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## AI to create vibrant economy

AI seen to enable and enhance productivity and the economy

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Oman is working on laying the foundations for the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and advanced technologies (AT) with the aim of creating an effective and vibrant economy.

AI is seen as one of the enablers to enhance productivity and the economy in the sultanate. According to the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology, which is overseeing the 'National Programme for AI & Advanced Technologies', the use of AI will support strategic decision-making based on big data, predicting future needs, creating new serv-



ices and products that improve lifestyles, and improving performance, productivity and competitiveness of the main economic and developmental sectors.

The ministry has stated that it will provide support to units of the state's administrative apparatus to develop innovative solu-

tions based on AI for all vital sectors of the economy. This will allow the sectors keep pace with the developments of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Oman was ranked 48<sup>th</sup> in the world and sixth in the Middle East in the Government AI Readiness Index 2020 issued by Oxford In-

sights. According to the ministry, Oman has a competitive advantage in development of AI and AT as the sultanate is characterised by a stable political climate that makes it an attractive destination for foreign investment. Additionally, there is strong government support for adoption of modern

technologies and innovation.

'The country benefits from a good number of submarine cables available which qualifies Oman to host data centres, high-speed computers and cloud services that are used to process artificial intelligence algorithms,' the ministry stated.

Oman provides a diverse range of economic sectors in which multiple technologies can be tried and tested. 'There are a large number of IT graduates who can be qualified and trained in the field of artificial intelligence and advanced technologies.'

The 'National Programme for AI & Advanced Technologies' was started in 2020 to supervise the preparation and implementation of an integrated national action plan for AI and advanced technologies, including capacity-building, research, innovation, industrialisation, investment, supporting establishment of emerging companies and formulation of policies and legislation.



(File photo)

## 'Cyclones could become repetitive in Arabian Sea'

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

A top environmental expert has warned of extreme weather events impacting Oman with continued global warming and rising levels of climate pollutants witnessed in the world today.

In an interview with Oman TV, Dr Yassin al Sharabi, director of the Centre for Environmental Studies and Research at Sultan Qaboos University, said, "Global warming and climate pollutants have dangerous effects on the climate. These are the reason why we are recording continuous rise in temperatures, decrease in annual rainfall, and increase in

heat waves in the sultanate."

He further warned that cyclonic activity in the Arabian Sea will increase in the future to record levels which may result in vast destruction. "Extreme weather phenomena, like Cyclone Gonu, may become repetitive due to climate change," said Dr Sharabi.

"Climate change will affect many regions in Oman," he added, saying that his centre has done several studies on the challenges that may arise due to climate change. "The use of fossil fuels and the decline of vegetation cover has led to a change in the composition of the atmosphere."

### NEWS BRIEFS

#### UN CALLS FOR COVID-CLOSED SCHOOLS TO REOPEN ASAP

Geneva, Switzerland -

Schools closed due to the coronavirus pandemic must reopen as soon as possible, the United Nations insisted on Tuesday, estimating that the education of more than 600mn children was at stake.

"This cannot go on," James Elder, spokesman for the UN Children's Fund (Unicef), told reporters in Geneva.

While acknowledging the difficult choices that governments have to make when facing the COVID-19 crisis and the possible spread of the disease, "schools should be the last to close and the first to reopen," he said, calling it a "terrible mistake" to reopen bars and pubs before schools.

## Muscat ranked among fastest capitals for 5G performance

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Muscat ranked eighth fastest in the world among capital cities for 5G performance in H1 2021, according to Ookla - the global leader in mobile and broadband network intelligence and testing applications.

The race for the fastest 5G performance among world capitals was extremely competitive during Q1-Q2 2021, the company stated. Oslo, Norway had the fastest 5G of any world capital, clocking a median download speed of 526.74 Mbps.

In the Middle East, most cities showed both high speeds and high 5G availability. Muscat, Abu Dhabi, Dammam, Doha, Dubai, Kuwait City and Riyadh showed above-average 5G download speeds and 5G availability in the first half of 2021.



Seoul had the second fastest median download speed over 5G of 467.84 Mbps. Abu Dhabi was third (421.26 Mbps), Doha fourth (413.40 Mbps) and Stockholm fifth (401.30 Mbps).

Riyadh (384.66 Mbps), Kuwait City (338.97 Mbps), Muscat 318.95 Mbps), Beijing (291.19 Mbps), and Taipei (287.86 Mbps) rounded the top ten.

'Mobile operators are rapidly expanding 5G deployments across the globe, with 16,410 new 5G deployments across 109 countries added to the Ookla 5G Map in June 2021 alone. Huge investments in 5G are being made to increase performance, especially in major cities,' the company stated.

The company used Speedtest Intelligence to see which world capitals have the best 5G speeds and availability, based on locations with commercially available 5G during Q1-Q2 2021. 'We've also created a white paper that highlights 5G performance in select cities around the world, including 5G performance at a provider level.'

The evaluation of global 5G performance is based on three key metrics - 5G download speed, 5G upload speed and 5G availability.

## Top US official thanks Oman for mediating peace in region

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

An official session of talks between the sultanate and the US was held at the Foreign Ministry on Tuesday. US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy R Sherman arrived in Muscat on Tuesday from China following a two-day visit to the country.

In Oman, Deputy Secretary Wendy met H E Sheikh Khalifa Ali al Harthy, Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs in the Foreign Ministry, and discussed advancing peace and security in the region and the shared commitment to bolstering the US-Oman bilateral relationship.



Wendy R Sherman

According to the US Department of State, the Deputy Secretary also thanked H E Sheikh Khalifa for Oman's role in mediating peace in the region and underscored the importance of an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire to help bring the war in Yemen to an end.



ABA Oman students lend interest-free loans to women



'Disappointed' Adawi vows to bounce back

## Oman to host yet another world-class sailing event this year

### 2021 ILCA Radial World Championships in Mussanah Sports City

Ashok Purohit  
Muscat

Oman is set to be the sailing capital of the world later this year with Oman Sail announcing on Tuesday that it will host yet another global event at Mussanah Sports City in 2021.

Oman Sail stated that it has

been awarded the rights to host the International Laser Class Association (ILCA) Radial World Championships and that the event will be held from November 29 to December 6.

Oman will be 'the destination' for sailing fans and enthusiasts as the world's best sailors head to the sultanate to compete in different classes.

Nearly 160 sailors from 50 nations are expected to take part in the worlds, which was originally scheduled to be held in Houston, US.

The Radial worlds will be the third big event that Oman Sail will be hosting this year. The first of these is the 49er, 49erFX and



Nacra 17 World Championships taking place from November 16 to 21, followed by one of the most prestigious sailing championships - 2021 Youth Sailing

World Championships - from December 11 to 18.

This is the first time that the 49ers, 49erFX and Nacra worlds will be hosted in Asia.

The 50<sup>th</sup> edition of the coveted youth world championships is expected to attract nearly 400 sailors from more than 60 countries across six

events for boys and girls.

Besides the three world championships, Oman is also hosting the 2021 Asian Windsurfing Championships in Mussanah from October 11 to 16.

Also on Tuesday, Oman Sail confirmed to Muscat Daily that it will host the Asian 49er, 49erFX and Nacra 17 Championships from November 5 to 9 after a request was received from the chairman of Asian Sailing Federation.

The Asian regatta is expected to be a good build-up for competitors from the continent ahead of the worlds at the same venue.

Continued on Page 03

# TEENS IN CONTROL

SWIFT, a microfinance group set up by students of ABA Oman International School, is trying to 'inspire and change the world one woman at a time'

Tridwip K Das  
Muscat

Most teens would rather while away time, only naturally. Play video games, watch movies or just hang around with friends, even as their parents struggle to get them to do something useful; something to help shape their future and do their parents proud.

A group of 20-odd students of ABA Oman International School is doing just that. In Grades 8 to 12, members of the club called SWIFT - Sustaining Women in Financial Turmoil (swiftmfi.org) - have helped microfinance people in need in 65 countries, including Ecuador, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines and Rwanda.

In an endeavour entirely beyond his years, Gobhanu Korisepati, 16, set up SWIFT in September 2020 to loan funds to vulnerable groups such as migrant workers, the elderly, single women and the disabled, giving them an opportunity to increase their income and better their lives.

## Interest-free loans

Money raised from sponsors - currently ABA students and their parents - is lent to women interest-free. When the loan is paid back, it's used to support other women.

The funds are dispensed through Kiva, a non-profit organisation headquartered in San Francisco, USA, that allows people to lend money via the Internet to low-income entrepreneurs and students in 77 countries. By crowd-funding loans, Kiva extends financial support to those with no access to banking services.

Since 2005, Kiva has given US\$1.61bn in loans to 4mn borrowers raised from 1.9mn lenders - including SWIFT - with a repayment rate of 96.3 per cent. Lenders on Kiva loan amounts in increments of US\$25, all of which



*Donating to SWIFT meant that my money would be able to help more than one person*

AL FAISAL AL ABDULLATIF

*In the future, we would like to lend both directly to Omani women and facilitate the borrowing of funds from Kiva*

GOBHANU  
KORISEPATI



Bangladesh. Over three months, he saw how one of the world's largest microfinance institutions helped make banking for the poor more accessible and was keen to make a change in Oman which he calls home.

"We realised that Omani women were far more likely to not have access to traditional financial services due to a lack of consistent income or mortgage," Gobhanu said of the findings that led to plans to include local women as beneficiaries of SWIFT's loans.

The club is working towards becoming the first-ever Omani Kiva field partner that will enable Omani women to register themselves on the site. "In the future, we would like to lend both directly to Omani women and facilitate the borrowing of funds from Kiva."

## Government approval

SWIFT is currently in the process of seeking government approval to approach sponsors from outside the school. "We hope that we receive sup-



*Gobhanu and other leaders often spend the equivalent of a part-time job helping these women*

ANEESH KUMAR  
CHELLAPPANNAIR

The group includes Al Faisal al Abdullatif, who will start Grade 11 in September. He's a club member and donor too. Asked what prompted him to give his money, he said, "I believe in women empowerment and this was a small thing to help. Donating to SWIFT meant that my money would help more than one person because the money would be reused to help multiple people."

