

RIGHTS COMMISSION PROBES SIERRA LEONE WORKERS' CASE

Taking a note of the reports published by the International Organisation for Migration and the Guardian of Britain about the mistreatment of domestic workers of Sierra Leone in Oman, the Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has followed up the case. **>A4**



OMAN GEARS UP FOR EXPO 2020 DUBAI PARTICIPATION

The General Commission for the Sultanate's Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai organised a field visit to the Expo site. The visit came in coordination with the concerned authorities in preparation for the Sultanate's participation in the international event. **>B1**



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ANNOUNCEMENT

Eid Al Fitr holidays to begin on May 12

MUSCAT: On the occasion of the Blessed Eid Al Fitr 1442 AH, the Ministry of Labour decided that the holiday for Eid Al Fitr for employees of the departments of the State Administrative Apparatus and other legal entities and private sector's establishments will begin from Wednesday, 29 Ramadan 1442 AH, corresponding to 12 May 2021.

The holiday ends as follows:

- In case the first day of the Eid falls on Thursday, 13 May 2021, the holiday will end on Saturday, 3 Shawal 1442 AH, corresponding to 15 May 2021.

Therefore, work shall be resumed on Sunday, 16 May 2021.

- In case the first day of the Eid falls on Friday, 14 May 2021, the holiday will end on Monday, 4 Shawal 1442 AH, corresponding

to 17 May 2021.

Therefore, work shall be resumed on Tuesday, 18 May 2021.

The decision allowed employers and employees to agree on work arrangements to compensate this holiday, if necessity arises.

The Ministry of Labour extended greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik on this blessed occasion, praying to the Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty, grant him good health, happiness and a long life, and for the return of this and similar occasions on His Majesty for many years to come while the Omani people and our dear country enjoy further progress and welfare and all Muslims blessings and prosperity.

-ONA

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY



NOC removal to boost labour market, help curb human trafficking

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Removing the No Objection Certificate (NOC) ruling in the country will lead to more opportunities for workers to get better jobs, and curb human trafficking, the chairman of the General Federation of Oman Trade Unions (GFOTU) has said.

On the occasion of International Workers Day, which falls on 1 May every year, Nabhan bin Ahmed Al Battashi, said the cancellation of the NOC is particularly important at present, because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has revealed the need for strong, resilient economies that can adapt to changing situations.

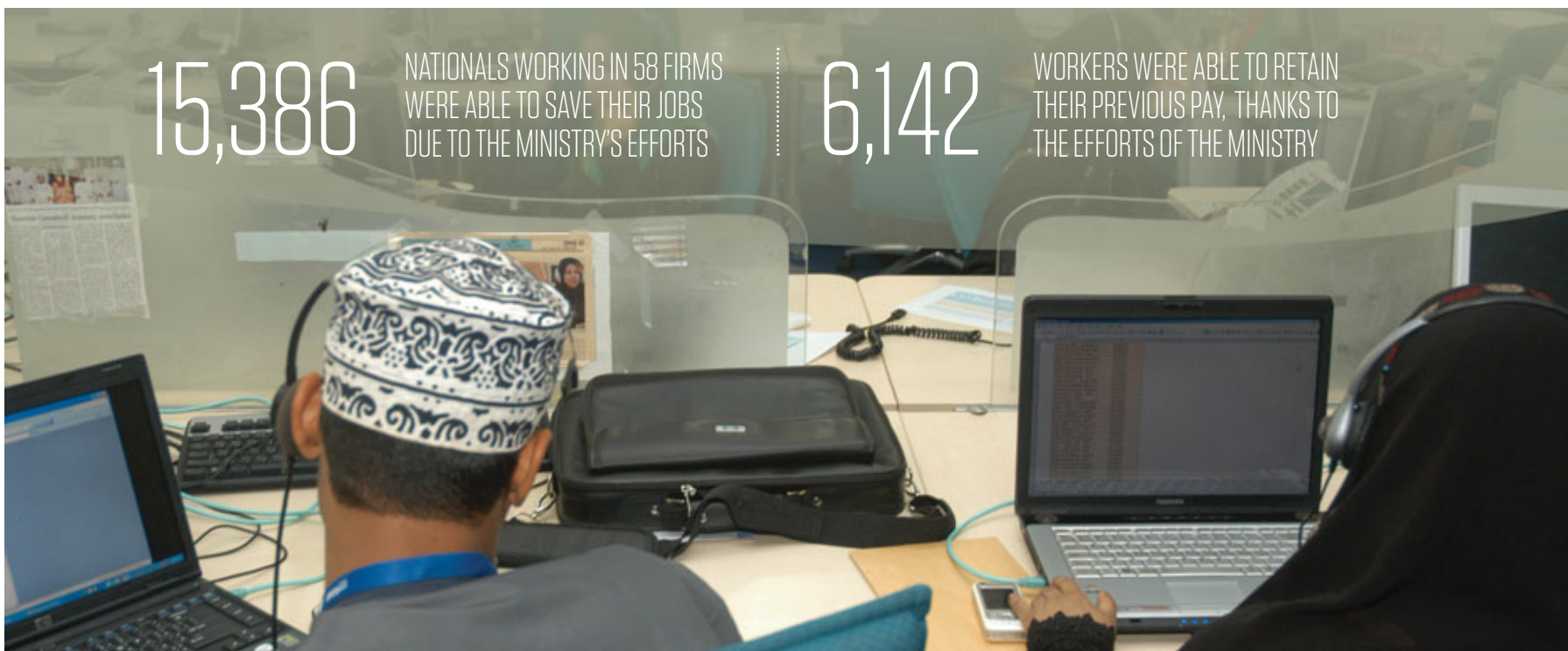
"It is important that the private sector and its workers have the flexibility necessary to face such economic repercussions, as well as ensure economic sustainability, and the continued welfare of employees," he said.

"In this context, we have also learned the importance of proper social welfare systems for those most affected by the pandemic."

Welcome

Al Battashi went on to welcome the government's efforts to improve Oman's economy and stave off the worst of its impacts by the pandemic, by introducing measures such as the Medium Term Fiscal Balance Plan. **>A3**

21,000 OMANIS SAVED FROM DISMISSALS, SALARY CUTS



The Ministry of Labour protected the workers by negotiating with 91 firms that had moved to dismiss or cut their salaries

Times News Service

MUSCAT: More than 21,000 Omanis were able to hold on to their jobs, and avoid salary cuts in the first quarter of 2021, thanks to efforts of the Ministry of Labour.

Between 1 January and 31

March, 2021, a total of 21,528 nationals were able to maintain their work and pay conditions, after the ministry stepped in to negotiate with 91 companies that had moved to dismiss them and/or reduce their salaries.

According to the report published

by the ministry, it held negotiations with 58 companies to retain 16,671 nationals in their employ, and was successful in helping 15,386 hold on to their jobs. Similarly, talks were also held to stop salary reductions of 9,212 Omanis employed in 33 companies, which resulted in 6,142 workers being able to draw the same pay they were used to previously.

During the first quarter, however, the Ministry of Labour received more than 4,000 complaints from workers. Of these, 1,010 have been referred to the court, and another 911 reached amicable settlements. Complaints centred on issues such as requests for monthly

salaries, compensation for unfair dismissal, and requests to revoke decisions to terminate employees.

When it came to expatriate workers, their main complaints were about repatriation to their home countries, end of service benefits, and requests for them to be given their passports. To make sure such issues can be dealt with smoothly and quickly, Oman has introduced laws to simplify litigation procedures concerning some disputes between employers and employees, relating to the application of the Labour Law.

There are about 1.4 million expatriates currently employed in the country: six per cent of them

hold high-level managerial and specialist roles. About 600,000 workers – a little less than half – work in Muscat Governorate, some 200,000 are in North Al Batinah, and another 165,000 in Dhofar.

According to their designations, there are 31,254 workers employed as directors of public administration, in addition to about 60,451 specialists, and 40,759 technicians in the scientific, technical, and humanitarian fields.

The vast majority of expat workers are concentrated in the basic auxiliary engineering professions, with more than 500,000 workers in this sector. **>A6**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Indian expats share stories from home

1 Indian nationals living in Oman who have returned to the country said that one of the main reasons for the spread of COVID-19 back home is because people have not taken it seriously. Expats from different parts of India all point to the same patterns of behaviour followed by people. **>A3**

WORLD

Amid COVID surge, Nepal bans all flights

2 Nepal banned all domestic flights from Monday midnight and all international flights from Wednesday midnight until May 14 amid a surge in COVID-19 cases. "The decision on flight restrictions are in place until May 14," Health Minister Hridayesh Tripathi, said. **>A6**

SPORTS

Kiwis become No. 1 ranked ODI team



3 New Zealand has replaced reigning World Champions England as the number one ranked side in the ODI rankings but England has consolidated its position at the top of the T20I table. These updates eliminate results from 2017-18 and half the weighting of matches played in 2019-20. **>A8**

CBO

Loan repayment relief for those losing job

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) confirmed that the priority to postpone loan repayment is for those who have been laid off from their work.

Tahir bin Salim bin Abdullah Al Amri, Executive President of CBO, confirmed in the Layil Muscat programme (Oman TV) that the priority to postpone loan repayment is for those who have been laid off from work and the postponement will be for a year without any interest.

Stressing that the issue of those laid-off is one that concerns many institutions in Oman, not just the CBO. Adding that there is also a priority for those whose wages and bonuses have been reduced and



working for government agencies and retirees as well, where the age group for repayment has been extended to seventy years.

This came after the 10th session of the Shura Council on April 26,

during which the council approved the vision of the Economic and Financial Committee regarding the postponement of the citizens' personal debts for consumers - and housing premiums (according

to specific conditions), that was presented by Ahmed bin Saeed Al Sharqi, Chairman of the Economic and Financial Committee in the council and its representative in the session.

In an exclusive interview with the *Times of Oman*, he said the committee had proposed a four-month period for the postponement of instalments.

The scheme is available to those earning less than OMR1,500 a month. Furthermore, no additional interest will be charged to those who choose to make use of this benefit.

He said that the government should take into account proposals made and present to the banking sector schemes such as reducing annual taxes on the banking sector.



OQ commissions LPG facility in Dhofar

B1

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INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY

<FROM A1 Stronger social protection

Intended to stabilise and then sustain the economy, the plan also includes stronger social protection systems, and reducing the impact COVID-19 has had on people's quality of life and living expenses, particularly those who have been directly affected by the pandemic.

"It is in the face of adversity and hardship that people show who they truly are, be they individuals or organisations," he said. "This pandemic has demonstrated the importance of trade unions and the ongoing positive role they've played for workers in the private sector. Unions helped address and mitigate the economic and social impact of COVID-19 on these workers."

