features of this new card include the ability to withdraw cash up to 100 per cent of the card balance at any Bank Muscat ATM, a three-year validity, a maximum pre-load amount of RO50,000 with no requirement for a minimum balance. The card can be pre-loaded



through any of the bank's branches, ATMs and as well as Internet Banking. Bank Muscat's existing and new government, semi-government institutions, SMEs and corporate customers can apply for as many cards as they wish to have by visiting the nearest Bank Muscat branch and filling the Corporate Card application form.

On this occasion, Abdullah Tamman al Maashani, General Manager - Products, Bank Muscat, said: "We are delighted to launch this new Visa Pre-Load Payment Card for our corporate clients aligned to Bank Muscat's vision 'To serve you better, everyday'. This card offers government institutions, SME and corporates the ability to manage their cash

flow and ensures delivering fast, convenient and secure services."

Manish Gautam, Visa's Country Manager for Oman, said, "Our Visa Corporate solutions are an attractive proposition for businesses and governments looking to streamline expense reporting both easily and securely."

Ilham Murtaadha al Hamaid, General Manager - Corporate Banking added, "Bank Muscat is keen to leverage its strong digital and technology capabilities in playing a major role in government's initiatives of national importance. This is also something which is consistent with the goals of Oman Vision 2040. We would like to take this opportunity to invite all our corporate customers to enjoy the benefits."



Bentley announces record financial results for first half of 2022

Bentley Motors has announced encouraging financial results for the first six months of 2022, despite continued global economic uncertainty. While the outlook for the second half of the year remains challenging, the luxury British marque posted operating profits of €398mn, up 124 per cent on the same period last year, the automaker said. The half-yearly figures compare favourably to €389mn for the whole of 2021, the company's previous record year.

Turnover increased from €1.324bn during the first half of 2021 to €1.707bn, while revenue per car climbed from €186,000, to €213,000, largely due to increased levels of personalisation. No luxury brand now sells more

cars over €200,000 or €250,000 than Bentley. Return on sales also reached a record 23.3 per cent during the first six months of 2022, up from 13.4 per cent the previous year. The best-selling Bentayga luxury SUV claimed 40 per cent of total sales, with the latest Flying Spur sedan accounting for 27 per cent, and the Continental GT Grand Tourer recording 33 per cent.

The latest figures support Bentley's forward-looking Beyond100 strategy, as the British brand reinvents its entire product range to embrace an electrified future, achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. This includes a €3bn ten-year investment programme in future products and at the Pymms Lane factory in Crewe,

where all Bentley models are built.

"Despite the continued global economic instability, it is promising to see Bentley is showing financial consistency as we reinvent the company in line with our Beyond100 strategy and form a basis to withstand further external shocks," said Adrian Hallmark, Chairman and CEO of Bentley Motors. "In particular, a significant increase in demand and capitalisation of our Mulliner personalisation programme drove record return on sales, and continued global interest in the freshest model line in the luxury sector resulted in record high revenues. I would like to thank our hard-working colleagues for their continued efforts."

MADAYN ORGANISES SPORTS AND CULTURAL EVENT FOR EMPLOYEES



The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates 'Madayn' has organised sports and cultural event for its employees under the auspices of Hamad bin Hamoud al Qasabi, acting CEO of Madayn. The event, which was held at Middle East College in the Knowledge Oasis Muscat, included a variety of activities such as futsal and cultural competitions, football match for employees' children, a practical firefighting exercise, in addition to an awareness lecture on 'Public Safety at Workplace'



Al Batinah
Development & Investment Holding Co. SAOG

شركة الباطنة للتنمية والاستثمار القابضة ش.م.ع.ع.

Al Batinah Development & Investment Holding Co. SAOG

Board of Directors Report

Dear shareholders,

On behalf of the board of directors, I present the report of the Board of Directors and the unaudited financial statements for the six months ended June 30, 2022.

Financial performance of the parent company and the group:

The parent company's revenues for the six months ended June 30, 2022 amounted to RO 99,072 compared to RO 47,133 for the same period last year 2021. Despite the increase in revenues, the company's financial results were affected by unrealized losses as a result of the decrease in the market value of the portfolio's shares. The parent company incurred a net loss of RO 49,875 compared to a net profit of RO 119,718 for the same period last year 2021. The group also incurred a net loss after tax of RO 75,084 compared to a net profit of RO 174,191 for the same period last year.

The group's net shareholders' equity amounted to RO 2,317,355 and the net assets per share of 77 Baizas, compared to RO 2,500,551 83 Baizas respectively for the same period last year 2021.

Regarding the new project of the company, the registration procedures for the new subsidiary company, Al-Pharabi for Veterinary & Agricultural Medicines Industries LLC, to which the company contributes 65%, have been completed. The project's land has been allocated in the Industrial City of Buraimi on an area of 6,024 square meters, and the engineering plans for the project are currently being prepared.

Finally, I have the honors on behalf of the members of the Board of Directors and the shareholders to extend our deepest thanks and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haithem bin Tariq for his wise leadership and guidance and pray to God to keep Oman and its people in peace and prosperity. I would also like to thank the esteemed shareholders for their support and continued encouragement of the company and the Capital Market Authority, the banks and all the entities that the company deals with.

Best regards,

Salah Bin Hilal Al-Mawally
Chairman

Unaudited Consolidated and parent company statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022

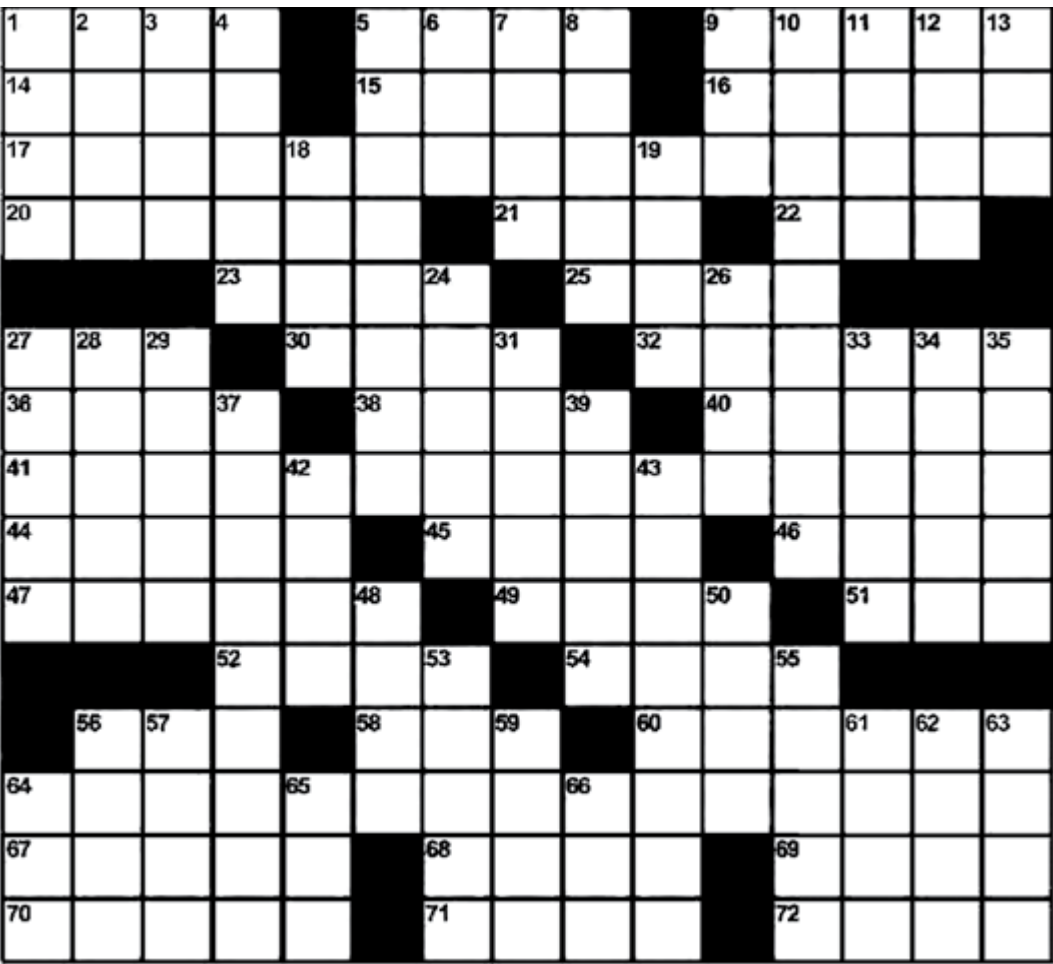
	Parent Company	Group
	As on 30 June 2022	As on 30 June 2021
	OMR	OMR
Non-Current Assets	1,612,326	1,562,417
Current Assets	538,797	680,271
Total Assets	2,151,123	2,242,688
Share Capital	3,000,000	3,000,000
Legal Reserve	195,657	212,450
Special Reserve	24,541	24,541
Retained (loss)/earnings	(1,092,517)	(941,384)
Investment fair value reserve	(205,462)	(216,027)
Non-Controlling Interest	-	(21,458)
Total Shareholders' equity	1,922,219	2,079,580
Total non-current liabilities	25,955	23,130
Total current liabilities	202,949	139,978
Total equity and liabilities	2,151,123	2,242,688

Unaudited Consolidated and Parent Company statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the six months ended 30 June 2022

	Parent company	Group
	Six months ended 30 June 2022	Six months ended 30 June 2021
	OMR	OMR
Net Investment income	14,271	175,365
Salaries and other staff costs	(28,199)	(24,268)
General and administrative exp.	(32,484)	(26,203)
Finance cost	(3,223)	(4,936)
Depreciations and Amortizations	(240)	(240)
Total expenses	(64,146)	(55,647)
Net profit before tax	(49,875)	(75,084)
Income tax expenses	-	-
Net profit after tax	(49,875)	(75,084)
Unrealized fair value gains / (Loss) on financial assets through other comprehensive income	(82,735)	(82,735)
Total comprehensive / (loss) income for the period	(132,610)	(157,819)
Net earnings per share	(0.002)	(0.003)

On request by any shareholder, the complete accounts either in English or Arabic will be sent by mail within 7 days of receipt of such request to P.O.Box 68 pc 117 al wadi al kabir, Muscat, sultanate of Oman tel. 24856658 , fax 24856698.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Moore of Hollywood
5) Vessels like Noah's
9) Made a blooper
14) Way short on rainfall
15) Passing or turning thing
16) Sycophant
17) Currency converter's output
20) Extensive property
21) Electrifying fish
22) Handyman's letters
23) Restrooms, informally
25) Prefix for "bell" or "found"
27) Biological eggs
30) Boyfriend
32) Fragrant fir
36) Like some charge cards
38) Bride's band
40) Aussie critter
41) Left-of-center pol
44) Rinse, as with a solvent
45)_ good example
46) Glacial ridge
47) Medical solution
49) South African currency
51) Discouraging words