## 'Complicated task at such a young age'

Among SWIFT's donors is parent Anupama Bommareddy. She decided to donate as she "found it interesting that they were able to loan money which I figured was a rather complicated task at such a young age".

Guiding the students in the project is their teacher Aneesh Kumar Chellappannair. He described them as passionate about making a difference in their community. "The project is run by the students directly. Gobhanu leads the SWIFT team by guiding them through the required tasks while approaching me for advice or approvals," he said.

Asked if the students get extra credit or marks, Chellappannair said, "They do not necessarily benefit academically from their work on SWIFT at least in the short run. It has made many students more confident to share their ideas while gaining real-life experience."

Most members of the group tend to meet weekly, he noted, "whereas Gobhanu and other leaders often spend the equivalent of a part-time job helping these women, further showing how driven the SWIFT team is."

Despite the long hours and effort he invests in SWIFT, Gobhanu claims he finds time to hang out with friends and be a teenager when possible.

"The COVID-19 has led to a reduction in social activities, but this has only further allowed me to concentrate on making SWIFT more impactful as the pandemic worsened the financial situations of many people, including Omanis," he said, revealing a razor sharp focus on the task at hand.

These are children taking initiatives and undertaking actions that have a lasting impact on lives and livelihoods of adults in remote corners of the world.



"SWIFT particularly drew me in because it focuses on women disproportionately affected by the lack of opportunities in the work field and the inability to gain sufficient incomes from their businesses," she informed.

*SWIFT particularly drew me in because it focuses on women disproportionately affected by the lack of opportunities*

REHANA KHAN

goes to funding loans, and receive no interest on the money they lend.

Kiva works with microfinance institutions around the world - called Field Partners - that post profiles of qualified local entrepreneurs on the website. Lenders browse borrower profiles on kiva.org, choose an entrepreneur they wish to fund, and transfer their funds to Kiva.

## RO10,000 to 1,000 women

To date, SWIFT has lent close to RO10,000 that has benefitted over 1,000 women. Its largest loan to an individual was the equivalent of RO110. The loan helped a borrower in Ecuador - Viviana Magali, 27 - buy fabric, thread and elastic to sew clothes to sell. She is now able to meet her family's needs.

Gobhanu first came across Kiva

during a geography class project in Grade 8, when he learnt about "transnational corporations and how businesses affect the world. Since my work in the classroom, I have been reading up on social entrepreneurship activities, and my interest in microfinance stems naturally from there".

Following the foundation of SWIFT, Gobhanu interned at Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus's Grameen Bank in

port through goodwill and corporate social responsibility drives. It is in the best interest of all Omanis to help develop our nation together through SWIFT's mission," Gobhanu said in words that belie his age.

His colleague in SWIFT, co-vice president in the executive team Rehana Khan, who has just completed Grade 9, too speaks like a seasoned professional.






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## Former diplomat Sadek Sulaiman passes away

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Renowned writer, thinker and former diplomat Sadek Jawad Sulaiman passed away on Tuesday. Suleiman was born in Muttrah in 1933.

Sulaiman worked for Oman's Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1976 until 1983 and served as Director of Political Affairs (1977-79) and Ambassador to the United States (1979-83).

Suleiman extensively participated in international forums, such as the general assemblies of the United Nations, and a number of international, regional and Arab organisations.

After his retirement from diplomatic service in 1983, he devoted himself to expanding his knowledge and completed a master's degree in international public policy from Johns Hopkins University in the US.

Suleiman was one of the founders of the Al Hewan (Dialogue) Center in Washington in 1994, and subsequently became the chairman of the centre's advisory board.

# Call for urgency to eliminate hepatitis

There are instances of people getting infected even in health centres

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The World Hepatitis Day - observed each year on July 28 to raise awareness of viral hepatitis - will this year focus on the urgency to eliminate it.

This year's theme is 'Hepatitis can't wait', conveying the urgency of efforts needed to eliminate hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030.

Viral hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver that causes severe liver disease and hepatocellular cancer.

With a person dying every 30 seconds from a hepatitis-related illness, medical experts say that the world can't wait to act on viral hepatitis even though the world is battling the COVID-19 crisis.

Dr Ahmed al Mandhari, WHO regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean, said, "This is a chance to reflect on our member states' commitment to ensuring the continuity of hepatitis services and reaching the elimination targets in the Global Health Sector Strategy and our regional vision of Health for All by All."

According to WHO estimates, in 2020 there were 30mn people chronically infected with viral hepatitis in the Eastern Mediterranean Region; 65,000



*COVID-19 made it even more difficult to deliver essential health services, including vaccination, diagnosis and care. But despite the challenges we must not lose sight of our goal of universal health coverage*

DR AHMED  
AL MANDHARI

people died of hepatitis and 570,000 became infected.

"COVID-19 made it even more difficult to deliver essential health services, including vaccination, diagnosis and care. But despite the challenges, and in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, WHO's Thirteenth Programme of Work (GPW 13) and our vision for the region, Vision 2023, we must not lose sight of our goal of universal health coverage," Dr Mandhari said.

He said that successful elimination requires scaling up five key recommended interventions.

"We need to vaccinate infants against hepatitis B, prevent mother-to-child transmission of

hepatitis B virus, ensure blood and injection safety, reduce harm among people who inject drugs and implement testing with a view to treatment," Dr Mandhari added.

Unfortunately, there are people who are still getting infected with hepatitis viruses in health-care settings - precisely where they should expect to be safe.

"Unsafe injection continues to be a driving source of hepatitis B and C virus infections and other blood-borne diseases such as HIV. Coverage of hepatitis B birth dose vaccination remains far too low. Such coverage hinders our efforts to achieve a hepatitis-free future for coming generations."



## MoCIIP clarifies on liquidation of companies

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has issued a clarification on the liquidation of some companies, which it says is done 'to keep pace with global economic changes'.

Liquidation of companies 'is considered a natural procedure to keep pace with global economic changes and technological developments that require the restructuring and development of institutions in line with the requirements of current developments', the ministry said.

The increase in the number of liquidated companies, the ministry said, 'is the result of facilities provided by the ministry for a period of six months to companies who wished to merge their multiple commercial activities, and for a period of one year for companies that wanted to liquidate their businesses entirely from the

commercial register effective from June 15, 2021', adding that 'announcement of the liquidation of companies in the official gazette is a binding legal procedure to end transactions and preserve the rights of others'.

The ministry has been trying to address the issue of multiple commercial records that has negative effects on the economy, and also help commercial establishments with different activities to liquidate expired and inactive companies.

According to the ministry, merger of registered companies will help public deal with a single legal entity instead of multiple entities. Additionally, mergers may result in single legal entities with solid capital which will enhance competitiveness.

It affirmed that the simplification of procedures for obtaining CRs through the Invest Easy portal is one of the factors for the improvement of the investment climate in the sultanate.

## MoH clarifies on social media buzz on doctors in Dhank

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Tuesday issued a clarification regarding a buzz in social media about two Omani doctors seeking employment saying that the two are still under internship.

The ministry stated that employing medical doctors involves approved stages and due process in the sultanate, and that

the two female graduates are currently in their internship year.

According to a trending tweet, two medical college graduates are sitting idle at home even as 14 expat general practitioners were employed in the health centre in the wilayat of Dhank.

The Twitterati called on the MoH to interfere in the matter.

In response, the MoH stated, 'After communicating with those concerned, it was found that the

two doctors are in their internship year which is one of the stages of graduation in medicine.'

During Phase - Excellence Year - prerequisite to obtain a licence - doctors are granted a sum of money from Sultan Qaboos University. Phase - General Foundation Programme in the Omani Council for Medical Specialisations - is a training period in which doctors join after completion of a year of internship.

## Oman Sail to host yet another worlds this year

Continued from Page 01

Besides the world championships and Asian meets, Oman Sail's own 'baby' - Sailing Arabia-The Tour will also begin on November 24. This will be the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the mixed offshore and inshore regatta that has sailors compete across the sultanate.

Speaking after the ICLA Radial World Championships were awarded to Oman, Oman Sail CEO Dr Khamis al Jabri said, "Oman Sail is honoured to be able to offer ILCA Radial sailors

from around the world an opportunity to compete against the best in the world. Winter will be a busy time for sailing in Oman and brings with it a welcome socio-economic impact which will benefit the community in Mussanah and across the country as we begin the journey back to normality after a long period of downtime. We are excited to again show the capability of our nation to host a high-profile event and look forward to sharing our warm hospitality with the world once more."

Andrus Poksi of the International Laser Class Association, said, "Oman has a long and proud maritime history and has gained a strong reputation as hosts in recent years. We are glad to be able to ensure the continuity of the ILCA Radial World Championships with the support of such capable hosts in Oman Sail and the ideal sailing conditions offered by the country in November."

The championships will be hosted at the Barceló Resort Mussanah, a five-star beachfront

resort. Entry will be initially allocated based on ranking positions and is capped at 110 sailors in the women's competition and 50 sailors in the men's category.

Prior to such a packed sailing schedule, Oman Sail had previously played host to several Olympic class sailing events, including the Laser World Championships in 2013 and RS:X World Championships in 2015. And earlier this year, Oman also hosted the Tokyo Olympics Asia and Africa 49er class Qualifiers.

@ashokmuscat

## COVID-19: 491 cases, 17 deaths

Muscat - The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Tuesday reported 491 new COVID-19 cases and 17 related deaths, taking the total number of cases registered in Oman to 295,017, including 3,788 deaths.

In a statement, the MoH said, 'Fifty patients were admitted to hospitals across the country in a 24-hour period on Tuesday, accounting for a total of 666 inpatients, including 281 in intensive care units.'

The total number of recoveries now stands at 277,010 and the recovery rate is 93.9 per cent.

### PRAYER TIMINGS

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| Fajr    | 4.09am  |
| Sunrise | 5.35am  |
| Duhr    | 12.13pm |
| Asr     | 3.36pm  |
| Maghrib | 6.51pm  |
| Isha    | 8.21pm  |

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# 51 jobseekers graduate from BP Oman, MEDRC programme

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Middle East Desalination Research Center (MEDRC) on Tuesday concluded its coveted TAHLYA IV programme at a graduation ceremony held under the patronage of H E Sheikh Khalifa Ali al Harthy, Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs in the Foreign Ministry.