Assistance trade unions have provided to employees during the pandemic has come in the form of safeguarding their rights, taking care of their interests, and representing them in matters concerning worker welfare, all of which fall under the responsibilities of trade unions. This has prevented workers from being terminated, as well helped them avoid wage cuts.

"We recently adopted a set of legislation and initiatives that will fundamentally make the private sector more attractive to workers," explained Al Battashi. "The most notable of these is removing the NOC, which in turn will reduce human trafficking, and provide better employment opportunities for workers."

"The Royal Directives of His



Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik in setting up the Job Security System (JSS) have also had a big impact in strengthening the social security structure – the GFOTU, and a number of relevant organisations played a prominent role in its approval. This system better the safety available to private sector workers, including some protection from threats to their future job stability."

The role of the JSS – he said – is even more crucial during the pandemic, in shielding some workers from mass layoffs carried out by companies. Al Battashi hopes that going forward, the JSS will also play a role in covering the difference in payments for workers who have had their salaries cut by companies during this challenging time.

"Employers contribute financially to this security system, so hopefully, this can be used to cover the difference between the worker's original wage and his new salary," he added. "In return, the expenses of employers are reduced, particularly those who have been

Trade unions have helped safeguard worker rights during the pandemic

affected by the pandemic."

The chairman also drew attention to Royal Decree No. 125/2020, which was issued to help simplify litigation procedures in labour cases, by enhancing the efficiency in settling disputes. It is hoped this will help solve many existing issues workers have.

"Despite the many improvements we've seen, the work patterns and economic development in the private sector do face a number of challenges," he explained. "Solving these are our priorities going forward, so that we can help regulate labour conditions in collaboration with other relevant parties."

These include follow-ups on the drafting and establishment of the new Labour Law, with the GFOTU having contributed to its preparation. It also provided feedback in the form of legal perspectives and comparative laws that exist similar to the one currently being drawn up.

PANDEMIC

COVID diaries: Indian expats share experiences of conditions back home

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Indian expats who have returned to Oman said that one of the main reasons for the spread of COVID-19 back home is because people have not taken it seriously.

Expats from different parts of India all point to the same patterns of behaviour followed by people: an ignorance of the dangers of the virus, lack of commitment to social distancing and mask wearing, and a casual attitude to lockdowns put in place to stop the spread of the disease.

India has a total of 3.4 million active cases, while about 16.2 million people with the virus have recovered. According to India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, more than 210,000 people have lost their lives from the virus.

However, as part of its vaccination drive, India has also administered 157 million doses, with 1.2 million people inoculated on 3 May alone.

'COVID is a rich man's disease'

A woman from the western state of Gujarat was among those forced to prepone her return to Oman, after entry into the country was banned for passengers flying from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. She had intended to stay on until May, but her parents themselves told her it was not safe for her to stay on.

The lax approach she saw people taking towards protecting themselves from infection, during a trip to the market, shocked her.

"All we wanted to buy was some bread – and we saw that there was no social distancing maintained, and no masks being worn," she said. "I asked the shop owner why he had not put these into effect, and

he told me this is because 'there is no coronavirus over here'. He then retorted, 'if you want to follow social distancing, please stand in the corner and do your shopping after everyone else has left.'

"People there laughed at me when I asked them why they were not wearing masks," she added. "When I went to the vegetable vendors, who were not following any of the protocols, they said 'COVID is a rich man's disease, we will not get it.'"

After this experience, the lady decided to get her goods delivered home, but had to take extra precautions to protect herself, her two young children, and her elderly parents from infection by deliverymen who often chose to ignore wearing masks, and were among those who made fun of her for taking such stringent precautions. After asking them repeatedly to wear a mask, those who dropped off the goods at her home would reluctantly hold their handkerchiefs up to their faces.

'People did not take the virus seriously'

The city of Mumbai – India's financial hub and the capital of Maharashtra state – has been particularly hit hard by COVID-19, and an expatriate who returned to Oman just hours before the entry ban came into effect was able to confirm that. A night-time lockdown has also been brought in to curb the spread of the virus. However, not everyone seems to understand its importance.

"A lot of people continued to roam about, unconcerned by the effects of the virus," he admitted. "If you ask me, the Indian government made a mistake by allowing the election rallies to take place in physical form, and permitting large-scale gatherings for weddings and festivals.

"In India, people did not follow the lockdown rules and precautions seriously at all, unlike in Oman, where we know how strictly these procedures are enforced," he added. "Simply put, they did not take the virus seriously. Had they done so, the situation would have been much, much better, but right now, everyone is trying to find someone else to blame for the spike in cases."

Forced to cancel a number of plans with friends, he also avoided going out as much as possible, in case he caught the infection and was subsequently unable to return to Oman. His brother, whose responsibility it is to get supplies for the family, would go out once every few days to do the shopping.

'We order everything online'

The South Indian state of Tamil Nadu imposed a lockdown on three cities as well: the state capital Chennai, Madurai, and Coimbatore, for four days, from 26 to 29 April, and an Indian man who had returned to Oman after visiting his parents said this precaution had been a long time in coming.

"Even in the area in which my folks live, not many people follow COVID protocols," he revealed.

"They don't follow the rules and regulations: social distancing, hygiene protocols, and mask wearing are unfortunately ignored. The lockdown rules have only been brought in to bring down infection rates. My parents order everything online, so that they can keep safe. Things that were already bad in 2020 have worsened in 2021. I hope people understand the value of staying at home, and the chances of getting infected when they go outside."



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OHRC

Rights commission probes Sierra Leone workers' case

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Taking a note of the reports published by the International Organisation for Migration and the Guardian of Britain about the mistreatment of domestic workers of Sierra Leone in Oman, the Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has followed up the case.

"The British Guardian had reported that the workers from Sierra Leone arrived to work in Oman based on an agreement with the recruitment agencies inside their countries on good salaries. Some workers had also agreed with the same agencies to work in European countries, though they were not informed that they would be taken to Oman to work as domestic workers," the OHRC said.

Based on the communications received from "Project 189" in London - an international organisation that supports the rights of migrant workers in the Middle East region - with regard to Sierra Leone workers, the OHRC coordinated with authorities concerned in Oman to investigate the matter.

On investigation, the OHRC found that the aforementioned workers have been deceived by the recruitment agencies of their countries, and this report was published by the London based paper.

In addition, the domestic workers were also persuaded regarding the nature of jobs, monthly wages, and the place of residence, before travelling outside their country.

As a result, some of them escaped from their employers after discovering discrepancy in the

agreement with the recruitment agencies of their countries.

The workers should have registered their complaints with the authorities concerned and followed-up in accordance with the laws in force.

They could have also informed the competent authorities at the airport if the recruitment office decided to deport them, but they did not complain about the violation of their rights.

Therefore, the authorities concerned clarified that labour rights are guaranteed by the Omani law and legislations which include assured monthly wages within a period not exceeding seven days from the end of each month or what the two parties have agreed upon while signing the agreement.

In addition, provision of food and housing, and necessary medical treatment by the employer for the contract duration.

Decent treatment

The law stipulates that a domestic worker shall get rest during the day, as well as the right to obtain monthly leave as agreed upon in the work contract, and a vacation after the period agreed upon, with an emphasis on decent humanitarian treatment that preserves the dignity of workers.

Moreover, a domestic worker shall obtain a travel ticket to return to their country, which is borne by the recruitment office within 180 days from the date of the worker's arrival in case it is proven that the profession conflicts with the occupation specified for him/ her in the recruitment licence, or suffers from a mental or contagious disease, or

has a disability that does not enable him to perform his work.

A domestic worker can also obtain a ticket to return to his/her country with the cost to be borne by the employer at the end of the contract period, or when the employer breaches the contract.

In case of any violations of labour rights of domestic worker, the worker may resort to legal means after registering his complaint through various bodies, including, the Ministry of Labour, Royal Oman Police, Public Prosecution, the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking, and Oman Human Rights Commission.

Any expatriate worker may register his/ her complaint by going directly to such authorities, or reporting to them via hotlines, text messages, WhatsApp, voice mail, e-mail, or through their websites on the Internet.

On the other hand, the law stipulates that the worker should not commit any unlawful activities, such as leaving or stopping work, or absconding.

Therefore, in case of any problem, he/she must report to non-Omani manpower recruitment offices for settling disputes related to wages, or the nature of work indicated in the contract during the first six months.

Moreover, if the complaint is not settled with the employer or the manpower recruitment office, he/she has the right to submit a complaint to the labour welfare departments of the Ministry of Labour to settle the dispute between the worker and the employer, noting that these departments exist in all governorates of Oman.

SALALAH MILLS COMPANY SAOG
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REPORT OF MATERIAL EVENTS

Dear Shareholders,

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Board of Directors, to present to you the Unaudited Financial Statements of Salalah Mills Company for the First Quarter ended on 31st March, 2021.

Sales

The total sales value during the first quarter of 2021 was RO 15 million, showing an increase of 4.3%, compared to the same quarter of 2020. The export revenue was 56.1% of the total revenues in the first quarter, compared to 51.3% in the first quarter of last year.

Net Profit

The company made a net profit of RO 1,111,439 during the first quarter of the current year compared to RO 914,311 made in the same quarter of last year, showing an increase of about 21.5%.

International Raw Material Prices

The international grain prices are affected by many factors, which lead to instability in prices. As a result of higher prices of raw materials, the management expect the profit margin to be affected in the second quarter of the current year.