52)_ d'etat
54) Russian ruler of old (Var.)
56) Infant no more
58) Pie _ mode
60) Lays to rest, as cremains
64) Post-hoc explanation
67) Respond to, as an opportunity
68) Land surrounded by water
69) Pueblo Indian
70) Not a soul
71) Snitched
72) Leave in, to an editor

DOWN

1) Truth alternative
2) Important times, historically
3) Fastball catcher
4) Worth a 10
5) Cosmetics ingredient
6) U.K. military branch
7) Bendable joint
8) Subj. taught in health class
9) Suffix of some ordinal numbers
10) Reason to slow down
11) Hindu noble
12) Overly caffeinated

13) Change the color of
18) Knife thrust
19) Word with "yacht" or "kennel"
24) They're often bil-lowed
26) Big shark
27) Human wolf, at times
28) Curtain fabric
29) There are tracks on it
31) Successfully anes-thetized
33) It's used in wrap-ups, clearly
34) Texas beer
35) Captures the king
37) What sleuthing is all about
39) Gain access to
42) Fix up again
43) Like big appetites
48)10jiao
50) Comedian Carvey
53) Braid
55) Babe and Baby
56) A shell of a snack
57) Football great Gra-ham
59) "Let's not forget ..."
61) Event in a prison movie
62) Slangy denial

63) Foul mood
64) Competed at Bel-mont
65) "The loneliest num-ber"
66) Afflicted

NOTE PAD

DOERS PRAT PLAN
ENSUE HAVE LIRE
COOLEDONESHEELS
TENET TABLET
SHE BOSH LEONE
KARMA SHELF WED
IDIOMS ARENA
COOPERSTOWN
TRUMP STOOLS
ABO TRUER ELMER
PAOLI SNOB III
ABLAZE GROAN
COOKEDBREAKFAST
HONE GEAR RATIO
ENGR EGGS ARENT

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

 **ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Almost anything turns out to be possible for you today, especially if you're in tune with your own energy. Go right ahead and tackle this new challenge. You're certainly able to rise above it all. And if you start by getting some clarity about the desired end results, so much the better. Find a trusted friend and talk things over if you need a fresh perspective, then take a deep breath and dive right in!

 **LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Just like Robin Hood, you have your own gang of merry rascals. Unlike the guy in tights, you're not stealing from the rich (or anyone else), because you're on a different kind of mission. Simply put, you all want to have as much fun as you can with as many people as you can find. You're the best at coming up with good times, so writing up your guest list is a piece of cake. Sherwood Forest isn't large enough to hold everyone!

 **SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21

You need to play nice today even if you know you're in the right. Take just a second to consider other perspectives before weighing in with the last word. A bit of thought can bring some surprising revelations about other people as well as your own motivations. Once you have that fresh point of view, you might dig up an answer that's good for everyone.

 **TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

It's easy for you to remake your outside (hair, shoes, clothes), but the work of making over your spirit is much more intense for you and in the end much more rewarding! If you've been wondering whether to take on a big self-improvement program, now is definitely the time to dive right in. And while you're at it, get a new haircut and some crazy shoes to complement the new you.

 **VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

If you've ever seen a dog chasing its tail, you know how funny confused obsession can be. For everyone but the obsessed, that is! You're a little like that with someone special right now, but you know exactly what's happening. It might be a new friendship or a new potential love, but you need to spend extra time with this person, and the feeling should be mutual. The sparks are flying like nothing you've seen before.

 **CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You tend to work best with people who share your values, so make sure to surround yourself with lots of like-minded peers to keep you on track. If you can simply keep your eyes down and your heart in the game, you can accomplish far more than you ever thought possible. It's also a great time to get something new off the ground, so start brainstorming right away with your people.

 **GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

If you can't get enough, don't worry. It looks like your supply is unlimited! In fact, with such huge piles of fun and thrills available, you ought to put out a general notice to your people to come on out and join you. No one can get a party going quite like you, and right now that talent is cranked up to a thousand by your hard-partying energy. Get the word out by any means necessary.

 **LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Don't say no today, especially if an especially charming person (you know the one) is making the request. This doesn't mean you should unthinkingly assent to all over-the-top adventures, but if they propose some wild and crazy fun that goes beyond your usual comfort zone (a little), there's no harm, right? If you're up for anything, you are sure to be surprised by how much you enjoy yourself.

 **AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Today begins with you feeling extra social and much more motivated to mix it up than usual. By later in the day, though, you're definitely in a more introspective kind of place. Try to spend the second half of the day in a quiet, calm space where you can find your center and spend some serious quality time with your own inner thoughts.

 **CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

A personal crisis is a tricky and persistent thing. It's kind of like a weed growing in an otherwise lovely and vibrant garden. You need to tear it out by the roots instead of pruning just a tiny bit of what you can see. Don't just put the blame on some outside phenomenon for making you feel restless or out of sorts. You need to go much deeper to discover its source. Then you can address the issue much more effectively.

 **SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Just sticking wax in your ears and lashing yourself to the mast might put you in good company, but it still can't keep you from hearing anything uncomfortable that you need to know. Avoiding the issue just makes more trouble than it's worth, for sure. So fight the urge to just shut down and try to take the news gracefully and with your intellect intact. That attitude alone can see you through anything.

 **PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Jetting between one pole and another can be kind of exciting at first, but it just starts to make you feel off-kilter in the end. There is a happy medium, and you've got to find it before too much time passes. Ask yourself what it is that makes you veer so steeply, and once you've got some answers, you should know just what to do next.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Where is the dangerous oval-shaped reef and island known as Banc du Geyser?

A. At the northern access to the Mozambique Channel
B. Off Nouméa
C. At the mouth of the Oyapok River in French Guiana
D. In the River Rhine

02. For which two films has Michael Caine won Oscars?

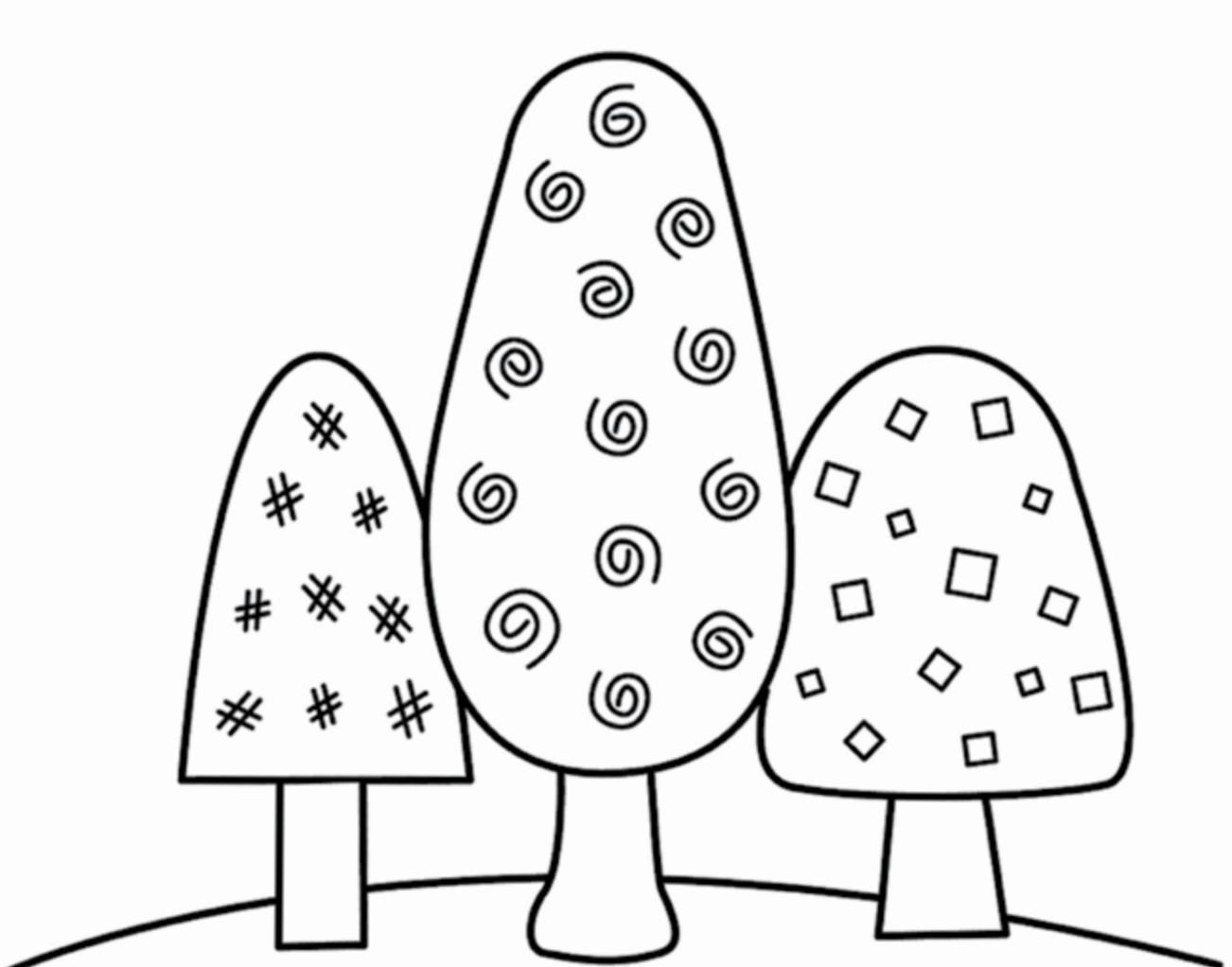
A. "Educating Rita" & "The Quiet American"
B. "Zulu" & "The Italian Job"
C. "Get Carter" & "The Ipcress File"
D. "The Cider House Rules" & "Hannah and Her Sisters"

03. Which of these sports has an arbitrator officially called an "umpire"?

A. Cricket
B. Rugby Union
C. Soccer
D. Boxing

Answers: 1.A 2.D 3.A

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

F	T	H	M
G	E	Qu	M
E	A	D	E
U	S	I	A

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

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

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Exhausted Gazans again under fire

Tested by repeated wars, they feel like they are living the same scenes again and again

Gaza, Palestinian Territories - With empty streets and drawn curtains, Gaza feels like a ghost town. Its residents - tested by repeated wars - feel like they are living the same scenes again and again.

Before Israel launched its 'pre-emptive' strikes on militants in the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian territory was enjoying a summer unlike any other in recent years.

Gaza's beaches, long deemed too polluted with waste water for swimmers, had been declared mostly usable again, allowing Palestinians swimmers and surfers to rediscover the joys of the sea.