In partnership with BP Oman, the MEDRC trained 51 jobseekers during the fourth edition of the programme that targets building the capacity of young Omanis by equipping them with the necessary skillset to advance in the desalination sector in Oman.

Of the total graduates, 19 were trained as supervisors while the rest 32 were trained to be operators in the desalination sector.

"This programme reflects our aspirations in contributing to the Omanisation of the nation's water sector and building the capacity of the Omani community



The graduation ceremony was held under the patronage of H E Sheikh Khalifa Ali al Harthy (Supplied photo)

in this field," said Shamsa al Rawahiya, BP Oman social investment manager.

"Since we commenced our partnership with the MEDRC six years ago," Rawahiya said, "the TAHLYA programme successfully trained 262 young Omani jobseekers of which 59 per cent are currently employed".

"We are delighted to announce that we are continuing our partnership with MEDRC with a new cycle of the TAHLYA V programme which will aim to train 76 in 2021."

Ciarán Ó Cuinn, MEDRC centre director, said that the partnership between the MEDRC and BP Oman "has helped empower young Omani jobseekers in the water sector".

"I want to commend BP Oman for their ongoing support and leadership. We are so proud of the achievements of our TAHLYA graduates who are already leading the way," he added.

By the end of the next edition of the TAHLYA programme, the venture would have 338 young Omanis fully trained for jobs in the desalination sector.



## 'Oman produced 261 tonnes of sugar cane'

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Oman has produced 261 tonnes of sugar cane during the 2020-21 season, which yielded more than RO1mn from around 70 acres of land, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources said.

According to the ministry, the wilayat of Bahla has produced 9,392kg of red sugar cane on 38.25 acres of land.

Nizwa produced 60,600kg from 20 acres, while Manah's 20 acres produced 31,726kg, the ministry said, adding that Hamra produced 42,926kg of sugar cane from nine acres and Bidiyah producing 240kg on three acres of land.

The sugar cane production in

*The ministry's statistics show that the sugar cane production has yielded more than RO1mn during 2020-21*

Sohar was 15kg (2 acres), Rustaq 50kg (.08 acre), Mudhaibi 400kg (.5 acre), Samail 3,170kg (0.625 acre), Adam 300kg (1 acre), Izki 3,105kg (1.75 acres)

"Farmers in Al Awija farms in the wilayat of Manah in the Governorate of Dakhliyah have succeeded in the production of 200 tonnes of wheat and red sugar in the current season," said Mo-

hammad al Bahlani, director of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in the wilayat of Manah.

He explained that the department provides services and guidance to farmers, in addition to wheat harvesting machines, seeds and help them combat diseases that affect plants.

He said that the total land under cultivation in Al Awija was of about 160 acres, which produced varieties of agricultural crops. The wheat and red sugar cane were the most important crops produced in Al Awija.

"The department endeavours to increase diversity in the cultivation of crops in Al Awija, because it is one of the villages distinguished by land fertility," Bahlani said.

### Unaudited Interim condensed financial statements for the six-month period ended 30 June 2021

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

#### Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Muscat City Desalination Company SAOG ("MCD" or the "Company"), I am pleased to present the Directors' Report together with the unaudited financial statements of the Company for the six-month period ended 30 June 2021.

#### Health, Safety and Environment (HSE)

The HSE performance of the Company to date has been satisfactory, with no Lost Time Accidents ("LTA"). The operator entity, Muscat City Desalination Operations and Maintenance Company LLC ("MCDOMC") has completed 1949 days without any LTA since the plant's commercial operations commenced on 19 February 2016. Similarly, there were no environmental incidents for the same period.

#### Operations

The plant successfully passed its annual performance test for the 7<sup>th</sup> Contract Year under the Water Purchase Agreement with Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC by achieving the Guaranteed Contracted Water Capacity of 7955 m<sup>3</sup>/hour.

During the first six months of 2021, the Company achieved a higher availability of 93.36%, compared with 93.33% during the same period in 2020. The water dispatch during the first half of 2021 was 32,044,968 m<sup>3</sup>, an increase of 0.99% compared with 31,732,000 m<sup>3</sup> during the same period in 2020. The total forced outage rate for the six-month period ending on 30 June 2021 is 0.35% (30 June 2020: 1.10%).

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 lockdown has not had any material impact on the plant's performance for the reporting period. The Company and its operator, MCDOMC have implemented all measures recommended by the authorities to prevent Covid-19 infections within the Plant and have re-organized the day-to-day activities at the plant to comply with the measures recommended by the Supreme Committee for Covid-19.

#### Financial Results

The Company's revenue for the first six months of 2021 was RO 8.738 million whilst the direct operating cost was RO 5.645 million. Accordingly, the gross profit for the period was RO 3.093 million, which is 0.8% higher compared with the corresponding period last year. General and administrative expenses for the first six months of 2021 was RO 0.383 million, which is higher by 1.6% compared with the corresponding period last year. Finance costs for the first six months of 2021 were RO 1.395 million, which is 7.9% lower than the finance costs incurred for the corresponding period last year.

The Company recorded profit before tax (PBT) of RO 1.321 million which is 12.2% higher than the PBT for the same period last year. Overall, the Company achieved profit after tax of RO 1.249 million for the period compared with profit after tax of RO 0.900 million for the corresponding period in 2020.

As at 30 June 2021, the share price of MCD was 90 Baizas (30 June 2020: 115 Baizas).

#### Corporate Governance

The Company continues to seek suitable candidates for the formation of an internal audit unit in accordance with the regulations issued by Capital Market Authority in February 2021 and until then, the Company shall continue with Grant Thornton.

#### Future Outlook

All reasonable and prudent measures have been and will continue to be taken by the Company to ensure high standards of health, safety and environmental compliance, and to sustain and improve reliability and availability going forward.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend our utmost appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik bin Taimur Al Said and His Government for their continued support and encouragement to the private sector by creating an environment that allows the Company to participate effectively in the growth of the Sultanate's economy and to contribute in the building of a strong nation.

Tamer Cankardas  
Chairman of the Board

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them either in Arabic or English to the company's address at PO Box: 1935, PC: 114, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman or go to our website [www.mcdcoman.com](http://www.mcdcoman.com)



MUSCAT CITY  
DESALINATION  
COMPANY SAOG

| Unaudited interim condensed statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021 |                                         |                                           |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--|
|                                                                                | Unaudited<br>30 June<br>2021<br>RO'000s | Audited<br>31 December<br>2020<br>RO'000s |  |
| <b>Assets</b>                                                                  |                                         |                                           |  |
| <b>Non-current assets</b>                                                      |                                         |                                           |  |
| Property, plant and equipment                                                  | 85,684                                  | 86,875                                    |  |
| Lease asset (right of use assets)                                              | 246                                     | 250                                       |  |
| Deferred tax                                                                   | 1,283                                   | 1,348                                     |  |
| <b>Total non-current assets</b>                                                | <b>87,213</b>                           | <b>88,473</b>                             |  |
| <b>Current assets</b>                                                          |                                         |                                           |  |
| Trade and other receivables                                                    | 1,832                                   | 1,322                                     |  |
| Cash and cash equivalents                                                      | 5,542                                   | 4,209                                     |  |
| <b>Total current assets</b>                                                    | <b>7,374</b>                            | <b>5,531</b>                              |  |
| <b>Total assets</b>                                                            | <b>94,587</b>                           | <b>94,004</b>                             |  |
| <b>Equity and Liabilities</b>                                                  |                                         |                                           |  |
| <b>Equity</b>                                                                  |                                         |                                           |  |
| Share capital                                                                  | 15,555                                  | 15,555                                    |  |
| Legal reserve                                                                  | 2,086                                   | 1,961                                     |  |
| Retained earnings                                                              | 3,116                                   | 1,992                                     |  |
|                                                                                | 20,757                                  | 19,508                                    |  |
| Hedging Reserve                                                                | (4,210)                                 | (5,879)                                   |  |
| <b>Net Equity</b>                                                              | <b>16,547</b>                           | <b>13,629</b>                             |  |
| <b>Non-current liabilities</b>                                                 |                                         |                                           |  |
| Non-current portion of term loans                                              | 51,568                                  | 53,211                                    |  |
| Non-current portion of fair value of derivative financial instruments          | 4,653                                   | 6,518                                     |  |
| Provision for decommissioning obligation                                       | 391                                     | 382                                       |  |
| Deferred tax                                                                   | 4,771                                   | 4,469                                     |  |
| Lease liability - non-current portion                                          | 253                                     | 255                                       |  |
| Shareholders' bridge loans                                                     | 8,632                                   | 8,854                                     |  |
| Shareholders' stand-by equity loans                                            | 754                                     | 754                                       |  |
| End-of-service benefits                                                        | 8                                       | 4                                         |  |
| <b>Total non-current liabilities</b>                                           | <b>71,030</b>                           | <b>74,447</b>                             |  |
| <b>Current liabilities</b>                                                     |                                         |                                           |  |
| Current portion of term loans                                                  | 3,386                                   | 3,314                                     |  |
| Current portion of fair value of derivative financial instruments              | 300                                     | 399                                       |  |
| Lease liability - current portion                                              | 3                                       | 3                                         |  |
| Trade and other payables                                                       | 3,321                                   | 2,212                                     |  |
| <b>Total current liabilities</b>                                               | <b>7,010</b>                            | <b>5,928</b>                              |  |
| <b>Total liabilities</b>                                                       | <b>78,040</b>                           | <b>80,375</b>                             |  |
| <b>Total equity and liabilities</b>                                            | <b>94,587</b>                           | <b>94,004</b>                             |  |
| <b>Net assets per share (RO)</b>                                               | <b>0.106</b>                            | <b>0.088</b>                              |  |

| Unaudited condensed statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the six-month period ended 30 June 2021 |                              |                              |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
|                                                                                                                            | Unaudited<br>2021<br>RO'000s | Unaudited<br>2020<br>RO'000s |  |
| Operating revenue                                                                                                          | 8,738                        | 8,294                        |  |
| Operating cost                                                                                                             | (5,645)                      | (5,225)                      |  |
| <b>Gross profit</b>                                                                                                        | <b>3,093</b>                 | <b>3,069</b>                 |  |
| Other income                                                                                                               | 6                            | -                            |  |
| Administrative and general expenses                                                                                        | (383)                        | (377)                        |  |
| Finance costs (net)                                                                                                        | (1,395)                      | (1,515)                      |  |
| <b>Profit for the period before tax</b>                                                                                    | <b>1,321</b>                 | <b>1,177</b>                 |  |
| Income tax                                                                                                                 | (72)                         | (277)                        |  |
| <b>Profit for the period</b>                                                                                               | <b>1,249</b>                 | <b>900</b>                   |  |
| <b>Other comprehensive income / (loss) for the period - Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss</b>  |                              |                              |  |
| Changes in fair values of derivative financial instruments                                                                 | 1,963                        | (4,700)                      |  |
| Deferred tax on changes in fair values of derivative financial instruments                                                 | (294)                        | 705                          |  |
| <b>Other comprehensive income / (loss) for the period net of income tax</b>                                                | <b>1,669</b>                 | <b>(3,995)</b>               |  |
| <b>Total comprehensive income / (loss) for the period</b>                                                                  | <b>2,918</b>                 | <b>(3,095)</b>               |  |
| <b>Earnings per share - basic and diluted</b>                                                                              | <b>0.008</b>                 | <b>0.006</b>                 |  |