Ahmed bin Abdullah Saeed Al Rawas
Chairman

BALANCE SHEET AS OF 31 MARCH 2021

ASSETS	31/03/2021 RO	31/03/2020 RO
Current Assets:		
Cash at bank and in hand	3,361,399	5,589,478
Receivables and prepayments	10,330,783	13,181,608
Investments	397,556	386,549
Inventories	20,355,909	17,949,415
Total Current Assets	34,445,647	37,107,051
Non-current Assets:		
Property, plant and equipment	29,488,326	29,434,135
Total Non-current Assets	29,488,326	29,434,135
TOTAL ASSETS	63,933,973	66,541,186
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
Current Liabilities:		
Bank borrowings	18,227,598	25,113,572
Payables and accruals	9,092,743	2,519,605
Lease liability under IFRS- current	82,424	4,361
Term loans, current maturities	-	215,652
Provision for Income Tax	470,200	216,866
Total Current Liabilities	27,872,963	28,070,056
Non-current Liabilities:		
Bank borrowings	1,558,857	5,000,000
Lease liability under IFRS	897,820	540,217
Deferred tax liability	1,145,611	1,023,123
Total Non-current Liabilities	3,602,288	6,563,340
Total Liabilities	31,475,251	34,633,396
Shareholders' Equity:		
Share capital	4,996,306	4,996,306
Share Premium	3,587,782	3,587,782
Legal reserve	2,089,103	2,089,103
general reserve	2,891,826	2,891,826
Retained earnings	18,893,704	18,342,772
Total Shareholders' equity	32,458,722	31,907,789
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	63,933,973	66,541,186
Net Assets Per Share	0.650	0.639

STATEMENT OF INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED AS OF 31 MAR 2021

	31/03/2021 RO	31/03/2020 RO
Revenue	15,043,728	14,420,602
Cost of revenue	(12,748,055)	(12,203,355)
Gross profit	2,295,673	2,217,247
Administrative and general expenses	(925,848)	(1,000,419)
Selling and promotion expenses	(25,405)	(19,148)
Other Income	17,672	22,501
Net financing costs	(63,640)	(144,521)
Profit for the year before taxation	1,298,452	1,075,660
Provision for taxation	(187,013)	(161,349)
Profit for the period	1,111,439	914,311
Basic earnings per share	0.022	0.018

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests the company in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request at P.O. Box No. 67, Al Awqadain, P.C. 217, Sultanate of Oman.

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Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of Ministry of Social Development hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)
10/2021	Providing of cleaning service for the building of the chihd care center in Al- khoud	Excellent or First or second	Sunday 23-5-2021 02:00 PM	Saturday 12-6-2021 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the tender documents at theTender Board e-tendering digital portal link (https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om) , On Tuesday 4/5/2021
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ The original (1%) bank warranty to be submitted at same day of submitting at tender box located in Directorate of Finanace & Administration at MOSD HQ.
- ❖ For Inquiry , please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402222 or 24166670)

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Ramadan

► IFTAR TIMING

6:41 pm

► RAMADAN WORDS



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► HEALTH TIP

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VISION Emerging Oman Fund			
VISION EMERGING OMAN FUND			
CHAIRMAN REPORT VEOF - 1Q21			
On behalf of the Investors' Committee, I am pleased to present Vision Emerging Oman Fund's results for the first quarter ended March 2021.			
The three month period ended March 2021 witnessed the VEOF fund outperform the MSM index by 5.63%. The NAV of Vision Emerging Oman Fund was up 7.02% against positive movement of 1.40% by the MSM 30 share index. The NAV of Vision Emerging Oman Fund was RO 0.961 and the MSM index ended the quarter at 3,708.71 points.			
Abu Dhabi was the leading GCC market followed by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Dubai while Bahrain and Qatar declined. Globally, all major indices advanced in Q1 2021 as the vaccination drive gathered pace. Brent oil advanced by 23%.			
The 2021 budget represents the first year of the tenth five year development plan (2021-2025) which paves the way to implement Oman Vision 2040 development objectives. The budget was prepared in light of the persistent financial and economic challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and decline in oil prices, including the agreement of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC+) to reduce crude oil production due to the decline in global growth and demand for oil, in addition to other commercial and geopolitical challenges. One of the key objectives of the FY21 budget includes sustainability of basic social services and maintaining a level of spending comprising at least 40% on those services. The basic social services are: health, housing, education, & social care and security.			
On behalf of the members of the Board of Directors, I would like to acknowledge and thank our valued unit holders for the continued participation.			
We thank the Fund's Management Body and staff for their dedication and commitment.			
Finally, we pay tribute to His Majesty for his inspiring leadership and vision under whose wise guidance, Oman will assuredly continue on the path towards successful development.			
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
	31 March 2021 RO (3 months)	31 March 2020 RO (3 months)	31 December 2020 RO (12 months)
INCOME			
Dividend income	48,974	102,059	101,655
Interest income	5	161	615
Other income	189	--	--
Net realised gain / (loss) on investments at fair value through profit or loss	22,304	3,775	(6,961)
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	60,185	(236,524)	(38,644)
	131,657	(130,529)	56,665
EXPENSES			
Management fee	6,562	6,558	25,330
Custodian service fees	1,849	1,865	7,500
General and administration	11,014	10,750	42,600
	19,425	19,172	75,430
Net profit / (loss) and total comprehensive income for the period / year	112,232	(149,701)	(18,765)
Net profit / (loss) per unit	0.058	(0.077)	(0.010)
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION			
	31 March 2021 RO	31 March 2020 RO	31 December 2020 RO
NET ASSETS			
Assets			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	1,799,769	1,491,991	1,705,973
Cash and cash equivalents	4,888	35,808	51,071
Other receivables	54,381	99,959	7,942
Total assets	1,859,038	1,627,758	1,764,986
Liabilities			
Accruals and other payables and total liabilities	12,599	13,204	30,779
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	1,846,439	1,614,554	1,734,207
Net asset value per unit	0.955	0.830	0.897

► GOOD DEED

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COVID-19

Nepal bans all domestic, international flights

KATHMANDU: Nepal banned all domestic flights from Monday midnight and all international flights from Wednesday midnight until May 14 amid a surge in COVID-19 cases.

“The decision on flight restrictions are in place until May 14,”

Health Minister Hridayesh Tripathi told the Kathmandu Post. “However, charter flights will be allowed.” Nepal has also made quarantine mandatory for everyone arriving in the country.

Foreigners flying into the Kathmandu Valley are subject to a man-

datory 10-day quarantine in hotels upon arrival. A negative polymerase chain reaction test result obtained within 72 hours prior to departure from the country of origin is required for entry into Nepal.

Bus services have been halted since Thursday (April 29), report-

ed Kathmandu Post.

Before the Cabinet's decision, the country's civil aviation regulator-the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal-had decided to introduce a fixed quota system for airlines to restrict the number of flights.

— ANI

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

<FROM A1 Over 95,000 workers in sales field

More than 95,000 workers are in sales and over 83,000 in agriculture and animal husbandry. There are over 100,000 workers in the industrial, chemical manufacturing, and food processing sector.

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Labour had introduced a scheme for expatriate workers to permanently leave the Sultanate, without needing to pay any labour-related fines. Until 31 March of this year, 69,467

expatriates had registered to leave under this initiative, while 48,863 people actually left.

Furthermore, 617 expats were arrested for violating the provisions of the Labour Law: 162 of them were in Muscat Governorate, 131 in North Al Batinah, and 112 in Al Wusta.

To make sure companies do follow all regulations related to them, the ministry also carried out 461 inspections to 736 companies, su-

pervising a total of 97,053 workers.

Companies that did not comply with the law were issued a number of measures to rectify them: 53 violations were issued, nine establishments were referred to the Public Prosecution department, 56 written warnings, 142 verbal warnings, and 297 instructions were issued to companies found guilty of violations.

A further 11 violations were issued against facilities found

breaking occupational safety and health guidelines.

Nine establishments were referred to Public Prosecution here as well, which called for the Ministry of Labour to also re-visit 15 others. 51 notices were also issued for companies to improve their standards before deadlines set by the ministry, 37 written warnings, 27 written alerts, and 14 sets of instructions and guidelines were also provided.



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SPRING REVOLUTION PROTESTS

Eight killed as Myanmar security forces open fire

NAYPYITAW: Three months after a coup plunged Myanmar into crisis on February 1, as many as eight people were killed as security forces opened fire on some of the biggest protests against the military rule in the country.

The protests were coordinated with demonstrations in Myanmar communities around the world to mark ‘the global Myanmar spring revolution’, after a spell of dwindling crowds, reported CNN. “Shake the world with the voice of Myanmar people's unity,” the organisers said in a statement. ANI

VISION FOCUSED FUND الرؤية للأسهم FOCUSSED FUND المنقطة			
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MARCH 2021			
The Vision Focused Fund (VFF) reported a positive 6.05% return for the quarter ending March 2021, with an ending NAV of 0.907.			
GCC markets are showing signs of optimism on expectations of global revival. IMF has revised the growth expectations for the GCC nations to higher levels from the projections in Oct. Although 2020 has been a unique year with the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting economic and daily life of people around the globe, we see signs of optimism with the rapid rollout of vaccination. Pressure on oil has eased with oil currently above the \$55 range. Markets reacted positively OPEC+ decision to start gradually curbing production cuts beginning May 2021.			
While GCC nation governments continue to lend the necessary support to the economy through various fiscal initiatives, the focus has now shifted on higher investment growth in the home economies. Saudi Arabia has unveiled multiple investment plans totaling SAR 27 trillion including to be invested in the economy over the next ten years. Similar investment initiatives have been announced in the region. The markets have reacted very positively to these key announcements.			
China, USA, followed by India, Japan and Germany are expected to lead the post-pandemic recovery according to IMF estimates. The mood on the street has shifted to cautious optimism, as various sectors of the economy limp back to normalcy. The downside risks from unpredictability of COVID resurgence in major economies lagging in inoculation programs still remain. In the GCC markets, on a YTD basis, Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi led the stock market performance, followed by Kuwait, Dubai and Oman.			
We see 2021 as a recovery year for industrials as global demand is picking up. We are also positive on financials from higher growth expectation from various national investment programs while also being supported through low-cost deposits for the near term. Additionally, Consumer durables is also witnessing an uptick in demand thereby signaling return of healthy demand back in the economy.			
We continue to look to the future with optimism and excitement. We are confident that Oman will continue to grow and prosper under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.			
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
	31 March 2021 RO (3 months)	31 March 2020 RO (3 months)	31 December 2020 RO (12 months)
INCOME			
Dividend income	5,548	11,526	26,997
Interest income	20	214	588
Foreign exchange gain	4,972	--	--
Net realised (loss) / gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	4,963	(224,447)	(169,598)
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	103,298	(228,245)	10,684
	118,801	(440,952)	(131,329)
EXPENSES			
Management fee	4,642	5,411	19,832
Brokerage expenses	2,374	--	4,877
Custodian service fees	3,382	1,082	3,966
Net foreign exchange loss	--	14,555	1,137
General and administration	3,405	4,703	14,295
	13,803	25,751	44,107
Net profit / (loss) and total comprehensive income for the period / year	104,998	(466,703)	(175,436)
Net profit / (loss) per unit	0.072	(0.274)	(0.105)
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION			
	31 March 2021 RO	31 March 2020 RO	31 December 2020 RO
NET ASSETS			
Assets			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	1,303,955	584,164	1,181,717
Cash and cash equivalents	26,741	563,346	45,735
Other receivables	1,335	8,052	--
Total assets	1,332,031	1,155,562	1,227,452
Liabilities			
Accruals and other payables	7,421	20,769	7,840
Total liabilities	7,421	20,769	7,840
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	1,324,610	1,134,793	1,219,612
Net asset value per unit	0.910	0.666	0.838