All that came to an abrupt halt on Friday when Israel again bombed the territory, citing threats from Islamic Jihad fighters. "We were living in peace and suddenly the bombardment began," said 40-year-old Mohammed Hamami.

"Enough! Enough!" he exclaimed. "Each month or each year there is a war."

There have been four conflicts since 2007 between Israel and armed groups from Gaza.

The beach promenade, one of the impoverished and overcrowded territory's rare leisure spots, crowded less than 24 hours earlier, was desolate on Saturday.

Street vendors stayed home and cafes were closed.

Fifteen months after the last conflict between Israel and



People run for cover during Israeli aerial bombardment in Gaza City on Saturday (AFP)

This latest escalation brings back images of fear, anxiety and the feeling that we are all alone. It has become a habit for Palestinians in Gaza to prepare a survival bag, in case they have to flee their homes

DOUNIA ISMAIL

armed groups in the territory brought devastation to countless Gazans, Hamami said he

was 'surprised' that Israel had attacked again.

Twice in July Israeli jets had

struck Gaza after what the military said was rocket and rifle fire from the territory. But this time the military said it was preparing for a week-long operation.

The Jewish state has blockaded Gaza since 2007, the year Hamas Islamists took power in the territory.

'Fear, anxiety'

Israel's army said its latest campaign was targeting militant

sites and fighters, estimating that 15 combatants had been killed. Palestinian militants retaliated with rocket fire.

The Hamas-run health ministry has reported 13 deaths from Israeli fire including a five-year-old girl, Alaa Kaddum. Her father carried her at her funeral, with a wound on her forehead and a pink bow in her hair.

More than 110 other people have been wounded, the min-

istry said.

For Gazans, the long night and second day of Israeli strikes stirred familiar and unwelcome emotions.

"This latest escalation brings back images of fear, anxiety, and the feeling that we are all alone," said Dounia Ismail, a Gaza City resident.

The incessant explosions and air strikes had kept her up all night, she said.

"It has become a habit for Palestinians in Gaza to prepare a survival bag, which contains a few important things, like photos, documents and some money and medicine," in case they have to flee their homes, said Ismail.

"I hope this escalation won't turn into a bigger conflict and I hope the Egyptian mediation will restore calm"

In Jabalia, in Gaza's north, Fouad Farajallah inspected what remained of his home, hit by an Israeli strike on Friday.

The living room had turned into a mass of sheet metal and rubble, the fan dangling from the ceiling.

"I was sitting here on the sofa, with my wife and children, and suddenly it all fell on us," he said. "My wife broke her hand and my son was wounded by shrapnel."

Even when silence appears to return between bombardments, something else fills the air: the buzzing of Israeli drones.

AFP

Head of Amnesty Ukraine resigns

Kyiv, Ukraine - The head of Amnesty International's Ukraine office has resigned, accusing the rights organisation of parroting Kremlin propaganda in a controversial report that criticised the war-torn country's military response to Russia's invasion.

Amnesty sparked outrage in Ukraine when it released a report on Thursday accusing the military of endangering civilians by establishing bases in schools and hospitals, and launching counterattacks from heavily populated areas.

"If you don't live in a country invaded by occupiers who are tearing it to pieces, you probably don't understand what it's like to condemn an army of defenders," Amnesty's Oksana Pokalchuk said on social media, announcing her resignation late on Friday.

"And there are no words in any language that can convey this to someone who has not experienced this pain."

Pokalchuk said she had tried to warn Amnesty's senior leadership that the report was one-sided and failed to properly take into account the Ukrainian position, but she was ignored.

Amnesty says it contacted defence officials in Kyiv with its findings on July 29, but had not received a response by the time of publication - but Pokalchuk argued that this wasn't nearly enough notice.

"As a result, the organisation unintentionally put out a statement that sounded like support for Russian narratives. Striving to protect civilians, this research instead became a tool of Russian propaganda."

Amnesty listed incidents in which Ukrainian forces appeared to have exposed civilians to danger in 19 towns and villages in the Kharkiv, Donbas and Mykolaiv regions. "We have documented a pattern of Ukrainian forces putting civilians at risk and violating the laws of war when they operate in populated areas," Amnesty secretary general Agnes Callamard said.

AFP

Libyan armed groups clash in Tripoli: Media reports

Tripoli, Libya - Clashes between armed groups erupted overnight in Tripoli, according to local media reports, the latest violence to hit the Libyan capital.

An AFP journalist heard gunfire and explosions around 1am on Saturday (2300 GMT) in the city.

The fighting, with light and heavy weapons, occurred in the

El Jebes district in the city's south, media reports said.

Tensions have been rising for months in Libya as two prime ministers vie for power, raising fears of renewed conflict two years after a landmark truce ended a ruinous attempt by eastern military chief Khalifa Haftar to seize Tripoli by force.

Saturday's clashes were between armed groups loyal to

Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, head of the unity government based in Tripoli, and others following his rival Fathi Bashagha, named in February as prime minister by a parliament based in Libya's east after he made a pact with Haftar.

The fighting ended when another group called the 444 Brigade intervened to mediate, according to Libyan media.

There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Bashagha has failed in his attempts to oust Dbeibah, who has repeatedly asserted he will only hand over power to an elected government.

Tensions between armed groups loyal to the rival leaders have increased in recent months in Tripoli. On July 22, fighting in the heart of the city

left 16 dead and about 50 wounded.

Dbeibah's Government of National Unity was appointed as part of a United Nations-backed peace process to end more than a decade of violence in the North African country.

The transitional government had a mandate to lead the country to elections last December, but they never took

place due to divisions over the rules and the presence of controversial candidates.

Libya has been gripped by insecurity since a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, leaving a power vacuum armed groups have been wrangling for years to fill.

AFP



Members of the Police and emergency services work on the Varazdin-Zagreb highway next to the wreckage of the bus after the accident that happened some 50km from Zagreb, on Saturday (AFP)

12 Polish pilgrims die in Croatia

Zagreb, Croatia - Twelve Polish pilgrims died on Saturday and 30 others were injured when a bus veered off a highway and crashed into a ditch in northern Croatia, authorities said.

"They were pilgrims heading for Medjugorje," a Catholic sanctuary in neighbouring Bosnia that draws hundreds of thousands of visitors every year, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki tweeted.

The death toll rose from 11 after one of the injured died in hospital, Interior Minister Davor Bozinovic told a press conference in the northern city of Varazdin.

Eighteen of the 30 hurt, who were all taken to hospitals in the area, were in a serious condition, said Maja Grba Bujevic, head of Croatia's emergency services.

Sixteen emergency medical teams had been dispatched to the crash site.

"All the victims (are) Polish citizens," said Lukasz Jasina, a spokesperson for Poland's foreign ministry.

The bus was registered in Poland, the spokesperson told the TVN24 channel in Warsaw.

Polish Health Minister Adam Niedzielski and Deputy Foreign Minister Marcin Przydacz were expected to arrive in Croatia later

in the day. "A serious accident took place around 5:40am (0340 GMT). The bus deviated and fell into a ditch off the highway," police spokesman Marko Muric had told AFP.

The crash occurred about 60km from Zagreb.

Croatia is one of Europe's top tourist destinations, with millions flocking this summer to its stunning Adriatic coast.

About 580,000 Polish tourists visited Croatia between January and July this year.

In July, 2021, ten tourists from Kosovo died in a bus crash on a highway in eastern Croatia. AFP

Families of trapped miners pray for miracle

Agujita, Mexico - Relatives of 10 workers trapped in a flooded coal mine in northern Mexico clung to hope they were still alive on Friday, more than 48 hours after a cave-in sparked a major rescue operation.

Family members spent a second night waiting anxiously for news after the latest disaster to strike Mexico's main coal-producing region in Coahuila state.

"I feel desperate, not knowing what's happening and when I'll see him again," said Jesus Mireles Romo, whose father was among the missing. "But I have faith that it will turn out well, that they will all get out," he told AFP, his eyes red from crying.

The 24-year-old rushed to the mine in Agujita in the municipality of Sabinas with his two brothers on Wednesday to try to help the victims before the authorities took over, and has not left since.

"It's painful to see your children who don't lose hope of seeing their father again," said his mother Claudia Romo, 45.

Five miners managed to escape in the initial aftermath of the cave-in on Wednesday, but since then no survivors have been found.

More than 300 soldiers and other personnel joined the rescue effort unfolding about 1,130km north of Mexico City,



Relatives of miners are seen near the coal mine where ten miners are trapped after a collapse, in state of Coahuila, Mexico on Friday (AFP)

the government said.

'Working tirelessly'

Soldiers and emergency workers labored through the night under floodlights pumping out water from the mine to try to make it safe enough to enter.

Authorities said the three mine shafts descended 60 meters and the floodwater inside was 30 meters deep - slightly lower than the day before.

"It's essential to reduce the water level... to allow the safe entry of specialised search and

rescue personnel," civil defense national coordinator Laura Velazquez said. "We're working tirelessly to rescue the 10 trapped miners," she said.

Family members cried and comforted each other while hopes of finding survivors dimmed with each passing hour. "What we want is for them to retrieve the bodies," Angelica Montelongo said with a sad and tired look, before summoning up new hope that her brother Jaime would be rescued.

"But hey, God willing, right?"

You have to have faith that they're alive," she said.

Miners and their relatives painted a picture of a precarious profession fraught with risks due to lax safety standards.

"When everything's fine, you don't think about the danger, but when things happen you think about quitting," said Luis Armando Ontiveros.

However, looking for a new job does not seem like a viable option for the 48-year-old, whose father taught him to dig for coal at an early age.

Besides, the father-of-three said he needed the monthly salary equivalent to about US\$500 - roughly twice the minimum wage - to pay for his children's education so they do not have to follow in his footsteps.

Crudely constructed mines like the one that collapsed lack concrete reinforcements to protect workers from a cave-in, engineering expert Guillermo Iglesias said.

The miners 'dig a shaft two meters in circumference and keep digging until they reach a small layer of coal,' he told local radio. The only thing supporting the surrounding earth is usually a large plastic tube through which the workers enter, he added.

AFP

Nuclear weapons a ‘loaded gun’, UN chief warns in Hiroshima

Hiroshima, Japan - ‘Humanity is playing with a loaded gun’ as crises with the potential for nuclear disaster proliferate worldwide, UN head Antonio Guterres said in Hiroshima on Saturday, the 77th anniversary of the first atomic bomb attack.

At an annual memorial, Guterres warned of the risk posed by crises in Ukraine, the Middle East and the Korean peninsula as he described the horrors endured by the Japanese city. “Tens of thousands of people were killed in this city in the blink of an eye. Women, children and men were incinerated in a hellish fire,” he said.