ON:LB C&F No. 100320

### ROP NEWS

#### Woman arrested for pickpocketing

Dhofar governorate police command of the Royal Oman Police (ROP) arrested a woman on charges of pickpocketing in crowded places.

ROP said, 'The arrested person would target women while they were shopping and steal money from their handbags.'

ROP said the accused has a criminal record and legal procedures are being completed against her.

#### One held with fake currency

Dhofar governorate police command of the Royal Oman Police (ROP) arrested a person on charges of forgery and promoting counterfeit currency.

In a statement, ROP said, 'Fake currency notes were found in his vehicle and legal procedures are being completed against him.'

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# Sultanate's first 3D concrete printing facility opens in Ghala

**Our Correspondent**  
Muscat

The first industrial 3D concrete printing facility in Oman was officially opened by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), InnoTech and Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company on Tuesday at Ghala Industrial Area.

Announcing the inauguration of the new facility, PDO in a tweet said, '3D concrete printing is a step change in the construction sector, providing a sustainable alternative to traditional construction method. This technology will also speed up the construction process, reduce waste and empower skilled Omanis.'

PDO said it is supporting the 3D printing initiative by providing its technical expertise, opportunity identification and project management.

'This facility opening is PDO managing director Steve Phimister's first opening ceremony since he assumed the role of managing director starting this month,' the company said.

The project in Ghala Industrial Area comes within the framework of an agreement signed between PDO, InnoTech and Galfar



*The project is expected to speed up the construction process in Oman, increase the local added value and boost partnership among private sector institutions*

in May 2021 for research and development in 3D printing with concrete in Oman.

The agreement between three

Omani companies ultimately aims to print a building using the 3D printing technology, which is considered a step change in the

construction sector, providing a sustainable alternative to traditional construction methods.

Eng Othman al Mandhari, founder and CEO of InnoTech, the first Omani company to venture into 3D printing, said the advantage of 3D printing technology is that it reduces costs and labour requirement and is highly reliable and environment-friendly.

"As an example, a building of 100sqm will take less than a week to be constructed. We hope to start actual work soon," he said.

The 3D concrete printing represents a qualitative shift in the construction sector as it provides a sustainable alternative to the traditional building method. The project is expected to speed up the construction process in Oman, increase the local added value and boost partnership among private sector institutions.

In order to cope with the world's modern construction techniques, Oman's Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) recently approved the construction by using 3D printing technologies in the sultanate's economic and freezones.

OPAZ affirmed to promote the new 3D printing techniques in various freezones and in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm in particular.

Different packages of facilities and incentives will be offered for companies that prefer to use the 3D-printed building technology, with an exemption from the leasing fees for a period of five years, OPAZ said in June.



## CBO issues RO95mn worth of treasury bills

**Our Correspondent**  
Muscat

A tender of the government treasury bills (issue number 542) was announced this week by the Central Bank of Oman. Total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO95mn, for a maturity period of 91 days, from July 28 until October 27.

The average accepted price reached RO99.806 for every RO100 treasury bill, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.805. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 0.7768 per cent and 0.7783 per cent, respectively.

The interest rate on the repo operations with the CBO is 0.5 per cent while the discount rate on the treasury bills discounting

facility with the central bank is 0.75 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance. These instruments provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

The Central Bank of Oman acts as the issue manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities.

Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. The government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures.

ONA

## IMF sees world growth at 6%, warns developing nations falling behind

Washington, US - The global economy will expand by 6 per cent this year, but disparities between nations are widening as advanced economies accelerate while developing countries fall behind, the IMF said Tuesday.

While the forecast for global growth is unchanged from the previous estimate in April, the United States is projected to see faster 7 per cent growth thanks to massive government spending and widespread COVID-19 vaccinations, while the IMF slashed the forecast for India, which is facing a resurgence of infections. 'Vaccine access has emerged as the principal fault line along which the global recovery splits into two blocs,' the International Monetary Fund said in its updated World Economic Outlook, warning of the danger to the economy if new virus variants are allowed to take hold.

The recovery 'is not assured even in countries where infections are currently very low so long as the virus circulates elsewhere,' the report said.

And while the recent inflation spike is the result of the unprecedented and uneven turnaround from the pandemic and should prove temporary, the IMF raised the possibility that price increases could become 'persistent.'

The Washington-based crisis lender once again stressed that 'the immediate priority is to deploy vaccines equitably worldwide.'

Advanced nations have vaccinated nearly 40 per cent of the population, compared to barely 10 per cent in emerging markets and even fewer in low-income countries, the report said.

### 'Virus variants could derail recovery'

"The emergence of highly infectious virus variants could derail the recovery and wipe out US\$4.5tn cumulatively from



global GDP by 2025," IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath warned in a blog post.

More than half of that lost wealth would come from rich nations in the event new variants of the coronavirus spread unchecked.

And this is not just a "tail risk" that is highly unlikely, "This is a realistic downside risk," said Petya Koeva-Brooks, deputy director of the IMF Research Department. Although some emerging market nations like Brazil and Mexico are poised to show stronger growth this year, developing nations as a group are lagging and struggling to return to their pre-pandemic levels.

"I would say we're more worried than we were back in April," Koeva-Brooks told AFP.

The IMF is pushing for a US\$50bn plan that offers a 'feasible cost to end the pandemic' by distributing vaccines and addressing immediate needs in lower income countries.

### Rising inflation

Rising prices are another factor weighing on the global recovery, and pose a challenge to policymakers.

"The unprecedented convulsion in the global economy last year continues to trigger aftershocks," the IMF said, pointing to a shortage of computer chips and a lack of shipping containers where they are needed, which has delayed deliveries of materi-

als.

Koeva-Brooks said some of the bottlenecks and price jumps were to be expected and should be temporary, but IMF economists acknowledge that higher inflation could become entrenched. Because the situation is so unique and "we've never seen how to reopen economies after a crisis like this one," it is difficult to forecast, she said.

However, the IMF said inflation should return to pre-pandemic ranges in 2022 and urged central banks to hold off on reacting to the temporary price pressures - but to be ready to take 'preemptive action.'

Vaccinations allowed an economic reopening and led to upgrades for the United States for this year and next, when growth is expected to hit 4.9 per cent.

However, that assumes the US Congress will approve another round of spending later this year, such as President Joe Biden's infrastructure and job creation programs.

The IMF also raised the 2021 estimates for Canada and Britain to 6.3 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively, while the euro area GDP is expected to expand 4.6 per cent, just slightly higher than the April WEO.

India's growth forecast was slashed three points to 9.5 per cent, and even China was trimmed by three-tenths of a percentage point to 8.1 per cent.

AFP

## US Fed begins meeting amid taper speculation

Washington, US - The US Federal Reserve's policy committee began its two-day meeting on Tuesday, amid speculation it could show the first signs of easing up on massive bond purchases that are supporting the US economic recovery.

A year-and-a-half after the central bank slashed its key interest rate to zero and began to buy assets at blistering pace to inject liquidity into financial markets, analysts are watching closely for any hints on when the Fed will begin to pull back on those measures as business returns to normal following the upheaval caused by the pandemic.

A Fed spokesperson said the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) began its delibera-

tions, but the latest thinking on the economy's progress will not be known until Wednesday, when the FOMC releases its policy statement and Fed Chair Jerome Powell speaks to reporters.

No rate hike is anticipated, since the Fed has pledged to keep the benchmark lending rate lower for longer to support the recovery.

But with data showing inflation spiking higher than expected, the Federal Open Market Committee could provide a preliminary signal that it is thinking about tapering its monthly bond purchases, although it may not do so for several months.

AFP



**OMAN CRICKET CLUB (OCC)**

### Annual General Body Meeting

The Board of Management of Oman Cricket Club wishes to state that Annual General Meeting for the year 2019 & 2020 is scheduled to be held on Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021 at 7:00 PM which will be conducted via face-to-face interaction or through online meeting depending on the COVID-19 situation and Supreme Committee restrictions. Any development in this regard will be notified accordingly.

**Secretary of the Club**  
**Chairman of the Board of Directors**

## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

The Coca-Cola Company is a global stalwart, known throughout the world and continuously among the world's top brands. We are the world's leading beverage company and we want to be a big part of Oman's story, refreshing Omanis with our vast portfolio, which includes Coca-Cola, Arwa, Sprite, Fanta and Monster, among other brands.

We have been present in Oman since 1988 and have grown continuously over our 23 years. To grow our business further, we are looking for the right partners to handle distribution of our product portfolio in Oman except Muscat and Salalah. If you have the passion to be associated with Coca-Cola and the desire to be an integral part of a fast growing business, please contact us (details are below).

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| Email id :   | igcastellino@coca-cola.co.om | malabri@coca-cola.co.om |

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

After compliments,

I am pleased to present to you the unaudited financial results as on 30th June 2021. The MSX – 30 Index increased by 16 % compared to the same period last year. Trading volumes increased by 90% compared to the same period last year 2020.