VISION REAL ECONOMY GCC FUND VISION REAL ECONOMY GCC FUND			
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MARCH 2021			
The Vision Real Economy Fund (VREF) ended the quarter with an 5.04% return in Q1-2021, with an NAV of RO 1.233.			
GCC markets are showing signs of optimism on expectations of global revival. IMF has revised the growth expectations for the GCC nations to higher levels from the projections in Oct. Although 2020 has been a unique year with the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting economic and daily life of people around the globe, we see signs of optimism with the rapid rollout of vaccination. Pressure on oil has eased with oil currently above the \$55 range. Markets reacted positively OPEC+ decision to start gradually curbing production cuts beginning May 2021.			
China, USA, followed by India, Japan and Germany are expected to lead the post-pandemic recovery according to IMF estimates. The mood on the street has shifted to cautious optimism, as various sectors of the economy limp back to normalcy. The downside risks from unpredictability of COVID resurgence in major economies lagging in inoculation programs still remain. In the GCC markets, on a YTD basis, Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi led the stock market performance, followed by Kuwait, Dubai and Oman.			
While GCC nation governments continue to lend the necessary support to the economy through various fiscal initiatives, the focus has now shifted on higher investment growth in the home economies. Saudi Arabia has unveiled multiple investment plans totaling SAR 27 trillion including to be invested in the economy over the next ten years. Similar investment initiatives have been announced in the region. The markets have reacted very positively to these key announcements.			
We see 2021 as a recovery year for industrials as global demand is picking up. Healthcare remains one of the top performing sectors. We are also positive on financials from higher growth expectation from various national investment programs while also being supported through low-cost deposits for the near term. Additionally, Consumer durables is also witnessing an uptick in demand thereby signaling return of healthy demand back in the economy.			
We continue to look to the future with optimism and excitement. We are confident that Oman will continue to grow and prosper under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.			
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
	31 March 2021 RO (3 months)	31 March 2020 RO (3 months)	31 December 2020 RO (12 months)
INCOME			
Dividend income	84,341	52,083	213,414
Other income	1,481	125	483
Foreign exchange gain	25,357	--	--
Net realised (loss) / gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	(21,850)	(179,457)	(276,598)
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	386,819	(1,413,254)	868,767
	476,348	(1,540,503)	806,066
EXPENSES			
Management fee	29,336	28,010	110,163
Custodian service fees	4,889	4,668	18,360
Net foreign exchange loss	--	42,874	6,228
General and administration	23,375	20,846	74,281
	57,600	96,398	209,032
Net profit / (loss) and total comprehensive income for the period / year	418,748	(1,636,901)	597,034
Net profit / (loss) per unit	0.062	(0.230)	0.085
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION			
	31 March 2021 RO	31 March 2020 RO	31 December 2020 RO
NET ASSETS			
Assets			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	7,446,348	5,545,928	7,658,736
Cash and cash equivalents	628,013	603,062	474,450
Other receivables	33,286	13,957	--
Total assets	8,107,647	6,162,947	8,133,186
Liabilities			
Counter Brokers Payable	111,057	--	--
Accruals and other payables	43,204	75,530	59,749
Total liabilities	154,261	75,530	59,749
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	7,953,386	6,087,417	8,073,437
Net asset value per unit	1.176	0.855	1.174

VISION AL KHAIR GCC FUND VISION AL KHAIR GCC FUND			
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MARCH 2021			
The Vision Al Khair Fund (VAKF) ended the first quarter of 2021 with a positive 8.91% return against 15.09% by the S&P GCC Shariah TR Index. The NAV of the VAKF was RO 1.119 at the end of March 2021.			
GCC markets are showing signs of optimism on expectations of global revival. IMF has revised the growth expectations for the GCC nations to higher levels from the projections in Oct. Although 2020 has been a unique year with the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting economic and daily life of people around the globe, we see signs of optimism with the rapid rollout of vaccination. Pressure on oil has eased with oil currently above the \$55 range. Markets reacted positively OPEC+ decision to start gradually curbing production cuts beginning May 2021.			
We expect national accounts to become robust with lower budget deficits due to recovery in the oil market. Part of the government spending will continue towards supporting sectors affected by the pandemic, while the bulk of it would continue to be invested in national vision plans. With over SR 27 trillion worth of investments planned over the next few years in the Saudi economy, we are positive on the Saudi financial, construction, materials and allied sector. Similar investment initiatives have been announced in the region. The markets have reacted very positively to these key announcements.			
The mood on the street has shifted to cautious optimism, as various sectors of the economy limp back to normalcy. The downside risks from unpredictability of COVID resurgence in major economies lagging in inoculation programs still remain. In the GCC markets, on a YTD basis, Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi led the stock market performance, followed by Kuwait, Dubai and Oman.			
We see 2021 as a recovery year for industrials as global demand is picking up. Telecom's growth potential continues accruing from the B2B and Enterprise with 5G. We are also positive on financials from higher growth expectation from various national investment programs while also being supported through low-cost deposits for the near term. Additionally, Consumer durables is also witnessing an uptick in demand thereby signaling return of healthy demand back in the economy.			
We continue to look to the future with optimism and excitement. We are confident that Oman will continue to grow and prosper under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.			
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
	31 March 2021 RO (3 months)	31 March 2020 RO (3 months)	31 December 2020 RO (12 months)
INCOME			
Dividend income	56,852	70,988	203,936
Profit (Muzn Account)	45	115	320
Other income	1,225	--	--
	58,122	71,103	204,256
Foreign Exchange gain	30,059	--	--
Net realised gain / (loss) on investments at fair value through profit or loss	5,489	(485,359)	(561,578)
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	718,031	(1,528,880)	571,331
	811,701	(1,943,136)	214,009
EXPENSES			
Management fee	30,967	31,614	116,924
Fund management body fees	8,630	8,702	35,000
Shariah board fees	2,466	2,486	10,000
Brokerage expenses (transaction cost)	5,089	5,526	8,565
Custodian fees	5,161	5,269	19,487
Foreign exchange loss	--	50,879	8,940
General and administrative expenses	8,813	8,710	33,531
	61,126	113,186	232,447
Net profit / (loss) and total comprehensive income for the period / year	750,575	(2,056,322)	(18,438)
Net profit / (loss) per unit	0.094	(0.228)	(0.002)
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION			
	31 March 2021 RO	31 March 2020 RO	31 December 2020 RO
NET ASSETS			
Assets			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	8,544,390	5,979,603	8,191,159
Cash and cash equivalents	383,512	689,592	226,909
Other receivables	22,648	43,118	--
Total assets	8,950,550	6,712,313	8,418,068
Liabilities			
Accruals and other payables	169,628	164,265	90,586
Total liabilities	169,628	164,265	90,586
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	8,780,922	6,548,048	8,327,482
Net asset value per unit	1.102	0.779	1.028





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SPORTS

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New Zealand becomes No.1 ranked ODI team

Australia is second with 118 points while India and England are both on 115, the former ahead on decimal points



ICC RANKINGS: New Zealand, who defeated Bangladesh 3-0 in their only ODI series during the past year, have advanced two slots in the ICC Men's ODI Team Rankings.

DUBAI: New Zealand has replaced reigning World Champions England as the number one ranked side in the ODI rankings but England has consolidated its position at the top of the T20I table after the annual update carried out on Monday.

These updates eliminate results from 2017-18 and half the weighting of matches played in 2019-20 which includes the 2019 World Cup. New Zealand, who defeated

Bangladesh 3-0 in their only ODI series during the past year, have advanced two slots in the ICC Men's ODI Team Rankings after gaining three rating points to reach an aggregate of 121. Australia is second with 118 points while India and England are both on 115, the former ahead on decimal points.

England's slip down to the

fourth position comes in the second annual update since they won the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup at Lord's in the summer of 2019. In the past 12 months, they have suffered 2-1 series losses to Australia and India, as well as an ODI loss to Ireland.

The latest update, which rates all matches played since May 2020 at 100 per cent and those of

the previous two years at 50 per cent, sees Australia move up two places from fourth to second and India drop one place to third. The West Indies have overtaken Sri Lanka to the ninth position.

The Netherlands have been allowed to retain their ranking despite only having played four ODIs during the new rating period, since their scheduled fixtures were postponed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

England remains the top-ranked side in the ICC Men's T20I Team Rankings, extending their lead over India to five points. During this period, they drew a three-match series against Pakistan 1-1, defeated Australia 2-1 and South Africa 3-0 before losing an away series to India by a 3-2 margin.

New Zealand has also gained in the annual T20I update, moving up from fifth to third after series wins over the West Indies, Pakistan, Australia and Bangladesh. Australia has moved the other way, down from third to fifth. **ANI**

Pankaj Khimji becomes new Chairman of OC

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Top cricket administrator Pankaj Khimji has now become the new Chairman of Oman Cricket (OC) after the post fell vacant due to the demise of its founding chairman Kanak Khimji in February.

Known as voice of Oman at International Cricket Council and top cricket platforms, Pankaj was recently appointed Vice-President of Asian Cricket Council (ACC).

He has been instrumental in Oman's growing stature as a rising force in international cricket apart from leading the national cricket team on international tours as Chef de Mission.

As Oman Cricket's representative in the highest echelons of international cricket, his efforts have resulted in unprecedented events and activities taking place in the Sultanate.

The country has now become an established cricket centre with



Pankaj Khimji.

a host of international events and tournaments to its credit.

In another development, Younis Sakhi Mahmood Al Balushi, Alkesh Joshi and Paul Sheridan have been inducted into Oman Cricket's Board of Directors. Their new role will continue till the next OC Board elections. The trio was serving Oman Cricket as Advisors to the Board till date.

FOOTBALL

Barcelona come from behind to keep La Liga hopes alive

MADRID: FC Barcelona came from behind to keep their La Liga hopes alive with a 3-2 win in Valencia on Sunday.

The win keeps Barca level on points with Real Madrid, two points behind league leaders Atletico Madrid, who visit the Camp Nou next weekend in what promises to be a season-defining game.

Things were looking grim for Barca when Gabriel Paulista headed Valencia in front in an entertaining game five minutes after the break. The Barca players protested a possible block on Marc Andre Ter Stegen, but the goal stood after a VAR check.

At that point Barca was five points behind Atletico, but Valencia defender Toni Lato gave them a lifeline with a handball seven

minutes later and although Messi's penalty was saved by Jasper Cillessen, Sergio Busquets kept the ball alive and Messi scored from close range.