Survivors were ‘cursed with a radioactive legacy’ of cancer and other health problems. “We must ask: What have we learned from the mushroom cloud that swelled above this city?”

Around 140,000 people died when Hiroshima was bombed by the United States on August 6, 1945, a toll that includes those who perished after the blast from radiation exposure.

Today, ‘crises with grave nuclear undertones are spreading fast’, Guterres said, repeating warnings he made this week at a nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty conference in New York.

“Humanity is playing with a loaded gun.”

Before dawn, survivors and their relatives began to gather at Hiroshima’s Peace Memorial Park to pay tribute to the victims.

A silent prayer was held at 8.15am, the moment the bomb was dropped. The Russian ambassador was not invited to the ceremony but visited Hiroshima on Thursday to lay flowers at the memorial site. Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, President Vladimir Putin has made



UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres lays a wreath during the annual memorial ceremony at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima on Saturday (AFP)

thinly veiled threats hinting at a willingness to deploy tactical nuclear weapons.

In a speech on Saturday, Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui cited Leo Tolstoy, the Russian author of *War and Peace*, saying: “Never build your happiness on the misfortune of others, for only

Tens of thousands of people were killed in this city in the blink of an eye. We must ask: What we have learned from the mushroom cloud that swelled above this city? (Today), crises with grave nuclear undertones are spreading fast. Humanity is playing with a loaded gun

ANTONIO GUTERRES

in their happiness can you find your own.”

Three days after the Hiroshima bombing, Washington dropped a second atomic bomb on the Japanese port city of Nagasaki, killing about 74,000 people and leading to the end of World War II. There are now fewer than 119,000 officially recognised survivors of the two nuclear attacks, according to government statistics from March.

The United States remains the only country ever to have used nuclear weapons in conflict. But around 13,000 are now held in state arsenals worldwide, Guterres said. Saturday was the first time Guterres attended the Hiroshima memorial in person as UN chief, with a visit last year cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

AFP

Sri Lanka asks China to delay ship visit

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka has asked China to indefinitely delay a visit by a ship reported by Indian media to be a spy vessel, following intense pressure by the island’s northern neighbour, official sources said on Saturday.

The Yuan Wang 5 is en route from the Chinese port of Jiangyin and due in the Chinese-run Sri Lankan port of Hambantota on Thursday, according to analytics website MarineTraffic.

It is described as a research and survey vessel, but according to Indian broadcaster CNN-News18 is a dual-use spy ship, employed for space and satellite tracking and with specific usage in intercontinental ballistic missile launches.

Indian media reports said that New Delhi was worried the vessel would be used to spy on its activities and that it had lodged a complaint with Colombo.

India remains suspicious of China’s growing influence in its southern neighbour Sri Lanka. New Delhi’s foreign ministry last week said that it will closely monitor ‘any bearing on India’s security and economic interests and takes all necessary measures to safeguard them’.

In a written request, the Sri Lanka foreign ministry told the Chinese embassy in Colombo not to go ahead with the visit, an official involved in the process told AFP on Saturday.

“The ministry wishes to request that the arrival date of the vessel Yuan Wang 5 in Hambantota to be deferred until further consultations are made on this matter,” the request says.

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe assured political party leaders on Friday that the controversial visit will not go ahead as planned.

Earlier this week, Colombo appeared to brush aside Indian concerns, saying the vessel was coming only to refuel and replenish supplies and would not undertake any work in Sri Lankan waters.

AFP



A Springfield Armory 1911 Ronin handgun in 9mm is displayed during the National Rifle Association (NRA) meeting in Texas on May 28 (AFP)

Canada to impose ban on handgun import from Aug 19

Montreal, Canada - Canada announced on Friday it will ban the import of handguns beginning on August 19, as part of a wider proposed freeze in the wake of high-profile mass shootings in the United States.

Such guns ‘have one purpose and one purpose only and that is to kill people’, Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino told a press briefing announcing the move. Global Affairs Canada added in a statement that the ban for businesses and individuals was a temporary measure, set to ‘last until the national freeze comes into force’, which is expected to happen by the fall.

The announcement was welcomed by arms control group PolySeSouvient, which called it an ‘important and innovative measure that will undoubtedly slow the expansion of the Canadian handgun market pending the passage’ of the handgun freeze. But the Canadian Coalition for Firearm Rights called the move ‘yet another abuse of process for political reasons,’ saying the way to ensure public safety would be to ban illegal, not legal handgun imports.

“They are prohibiting licensed and vetted Canadians from legally owning handguns of which they have for over 100 years in Canada.”

Experts remain skeptical about the effectiveness of gun control measures taken by Ottawa, pointing to the smuggling of guns from the neighbouring United States as the real problem. On Wednesday, the Canada Border Services Agency announced two major seizures in western Canada of ‘ghost guns’.

AFP

Greece flies Russian money launderer to US: Lawyer

Athens, Greece - Greece has extradited a Russian money launderer to the US, hours after his release from a French jail, his lawyer said on Friday.

Zoe Konstantopoulou said Alexander Vinnik ‘was loaded onto a private plane to the US’ without being allowed to lodge an asylum request in Greece.

A source with knowledge of the case in France said Vinnik had been handed back to Greek authorities on Thursday afternoon, just weeks after the Court of Cassation in Paris confirmed his five-year sentence for money laundering.

Vinnik, 43, had been in French custody for the past two years following his extradition from Greece.

The father-of-two has been the subject of a long legal wrangle between Greece, France, Russia and the United States.

Vinnik’s French lawyer, Frederic Belot, said Washington appeared to have exerted significant pressure to secure his extradition.



This file photo shows Alexander Vinnik being escorted by police officers as he arrives at a courthouse in Thessaloniki on October 4, 2017 (AFP)

He said his client was sent to San Francisco via Boston and faces 55 years in prison in the US.

“After more than five years of litigation... Vinnik was extradited to the United States yesterday to be held accountable for operating BTC-e, a criminal cryptocurrency exchange, which laundered more than US\$4bn of criminal proceeds,” US Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Polite said in a Justice Department statement.

According to the indictment, BTC-e was a ‘significant cyber-crime and online money laundering entity’, which allowed users to trade with high levels of anonymity and ‘developed a customer base heavily reliant on criminal activity’. The Russian foreign ministry condemned the move, saying: ‘We are outraged by the Greek authorities’ unfriendly actions’ and pledging to stand up for Vinnik’s interests.

“Russian diplomats will do everything possible to protect his legitimate rights and interests.”

terday to be held accountable for operating BTC-e, a criminal cryptocurrency exchange, which laundered more than US\$4bn of criminal proceeds,’ US Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Polite said in a Justice Department statement.

According to the indictment, BTC-e was a ‘significant cyber-crime and online money laundering entity’, which allowed users to trade with high levels of anonymity and ‘developed a customer base heavily reliant on criminal activity’. The Russian foreign ministry condemned the move, saying: ‘We are outraged by the Greek authorities’ unfriendly actions’ and pledging to stand up for Vinnik’s interests.

“Russian diplomats will do everything possible to protect his legitimate rights and interests.”

Vinnik was originally arrested in July 2017 in the northern Greek tourist resort of Halkidiki. A long judicial procedure followed, with Greece sifting through the conflicting extradition requests before deciding in favour of France.

A French court in 2020 sentenced Vinnik to five years in prison for money laundering but cleared him of an original charge of defrauding nearly 200 people using ransomware. His sentence was confirmed by the French Court of Cassation in June.

A US indictment accuses Vinnik of 21 charges ranging from identity theft and facilitating drug trafficking to money laundering.

In Russia, he is wanted on lesser fraud charges involving just €9,500.

AFP

Going once, going twice... Pakistan lions up for auction

Lahore, Pakistan - A Pakistan zoo is auctioning off a dozen lions to private collectors next week to free up space for a pride that won’t stop growing.

Lahore Safari Zoo now has so many big cats that their lions and tigers have to take it in turns to access the paddocks, said Tanvir Ahmed Janjua, the zoo’s deputy director.

“Not only will we free up more space here, but our expenses for meat to feed them will also decrease,” he told AFP.

The zoo is currently home to 29 lions, and officials plan an auction on August 11 to sell 12 of them, aged between two and five years old.

There are also six resident



Visitors look at lions at the Lahore Safari Zoo in Lahore last week (AFP)

tigers and two jaguars.

Conservationists are opposed to the sale, with the environmental group WWF saying the creatures should be moved to other established zoos, or breeding females sterilised or given contraceptives.

“Animal exchanges and donations between zoos are a widely accepted practice,” the organisation’s Uzma Khan told AFP.

“Once an institution such as a zoo places a price tag on a wildlife species it is promoting trade - which is counterproductive to conservation,” she added.

Keeping lions, tigers and other exotic wildlife as pets is not uncommon in Pakistan, and is seen

as a status symbol.

Wealthy owners post images and video clips of their big cats on social media, and rent them out as props for movies and photoshoots.

Zoo officials have set a reserve of 150,000 Pakistan rupees (US\$700) per cat, but hope each will fetch around two million rupees.

Not just anyone can take part in the auction, however.

Janjua said buyers will have to be registered with provincial authorities and show they have the means to provide proper care and shelter for the creatures.

Zoo veterinary officer Muhammad Rizwan Khan told AFP an initial attempt last year to

auction lions fell through as potential buyers lacked the necessary documentation or licences.

Nouman Hassan, who fell foul of authorities in the past when he was filmed walking his pet tiger on a leash in Lahore, plans to take part.

“I will try to buy two to three lions for sure,” he told AFP, adding the auction was a good way to diversify the gene pool for private collectors who already owned a big cat.

With little legislation to safeguard animal welfare, zoos across Pakistan are notorious for their poor facilities, but the Lahore Safari Zoo is considered one of the best, set over 200 acres.

AFP

Taiwan accuses Beijing of simulating invasion on mainland as US-China relations nosedive

Relations between two superpowers nosedived following Pelosi's trip to China's self-ruled neighbour

Taipei, Taiwan - Taiwan accused the Chinese army of simulating an attack on its main island on Saturday, as Beijing continued its retaliation for US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's Taipei visit.

Relations between the two superpowers nosedived following Pelosi's trip to China's self-ruled neighbour - which it claims as its territory - prompting calls from the UN for an urgent de-escalation of tensions.

Beijing maintained some of its largest-ever military drills around Taiwan on Saturday - exercises aimed at practising a blockade and ultimate invasion of the island, analysts say. Taipei said it observed 'multiple batches' of Chinese planes and ships operating in the Taiwan Strait, some of which crossed a demarcation line that divides the strait, but which Beijing does not recognise.

"They were judged to be conducting a simulation of an attack



A woman walks past pro-Taiwan independence flags in Taipei on Saturday (AFP)

on Taiwan's main island," it said.