### Revenues

Total operating revenue reached at RO 198,669 (Omani Rials One Hundred & Ninety-Eight Thousand Six Hundred Sixty-Nine) compared to RO 106,362 (Omani Rials One Hundred & Six Thousand Three Hundred Sixty-Two) for the same period last year, a increase of 87%.

### Net Profits :-

The total expenses amounted to RO 189,744 (Omani Rials One Hundred & Eighty-Nine Thousand Seven Hundred Forty-four) compared to RO 207,058 (Omani Rials Two Hundred & Seven Thousand Fifty-Eight) in the same period last year 2020, a decrease of 8%. The Company posted a Profit RO 8,925 (Omani Rials Eight Thousand Nine Hundred Twenty-Five) compared to Losses of RO 100,696 in the same period last year.

### Shareholders' Equity:-

Shareholders' equity amounted to RO. 3,179,164 (Omani Rials Three Million One Hundred Seventy-Nine Thousand One Hundred Sixty-Four) compared to RO. 3,122,256 (Omani Rials Three Million One Hundred Twenty-Two Thousand Two Hundred Fifty-Six) for the corresponding period last year, a increase of 2%. The book value per share was RO 0.159 as on 30th June 2021.

Dear Shareholders,

Finally, we ask Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, may Almighty Allah protect and preserve him, and we pray to God to raise the epidemic and calamity, and to preserve the Omani people and perpetuate the blessing of security and safety.

Omar bin Ahmed bin Abdullah Mahfoodh Al-Sheikh  
Chairman

### Unaudited Interim Balance Sheet As At 30 June 2021

|                                          | 30 June 2021<br>RO | 30 June 2020<br>RO |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>ASSETS</b>                            |                    |                    |
| Cash in hand and at bank                 | 675,084            | 415,038            |
| Investments                              | 1,413,187          | 1,293,823          |
| Other receivables                        | 952,962            | 279,251            |
| Property and equipment                   | 9,062              | 10,302             |
| Investments Properties                   | 1,800,000          | 1,800,000          |
| <b>Total assets</b>                      | <b>4,850,295</b>   | <b>3,798,414</b>   |
| <b>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>            |                    |                    |
| <b>Equity</b>                            |                    |                    |
| Share capital                            | 2,000,000          | 2,000,000          |
| Share premium                            | -                  | -                  |
| Legal reserve                            | -                  | -                  |
| Fair value reserve                       | 432,839            | 328,358            |
| Reserve of change in buildings value     | 862,859            | 862,859            |
| (Accumulated losses)/retained earnings   | (116,534)          | (68,961)           |
| <b>Total equity</b>                      | <b>3,179,164</b>   | <b>3,122,256</b>   |
| <b>LIABILITIES</b>                       |                    |                    |
| Bank overdraft                           | 695,468            | 170,347            |
| Accounts payable                         | 954,965            | 427,440            |
| Accruals and other liabilities           | 15,099             | 21,138             |
| End of service benefits                  | 5,599              | 57,233             |
| <b>Total liabilities</b>                 | <b>1,671,131</b>   | <b>676,158</b>     |
| <b>Total equity and liabilities</b>      | <b>4,850,295</b>   | <b>3,798,414</b>   |
| <b>Customer securities held in trust</b> | <b>322,348</b>     | <b>285,800</b>     |
| <b>Net assets</b>                        | <b>3,179,164</b>   | <b>3,122,256</b>   |
| <b>Net asset value per share</b>         | <b>0.159</b>       | <b>0.156</b>       |

### Unaudited Interim Income Statement For The Six Months Ended 30 June 2021

|                                                               | 30 June 2021<br>RO | 30 June 2020<br>RO |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Income</b>                                                 |                    |                    |
| Net brokerage commission                                      | 144,677            | 54,199             |
| Dividend and other income                                     | 53,992             | 51,700             |
| Net gain (loss) on sale of investments                        | -                  | 463                |
| Un realized profit/ loss at fair value through profit or loss | -                  | -                  |
| Gain on sale of available- for- sale financial assets         | -                  | -                  |
| <b>Total</b>                                                  | <b>198,669</b>     | <b>106,362</b>     |
| <b>Expenses</b>                                               |                    |                    |
| Salaries and related costs                                    | (119,451)          | (140,501)          |
| Administrative and general expenses                           | (57,791)           | (53,060)           |
| Interest and financial charges                                | (10,025)           | (9,054)            |
| Depreciation                                                  | (2,477)            | (4,443)            |
|                                                               | (189,744)          | (207,058)          |
| <b>Profit (Loss) for the period</b>                           | <b>8,925</b>       | <b>(100,696)</b>   |
| <b>Earning (Loss) per share (Baizas)</b>                      | <b>0.0004</b>      | <b>(0.005)</b>     |

# Amazon eyes cryptocurrency but not poised for Bitcoin

New York, US – Amazon has denied a report that the e-commerce giant planned to begin accepting Bitcoin payments by the end of this year, but acknowledged an interest in cryptocurrency.

City AM cited as unnamed insider as saying Amazon would start taking cryptocurrency, citing a recent job posting by the company for someone with digital currency and blockchain skills. Contacted by AFP, an Amazon spokesperson said information in the story was "fabricated," but that the company does have its eyes on the cryptocurrency sector.

"Not withstanding our interest in the space, the speculation that has ensued around our specific plans for cryptocurrencies is not true," the spokesperson said.

"We remain focused on what this could look like for customers shopping on Amazon."

Cryptocurrency values climbed Monday on speculation that it might be accepted for Amazon purchases.

"We're inspired by the innovation happening in the cryptocurrency space and are exploring what this could look like at Amazon," the spokesper-



son said.

"We believe the future will be built on new technologies that enable modern, fast, and inexpensive payments, and hope to bring that future to Amazon customers as soon as possible."

After dipping from early May to mid-July, Bitcoin briefly rose above US\$40,000 on Monday before losing ground.

The cryptocurrency sector is known as a bit of a roller coaster ride for investors, and is being watched warily by authorities and regulators concerned about its lack of transparency.

Backlash by governments caused Facebook to scale back plans unveiled in 2019 for a global cryptocurrency called 'Libra.' The project, entrusted to an independent association, has shifted to fielding 'Diem' stable-

coins, a type of cryptocurrency whose value is based on select real-world currencies.

Amazon handles hundreds of billions of dollars in transactions annually, making it a huge marketplace for cryptocurrency to make a debut as legal tender.

Big tech companies are interested in bitcoin and it could take off again after several weeks of laying low.

"Bitcoin is flying once again and it would appear the credit is going to Amazon, or more specifically a job posting at the company," remarked Craig Erlam, an analyst at the online brokerage Oanda. "What that actually means is anyone's guess but what it does do is excite crypto enthusiasts and gets the rumour mill pumping," he added. AFP

# Tesla's quarterly profits top \$1bn for first time

New York, US – US electric car-maker Tesla reported its first-ever quarterly profit above US\$1bn Monday as it reiterated its 2021 production targets despite supply chain upheaval.

Record deliveries of electric cars during the period allowed Elon Musk's company to garner earnings of US\$1.1bn in the quarter, up from US\$104mn in the year-ago period as revenues nearly doubled to US\$12bn.

Musk described the profit benchmark as "really an incredible milestone," but while cautioning that the growth rate the rest of the year "will be determined by the slowest part of ... our supply chain."

Besides a dearth of semiconductors that has plagued automakers around the world, Musk also cited scarcity of lithium and other raw materials as a wildcard.



Elon Musk

Musk has been a pacesetter in the industry, unveiling a growing slate of electric vehicles ahead of other traditional industry players. But analysts have cautioned the company faces increasing competition from new models being launched by General Motors, Volkswagen and other companies. Tesla reiterated its 2021 forecast, saying: 'Over a multi-year horizon, we expect to achieve 50 per cent average annual growth in vehicle deliveries.

In some years, we may grow faster, which we expect to be the case in 2021.'

The language is identical to that in the prior quarter, although Tesla alluded repeatedly to supply chain problems. Musk said on a conference call with analysts and investors that the semiconductor problem "does seem like it's getting better, but it's hard to predict." He also warned that the company's supply chain can be harmed "if anything goes wrong anywhere on earth."

Tesla said it made progress on greenfield factories in Germany and in the state of Texas, which are on track to produce Model Y vehicles later in 2021. However, the company pushed back the timeframe for launching its Semi truck program to 2022, citing the limited availability of battery cells and other supply issues.

AFP

# South Africa's port terminals still disrupted days after cyber attack

Johannesburg, South Africa – South Africa's state-owned logistics firm said Tuesday it was working to restore systems following a major cyber-attack last week that hit the country's key port terminals.

The attack began on July 22 but continued, forcing Transnet to switch to manual systems, it said.

In a letter to its customers dated Monday, the company declared a force majeure – a clause that prevents a party from fulfilling a contract because of external and unforeseen circumstances.

It said it had 'experienced an act of cyber-attack, security intrusion and sabotage, which resulted in the disruption of... normal processes and functions.'

The attack has affected ports in Durban – the busiest in sub-Saharan Africa – as well as Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and



Ngqura, Transnet said in the 'confidential' notice seen by AFP on Tuesday.

In a statement later on Tuesday, the firm said it expected to lift the force majeure 'soon' following significant progress in restoring its systems.

'It is expected that some applications may continue to run slowly over the next few days,' it said.

The outage came on the heels

of civil unrest sparked by the jailing of ex-president Jacob Zuma that halted operations for several days.

"The last few days have been the nail in the coffin," said Dave Watts, a consultant to the South African Association of Freight Forwarders.

"Up to this morning nothing is moving out of the ports, zero, since Thursday," he told AFP.

AFP



## FINCORP AL AMAL FUND

### UN AUDITED RESULTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

#### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE QUARTER ENDED JUNE 30, 2021.

Dear Unit holders,  
On behalf of the Investors' Committee, I hereby present to you the un-audited financial results of Fincorp Al Amal Fund (AIGI), for the quarter ended June 30, 2021.