Antoine Griezmann put Barca in front after Cillessen saved Frenkie de Jong's header and Messi then fired in a stunning free-kick off the post to make it 3-1 in the 69th minute.

Carlos Soler set up an exciting finish to the game with an 83rd-minute thunderbolt, but despite a few nervous moments Barca held on for a vital win. Atletico Madrid rode their luck to win 1-0 against relegation-threatened Elche on Saturday, thanks to Marcos Llorente's 23rd-minute shot which took a big deflection on its way into the net. **ANI**



COVID-19

RCB-KKR clash rescheduled as two players test positive

AHMEDABAD: The Indian Premier League (IPL) match between Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) and Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) slated to be played on Monday evening has been rescheduled for a later date.

"Varun Chakravarthy and Sandeep Warrier were found to be positive in the third round of testing in the last four days. All other team members have tested negative for COVID-19," the IPL said in an official statement. Both the players have isolated themselves from the rest of the squad. The Medical Team is in continuous touch with the duo and are monitoring their health. Meanwhile, the Kolkata Knight Riders have now moved towards a daily testing routine to identify any other possible cases and treat them at the earliest.

The Medical Team is also de-

termining the close and casual contacts of the two positive cases during the 48 hours prior to collection of the sample that returned the positive test results.

The BCCI and the Kolkata Knight Riders prioritise the health and safety of everyone involved and all measures are being taken in that endeavour.

Earlier on Monday, speaking to ANI, a BCCI official had confirmed that there are cases in the KKR camp and the RCB camp isn't too keen to take the field against them. "Varun and Sandeep tested positive and that made the RCB camp wary of the situation. The game is set to be postponed," the official had said.

India registered a slight dip in COVID-19 cases as it registered 3,68,147 new coronavirus infections and 3,417 related deaths in

the last 24 hours, informed the union health ministry on Monday morning. With this, the cumulative count of the cases has gone up to 1,99,25,604.

Before the start of the tournament, Delhi Capitals' Axar Patel had tested positive for Covid-19. Kolkata Knight Riders batsman Nitish Rana also tested positive, but he also returned a negative test before the start of the tournament. Few groundstaff members at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai had also returned positive tests, but all the 10 IPL matches went smoothly in Mumbai.

With the second COVID-19 wave rampant across the country, there have been reports of some foreign players being wary of the situation and how they will return to their respective countries at the end of the 14th edition of the IPL. **ANI**

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has declined, with prices for delivery by July 2021 reaching \$64.48, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by 78 cents. - **ONA**

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 3,789.45 points, up 0.03 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up 0.61 per cent at 537.52 points. Madina Takaful, up 5.68 per cent, was the top gainer while Al Batinah Development, down 8.16 per cent, was the top loser.

OQ commissions its \$826mn liquefied petroleum gas facility

Built with a total investment of \$826 million, OQ-LPG is the first-of-its-kind gas treatment project in Oman to extract LPG and condensate from OQ's gas network



HIGHEST STANDARDS: The facility, built as per the highest standards in safety, quality, and technical integrity, consists of an extraction plant, a fractionation facility, storage tanks, shipping facilities, and an interconnection pipeline system. - **ONA**

MUSCAT: OQ announced the commissioning of one of Oman's vital energy extraction projects, the OQ Liquefied Petroleum Gas (OQ-LPG) facility.

Built with a total investment of \$826 million, OQ-LPG is the first of its kind gas treatment project in Oman to extract LPG and condensate from OQ's gas network.

With its centrepiece extraction facilities located in Salalah Free Zone adjoining the Port of Salalah,

OQ-LPG has the potential to create a new energy hub in Salalah centring on the production of LPG, a commercially valuable and economically competitive fuel with

growing demand in domestic and international markets.

While reiterating the position of Oman as an energy exporter, it will optimise the Sultanate's gas value

chain by recovering propane, butane and condensate for these markets.

The facility, built as per the highest standards in safety, quality, and technical integrity, consists of an

extraction plant, a fractionation facility, storage tanks, shipping facilities, and an interconnection pipeline system. The plant will process approximately 8 million Standard Cubic Metres per Day (Sm3/d) of lean gas and will produce around 304-kilo tonnes per annum (KTA) of LPG products composed of 155 KTA of Propane (C3), 111 KTA of Butane (C4) and 38 KTA of Condensate (C5+).

Marking this important milestone, Sultan Ali Al-Burtumani, Vice President of Business Development OQ Downstream, stated "OQ-LPG plant is positioned as a strong contributor to the national economy through achieving the best utilisation of natural gas resources to extract liquefied gas. This will help in meeting the LPG needs of Dhofar governorate and southern Oman in general."

He added that OQ-LPG will further uplift our standards to provide better quality services for our clients and optimise stakeholder value. He pointed out that OQ is joining hands with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals to maximise the extraction of natural gas liquids (NGLs); the richer molecules within the nature for petrochemical industries developments.

OQ-LPG plant's production is expected to reach a total of 300,000 metric tonnes (MT) per annum.

The plant holds immense potential in terms of revenue generation, In-Country Value (ICV) and community development. Besides deriving economic value through propane, butane and condensate sales, the plant will generate potential downstream business, such as petrochemicals.

During all its phases, the project has been promoting ICV in the gas sector as the project spent \$260 million of ICV, with over 150 SMEs, 33 sub-contracts and Omani registered vendors.

OQ-LPG had several corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in Dhofar including the supply of medical equipment to hospitals and building schools.

The commissioning of OQ-LPG, which is expected to be completed by mid-May 2021 forms the final technical requirement before the plant starts commercial operations.

The project team recently celebrated the production of the first on-spec product, which is considered one of the milestones during the commissioning phase. -**ONA**

GLOBAL EVENT

Oman gears up for participation in Expo 2020 Dubai

DUBAI: The General Commission for the Sultanate's Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai organised a visit to the Expo 2020 Dubai site from May 1 to 3, 2021, in coordination with the authorities concerned in preparation for the Sultanate's participation in the international event. Expo 2020 is planned to commence on October 1, 2021, and will extend until March 31, 2022.

The Omani delegation participating during the visit included Mohsin bin Khamis Al Balushi, Commissioner General of the Sultanate at Expo 2020 Dubai, Sayyid Saeed bin Sultan Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, Sheikh Salem bin Muslim Al Kathiri, Head of the Sultanate of Oman Commercial Office in Dubai, and several officials from the public and private sector institutions involved in the Sultanate's participation.

An invitation was also extended to the Sultanate by Expo 2020



Dubai to participate in the International Participants Meeting taking place in Dubai on May 4-5.

During the visit, the organising committee met and discussed the activities and programs planned during the six months of the event.

The delegation paid a special visit to the Sultanate's pavilion to find out about the latest developments and preparations related to the workflow of the pavilion.

It is worth noting that the pavil-

ion has been built and designed in a distinctive modern style inspired by one of the icons of nature in the Sultanate, which is the frankincense tree. Its construction is divided to tell the story of the frankincense life cycle through its five zones relevant to the central theme and the three sub-themes of Expo 2020 Dubai. In addition to the modern design, the latest technologies have been used to present and highlight the pavilion's story to make

the visitor's journey a fascinating and memorable experience.

Mohsin Al Balushi confirmed that the operational level of the Sultanate's pavilion at Expo Dubai has reached 89 per cent, with most of the components of the pavilion completed.

Expos are global events dedicated to finding solutions to humanity's fundamental challenges by offering a journey inside a chosen theme through engaging and immersive activities.

The first World Expo to be held in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia region, Expo 2020 Dubai will bring together millions of visitors and more than 200 participants - including 190-plus countries, as well as multilateral organisations, businesses and educational establishments - to build bridges, inspire action and explore real-life solutions to some of the biggest challenges facing our planet today.

ECONOMY

Asia Pacific growth outlooks diverge amid recovery from pandemic shock: Fitch Ratings

HONG KONG: Asia Pacific economies are recovering from the initial shock of the COVID-19 pandemic but intra-regional disparities in the magnitude of shock and durability of growth outlooks are increasingly evident, Fitch Ratings has said.

The underlying economic outlook for North Asia, Australia and New Zealand remain better than for Southeast Asia and India partly due to their greater success in containing the virus.

Strong global demand

North Asia in particular is also benefitting from strong global demand for electronics and semiconductors, said Fitch.

The pandemic continues to challenge regional growth outlooks, as highlighted by a renewed

surge of cases in India, which can present risks to the forecast of 12.8 per cent growth in the fiscal year ending March 2022.

Potential relief

Vaccination programmes offer potential relief, but progress has mostly been slow in A-Pac and further challenges may arise from variant COVID-19 strains, said Fitch.

Support to counter the pandemic's effects continues to weigh on credit metrics in most sovereigns. Only China is making a concerted effort to withdraw stimulus.

Further waves of the virus can cause the pace of fiscal consolidation among A-Pac sovereigns to diverge from our assumptions over 2021-22. -**ANI**

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MARKET

MSX index ends higher



Madina Takaful, up 5.68 per cent, was the top gainer, while Al Batinah Development, down 8.16 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 3,789.45 points, up 0.03 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up 0.61 per cent at 537.52 points. Madina Takaful, up 5.68 per cent, was the top gainer, while Al Batinah Development, down 8.16 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Madina Takaful were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1,121 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR4 million, with more than 30 million shares changing hands. Out of 51 traded stocks, 16 advanced, 8 declined and 27 remained unchanged. At the session close, Local investors were net buyers for OMR32,000 while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for OMR29,000 followed by foreign investors for OMR3,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 5,858.49 points, up by 0.09 per cent. Madina Takaful, Oman & Emirates Holding, National Life Insurance, Al Anwar Investment and Al Omaniya Financial Ser-

vices were up 5.68 per cent, 2.17 per cent, 1.52 per cent, 1.10 per cent and 0.99 per cent respectively. Al Batinah Development, Muscat Finance, Ominvest and National Bank Oman were down 8.16 per cent, 2.13 per cent, 0.64 per cent and 0.63 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,394.57 points, up 0.31 per cent. Raysut Cement, Gulf International Chemical, Al Maha Ceramic, Al Anwar Ceramic and Oman Cables Industry were up 3.23 per cent, 2.91 per cent, 1.33 per cent, 0.58 per cent and 0.47 per cent respectively. Galfar Engineering, National Aluminum Product and Jazeera Steel Product were down 1.79 per cent, 0.89 per cent and 0.58 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.12 per cent before closing at 1,598.88 points. Al Batinah Power, SMN Power Holding, Oman National Engineering, Oman Investment & Financials and National Gas were up 1.79 per cent, 1.45 per cent, 1.08 per cent, 0.98 per cent and 0.73 per cent respectively. Ooredoo was the only loser by 0.51 per cent. — United Securities