The democratic island's military mobilised air and land patrols and deployed land-based missile systems in response, the defence ministry said in a tweet.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, meeting with his Philip-

pine counterpart on Saturday, said Washington was 'determined to act responsibly' to avoid a major global crisis.

The environment became the latest victim of the geopolitical jousting a day earlier, as Beijing said it would withdraw from a se-

ries of talks and cooperation agreements with Washington - most notably on climate change and defence cooperation.

China should not hold talks on issues of global concern such as climate change 'hostage', Blinken said, as it 'doesn't punish the

United States, it punishes the world'. In a bid to show just how close China's forces have been getting to Taiwan's shores, Beijing's military overnight released a video of an air force pilot filming the island's coastline and mountains from his cockpit.

And the Eastern Command of the Chinese army shared a photo it said was taken of a warship patrolling in seas near Taiwan, the island's shoreline clearly visible in the background.

Taiwan's army released images on Saturday of one of its

frigates monitoring a Chinese ship within touching distance, and soldiers activating its land-based missile systems.

The drills have also seen Beijing fire ballistic missiles over Taiwan's capital, according to Chinese state media. Beijing said it would also hold a live-fire drill in a southern part of the Yellow Sea - located between China and the Korean peninsula - from Saturday until August 15.

Taiwan has remained defiant, insisting it will not be cowed by its 'evil neighbour'. The scale and intensity of China's drills have triggered outrage in the United States and other democracies, with the White House summoning China's ambassador to Washington to rebuke him over Beijing's actions.

Blinken and the foreign ministers of Japan and Australia issued a joint statement calling on China to halt the exercises after meeting on the sidelines of an Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Cambodia.

Beijing's decision to withdraw from hard-won cooperation on climate change has now sparked wider fears about the future of the planet. It's 'impossible to address the climate emergency if the world's number one and number two economies and emitters are not taking action', Alden Meyer, a senior associate at E3G, a climate-focused think tank, told AFP.

AFP

UK boy dies after life support stopped at end of long legal battle

London, UK - A London hospital on Saturday withdrew life support for 12-year-old British boy Archie Battersbee after his parents lost a long, emotive and divisive legal battle.

Archie's mother, Hollie Dance, said her son passed away just over two hours after the artificial ventilation was stopped. "Such a beautiful little boy. He fought right until the very end," she told reporters, sobbing, outside the Royal London Hospital.

"I'm the proudest mum in the world," Dance said, after spending the night at his bedside with other relatives.

One of these, Ella Carter, denounced Archie's final moments as 'barbaric', however. She said that after his ventilation was switched off, 'he went completely blue'. "There is absolutely nothing dignified about watching a family member or a child suffocate," she said.

Dance found Archie unconscious at home in April with signs he had placed a cord around his neck, possibly after taking part in an online asphyxiation challenge. The hospital trust's chief medical officer, Alastair Chesser, said in a statement that 'Archie died after treatment was withdrawn in line with court rulings about his best interests'.

Chesser thanked the medical staff who cared for Archie, saying they 'provided high quality care with extraordinary compassion over several months in often trying and distressing circumstances'.

At the entrance to the hospital in east London, well-wishers left flowers and cards, and lit candles in the shape of the letter 'A'.

"My boy is 12, the same age as Archie, and this just puts things in perspective," Shelley Elias, 43, said after leaving her own offerings at the site earlier on Saturday. "I did not know what to write because there are no words that will take the pain away," she said.

A judge in June agreed with doctors that Archie was 'brainstem dead', allowing life support to be discontinued, but the family fought through the courts to overturn that.

Arguing that Archie could benefit from treatment in Italy or Japan, they took their case all the way to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, which this week declined to intervene.

The parents also lost a last-ditch legal bid to have Archie transferred to a hospice for his final hours.

"All legal routes have been exhausted," a spokesman for the campaign group Christian Concern, which has been supporting the family, said late on Friday.

The case is the latest in a series that have pitted parents against Britain's legal and healthcare systems.

The involvement of groups such as Christian Concern in support of desperate parents has drawn criticism for prolonging the pain of all concerned. Such groups are often working to their own agendas, according to Dominic Wilkinson, professor of medical ethics at the University of Oxford.

"They may have different political or other views, (and) have reason to wish to tell the parents things that may not be accurate," he said on Sky.

AFP

Biden's cornerstone bill back before Senate

Washington, US - After 18 months, a possible victory for Joe Biden's social and climate reform legislation seems within reach: Congress on Saturday will begin debating a revised version of the US President's cornerstone bill, the fruit of numerous compromises with those on his party's right.

Biden, who took office promising big reforms, is calling the bill 'a gamechanger for working families'. The legislation - officially the Inflation Reduction Act - includes US\$370bn towards ambitious climate goals and US\$64bn for health care.

That would make it the largest investment yet in clean energy by the United States, something that Biden has called 'historic'.

Sweetening the deal

Despite yearly fires and deadly

Biden, who took office promising big reforms, is calling the bill 'a gamechanger for working families'. The legislation includes US\$370bn towards climate goals and US\$64bn for healthcare



US President Joe Biden (AFP)

flooding in parts of the country, the climate crisis does not register high on the average household's list of concerns, falling below issues like inflation or unemployment.

To garner support for their climate initiatives, Democrats sweetened the legislation with tax credits for producers and consumers of wind, solar and

nuclear power. Funding would additionally be allocated towards protecting forests from the increasingly extreme wildfire seasons that have ravaged the US West in recent years, a phenomenon directly linked to climate change.

Tackling drug prices

The bill additionally tackles ex-

orbitant drug prices for medication such as insulin, in an attempt to partially ease the immense inequality that exists in US access to health care.

"The anguish of people not being able to pay for medicines that may save their lives will be greatly reduced," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said.

One of the major reforms in the bill would, for example, force pharmaceutical companies to offer rebates for certain drugs if the prices are rising faster than inflation.

The cost of some medication in the United States can be up to ten times more expensive than in other wealthy nations.

The bill also aims to reduce the federal deficit via a minimum corporate tax of 15 per cent for all companies with profits exceeding one billion dollars.

'Defeat this bill'

The funding is popular with Americans, according to several polls, but has been strongly denounced by Republicans, who say Biden will stoke record-breaking inflation.

"We're going to do everything we can to defeat this bill," Republican Senator John Thune promised on Friday.

But Republicans' tools to block the legislation are limited: Democrats can pass it without any votes from across the aisle.

The Republicans could, however, try to slow down the legislative process by presenting amendments during debate.

The Senate is expected to vote on the bill early next week. After that, it will head to the House of Representatives, where Democrats have a narrow majority, for a vote there.

AFP

Kenya candidates make final bid for votes

Nairobi, Kenya - Flanked by cheering crowds, the frontrunners in Kenya's presidential election sought to make their final push for votes on Saturday under tight security, capping months of frenetic campaigning ahead of the August 9 polls.

Deputy President William Ruto and Raila Odinga, a veteran opposition leader now backed by the ruling party, are fighting for the chance to lead the East African powerhouse as it grapples with a cost-of-living crisis.

Previous polls have been marred by violence and continue to cast a dark shadow over the country, where 22.1mn voters will now choose the next president, as well as senators, governors, lawmakers, women representatives and some 1,500 county officials. The battle for votes has been dominated by mud-slinging, tit-for-tat claims of rigging and a freebie bonanza for supporters,



Presidential candidate William Ruto gestures as he arrives at the rally at the Nyayo National Stadium in Nairobi on Saturday (AFP)

who have been showered with umbrellas, groceries and cash for attending rallies.

After criss-crossing the vast country in recent months, the two candidates staged their final offensive in the capital Nairobi, with Ruto holding a rally at the 30,000-seat Nyayo National Stadium and Odinga campaign-

ing at Kasarani Stadium, which seats 60,000.

Lawyers David Mwaure and George Wajackoyah - an eccentric former spy who wants to legalise marijuana - are also in the fray.

The bitterly fought race has sparked speculation Kenya may see its first presidential run-

off, with many worried that a challenge to the result could lead to street violence.

A wealthy businessman with a rags-to-riches background and a shadowy reputation, Ruto, 55, was long expected to be President Uhuru Kenyatta's successor, but lost ground when his boss - who cannot run again - joined hands with longtime rival Odinga in 2018.

Kenyatta's endorsement has given Odinga, 77, access to the ruling Jubilee party's powerful election machinery, but has also dealt a blow to the former political prisoner's anti-establishment credentials.

Nevertheless, some analysts believe that Odinga will emerge the winner in a close race, with Oxford Economics highlighting the fact that he has the backing of 'several influential political leaders', including Kenyatta.

AFP

Gunmen kill six in central Nigeria: Police

Kano, Nigeria - Gunmen have killed six people, including two Indians, in Nigeria's Kogi state, police said on Saturday, with the region wracked by militant and gang violence.

The attackers opened fire on a bus in the industrial town of Ajaokuta late on Friday, killing two Indians, their two police escorts and two drivers, state police spokesman William Ovyé Aya said in a statement.

"Two expatriates, two company drivers and two police inspectors died in the exchange of fire," Aya said.

He described the gunmen as 'hoodlums', a term used by the police for criminals and militants.

Aya said the Indians were employees of a ceramics company in the town.

AFP



{ BASILICA CISTERN }

People stands next to the Medusa head in the Basilica Cistern while visiting the historic site in Istanbul

A mystical water underworld of past empires reopens to tourists in Istanbul

WATER underworld

The Basilica Cistern built for the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire in modern-day Istanbul has reopened after a five-year makeover that has transformed the water storage site into a refreshingly cool haven of underground sound and light.

Built in AD 542 near the Hagia Sophia mosque - then a cathedral - the basilica was once part of a network of more than 100 cisterns begun by the Romans and completed by the Byzantines and Ottomans to supply the city and its palaces with running water.

Known in Turkey as Yerebatan Sarnici (the cistern buried underground), its rows of water-steeped columns gained fame on the silver screen when they featured in a

scene from the 1963 James Bond film 'From Russia With Love'. But the city had to partially close the site for restoration in 2017 over fears the basilica could crumble if the slightest tremor of an earthquake were to jolt Istanbul.

It has been completely shut since the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, allowing workers to strengthen and clean up the 138m by 65m water palace, said Aysen Kaya, deputy head of the municipality's heritage department.

Steel rods were stretched across the corners of the 336 columns holding up the subterranean ceiling, arranged in 12 rows of 28. The pink brick walls have also been cleared of traces of past, less elegant renovation efforts.

"By scraping off the added layers of

cement, we brought the bricks up to date," said Kaya. She pointed to two pipes exposed by the latest work - one which brought water to the Hagia Sophia, and another to a palace that stood before the sultans built the Topkapi harem next door.

The Basilica Cistern could store nearly 80,000 litres of water, which cascaded down aqueducts from mountains 19km to the north.