#### Fund Performance

| Particulars                | Amount in RO   |                    |                   |
|----------------------------|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
|                            | June 30, 2021  | June 30, 2020      | December 31, 2020 |
| For the period ended       |                |                    |                   |
| Total Income/(Loss)        | 1,140,174      | (1,116,111)        | 42,219            |
| Fund Expenses              | (165,090)      | (103,561)          | (205,059)         |
| <b>Net Profit / (Loss)</b> | <b>975,084</b> | <b>(1,219,672)</b> | <b>(162,840)</b>  |

| Particulars                    | Amount in RO  |               |                   |
|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|
| As on                          | June 30, 2021 | June 30, 2020 | December 31, 2020 |
| Net Asset Value (in RO)        | 7,538,869     | 7,278,412     | 8,207,833         |
| Units Outstanding              | 6,393,006     | 8,006,177     | 7,880,507         |
| Net Asset Value per unit       | 1.179         | 0.909         | 1.042             |
| Fund Performance (net of fees) | 13.22%        | -13.82%       | -1.86%            |
| S&P GCC Composite Price Index  | 22.36%        | -16.07%       | -1.72%            |

#### Q2 2021 Performance

Global markets continued to show strength in Q2 2021 with developed economies starting to report economic growth on the back of increased inoculations and easing of restrictions. However, inflation worries, expectations of tighter liquidity and extended valuations for equities moderated gains. Value stocks maintained their momentum compared to growth sectors such as energy, real estate and financials performing well while defensive and technology sectors began to lag. In the GCC markets industrial and real estate sectors performed well especially in Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar. Brent crude continued to surge 18% for the quarter on improving demand outlook supporting strength in the regional markets.

Al Amal Fund rose 5.87% for Q2 2021. The S&P GCC Composite gained 9.34% and the S&P 500 index rose 8.17% for the quarter ended 30 June 2021.

#### Market Outlook

Going into the second half of this year, with improving vaccination rates and effectiveness of vaccines against variants, several developed economies are returning to growth as they reopen. The IMF has upped its forecasts for global growth to 6% for 2021 supported by fiscal stimulus and an adapted business environment. Investor sentiment remains largely positive towards equities supported by recovery in earnings despite valuations appearing stretched in some markets, concerns about the timing of central bank tightening and impact of inflation. Over the coming quarters, European and emerging markets could do well given that they have lagged relative to other markets. With energy prices supported by demand growth expectations, there is good scope for GCC markets to continue to see strength in the near term.

#### Investment Strategy

The fund's investment strategy seeks to build a portfolio of stocks with superior fundamentals, comfortable valuations, and attractive dividend yields, while actively managing downside risk in case of market setbacks. In view of the unexpected impact of Covid-19 on stock markets, the Investor Committee took measures to enhance the strategy of the fund. Beginning Q3 2020, Al Amal Fund expanded its investment mandate from being only GCC to include the U.S. market. In the long run, this strategy will aid long term capital appreciation with growth in secular international stocks supported by cyclical, high dividend plays in the region. Considering the current environment, your Fund is well positioned to take advantage of opportunities in line with the fund's strategy to protect the capital and enhance the wealth.

#### Special Cash Dividend

Considering the profits for the half year ended June, Fund proposes a special cash dividend of 70 bz subject to the approval of the unit holders in the General Meeting.

#### In Conclusion

The Investors' Committee would like to express its appreciation and gratefulness to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said and the Omani Government for providing a secure and stable economic environment focused on driving growth and continued prosperity for all.

The Committee also wishes to thank the Capital Market Authority and Muscat Securities Market for their sustained and continued efforts in building a vibrant capital market and the management team for their diligence and dedication in managing the fund successfully in a challenging economic environment.

On behalf of the Investors' Committee, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the unit holders for their continued support and confidence.

#### On Behalf of the Investors Committee

Aymen bin Hamed Al Buisaidi

Chairman

Dated: July 25, 2021

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ادارة الاصول | وساطة | تمويل الشركات والاستشارات | بحوث  
Asset Management | Brokerage | Corporate Finance and Advisory | Research

# Ahlibank signs pact with Dhofar Insurance

As part of its efforts to meet customer needs, keeping pace with the rapid changes in the banking sector, Ahlibank has announced the signing of an agreement with Dhofar Insurance Company SAOG, wherein the bank is yet again adopting industry best practices to offer new, high quality and innovative products and services in Oman.

Under the agreement, Ahlibank will strengthen its portfolio of insurance solutions offering its customers comprehensive home and family insurance protections with long term plans, to address their evolved and aware choices. The partnership with Dhofar Insurance will protect individuals and their property from financial risks arising from various potential risks and any uneventful happening.

Commenting on the addition of insurance products in agree-

ment with Dhofar Insurance Company, Muneer al Balushi – AGM, head of Retail Distribution, Ahlibank, said, “We are pleased to expand the insurance portfolio provided to our customers in Oman. Ahlibank has a unique customer-based approach, and we ensure that we take into account the related benefits that our customers can reap in conjunction with any of our new projects implemented or our products on offer. Meeting the needs of customers is at the heart of our mission, taking into account the different circumstances that may arise in their lives.”

In addition to the comprehensive insurance provided by Ahlibank for vehicles, personal accidents and travel, customers will be able to obtain financial security and peace of mind with the new comprehensive family pro-



tection long term plan, which is characterised by easy purchase, and extensive coverage.

The plans will offer to cover costs associated with death due to COVID-19, death for other reasons including the cost of cas-

kets, embalming and flight ticket for the transportation of the deceased's body, provision of insurance for total permanent disability while providing the cost of the airline ticket to the insured, and insurance for permanent

total disability, permanent partial disability and temporary disability due to an accident.

Furthermore, the insurance will cover hospital's hypnosis expenses, which include the cost of hospital treatment after hypnosis

due to an accident.

Similarly, the home insurance is also a complete solution to mitigate loss, and covers the building and the contents of the building and devices against any loss or damage, whether through fires and associated risks such as explosion, damage due to aircraft accidents, riots, demonstrations and damage, storms, hurricanes, landslides and earthquakes. It also covers sheltering against theft, protecting contents, such as, household items, furniture, installations, etc, within the criteria specified in the document. Owners of houses or apartments, apartments' tenants in buildings and residential buildings' tenants can obtain the document.

Sharing his views, Omar Ahmed al Sheikh, deputy CEO, Dhofar Insurance Company, said, “We thank Ahlibank management for expanding the in-

surance agreement between the two sides, through which we aim to provide services and solutions that meet the various needs for a safe life for customers, by providing multiple solutions and financial support to address their moments of crisis.

“Through this agreement with the Bank, which has a well-established market position and a wide range of customers, we strive to connect and add value to larger segments of the public and meet their needs.”

Ahlibank seeks to provide innovative banking services and solutions to its customers that suit different sectors and individuals within the framework of its customer-first approach. In addition to providing advanced and comfortable products and services, through its presence and deployment in strategic locations across the sultanate.

## Two Bank Muscat customers win RO500,000



Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, conducted a special Al Mazyona Mid-year draw and gave away over RO1.5mn in high value prizes to be given away to 92 lucky winners.

The lucky winners included two customers from the Mudhaibi and Madinat A'Sultan Qaboos branches who won a total of RO500,000 in the two top prizes. The draws under the Al Mazyona scheme, which is Oman's biggest prize draw scheme, was livestreamed across the bank's social media channels on Instagram, Twitter and YouTube keeping in mind the keen interest of the bank's customers and the general public. The Mid-year draw rewarded Asalah and Al Jawhar customers as well as those from all the gov-

ernorates of the sultanate and was held in the presence of Abdulnasir al Raisi, deputy general manager - Premier Banking, Bank Muscat and Dr Fatma al Hajri, Behavioural Economics expert.

Two lucky winners won RO250,000 each in the special mega prizes, which were given away during the prize draw. All customers maintaining a minimum balance of RO30,000 in their Al Mazyona accounts were automatically entered into the draws to select the two top winners in the Mid-year draws. Similarly, high savings Asalah Priority Banking customers maintaining a minimum balance of RO30,000 were entered into the draws for 10 Mid-year prizes of RO50,000 each for a total of RO500,000 in prizes for Asalah customers.

## Zoho Invoice made free to support SMEs

Zoho Corporation, a global technology company, announced that starting on Tuesday, its on-line invoicing solution, Zoho Invoice, will be completely free of cost to further extend the company's support for small and medium-sized enterprises. Zoho Invoice is compliant with the local VAT laws.

In the last four years, Zoho Invoice's revenue growth has rapidly increased, demonstrating the need for a comprehensive invoicing solution to aid businesses from any industry to shift from manual to digital. Due to the pandemic, SMEs have decided to modernise their invoicing processes at an accelerated rate. To continue its support of the SME community, Zoho Invoice offers advanced capabilities such as time tracking, auto recording of expenses, project billing, and 30+ real time reports to help freelancers and small businesses easily navigate the billing and payment collection process, without the concerns of cost.

For small and medium-sized



enterprises, billing and payment collection has continued to be a challenge due to administrative costs, limited staff, and insufficient time resources.

“We launched Zoho Invoice in 2008, with the goal of providing a fully customisable invoicing solution for businesses of all sizes. Since then we've grown to millions of users worldwide. Through the migration from paper-based invoicing to digital invoicing we've seen the need for simplified billing to fit the customised needs of the SMEs,” said Hyther Nizam, president of MEA, Zoho Corp.

### MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

For six-month period ended June 30, 2021 (1H2021), the Company has recorded a profit after tax (PAT) of RO 9.57 million. The profit after tax decreased to RO 9.57 million in 1H2021 as compared to RO 10.5 million earned in the corresponding period in 2020 (1H2020) due to one off Cyclone Mekunu Insurance claim settlement recognized in 1H2020.

#### Financial performance

Key financial performance indicators are shown below:

|                  | 1H2021<br>RO million | 1H2020<br>RO million |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Revenue          | 37.8                 | 36.3                 |
| EBITDA           | 22.2                 | 24.1                 |
| PBIT             | 16.7                 | 18.6                 |
| Profit after tax | 9.6                  | 10.5                 |

A brief analysis and characteristics of the major components of the profit or loss statement is presented below:

#### Revenue

Power contributed 51% (excluding fuel charge), water 22% and fuel charge 27% to the total revenue. Revenue was increased by 4% mainly due to increase in fuel charge revenue and energy charge revenue resulting from increase in plant load factor. Fuel charge revenue is a pass through and is calculated based on consumption of natural gas as computed by the plant's contractual Fuel Demand Model. Capacity charge revenue slightly reduced due to one day extra revenue in 1H2020 (leap year impact).