MUSCAT SECURITIES MARKET

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, MAY 3

	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PD	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	PDA VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	1,138,741	327,656	96	0.282	0.297	0.282	0.288	0.279	0.009	3.228	0.293	0.291	0.306	0.100	57,600,000
OM0000000005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	354,650	107,677	44	0.302	0.308	0.300	0.304	0.300	0.004	1.333	0.300	0.300	0.300	0.100	16,720,000
OM0000001722	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	1,642,297	151,302	59	0.094	0.094	0.090	0.092	0.091	0.001	1.099	0.091	0.090	0.091	0.100	18,400,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FIN.S	3,850,947	393,780	170	0.102	0.104	0.101	0.102	0.101	0.001	0.990	0.102	0.102	0.103	0.100	29,777,387
OM0000001525	OMAN INVST & FIN.	1,217,000	124,756	34	0.103	0.103	0.102	0.103	0.102	0.001	0.980	0.102	0.102	0.100	24,411,000	
OM0000001169	NATIONAL GAS	59,063	8,167	15	0.137	0.141	0.137	0.138	0.137	0.001	0.730	0.141	0.138	0.139	0.100	11,730,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	50,000	17,400	3	0.348	0.348	0.348	0.348	0.346	0.002	0.578	0.348	0.330	0.346	0.100	103,082,361
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDSTR	222,000	191,213	30	0.856	0.872	0.856	0.860	0.856	0.004	0.467	0.864	0.868	0.864	0.100	77,142,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	129,600	32,644	17	0.250	0.254	0.250	0.252	0.251	0.001	0.398	0.250	0.246	0.251	0.100	83,373,623
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSUR.	63,810	24,120	10	0.378	0.378	0.378	0.378	0.378	0.000	0.000	0.378	0.376	0.378	0.100	37,800,000
OM0000002226	AHLI BANK	50,000	5,350	2	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.106	0.107	0.100	208,613,349
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	122,000	40,006	15	0.328	0.328	0.326	0.328	0.328	0.000	0.000	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.100	20,070,002
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INV.	414,056	36,902	34	0.090	0.090	0.088	0.089	0.089	0.000	0.000	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.100	8,010,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,265,769	493,994	18	0.392	0.394	0.390	0.390	0.390	0.000	0.000	0.392	0.392	0.396	0.100	1,394,045,169
OM0000003026	OMAN TELCOOM	50,100	39,276	4	0.794	0.794	0.794	0.794	0.794	0.000	0.000	0.794	0.790	0.794	0.100	588,000,000
OM0000003234	RENAISSANCE SER.	17,339	6,962	7	0.400	0.402	0.400	0.402	0.402	0.000	0.000	0.402	0.402	0.404	0.100	95,036,820
OM0000003398	SOHAR INT. BANK	2,096,818	188,793	12	0.090	0.091	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.091	0.090	0.090	0.100	219,105,606
OM0000003620	VISION INSURANCE	58,750	4,250	4	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.000	0.000	0.072	0.071	0.072	0.100	7,200,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	201,720	78,160	22	0.390	0.390	0.386	0.388	0.390	-0.002	-0.513	0.386	0.388	0.398	0.100	252,566,361
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PROD.	212,500	72,048	21	0.338	0.340	0.336	0.340	0.342	-0.002	-0.585	0.338	0.338	0.340	0.100	42,465,306
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	69,775	19,796	5	0.312	0.312	0.310	0.310	0.312	-0.002	-0.641	0.310	0.312	0.314	0.100	250,408,422
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	818,182	37,688	38	0.046	0.047	0.046	0.046	0.047	-0.001	-2.128	0.046	0.046	0.050	0.100	14,128,731
Total	22	14,099,005	2,401,924	660												
Parallel Market																
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	6,033,809	563,019	227	0.091	0.095	0.091	0.093	0.088	0.005	5.682	0.094	0.093	0.094	0.100	16,275,000
OM0000002028	GULF INT. CHEM.	137,000	14,459	22	0.105	0.107	0.105	0.106	0.103	0.003	2.913	0.107	0.106	0.107	0.100	2,226,000
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	188,612	8,926	15	0.047	0.048	0.047	0.047	0.046	0.001	2.174	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.100	5,728,125
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	54,000	3,078	4	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.056	0.001	1.748	0.057	0.056	0.057	0.100	38,468,584
OM0000007043	NATIONAL LIFE INS.	20,000	8,000	2	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.394	0.006	1.523	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.100	106,000,000
OM0000004348	SMN POWER HOLDING	36,475	2,553	2	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.069	0.001	1.496	0.070	0.068	0.072	0.100	13,974,492
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT. ENG.	63,249	5,972	8	0.095	0.095	0.093	0.094	0.093	0.001	1.075	0.093	0.093	0.094	0.100	12,220,000
OM0000001517	HESBC BANK OMAN	3,049,855	399,980	14	0.320	0.320	0.310	0.310	0.310	0.000	0.000	0.320	0.310	0.310	0.100	204,904,905
OM0000001806	MUSCAT INSURANCE	200	70	1	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.000	0.000	0.350	0.350	0.384	1,000	3,858,798
OM0000001822	UNITED POWER	33,098	33,594	11	1.015	1.015	1.015	1.015	1.015	0.000	0.000	1.015	1.015	1.020	1,000	812,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INV.	7,000	154	1	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.000	0.000	0.022	0.022	0.023	0.100	5,557,330
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MKK	1,300	1,108	2	0.852	0.852	0.852	0.854	0.854	0.000	0.000	0.852	0.852	0.852	0.100	76,380,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	33,000	1,485	5	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.000	0.000	0.045	0.044	0.045	0.100	15,711,498
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	1,404,404	150,368	3	0.107	0.110	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.110	0.107	0.110	0.100	320,609,604
OM0000003281	TANGER FINANCE	5,000	370	1	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.074	0.078	0.100	15,763,660
OM0000003711	SOHAR POWER	530	24	1	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.000	0.000	0.045	0.042	0.045	0.100	9,945,450
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	346,796	32,293	18	0.093	0.094	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.000	0.000	0.094	0.093	0.094	0.100	139,500,000
OM0000004469	SHARQIA DESALIN	10,000	1,210	1	0.121	0.121	0.121	0.121	0.121	0.000	0.000	0.121	0.110	0.121	0.100	11,854,061
OM0000004735	SEMBOCORP SALALAH	90,000	7,200	6	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.079	0.080	0.100	76,363,756
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	31,058	1,770	2	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.000	0.000	0.057	0.056	0.057	0.100	40,721,161
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	5,817	473	1	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.100	26,411,500
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	90,539	4,306	12	0.047	0.048	0.047	0.048	0.048	0.000	0.000	0.048	0.047	0.049	0.100	70,204,870
OM0000006912	AHLIA INSURANCE	3,500	1,120	1	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.310	0.310	0.000	0.000	0.320	0.310	0.320	0.100	31,000,000
OM0000007084	MCT DESALINATE	320	28	1	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.100	15,686,435
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	1,265,698	201,071	8	0.158	0.160	0.158	0.159	0.160	-0.001	-0.625	0.160	0.158	0.160	0.100	258,525,471
OM0000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD.	280,000	31,040	22	0.112	0.112	0.110	0.111	0.112	-0.001	-0.893	0.110	0.109	0.110	0.100	3,728,431
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEER	2,767,394	182,370	64	0.055	0.056	0.055	0.055	0.056	-0.001	-1.786	0.055	0.055	0.056	0.100	15,945,935
Total	27	15,947,365	1,536,351	455												

CHINA

Smartphone shipment up

BEIJING: China's smartphone market recorded 30 per cent year-on-year growth in the first quarter of the year, according to an industrial report. China, together with other Pacific regions, has greatly contributed to the accelerated recovery of the global smartphone market. - Xinhua

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FEATURES

GREEN CONSTRUCTION: CREATING EMISSIONS-FREE BUILDING SITES

Building sites produce emissions and air pollution. Cities, developers and construction machinery manufacturers are looking for ways to clean them up.



The dust, smell, noise and heat from the Hong Kong’s many construction sites are often “unbearable” for many of the city’s residents, particularly in its hot, muggy summer. “No matter if it’s in winter or summer,” said 28-year-old Dorothy Wong. “It’s dusty and stinky from diesel. And so noisy that I usually have to cover my ears when I pass by them. In Hong Kong, it’s not easy to go around them as the city is rather packed.”

Aside from being a nuisance for the city’s people, machinery and fuel consumption on construction sites also contribute to air pollution in the form of nitrogen oxides and particulate matter, which can damage the heart and lungs after prolonged exposure.

Building and construction is a highly polluting sector, making up about 39 per cent of the world’s energy-related CO2 emissions. While there’s a lack of data on how much construction sites contribute to the overall figure, one study of a building complex in Korea found that on-

site construction contributed to 4.2 per cent of total emissions.

Part of the problem is the industry’s reliance on carbon-emitting diesel generators to power energy-hungry machines like tower cranes. That’s why in 2019 Hong Kong’s major developer Gammon Construction started experimenting with lithium-ion batteries as a cleaner power source instead.

Electric instead of diesel

Each Enertainer, as the battery systems produced by local startup Ampd Energy are called, can potentially replace two diesel generators that would power four tower cranes and slash on-site carbon emissions by over 80 per cent.

“A [diesel] generator in Hong Kong that powers a crane might produce around 140 tons of carbon a year,” said Julian de Jonquieres, Ampd’s Chief Operating Officer. “But the electricity to charge our Enertainers would be around 25 tonnes.”

Gammon Construction has since used storage systems, housed in non-descript white metal boxes, to power heavy machinery at seven of its sites. And as urban populations and the de-

mand for new buildings grow, the hunt is on for more ways to clean up construction sites, with cities at the forefront.

Cities lead the green construction charge

In 2019, Norway’s capital Oslo pioneered what it says was the world’s first zero-emissions construction site when it turned a busy street into a pedestrian zone using mainly electric machinery.

The switch from fossil fuel-powered equipment saved 35,000 litres (9,246 gallons) of diesel and 92,500 kilograms (203,930 pounds) of carbon emissions, according to local authorities.

Oslo, alongside other metropolises such as Los Angeles, Budapest and Mexico City, has pledged to cut emissions by at least half for all new buildings and infrastructure projects by 2030, as well as using only zero-emissions construction machinery by 2025.