The feat helped protect the Byzantines from summer drought.

Upside-down Medusa

The renovation also includes a lower footbridge above the water, bringing tourists within half a metre of its surface. And with improved lighting, the floor is now visible for the first time.



At the heart of the 1,500-year-old structure, a triumph of the art and techniques of its time, modern works have been inserted for extra effect, such as a grasping hand emerging from the water.

A translucent jellyfish artwork seems to almost dance between the columns, lit up by the rainbow of colours illuminating the dark hall with a gentle glow.

"We wanted a light installation that takes nothing away from the mystical atmosphere of the place," Kaya said. The queue of tourists snaking its way to the cistern's entrance under the hot Istanbul sun is a testament to the restoration's success.

"Absolutely incredible," said 40-year-old British visitor Nick Alatti, struggling to express his amazement in words. "I've never seen a place like this before, ever. And it will live with me for a very long time."

AFP

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

E-commerce Assistant Manager :
vndian female with 6 years
experience in ecommerce with
skills in cataloging, order
management, logistics, customer
service seeks suitable placement.

Contact : 96629331

Looking for an investor for
ceramics business which is
located in Musannah.
Contact-92942702

Pakistani man having experience
29 years in electrical supervisor,
Oil and Gas and have a driving
licences looking for a job.
Please contact on: 95196847



**Quality car rentals
at competitive prices.**

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease



**AUDIT,
ACCOUNTING,
VAT, TAXATION**

Contact:97239696/95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur
Kumar@gccaoman.com

BIRTHDAY WISHES



CARMELITA LLANES
07 August

"Happy and Blessed
Birthday Mama!
We Love you!"
Joel&Acel

SITUATION VACANT

BAHWAN METAL & GLASS ENGINEERING LLC

Required Sales Representative
with minimum 2 years of work
experience in sales. The
candidate should have 1 year
working experience in Oman.
Having a driving
license and a car is a must.

Please send your CV to
mazzan@bahwanmge.com
Tel: +96896666685

RENAISSANCE

ON THE CUTTING EDGE

RENAISSANCE IS BEYONCE'S FIRST ACT OF THREE, LEADING WITHOUT VISUALS IN A PROJECT SHE RECORDED OVER THE COURSE OF THREE YEARS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Beyonce, the paradigm-shifting music royal whose art has long established her as one of entertainment's seminal stars, last week released her hotly anticipated album *Renaissance*, a house-tinged dance record primed for its summer needle drop.

Six years after she shook the culture with her powerful visual album *Lemonade*, Beyonce's seventh solo studio work is a pulsating, sweaty collection of club tracks aimed at liberating a world consumed by ennui.

Eminently danceable and rife with nods to disco and EDM history - Queen Bey interpolates Donna Summer and Giorgio Moroder along with James Brown and the archetypal synth line from *Show Me Love*, the 1990s house smash by Robin S - the 16-song album is poised to reign over the season.

Prior to releasing her opus Beyonce had dropped *Break My Soul* to acclaim, setting the tone for her house revival that highlighted the Black, queer and working-class artists and communities who moulded the electronic dance genre, which first developed in Chicago in the 1980s.

The megastar has indicated that *Renaissance* is but the first act of three, in a project she said she recorded over the course of three years during the pandemic.

"Creating this album allowed me a place to dream and to find escape during a scary time for the world," Beyonce said on her website.

"It allowed me to feel free and adventurous in a time when little else was moving," she continued. "My intention was to create a safe place, a place without judgement. A place to be free of perfectionism and overthinking."

"A place to scream, release, feel freedom. It was a beautiful journey of exploration."

Expansive listening journey
In the weeks preceding the release of *Renaissance*, Beyonce teased the album with the steady stream of glossy, curated portraits of herself that over the past decade have become her signature. But though she's received wide praise for keeping the world of music videos on the cutting edge, Beyonce put out her latest record sans visuals (they're promised at a later date.)

In a statement, her label Parkwood Entertainment and Columbia Records lent insight into the decision, saying the artist "decided to lead without visuals giving fans the opportunity to be limitless in their expansive listening journey."

Beyonce's soaring vocals have their place on *Renaissance* but it's the rhythmic, urgent call to the dance floor that stands out, with a tapestry of influences paying homage to pioneers of funk, soul, rap, house and disco.

"*Unique/That's what you are/Stiletto's kicking vintage crystal off the bar*," she sings on *Alien Superstar*, which samples Right Said Fred's *I'm Too Sexy* in a sonic ode to voguing, the stylised house dance that emerged from the Black LGBTQ ballroom culture of the 1960s.

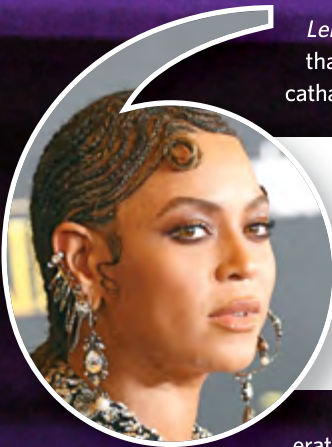
That song closes by sampling a speech from Barbara Ann Teer, who founded Harlem's National Black Theatre.

On *Virgo's Groove*, Beyonce gets raunchy with an unabashed sensual anthem, adding a titular nod to her star sign. The *Virgo* turns 41 on September 4.

Along with a smattering of deep house cuts as well as tributes to gospel, funk and soul, Beyonce's collaborators on *Renaissance* include Nile Rodgers, Skrillex, Nigerian singer Tems, Grace Jones, Pharrell and, of course, her rap mogul husband Jay-Z.

Album leaks, Beyhive stings
Beyonce has long bucked music's conventional wisdom, and is credited with popularising the surprise album drop.

She later made waves by releasing *Lemonade* - the groundbreaking work that chronicled her own emotional catharsis following infidelity within a gen-



My intention was to create a safe place, a place without judgement. A place to be free of perfectionism and overthinking

BEYONCE

erational and racial context - first on cable television, and limiting its streaming availability.

Since *Lemonade*, she's released *Homecoming*, a live album and film featuring footage from her mythic 2018 Coachella performance, as well as the critically acclaimed song *Black Parade* - which dropped amid mass protests ignited by the police murder of George Floyd.

That song saw the megastar, who first gained fame as a member of *Destiny's Child*, become the winningest woman ever at the Grammys with 28, and the gala's most decorated singer. But for all her cultural clout and an indisputable throne in music's pantheon, Beyonce's songs have not seen the same commercial dominance as other contemporary global stars - her last number one solo hit was 2008's *Single Ladies* (Put a Ring on It). That's poised to change with *Renaissance*.

The album's release saw Queen Bey return to music business as usual, deploying pre-sales, a lead single drop, a tracklist and polished social media fodder.

But it wasn't without a hitch - in the days prior to the official release, the album leaked online.

Last Friday, Bey thanked her hive for waiting, and added, "I appreciate you for calling out anyone that was trying to sneak into the club early. We are going to take our time and enjoy the music. I love you deep."

File photo taken on February 15, 2016
Beyonce speaks onstage during the 58th Annual Grammy music Awards in Los Angeles

Oman team all set for Islamic Solidarity Games in Konya

Konya, Turkey: Oman team arrived in Konya on Saturday to compete in the Islamic Solidarity Games to be held in the Turkish city from August 9 to 18.

Oman will field 30 athletes in the fifth edition of the Games, which will see 5,000 athletes representing 55 Islamic countries compete in 24 disciplines. Oman will compete in five sports - athletics, cycling, swimming, weightlifting and shooting.

Hisham bin Salem al Adwani is the delegating chief of Oman while Ishaq bin Abdullah al Balushi is the assistant of delegation chief.

Members of the Board of Directors Saif bin Sebaa al Rashidi and Abdullah bin Mohammad Ba Makhalf have also accompanied the team.

Besides presenting a grand arena to showcase the talent of the contestants, the Islamic Solidarity Games strengthen international relations between Islamic countries.

Oman athletes aim to win maximum medals from the five sports they compete.

Athletics

Oman athletics team will be in action from August 11 to 14. Khawla bint Rashid al Rawahi is the team manager while Mohammed bin Talib al Balushi is the team administrator.

Coaches Mohammed bin Abdullah al Hoti, Saeed bin Hamad al Harthi, Imad Mohammed Shawqi Siraj and physiotherapist Krasmir Petrov will look to get the best out of the squad which features Oman's top runner Barakat bin Mubarak al Harthi.

Ali bin Anwar al Balushi, Mohammed bin Hamdan al Sulaimani, Mohammed bin Obaid al Saadi, Ammar bin Yasir al Seifi, Hussein bin Mohsen al Farsi, Salem bin Saleh al Yarubi, Salem bin Abdullah al Rawahi, Fatek bin Abdul Ghafour Beit Jaaboub, Mubin bin Rashid al Kindi, and Mazoon bin Khalfan al Alawi are the other athletes.

Weightlifting

The weightlifting competitions are also scheduled from August 11 to 15. Oman team consists of coach Mazen Hamid al Badri and weightlifters Amer bin Salem al Khanjri and Elias bin Tamim al Busaidi.

Swimming

The swimming competitions will start on August 13 and will end on 17. Oman team will be headed by Said bin Masoud al Matroushi, coach Mohammed Moez bin Mustafa al Khiri, and swimmers Issa bin Samir al Adawi, Nasser bin Saif Al Kindi and Muhannad bin Younis Oulad Thani.

Shooting

Oman field a strong shooting squad. Mohammed bin Suleiman al Hatali is the team administrator, Saud bin Salem al Abadi is the skateboard trainer and Marco Conti is the shotgun trainer. The shooters are Reem bint Juma al Hosni, Salim bin Salem al Nasiri, Abdullah bin Saif al Mandhari, Hussein ben Rashid al Shahoumi, Fakhriya bint Khamis al Jahafia, Naghmus bin Adnan al Hatali, Muhammad bin Hamad al Gharbi, Yasser bin Salem al Nasiri and Fatima bint Abdullah al Sulaimiya.

Cycling

The cycling competitions will be held from August 11 to 14. The team is led by coach Mohamed Walid Zamani while Ali bin Khamis al Ankoudi is the assistant coach. Samuel Kattambay is the technical expert and cyclists are: Saeed bin Ibrahim al Rahbi, Mohammed bin Ahmed al Wahabi, Abdul Rahman bin Hareb al Yaqoubi, Mazen bin Saeed al Riyami and Munther bin Abdullah al Hasani.

ADAPTABILITY CHECK

European clubs forced to adapt as new season starts with FIFA World Cup in Qatar on the horizon

Paris, France - The new season that kicked off this weekend in the Premier League and around Europe promises to be like no other with clubs being forced to adapt to the long interruption in November and December for the World Cup, and the resulting consequences.