#### Cost of sales

Cost of sales mainly comprises depreciation of property, plant and equipment, fuel cost, operations & maintenance (O&M) cost and Long Term Service Agreement (LTSA) cost. Cost of sales increased by 11% compared to the same period in 2020, mainly due to the increase in fuel cost, operation and maintenance cost and LTSA cost. Fuel cost increased due to increase in plant load factor in line with the increase in fuel charge revenue. Operation and maintenance cost increased due to increase in planned maintenance activities and LTSA cost increased due to increase in number of chargeable FFH and inflation factor.

#### Other Income

Other income is reduced as compared to the previous year mainly because of one-off insurance claim settlement in 1H2020, which was compensation of business interruption and property damage loss arising from Cyclone Mekunu in 2018.

#### Net finance cost

Net finance cost decreased in 1H2021 compared to 1H2020 due to the scheduled repayment of part of the term loan in line with the financing documents.

#### Income tax expense

Income tax expenses decreased due to decrease in profit for 1H2021 as compared to the corresponding period previous year.

#### COVID-19 Pandemic

Dhofar region was not significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, registering very low number of COVID-19 cases throughout 2020 and to date 2021. Nevertheless, the Company activated its business continuity plan and took all necessary precautionary measures to protect our people and operations. Some of the initiatives included regular disinfection of the plant, the formation of split team arrangements, the preparation of emergency response plans to tackle emergency situations, provision of all required PPEs, and the reconfiguration of the plant entrance system to enable active screening of employees and visitors. In 1H2021, the Company has proactively taken steps to provide vaccination to its staff and contractors.

#### Business outlook

The commitment to safe and reliable operations will remain the Company's top priority. At the same time, the Company will remain focused on maximising shareholder returns through a continued watch on the financial and operational performance of the Company.



### Statement of profit and loss and other comprehensive income for period ended 30 June 2021

|                                                               | Unaudited<br>For three<br>months<br>period<br>ended<br>30 June<br>2021<br>RO | Unaudited<br>For six<br>months<br>period<br>ended<br>30 June<br>2021<br>RO | Unaudited<br>For three<br>months<br>period<br>ended<br>30 June<br>2020<br>RO | Unaudited<br>For six<br>months<br>period<br>ended<br>30 June<br>2020<br>RO |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Revenue from contracts with Customers                         | 21,136,420                                                                   | 37,795,939                                                                 | 19,700,070                                                                   | 36,343,227                                                                 |
| Cost of sales                                                 | (11,909,133)                                                                 | (21,118,276)                                                               | (10,139,781)                                                                 | (19,028,557)                                                               |
| Gross profit                                                  | 9,227,287                                                                    | 16,677,663                                                                 | 9,560,289                                                                    | 17,314,670                                                                 |
| Administrative and general expenses                           | (146,939)                                                                    | (301,948)                                                                  | (227,405)                                                                    | (392,990)                                                                  |
| Other income                                                  | 301,161                                                                      | 327,657                                                                    | 16,887                                                                       | 1,685,602                                                                  |
| Profit before interest and tax                                | 9,381,509                                                                    | 16,703,372                                                                 | 9,349,771                                                                    | 18,607,282                                                                 |
| Finance income                                                | 15,355                                                                       | 48,510                                                                     | 85,546                                                                       | 197,662                                                                    |
| Finance costs                                                 | (2,660,453)                                                                  | (5,483,748)                                                                | (3,125,758)                                                                  | (6,469,998)                                                                |
| Profit before income tax                                      | 6,736,411                                                                    | 11,268,134                                                                 | 6,309,559                                                                    | 12,334,946                                                                 |
| Income tax expense                                            | (1,013,129)                                                                  | (1,694,073)                                                                | (937,155)                                                                    | (1,842,663)                                                                |
| Profit after tax for the period                               | 5,723,282                                                                    | 9,574,061                                                                  | 5,372,404                                                                    | 10,492,283                                                                 |
| Other comprehensive income                                    |                                                                              |                                                                            |                                                                              |                                                                            |
| Items that may be reclassified to profit or loss              |                                                                              |                                                                            |                                                                              |                                                                            |
| Fair value of cash flow hedge adjustments – gross             | (271,347)                                                                    | 971,959                                                                    | (686,495)                                                                    | (6,247,861)                                                                |
| Reclassification to profit or loss - gross                    | 1,141,888                                                                    | 2,343,894                                                                  | 1,052,898                                                                    | 1,828,363                                                                  |
| Deferred tax asset on change in fair value of cash flow hedge | (130,581)                                                                    | (497,378)                                                                  | (54,960)                                                                     | 662,925                                                                    |
| Total comprehensive income for the period                     | 6,463,242                                                                    | 12,392,536                                                                 | 5,683,847                                                                    | 6,735,710                                                                  |
| Earnings per share:                                           |                                                                              |                                                                            |                                                                              |                                                                            |
| Basic earnings per share                                      | 0.0060                                                                       | 0.0100                                                                     | 0.0056                                                                       | 0.0110                                                                     |

### Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021

|                                                     | Unaudited<br>as at<br>30 June<br>2021<br>RO | Audited<br>as at<br>31 December<br>2020<br>RO | Unaudited<br>as at<br>30 June<br>2020<br>RO |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Assets                                              |                                             |                                               |                                             |
| Non-current assets                                  |                                             |                                               |                                             |
| Property, plant and equipment                       | 264,653,290                                 | 270,072,326                                   | 275,148,386                                 |
| Right of use assets                                 | 688,134                                     | 701,515                                       | 715,079                                     |
| Intangible assets                                   | 15,913                                      | 26,584                                        | 39,020                                      |
| Total non-current assets                            | 265,357,337                                 | 270,800,425                                   | 275,902,485                                 |
| Current assets                                      |                                             |                                               |                                             |
| Inventory                                           | 5,743,638                                   | 5,667,627                                     | 5,635,543                                   |
| Trade and other receivables                         | 17,385,838                                  | 24,565,231                                    | 30,481,939                                  |
| Bank deposits                                       | 21,701,478                                  | 20,676,336                                    | 19,731,732                                  |
| Cash and bank balances                              | 1,496,964                                   | 521,251                                       | 5,959,514                                   |
| Total current assets                                | 46,327,918                                  | 51,430,445                                    | 61,808,728                                  |
| Total assets                                        | 311,685,255                                 | 322,230,870                                   | 337,711,213                                 |
| Equity and Liabilities                              |                                             |                                               |                                             |
| Equity                                              |                                             |                                               |                                             |
| Share capital                                       | 95,457,195                                  | 95,457,195                                    | 95,457,195                                  |
| Legal reserve                                       | 11,987,847                                  | 11,030,441                                    | 10,247,441                                  |
| Retained earnings                                   | 21,473,027                                  | 14,574,602                                    | 13,636,870                                  |
| Shareholders' funds                                 | 128,918,069                                 | 121,062,238                                   | 119,341,506                                 |
| Hedging reserve                                     | (8,992,356)                                 | (11,810,831)                                  | (13,762,430)                                |
| Net equity                                          | 119,925,713                                 | 109,251,407                                   | 105,579,076                                 |
| Liabilities                                         |                                             |                                               |                                             |
| Non-current liabilities                             |                                             |                                               |                                             |
| Long term loans                                     | 114,613,933                                 | 126,719,435                                   | 139,758,122                                 |
| Long term lease liability                           | 507,594                                     | 491,616                                       | 476,616                                     |
| Asset retirement obligation                         | 710,374                                     | 688,084                                       | 667,156                                     |
| Deferred tax liability                              | 22,633,802                                  | 21,801,198                                    | 20,980,301                                  |
| Derivative financial instruments                    | 7,371,834                                   | 10,392,475                                    | 11,890,730                                  |
| Total non-current liabilities                       | 145,837,537                                 | 160,092,808                                   | 173,772,925                                 |
| Current liabilities                                 |                                             |                                               |                                             |
| Current portion of long term loans                  | 25,804,057                                  | 25,154,721                                    | 24,957,097                                  |
| Current portion of derivative financial instruments | 3,207,407                                   | 3,502,619                                     | 4,300,364                                   |
| Trade and other payables                            | 15,552,536                                  | 22,832,519                                    | 28,538,555                                  |
| Current tax payable                                 | 1,358,005                                   | 1,396,796                                     | 563,196                                     |
| Total current liabilities                           | 45,922,005                                  | 52,886,655                                    | 58,359,212                                  |
| Total liabilities                                   | 191,759,542                                 | 212,979,463                                   | 232,132,137                                 |
| Total equity and liabilities                        | 311,685,255                                 | 322,230,870                                   | 337,711,213                                 |
| Net assets per share                                | 0.135                                       | 0.127                                         | 0.125                                       |

# NBO launches HiPotential Identification programme

In line with its vision and mission to create a market-leading workforce, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has launched its new employee-focused HiPotential Identification programme.

The first phase of evaluations under the programme has been completed through an assessment centre, where bank employees including its Islamic banking window, Muzn, were taken through a series of online assessments and interviews. Out of their results, a pool of ‘Hi-Potential’ candidates has been identified, who will then be provided with customised development plans that will chart out their ongoing progression and upskill them for professional growth. In the next batch of assessments, the bank will target additional employees.

“Our people are at the heart of what we do and are our most important assets, and as such, we have always strived to help them reach their development goals. The Assessment Centre has been

designed using industry leading practices and strengthens our endeavours to identify, groom and grow a leadership pipeline from within,” said Nasser al Hajri, chief operating officer at NBO. “We have a huge pool of talent at the bank and we are committed to equipping them with the tools and techniques to be able to contribute to

a self-reliant, engaged, and future-ready workforce, while opening up greater opportunities for them in the future.”

The HiPotential Identification programme is one of many strategic interventions that are being launched as part of the bank’s commitment to create and sustain a strong performance-based culture.