The switch is slightly easier for Oslo compared to other cities, because it generates 98% of its electricity from renewable sources like hydropower. Still, finding fossil fuel free machinery and ensur-

ing reliable power supply for it has proved a challenge, according to Nils Gelting Andresen, who works with the city’s climate agency.

New tender criteria that encourage construction sites to go emissions-free, as well as city funding for machinery that runs on sustainable biofuels, electricity or district heating could help. But, says Gelting Andresen, there needs to be a global push for green construction sites to fuel demand for such equipment.

“The most important work to ensure an increase in demand is international cooperation — as Oslo is a very small city — on a global scale,” Andresen told DW. “In order to meet the high demand for on-site power, new technology and solutions will be necessary, and we already see these emerging now — like batteries and mobile charging solutions.”

The search for alternatives

One company trying to meet the so far limited demand for green machines is Wacker Neuson. Based in Germany, they’ve been producing electric construction equipment since 2015, including excavators, wheel loaders and

battery-powered rammers.

“Almost all of our zero-emission machines are battery-powered and can be operated independently of the power grid,” according to the company.

Between September 2020 and February 2021, the Danish capital Copenhagen cut carbon emissions from construction equipment by 85 per cent on its first emissions-free site after switching to Wacker Neuson’s electric machinery.

But making the change is pricey. For instance, hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) diesel is 50 per cent more expensive than traditional diesel, said Christina Schuln-Zeuthen, manager of the city’s construction department.

And the use of larger electrified machinery has shown to be more expensive,” Schuln-Zeuthen told DW. “Hopefully, prices will decrease, as the market is moving towards climate-friendly solutions.”

Construction sites just the beginning

Construction sites are just one source of emissions from the building sector. Creating cement, the world’s main building mate-

rial, is highly resource and energy-intensive, accounting for some 8 per cent of global CO2 emissions.

Operating buildings, that is powering lighting, heating and cooling them, also accounts for about 28 per cent of global emissions.

Albert Chan, a professor at Hong Kong Polytechnic University’s Department of Building and Real Estate, said cleaning up the construction phase of building is critical, but it can’t stop there.

“In the world of sustainability, the operation phase is deemed more significant and complex in ensuring long-term sustainability of buildings throughout their lifetime,” said Chan.

Still, Chan believes emissions-free construction sites could be a driving force in cleaning up the building sector and that sustainable machinery “will lead to a worldwide transformation.”

For residents of cities, such as Hong Kong, the change can’t come soon enough. “It would be ideal for construction companies to reduce the extra heat and dust they release from the construction sites,” said Wong. “But I know it’s going to be quite difficult.” —DW

ROUND-UP

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In Oman, the Lincoln range includes the family-size Lincoln Navigator, the Lincoln Aviator and the Lincoln Corsair

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The Navigator is available with no additional payment (Since 5% VAT on net selling price will be borne by Lincoln Oman), Cash Gift RO 9000, Service – 5 Years / 100,000 km, and Registration (1 year). The Navigator combines modern luxury with advanced technology – elevating family travel to first class. A twin-turbo V6 engine that can produce 450



horsepower provides smooth power whenever you need it, delivered through a 10-speed transmission. Navigator's lighter, high-strength aluminium-alloy body helps create a more refined ride.

The Lincoln Aviator is available with no additional payment (Since 5% VAT on net selling price will be borne by Lincoln Oman), Cash Gift RO 8400, Service – 5 Years / 100,000 km, and Registration (1 year). The Aviator is packed with advanced technologies that let the luxury SUV rise to greet you and scan the road ahead to glide through the uneven pavement.

Aviator offers the kind of capability premium clients requires in a three-row SUV, with available all-wheel drive. The standard twin-turbocharged 3.0-litre V6 engine, paired with a 10-speed Select-Shift® automatic transmission, delivers an impressive 400 horsepower and 562 Nm of torque for effortless acceleration.

The Lincoln Corsair is available with no additional payment (Since 5% VAT on net selling price will be borne by Lincoln Oman), Cash Gift RO 5500, Service – 5 Years / 100,000 km, and Registration (1 year). The Corsair embraces elements of both

the full-size Lincoln Navigator and three-row Lincoln Aviator while building on these cues with even more flair. Painstakingly sculpted in clay, Corsair features exquisite contouring throughout the body section of the door, offering a deep landscape of curvature and relief with a fast-falling roofline. Staying true to its Quiet Flight DNA, Corsair is engineered to deliver the effortless drive experience and sensation of gliding over the road. A standard 2.0-litre with a targeted 245 horsepower is mated to a new 8-speed automatic transmission for agile performance.

CHARITY

Omantel launches Al Noor Waqf with Imam Jabir Bin Zaid Waqf Foundation

MUSCAT: In its continued service to the community and to encourage the spirit of giving, Omantel, the Sultanate's leading integrated telecom services provider, has announced establishment of Al Noor Waqf, in association with the Imam Jabir Bin Zaid Waqf (Endowment) Foundation.

Omantel is proudly the first corporate entity to have been chosen by the foundation for this initiative, under which it will support the foundation in extending its messages.

Omantel, using its 2021 Ramadan Campaign, will bolster the foundation's efforts in raising awareness about Waqf and promoting community participation. Al Noor Waqf will form an integral part of charity in Omani society through which people can donate towards a cause, social projects or sponsor a person. Funds received as donations will be invested to

reap returns, which will be re-invested to build the endowment so that it continues to benefit successive generations.

Commenting on the objectives of this initiative, Laila Muhammad Al Wahaibi, Manager of Corporate Social Responsibility at Omantel said, "The most important objectives of this initiative are to raise social awareness about charity and Waqf, strengthen the Foundation's connection with society in general and with Waqf institutions, to enable people contribute towards projects of the Foundation through charity, and to encourage the community to show solidarity in providing access to education and other assistance for financially weaker families.

She further pointed out that Omantel is a medium to inform people on how to participate. The Company will use its various communication vehicles such as text



messages, social media accounts and its website to lead members of the society to be a part of the Foundation's initiative. The link to the initiative <https://jabirfoundation.om/waqfAlnoor> is available in Ramadan Drive section of Omantel's website.

On his part, Eng. Ahmed bin Saleh Al Rashdi, CEO, Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf Foundation, said, "This cooperation with Omantel is part of our efforts to come together with institutions and corporates to promote the culture of an endowment. The Al Noor Waqf

initiative aims to encourage community members to participate and donate an endowment (waqf) share to those they love, be it family members or friends. The Foundation will invest these funds and disburses their proceeds to serve the education and people faced humanitarian conditions."

Al Rashdi reiterated, "The first such cooperation is with Omantel and we aim to expand this partnership and take it to newer heights."

Other social responsibility initiatives forming Omantel's 2021 Ramadan Campaign include home renovations for needy families in cooperation with Dar Al Atta'a and the Fak Kurbah initiative, a redressal channel created in partnership with the Omani Lawyers Association. This partnership is funded by donations made by Omantel's employees in addition to the company's contribution.

Omantel is the Sultanate's first

and leading integrated telecommunications services provider, enabling the digital society to flourish, allowing new ways of doing business and delivering a world of information, news and entertainment. While striving to ensure optimum customer satisfaction, Omantel plays a key social role to provide the required support and subsidy to all sectors of the Omani society.

The Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf Foundation manages funds and invests them in its real estate projects. The proceeds from such projects are used to help needy students and families. The Foundation has a set of initiatives in the educational field, including the initiative to strengthen the Waqf through training 3,000 people interested in Waqf work. Moreover, part of the proceeds is re-invested to ensure sustainability and continuity of such Waqf funds.

OFFER

Make your dream of owning INFINITI QX80 come true this Ramadan

MUSCAT: Infiniti Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, is offering a plethora of rewards for customers buying the full-size luxury SUV INFINITI QX80.

Customers who purchase INFINITI QX80 during the Ramadan promotion are eligible for an assured cash gift, free registration, free window film and ceramic paint protection coat, free periodic vehicle service package and free AAA Assistance Card. The special offer is valid till June 6, 2021.

A senior spokesperson at INFINITI Oman said, "INFINITI QX80 vows to present drivers with even more style and luxury. This is a good time to buy the QX80 which features a range of available drive-assist technologies. Blind Spot Intervention® (BSI®), Lane Departure Prevention (LDP), Distance Control Assist (DCA), and an updated Intelligent Cruise Control system are all included, while Android Auto™ and Apple CarPlay™ continue to bring enhanced connectivity across the QX80 range."

Assured cash gift

Customers buying INFINITI QX80 will get an assured cash gift of OMR 4000. The cash gift can be adjusted in the down payment of the car if the customer opts for it.

All customers purchasing INFINITI QX80 during this scheme period will be eligible for free



first-year vehicle registration. Applicable to the extent of private registration only. For commercial registrations, an additional amount including passing needs to be borne by the customer.

All customers purchasing INFINITI QX80 during this scheme will be eligible for free window film (side and rear glass) and ceramic paint protection coat.

All customers purchasing INFINITI QX80 during this scheme

period will be eligible for a free periodic maintenance service package for three years/60,000 km (whichever is earlier).

All customers purchasing INFINITI QX80 during the scheme period will receive a free AAA assistance card for the first year only.

The 2021 INFINITI QX80 full-size luxury SUV, features added equipment, innovative new technologies and stylish features befitting its luxury status, in addition to

a new 'Black Edition' grade.

Key additions to the flagship model include the new generation INFINITI InTouch infotainment, Premium In-Vehicle-Infotainment (P-IVI) System featuring two HD display screens, 3D maps, Apple Car Play and Android Auto capabilities. A further notable addition to the model is the BOSE Performance Series with 17 speakers for high fidelity audio experience with surround sound technology.

VIRTUAL PAYMENT

Mazoon Electricity urges customers to use its easy, safe e-payment channels

MUSCAT: Encouraging customers to adopt innovative and accessible technologies, Mazoon Electricity Company, the leading electricity provider in Oman, has advised customers to use its e-payments platforms to pay bills for the ease and convenience it offers.

It has reminded its customers that e-payments can help fight COVID-19 and further the effectiveness of the social distancing measures announced by Oman's Supreme Committee dealing with the pandemic situation.

Advising them to switch to a virtual payment method like online payments or payment links, Mazoon Electricity reminds customers that it will keep users safe and help them observe social responsibility.

Mazoon Electricity offers several smart, hassle-free and interactive options to pay bills. Customers can pay their bill online from anywhere by accessing their account through Mazoon Electricity's e-channels. They can pay their electricity bills through mobile applications of companies such as ONEIC Bill & Pay, OIFC Khedmah or any self-service kiosks available at Mazoon Electricity, ONEIC or OIFC premises. Customers can also pay through an electronic portal: <https://oss.nama.om>.