"The World Cup in Qatar will make this season more intense than any other," insisted Real Madrid and Belgium goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois recently as he looked ahead to what is in store at club and international level.

In Spain, like in Italy, the season does not begin until next weekend, but the Premier League kicked off on Friday, along with the Bundesliga, Ligue 1 and Dutch and Portuguese championships.

All leagues will then stop by the weekend of November 12-13 to allow players involved at the World Cup to join up with their national teams ahead of the opening game in Qatar on November 21.

The World Cup final will be on December 18, but the Premier League will restart with its traditional Boxing Day fixture list on December 26.

La Liga returns on December 31 while the French top flight has done away with its traditional Christmas and New Year holiday -- instead Ligue 1 teams will play on December 28 and again on January 1.

In contrast Serie A will remain shut down until January 4, while the German Bundesliga has conserved its long winter break, shutting down on November 13 and not kicking off again until January 20.

"To have the break in the middle, with a World Cup, will affect all the teams in every league around the globe," observed Jurgen Klinsmann, who coached both Germany and the United States at World Cups.

It will shake up everybody." The compressed schedule means just one weekend off for an international break before Qatar, in late September.

The lack of time impacts on European competition too: the six Champions League group-stage matchdays will all be played by early November.

Given the schedule, clubs know they will need to adapt to guard against the danger of losing players to injury.

"We are certainly going to need to let players breathe a bit," said Christophe Galtier, the Paris Saint-Germain coach.

"We will need to adjust players' playing time so we lose as few as possible to injury."

Then there is the issue of the month during the World Cup - ordinarily, with the tournament in June and July, players not involved would be on holiday.

Liverpool could lose as many as a dozen players to international duty but the rest of Jurgen Klopp's squad, including Mohamed Salah and Andy Robertson, will head to Dubai for a training camp.

AFP



Tottenham's Harry Kane (C) vies with Southampton's Jan Bednarek (L) and Romeo Lavia in their opening match of the Premier League (AFP)

It could be a dramatic season. It's never been done before. It will shake up everybody

JURGEN KLINSMANN

GENETCO CARNIVAL

NOW BIGGER & BETTER!!

98"

Model: 98C735

This summer buy Genetco distributed products & win attractive gifts*

WIN! WIN! WIN!..

THREE MEGA GIFTS

TCL QLED 98" 4K Google TV's

29th June to 27th August 2022

OVER 300 ATTRACTIVE GIFTS TO BE WON!..

BRAND	PRODUCTS	MODEL	NO OF GIFTS
HITACHI	PREMIUM SIDE BY SIDE REFRIGERATOR	RS700PK0GBK	10
JBL	PARTY SPEAKER	PARTY BOX 710	10
GREE	SPLIT AIR CONDITIONER	GS 28 GMAX 60	10
BEKO	FRONTLOAD WASHING MACHINE- 10KG	WTE1014S	10
SKYWORTH	95" UHD LED ANDROID TV	LED 55SUC9300	10
HITACHI	HITACHI STICK VACUUM CLEANER	PV-XL2K24CDS CG	20
JBL	TRUE WIRELESS EARPHONE	ENDURANCE PEAK II	130
BEKO	TURKISH COFFEE MACHINE	BKK2300B	100

* Applicable on purchase of below mentioned brand products with minimum value of RO 50/- (excluding VAT) from Genetco authorized retailers only during promotion period. Terms & conditions apply.

HITACHI

GREE

JBL

YORK

TCL

SKYWORTH

BEKO

BEST

ROWA

Friz Cool

LAROSS

P74602, P74234

www.genetco.net

@GenetcoOman

@GenetcoOman

Genetco Oman

جینتکو Genetco

51 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

MUSCAT 97693496, 96742452 Available at Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers

SALALAH 79011363



Johann Zarco

Zarco on pole in Silverstone

Silverstone, United Kingdom - Ducati's French rider Johann Zarco clocked a new track record to grab pole for the British MotoGP in qualifying at Silverstone on Saturday as Aleix Espargaro took an honourable sixth after a high-speed crash.

Zarco, who rides for Ducati's satellite Pramac team, is joined on the front row for Sunday's race by Maverick Vinales of Aprilia, just 0.098s behind, and Jack Miller on a factory Ducati.

World champion and series leader Fabio Quartararo took fourth on the grid for this 12th round of the 20-race season.

The French rider must serve a long lap penalty during the race as punishment for a collision with Espargaro at Assen before the break.

Zarco claimed his second prime grid position of the season and eighth in MotoGP in style with a lap of 1min 57.767s to smash the former track record of 1min 58.168 set by the absent Marc Marquez.

AFP

Daniil Medvedev to meet Norrie in Los Cabos final

Los Cabos, Mexico - World number one Daniil Medvedev continued the build-up to his US Open title defense with a 7-6 (7/0), 6-1 victory over Miomir Kecmanovic in the ATP hard-court tournament in Los Cabos, Mexico, on Friday.

He booked a title showdown with defending champion and third seed Cameron Norrie, who beat second-seeded Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

By reaching Saturday's final, his fourth of the year, top-seeded Medvedev is assured of taking the top ranking into his title defense at Flushing Meadows later this month.

Friday's action marked the first time since Cincinnati last year that the top four seeds made it to the semi-finals of an ATP tournament.

Rublev in semis

Top seed Andrey Rublev won twice on Friday to reach the semi-finals of Washington Open, dispatching Americans Maxime Cressy and JJ Wolf at the US Open tune-up.

World number eight Rublev defeated 32nd-ranked Cressy 6-4, 7-6 (10/8) in one hour and 42 minutes then eliminated 99th-ranked wildcard Wolf 6-2, 6-3 in 78 minutes.

Next in Rublev's path is Japan's 96th-ranked Yoshihito Nishioka, who outlasted British 16th seed Daniel Evans 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 7-5 after three hours and 35 minutes.

Wimbledon runner-up Nick Kyrgios fired 35 aces on his way to beating hometown hero Frances Tiafoe 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (14/12), 6-2 and reaching the other semi-final against Sweden's 115th-ranked Mikael Ymer.

Ymer, who lost his only ATP final last August at Winston-Salem, beat 54th-ranked American Sebastian Korda 6-2, 5-7, 6-3 after two hours and 27 minutes.

Estonia's Kaia Kanepi defeated Anna Kalinskaya 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-3 to reach a semi-final against Aussie Daria Saville, who beat Canadian qualifier Rebecca Marino 6-1, 7-5.

World number 20 Victoria Azarenka, a two-time Australian Open champion, won her first match over Czech Tereza Martincova 7-6 (9/7), 6-2, but her double bid was spoiled by 21-year-old Chinese lucky loser Wang Xiyu. Wang, seeking her first WTA title, rolled over 33-year-old Azarenka 6-1, 6-3.

AFP



Russia's Daniil Medvedev returns the ball to Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic during their semi-final match at Mexico ATP Open on Friday (AFP)

GOALS GALORE

Liverpool stumble, Spurs shine on Premier League’s opening weekend

Manchester, United Kingdom - Liverpool's Premier League title challenge got off to a sluggish start as the Reds were held 2-2 at newly-promoted Fulham, while Tottenham delivered on their pre-season hype by thrashing Southampton 4-1 on Saturday.

Jürgen Klopp admitted the best part of Liverpool's day was the result as the Champions League finalists twice had to come from behind at Craven Cottage.

Aleksandar Mitrovic maintained his stunning form from last season in the Championship as the Serb outmuscled Trent Alexander-Arnold to head Fulham into a deserved half-time lead.

The introduction of Darwin Nunez in the second half brought Liverpool to life and the Uruguayan flicked home his first Premier League goal since a 75-million-euro (\$77 million) move from Benfica to level.

Mitrovic restored Fulham's lead from the penalty spot after he was tripped by Virgil van Dijk inside the area.

But Mohamed Salah ensured Liverpool at least did not start the season with a defeat by slotting into an empty net from Nunez's pass.

"We started actually exactly the opposite way that we wanted," said Klopp.

"We are used to more dominance and we never could get that because we just played not good enough, not quick enough, not precise enough."

By contrast, Tottenham had a dream start to the campaign to raise hopes they could compete for a first league title in 61 years.

Spurs also fell behind to James Ward-Prowse's strike from the



Liverpool's Egyptian striker Mohamed Salah celebrates after scoring against Fulham in the English Premier League on Saturday (AFP)

edge of the box after just 12 minutes, but the response from Antonio Conte's men was emphatic.

The goals to turn the game around before half-time came from unlikely sources as Ryan Sessegnon and Eric Dier headed home.

Mohammed Salisu then passed the ball into his own net for a comical own goal on the hour mark.

Dejan Kulusevski rounded off the scoring with a cool and precise finish into the far corner to take Spurs above Arsenal at the top of the table.

Newcastle may not have delivered the big-name signings many expected in the transfer market, but the Magpies did the

We are used to more dominance and we never could get that because we just played not good enough, not quick enough, not precise enough

JURGEN KLOPP

business on the pitch to spoil Nottingham Forest's return to the English top flight with a 2-0 win.

Forest have even outspent Newcastle in the window on 12 new signings so far, but were given a lesson in the step up in quality to the Premier League at St James' Park.

Fabian Schar's sensational strike opened the scoring before

Callum Wilson's predatory finish sealed the three points.

Bournemouth were also 2-0 winners over Aston Villa, dispelling their pre-season gloom after a lack of transfer activity. Jefferson Lerma got the Cherries off to a great start after just three minutes and Kieffer Moore added a second 10 minutes from time.

Leeds shrugged off the loss of

Kalvin Phillips and Raphinha over the summer as they beat Wolves 2-1 at Elland Road. Daniel Podence had fired Wolves into an early lead, but Jesse Marsch's men fought back impressively.

Rodrigo blasted in from a narrow angle to level before Rayan Ait-Nouri's own goal decided the game 16 minutes from time.

Earlier on Friday, Arsenal rode out a second-half onslaught from Crystal Palace to make a perfect start to the season with a 2-0 win at Selhurst Park.

Gabriel Martinelli's header gave them a deserved half-time lead, before Marc Guehi's own goal late on then sealed the three points.

AFP

'Feels normal' as Bayern rout Frankfurt in Bundesliga opener

Berlin, Germany - Bayern Munich coach Julian Nagelsmann said he didn't mind if it was beginning to feel "normal" for his team to win the title, after thrashing an overwhelmed Eintracht Frankfurt 6-1 away at Deutsche Bank Park on Friday.

Munich got their quest for an 11th consecutive Bundesliga title off to the best possible start, with teenage forward Jamal Musiala scoring two as Bayern dismantled the reigning Europa League champions.

Asked after the match if Munich winning the Bundesliga was beginning to feel like "normality", Nagelsmann unsurprisingly said he was happy with the status quo.