Customers can also use the



innovative Interactive Voice Response (IVR) payment system to pay their bills. The IVR system allows consumers to make an automated payment over the phone without interacting with a live person. Through the innovative service available via Mazoon Electricity's call centre (80077771), customers can pay their pending bills over an exclusively customised and secure IVR system.

The company has urged its customers to activate the Green Bill service to obtain an electronic copy of their monthly bill via email registered with the company or by updating their data and providing the company with their latest email address. Customers can register for the Green Bill by following the link: <https://mzec.nama.om/en-us/pages/greenbill.aspx>

MASERATI'S FIRST HYBRID SUV



New Maserati Levante Hybrid's global digital premiere

MODENA: The Maserati Levante Hybrid is presented to the world in both a physical and digital World Premiere event. The dual nature of Maserati is shown at the Shanghai Auto Show for its live presentation, and, for the rest of the world, in a virtual launch event on the brand's website (houseof.maserati.com).

With the brand's first electrified SUV, Maserati takes a major step forward in its strategy for electrification, which began last year with the Ghibli Hybrid.

"Faster. Greener. Unique", Levante Hybrid is faster than diesel, more sustainable than diesel or gasoline, and unique in its specific characteristics.

The Maserati SUV, which has already made an impact in the history of the Brand with its record-breaking figures, now presses ahead into a future in which all new Trident models will be electrified.

Maserati is innovative by nature, and with Levante it pursues the philosophy behind its entry into the world of electrification: the aim of improving performance while staying true to the Brand's values, delivering speed and agility while saving fuel and reinforcing the Trident's dedication to driving pleasure and luxury. The result is a hybrid SUV that retains the distinctive roar of every Maserati.

Levante Hybrid combines the 4 cylinders, 2-litre engine with a 48-volt Hybrid system to recover energy during deceleration and braking. The hybrid car weighs less than the 6 cylinder engine equivalent (both diesel and gasoline), and above all have an even better weight distribution since the battery is placed in the rear without compromising the load capacity and optimally balancing the masses of the vehicle.

ROUND-UP

Attractive Ramadan offer on Foton commercial vehicles range

Foton's Ramadan offer 'Season to Begin a New Journey', which will go on till June 6 offers free service, assured fuel card, manufacturer's warranty and low monthly instalment



MUSCAT: Gulf Great Sands, the exclusive importer of Foton vehicles in Oman, has announced a 'Season to Begin a New Journey' offer on all Foton range of vehicles as part of its exclusive Ramadan promotion. Foton's Ramadan offer 'Season to Begin a New Journey', which will go on till June 6 offers free service, assured fuel card, manufacturer's warranty and low monthly instalment. The Ramadan offer is available on models including Foton Aumark S Light Truck (3.8L Turbo Engine, 140hp); Foton Tunland Pickup 2.4L Double

Cab, 134hp, 2WD; Foton View CS2 Mini Bus 2.7L Engine, 147hp and Foton Auman Medium Duty Truck 6.7L Engine, 245 hp. Partnering with Foton Motor Group, one of the world's largest manufacturer of commercial vehicles, Gulf Great Sands (GGS) had launched a full range of commercial vehicles in Oman. Through this exclusive distribution partnership, Gulf Great Sands has commenced the supply of a range of Foton's commercial vehicles in Oman which includes heavy duty trucks, medium duty trucks, light

duty trucks, pickups, minibuses, panel vans, and SUVs. A GGS spokesperson said, "The 'Season to Begin a New Journey' extends a host of incentives for Foton customers this Ramadan. We are certain our customers will benefit immensely from it. All Foton vehicles boast the highest levels of quality and design, due to its partnership with leading names like Daimler, Cummins and others. Foton invests heavily in research, development and state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities. This ensures all Foton vehicles are cre-

ated with current as well as emerging technologies. This is a great time to buy Foton vehicles." As part of the offer, Foton customers can avail of assured cash gift ranging from OMR 1600 to OMR 3500 varying model-wise purchased through the Foton showroom. The cash gift is offered for vehicle financing purpose and will be adjusted as part of the down payment if the customer opts for it. Customers will be offered one year/20,000 km to five years/100,000 km Periodic Maintenance Service. One year/20,000 km is

applicable on Aumark light-duty truck only, two years/50,000 Km applicable on Auman medium duty truck only, five years/100,000 km applicable on View Mini Bus, View Cargo Van and Tunland Pickup only. This excludes battery, wear & tear parts, Periodic Maintenance Service Intervals will be as per the manufacturer's schedule and recommendation. Customers wanting to purchase Foton vehicles can avail of easy monthly instalments which are calculated based on a 20% down payment and six years load

tenure. Subject to credit approvals from bank and finance companies. Easy Monthly Installment is shown for the Aumark Truck and Auman Truck - Chassis with Steel Box only. Any additional modification or fittings will be charged separately. Customers buying Foton vehicles can get a free fuel card up to OMR100. The manufacturer's warranty is three years/100,000 km (whichever is earlier). Value propositions on all Foton models

- Assured cash gift
- Free OMR 100 fuel card on all models.
- Manufacturer's warranty on Foton Aumark S Light Duty Truck; Foton Tunland Pickup; View CS2 Minibus and Auman Medium Duty Truck is three years/100,000 km (whichever is earlier).

Customers can now own a vehicle with low monthly instalment. The monthly instalment for the various models starts from:

- Aumark S Light Truck with Steel Box: EMI starting from OMR 215 for 6 years
- Tunland Pickup 2wd: EMI starting from OMR 130 for 6 years
- View CS2 Mini Bus 13 Seater: EMI starting from OMR 175 for 6 years.
- Auman Medium Duty Truck with Steel Box: EMI starting from OMR 425 for 6 years

BANK MUSCAT

Meethaq's 5% cashback campaign to benefit credit cardholders

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric vision, Meethaq Islamic banking from Bank Muscat has launched an attractive 5% cashback promotion on credit card transactions for the holy month of Ramadan. All Meethaq Standard / Titanium and Hafawa credit cardholders (except Meethaq-Lulu cardholders) are eligible to participate in the promotion, which offers cashback of up to RO 10 per month for credit card Point of Sales (PoS) grocery purchase transactions. The special promotion will be valid until 31 May 2021. Meethaq credit cards are a big hit with customers thanks to some of the best deals and rewards in the country. They provide customers with convenience and flexibility in making day-to-day transactions at shopping malls, restaurants or international destinations. In addition, Meethaq credit cards come with an array of features and benefits which include wide acceptance, contactless payments, 24/7 customer service, OTP service for secured online transactions, SMS alerts for transactions and up to 52 days of the payment grace period. Current Meethaq credit card of-



ferings are the recently launched Meethaq-Lulu co-branded credit card, Hafawa Visa Signature credit card, the Titanium Mastercard credit card and the Standard Mastercard credit card with each of the card types availing different features and benefits suited for the needs of its various customer segments. All Meethaq credit cards are based on the concept of Ujrah without any interest charges as per Sharia rules and principles. Meethaq has enabled various

options to make secure payments worldwide and is a preferred electronic payment services provider in Oman's Islamic banking sector. The bank encourages the use of credit cards, which allows individuals to spend in a disciplined manner and keep track of all their transactions through electronic monthly statements. Meethaq extends support to all key economic sectors with innovative Sharia-based products. It is well-positioned to provide Islamic

financial expertise to all segments and thereby promote the good of society as a whole. Meethaq Islamic Banking, which has been recognised as the Best Islamic Bank in Oman previously by Islamic Finance News, has adopted the best practices in Islamic banking and finance. Every Meethaq product goes through the process of Sharia-compliance certification by the Sharia Supervisory Board and is created in line with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman.

ECO-COMMITMENT

Babyshop launches new eco-friendly brand, Love Earth

MUSCAT: Committed to giving the best to new generations, Babyshop announces the launch of its sustainable eco-friendly in-house brand, Love Earth. The brand works closely in tandem with Babyshop's overarching brand purpose, 'Every child deserves the best start in life.' Love Earth takes this brand purpose beyond the material sense, to a larger dimension, which is by "giving every child a better planet to get the best start in life." Love Earth is an in-house clothing brand created and designed by Babyshop, working with carefully selected manufacturers who meticulously follow the highest sustainability standards. The collection is available for ages 0 to 14 years. The entire Love Earth range is produced with minimal or zero impact on the environment, using materials and resources that are not only child-friendly but eco-friendly, too. **Good for nature and your baby** Love Earth's eco-commitment percolates right down to the mi-

nutest detail. Buttons and accessories are made from recycled polyester. Fabrics in the Love Earth collection have a super-soft feel and sport neutral colour palettes. All materials are sourced from suppliers who are dedicatedly committed to environmental causes. This thoughtful brand uses only eco-friendly manufacturing processes that minimise wastage and help to keep its carbon footprint tiny. Furthermore, Love Earth uses materials that do not erode the earth's rapidly depleting resources. The aim is to avoid tipping over the delicate eco-balance that the world is teetering on. So, Love Earth adheres to manufacturing practices that keep its consumption of fuel, water, electricity and other production consumables to the minimum. Happy childhood, happy planet. The overarching principle of Love Earth, in its products, processes, people, performance and perfection quests, is to make our planet a happy place for those who use its products, and who will one day inherit the earth.

ONLINE FLOWERS DELIVERY STORE

Floward covers entire GCC with launch in Sultanate of Oman

MUSCAT: Floward, the go-to online flowers and gifts delivery store in the region launched its services in Muscat, Oman on Sunday, May 2, 2021, making it the first expansion of the year for the company. With this expansion, the company now operates in 19 cities across seven countries. As part of its expansion strategy, Floward will gradually launch in different cities in the Sultan-

ate with plans to operate in Dhofar Governorate in the next four months, and Al Batinah Governorate in the next six months; thus, covering the largest cities in the country by the end of the year. Floward CEO Abdulaziz Al Loughani said, "This is a very special occasion for us at Floward as this launch marks our last country to serve in the GCC region. Despite the challenges Oman and the region



are going through, our team worked very hard in the previous months to set up our operations there in a way that ensures the highest quality in customer service and experience, products, and other touchpoints to become the best online flowers delivery service in Oman. We are moving forward with our expansion strategy in the MENA region and aim to cover as much of it as possible soon."

Established in 2017, Floward is a full-fledged e-commerce solution that offers prime fresh-cut flowers sourced from the best growers and farmers around the world and arranged locally by a team of florists and designers. Floward also offers cakes, chocolate and perfumes curated by the region's most exciting designers bundled with its flower arrangements and manages the last-mile same-day delivery.

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