"When you win ten in a row, yes it starts to feel normal," he told broadcaster DAZN.

"But I don't really care if it feels normal or not - but yes, it can stay 'normal'."

"The first half was outstanding. I don't think it'll always be like this, but we should be satisfied."

Former Liverpool forward Sadio Mane scored on his

league debut when he nudged a 28th minute header past goalkeeper Kevin Trapp.

The Senegalese was one of five different goal scorers for Munich, allaying fears Bayern may be toothless up front after the summer exit to Barcelona of Robert Lewandowski.

Joshua Kimmich, Benjamin Pavard, Musiala (two) and Serge Gnabry also got on the scoresheet for the Bavarians.

Kimmich opened the scoring in the fifth minute via a free kick, with his shot bouncing in off the post past a stunned Trapp, who may have had his vision obscured by dense fog caused by the pyrotechnics of his own home fans.

French defender Pavard scored just five minutes later, volleying in a loose ball across his body in a manner reminiscent of his goal of the tournament against Argentina in the 2018 World Cup.

Despite the opening onslaught, the next stages belonged to the home side, who had two clear cut chances to peg one back.

AFP



Bayern Munich's Sadio Mane celebrates with team-mates after scoring against Eintracht Frankfurt on Friday (AFP)

Pirlo hoping to relaunch coaching career on banks of the Bosphorus

Istanbul, Turkey - A year after being sacked by Juventus in the wake of a disappointing first season in charge, Italy great Andrea Pirlo is aiming to relaunch his coaching career on the banks of the Bosphorus with unfashionable Istanbul club Fatih Karagumruk.

"I have an idea of how I want to play football and I hope it will be a successful season," insisted Pirlo at his unveiling in mid-June, dressed in an immaculate blue suit as he met Turkey's sports press at a chic Istanbul hotel.

Pirlo, now 43, had no prior top-level coaching experience when he was named Juventus coach in August 2020.

He led the Turin club to victory in the Italian Cup but Juve went out of the Champions League in the last 16 and finished fourth in Serie A, ending a run of nine consecutive titles.

Pirlo was duly sacked, but he is now back in business at Karagumruk, who play their first game of the new Turkish Super



Fatih Karagumruk coach Andrea Pirlo at a training session in Istanbul (AFP)

Lig season on Sunday after finishing eighth in the last campaign.

Fate has dictated that his first game will be against another Italian coach in Francesco Farioli, who was in charge of Karagumruk last year and is now at Sunday's opponents Alanyaspor.

Pirlo's new club hail from the working-class neighbourhood of Karagumruk, on the European

side of the Bosphorus, in a city where the footballing scene is dominated by the giants of Galatasaray, Fenerbahce and Beşiktaş.

In Turkey, the man who helped Italy win the 2006 World Cup has been given the nickname "Basbakan", or prime minister, in a nod to the way he controlled the ball during his

playing days. It will be a big ask for Karagumruk to compete against the big three or champions Trabzonspor at the top of the table, but sports journalist Alp Ulugay believes Turkey offers Pirlo - a two-time Champions League winner and six-time Serie A champion - the chance to revive his career.

AFP

Atletico friendly against Juventus in Israel cancelled over security

Madrid, Spain - The pre-season friendly between Spanish side Atletico Madrid and Italian giants Juventus which was scheduled to take place in Israel this weekend has been cancelled because of "security" concerns, the two teams announced on Saturday.

The match was due to take place at the Bloomfield stadium in Tel Aviv on Sunday but a renewed surge in hostilities in the region prompted the promoters Comtec Group to call it off.

"Due to the latest developments, the friendly between Atletico Madrid and Juventus, scheduled in Israel, has been cancelled," said Juventus in a statement.

"Due to the current security situation, Comtec Group announces that the match between Atletico Madrid and Juventus, scheduled for tomorrow, Sunday 7 August at Bloomfield Stadium, will not be played."

AFP

Free home delivery & timely service

Oman Water Co. SAOC,
PO Box 817, Rasayil 124,
Sultanate of Oman,
www.omanoasis.com

CALL TOLL-FREE
800 71 222
or GSM: 9275 5522

Winner of
His Majesty's Cup Award
in 2012 & 2013
for Best Five Factories

C.R. No. 1365452

mai
alkaline

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

HYDRATE SMARTLY

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing

pH 9.1 to 9.5

oman
OASIS

Toll-free
800 71 222 or
9275 5522

C.R. No.: 1365452

COMMONWEALTH GAMES



Australia's Oliver Hoare (L) wins gold in the 1500m ahead of Kenya's Timothy Cheruiyot (3L) and Scotland's Jake Wightman (2R) at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham on Saturday (AFP)

OLIVER TWIST!

Australia's Oliver Hoare stuns favourites to win 1500m gold at Commonwealth Games, Jemima Montag takes emotional gold in women's 10,000m race walk

Birmingham, United Kingdom - Australia's Oliver Hoare shocked world champion Jake Wightman and Kenya's Timothy Cheruiyot to win 1500m gold at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham on Saturday.

The 25-year-old produced a storming late finish to cruise past Scotland's Wightman and Kenyan star Cheruiyot, setting a new Games record of 3min 30.12sec. He fell to the track and put his head in his hands before rising to his feet and letting out a huge roar.

"It was a very fast race but I have been training for a fast race," said Hoare, who broke a record that had stood since 1974. "It was just about kicking at the

I went through on the inside with a lap to go and I saw Jake next to me. And I started to panic because he is the world champion. But I tried to hold my composure.

OLIVER HOARE

right time. I went through on the inside with a lap to go and I saw Jake next to me. And I started to panic because he is the world champion. But I tried to hold my composure."

Hoare's victory was the second Australian gold medal of the morning on the penultimate day of track and field action at Alexander Stadium.

It followed an emotional win for Jemima Montag in the women's 10,000m race walk, four years after she won the 20km event at the 2018 Games on the Gold Coast.

But Jamaican high-jumper Lamara Distin (1.95 metres) denied Australia a golden treble, taking gold ahead of Australia's recently crowned world cham-

pion Eleanor Patterson (1.92).

Priyanka Goswami, who had her fingernails painted in the colours of the English flag, finished second in the women's race walk.

The 26-year-old Indian, who has a habit of painting her nails in the national flag of the country in which she is competing, said: "I have a Lord Krishna and I take him with me to every competition and he brought me luck today."

Montag, wearing a lucky gold bracelet made from a piece of jewellery that had belonged to her late grandmother, Holocaust survivor Judith, wiped tears from her eyes as she crossed the line in 42:34.30.

"What I take from that is, in a

race, it is one kilometre at a time and not thinking about the finish line," she said, referring to her grandmother's experiences.

"She teaches me to take one step at a time and it also puts things into perspective."

Hosts England, who are in a battle with Australia to finish top of the overall medals table, won a gold medal when Nick Miller retained his hammer throw title with a distance of 76.43 metres.

Saturday's evening session will feature an enthralling battle in the women's 200m between last year's Olympic gold and silver medallists, Jamaica's Elaine Thompson-Herah and Christine Mboma of Namibia.

AFP



India's Sakshi Malik celebrates her gold in women's 62kg wrestling (AFP)

India win triple gold in wrestling, Sable breaks hegemony of Kenya in steeplechase

Birmingham, United Kingdom - India won triple gold in the wrestling competition at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham on Friday, with Bajrang Punia defending his men's 65kg title and Sakshi Malik taking the women's 62kg crown.

In the men's 86kg category, Deepak Punia beat Pakistan's Muhammad Inam, who called for more sporting ties despite political tensions between the South Asian nations.

"There is no hate," he said. "The more sporting competition that we can have between us, the better the relations between the people."

India's Avinash Mukund Sable broke the stranglehold of the Kenyans in the men's 3,000m steeplechase Commonwealth Games on Saturday as he took

silver behind Abraham Kibiwot.

The Kenyans had swept the medals from the 1998 Games onwards, but Sable picked off Kibiwot's two team-mates - including defending champion and world bronze medallist Conseslus Kipruto - and attacked the leader on the final bend.

But Kibiwot kept his nerve to hold off Sable and win in a time of 8:11.15.

"I know the guy who was following me (Sable) and I know he is not that fast," said Kibiwot. "I was not afraid of him so that is why I controlled the race at the front."

In the process Sable bettered his own national record by almost a second. Sable clocked 8:11.20 to better the previous NR of 8:12.48, set at the Rabat Diamond League earlier this year.



Kenya's Abraham Kibiwot (R) wins gold in men's 3000m steeplechase while India's Avinash Mukund Sable takes silver (AFP)



Grenada's Lindon Victor celebrates after winning gold in decathlon on Saturday (AFP)

Victor retains decathlon crown as England hunt down Australia

Birmingham, United Kingdom - Grenada's Lindon Victor retained his Commonwealth Games decathlon crown in a nail-biting finale on Friday as host nation England closed the gap on Australia at the top of the medals table.

New Zealand shot putter Tom Walsh also held on to his title while 18-year-old Kenyan Jackline Chepkoech won the 3000 metres steeplechase in a Games record of 9min 15.68sec.

Jamaican triple jumper

Shanieka Ricketts shed her bridesmaid's tag - having been silver medallist in the 2018 Games and last month's world championships - to post a Games record of 14.94 metres.

Walsh, the 2017 world champion, won the shot put with a mark of 22.26 metres as New Zealand compatriot Jacko Gill took silver with a personal best of 21.90m.

English diver Jack Laugher won his second gold of the Games, in the men's synchro-

nised 3m springboard with Anthony Harding, despite an interrupted night's sleep, after taking the 1m springboard title.

"To say that I had a couple of hours' sleep and then to go out there and perform some of the hardest dives in the world alongside a great synchro partner was obviously pretty good," he said.

England's Matty Lee and Noah Williams triumphed in the men's synchronised 10m platform event.

England's women reached the

hockey final with a shootout win against defending champions New Zealand while Australia also needed a shootout to beat India.

George Miller, 75, became the oldest Commonwealth gold medallist when Scotland beat Wales in the para mixed pairs bowls.

Australia still lead the way in the overall medals table, which includes para events, with 50 gold, but England are now just three behind.

AFP

Read Muscat Daily
Stay Informed



R024
1 YEAR
(Actual price: R052)
R015
6 MONTHS

SUBSCRIBE NOW

Toll free no: 80076000
E-mail: customercare@apexmedia.co.om
Call Shamshad: 99104345

an apex media | منشور PUBLICATION | الأمانة للإعلام

www.apexmedia.co.om

THE ALL-NEW
QX60

TAKE ON LIFE IN STYLE



3.5L V6 ENGINE, 279 HP, 3-ROW SUV

LEARN MORE



INFINITI