Recently, the bank joined the nationwide Etimad initiative to train Omanis for middle and senior management positions. Meanwhile, its in-house training arm, the Academy of Excellence, has been helping its employees meet their professional goals for more than 10 years, with a number of training courses.



## Six winners grab incredible prizes in Ooredoo’s latest Nojoom raffle draw

Every day is exciting with Ooredoo! Six lucky Nojoom members grabbed incredible prizes that included the latest iPhone, the popular PlayStation 5 and the grand prize of a stunning BMW Z4 during the latest Nojoom raffle draw.

All Nojoom members were automatically entered into the daily and weekly draws, which saw some amazing prizes being given away; anything from GBs of data, local and international call minutes, and the massive prize of a car! This is one of many ways Ooredoo gives back to long-standing loyal customers.

Nojoom, members can earn points by simply paying Ooredoo bills on the app that can be redeemed as discounts and have access to exclusive offers from over 100 partners across Oman.

With a growing number of members, it’s just one way that Ooredoo is pioneering an awesome customer experience. Nojoom is available through the Ooredoo app, available on iOS, Android and as a web app for all other smartphones. Don’t miss out, sign up today and start earning points now!

## OC urges Senior Division teams to register before Aug 10



Amid preparations to host ICC T20 Cricket World Cup, Oman Cricket (OC) has reminded the Senior Division teams to hasten the registration process for the new season along with the payment of tournament fees before the deadline expires on August 10.

Once the team registration and payment process is over, teams will be required to complete the player registration by August 15. All Senior Division teams must enrol a minimum of 15 players including at least one Omani national for the season.

“The Senior Division teams

must also physically submit a duly signed player consent form to Oman Cricket office before 5.30pm by August 18. No scanned copies or emails will be accepted,” said an OC official.

Holding the biggest pool of sides in any Division of Oman Cricket’s League tournament, the Senior Division comprises teams from B Division downwards while Junior Division consists of various tiers of inter-school and cricket academy competitions across different age groups.

The 30-over B Division and 20-over lower Division leagues may start on September 13.

## New Nokia phones bring technology built to last



HMD Global, the home of Nokia phones, announced three new phones and a new audio portfolio. Built to survive anything life can throw at you, the Nokia XR20 can withstand much more than you’ll ever demand of it. The Nokia C30, a hero device to the C-series, features the largest screen and battery yet. Nokia 6310 is a new member of the Originals family, a reimagined noughties classic.

The day also marked the biggest Nokia accessory launch to date, with new lifestyle audio products streamlined into four distinct lines – Go, Micro, Comfort and Clarity.

Florian Seiche, CEO, HMD Global, said, “We are tapping into consumer pain points around durability and longevity. We did a global trend report and found that 73 per cent of consumers want to keep their phone for longer and would if their devices were maintained over time. At HMD, we are empowering people to avoid early device replacement and encouraging a more sustainable consumption through our longevity promises.

“We are delighted to announce the Nokia XR20 – a life-proof phone with our trademark sleek, Nordic design that we built for both consumers and enter-

prises. Today we also grow our refreshed X-series and C-series with two shining examples of what these ranges stand for. Our goal is to provide people with products they will love, trust and want to keep for longer.”

**Nokia XR20 enhances the X-series**

Extreme temperatures, 1.8m drops, 1h under water and more, the new Nokia XR20 is built for conditions far harsher than the rough and tumble of everyday life. This life-proof phone is concealed in a sleek, timeless design. So, whilst you’re probably never going to stretch your phone to the extremes of its capabilities, you can be reassured that the Nokia XR20 can endure more than you’ll ever demand of it.

Featuring one of the strongest of screens for extra peace of mind: Corning Gorilla Glass Victus – it’s amongst the toughest of glass out there. To test its durability, Brazilian football legend Roberto Carlos and female world champion freestyler Lisa Zimouche put the new Nokia XR20 through a series of tough tests.



## Maserati MC20 makes its debut at Goodwood Festival of Speed 2021

Maserati’s MC20 super sports car made its UK dynamic debut at Goodwood’s 27<sup>th</sup> Festival of Speed, taking on the famous hill climb in the Supercar Run.

Over the four-day motoring event, which took place at Goodwood in West Sussex from July 8-11, Maserati MC20 was put to the test on the 1.16 mile course.

The MC20 is the Trident brand’s first mid-engine two-seater super sports car boasting a top speed of over 202mph, and is the first Maserati with a carbon fibre monocoque, meaning the whole car weighs in at a feather-light 1500kg.

Paired with its powerful F1-derived engine, this combination ensures an exceptional power to

weight ratio, for a jaw-dropping acceleration and top speed, achieving 0-62mph in 2.8 seconds.

The Maserati Nettuno engine was on display alongside the MC20 in the Supercar Paddock.

The Ghibli Trofeo, in Nero Ribelle, Maserati’s performance saloon, also made an appearance on the iconic hill climb as

part of First Glance, showcasing its 580 hp V8 engine that can reach 62mph in 4.3 seconds.

For the remainder of the Festival, both the MC20 and the Ghibli Trofeo were thrilling spectators twice a day on the Goodwood hill climb and were on display in the Supercar Paddock and the First Glance Paddock respectively.

## Mercedes-Benz Oman launches Actros health check packages



Continuing to provide optimum ride comfort, exemplary safety and outstanding reliability for every long-haul journey, Mercedes-Benz Oman has announced its latest Service Week, offering Health Checks for Actros trucks in Muscat, Haima, Sohar and Salalah.

Specifically targeting those components that are prone to wear and tear, the customised service is available for 6-cylinder engines for just RO103 incl. VAT and 8-cylinder engines for just RO111 incl. VAT. Carried out by certified technicians, the comprehensive package is available between August 8 and 12, and includes a range of maintenance

checks to ensure that both businesses and drivers have complete peace of mind.

“As our flagship Mercedes-Benz truck, the Actros is a vehicle fit for the future, with a reputation for being one of the most efficient, safe and comfortable heavy-duty vehicles in the market. Our Health Checks aim to keep it that way. Performed by our certified technicians and backed by our absolute commitment to aftersales care, they will leave the service centre in peak condition and ready to go,” said Gary Brown, general manager of Mercedes-Benz Oman.

The Health Check package is equipped to ensure that each

truck remains in peak mechanical health, and includes engine oil (mineral oil) and filter change, replacement of diesel filter, checking for oil leaks on major components, checking and adjusting fluid levels, diagnostic check-up of vehicle electrical system, engine compression test with diagnostic tool that gives indication on engine condition, multi-point inspection, retightening of lug nuts on two/three axles, and vehicle washing and greasing.

With a rigorous prioritisation of providing all customers with the very best customer experience, Mercedes-Benz Oman Commercial Vehicles offers an

unrivalled range of tailor-made and reliable transport solutions, local service and parts supply throughout the wide national network of Mercedes-Benz branches, as well as expert technical and driver support.

To book an appointment, customers can call 99375876 (Muscat), 92735350 (Haima), 99884515 (Salalah), or 91397950 (Sohar). Alternatively, email [eraldo.d Cunha@mercedes-benz.co.om](mailto:eraldo.d Cunha@mercedes-benz.co.om) (Muscat), [ali.alfarsi@mercedes-benz.co.om](mailto:ali.alfarsi@mercedes-benz.co.om) (Haima), [mohamed.reshal@mercedes-benz.co.om](mailto:mohamed.reshal@mercedes-benz.co.om) (Salalah), or [younis.alfarsi@mercedes-benz.co.om](mailto:younis.alfarsi@mercedes-benz.co.om) (Sohar).

# Biden announces end of US combat operations in Iraq

Washington, US - President Joe Biden declared US relations with Iraq would enter a new phase with American troops exiting combat operations in the country by year-end as he held talks Monday with Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi.

Amid the threat of an Islamic State resurgence and Iran's powerful influence in Baghdad, Biden stressed that 'Washington remains committed to our security cooperation' while Kadhemi reaffirmed their 'strategic partnership'.

US troops in Iraq will 'to continue to train, to assist, to help, to deal with ISIS (Islamic State) as it arises,' Biden said.

But, in a shift that comes as the United States pulls out of Afghanistan, the US leader confirmed that the 2,500 US troops still in Iraq won't be fighting.

"We're not going to be, at the end of the year, in a combat mission," he said.

## Vaccines on the way

Eighteen years after the US invaded Iraq to remove strongman Saddam Hussein, and seven years after a US-led coalition battled Islamic State extremists who threatened the country, Washington turned its focus to other types of assistance.

It said it would help strengthen electric power supplies, fight COVID-19, confront the impacts of climate change, and support private sector development.

Some 500,000 coronavirus vaccine doses pledged to Baghdad 'will be there in a couple weeks', Biden told Kadhemi in the White House.

Biden also emphasised US support for elections in October in Iraq, saying Washington is working closely with Baghdad, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the United Nations to ensure the elections are fair.

"We support strengthening Iraq's democracy and we're anxious to make sure the election goes forward," he said.

Kadhemi said he was in Washington 'to discuss the future of our nation'.

"America, they help Iraq. Together we fight, fight and defeat ISIS," he said. "Today, our relation is stronger than ever - our partnership in the economy, the environment, health, education, culture and more."



US President Joe Biden (right) hosts Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi in the Oval Office at the White House, in Washington, DC, on Monday (AFP)

## Pro-Iran groups welcome US pledge

Baghdad, Iraq - Several powerful pro-Iran groups in Iraq on Tuesday welcomed an announcement by Washington that US combat operations in the country will end this year, an outcome they have long demanded.

US President Joe Biden declared on Monday that 'we're not going to be, at the end of the year, in a combat mission', as he hosted Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi for White House talks.

US troops would continue to provide training and assistance to the Iraqi military, including also intelligence co-operation, falling short of pro-Iran factions' demands for a full withdrawal.

But the Conquest Alliance,

the political wing of Iraq's Hashed-al-Shaabi paramilitary network, which is dominated by pro-Iran groups, said it considered Biden's announcement 'to be a positive step towards the full sovereignty of Iraq'.

"We hope that it will materialise on the ground," it added.

US troops were invited into Iraq in 2014 - three years after ending an eight-year occupation that began with the invasion to topple Saddam Hussein - by a government desperate to halt a sweeping advance by the Islamic State group.

Iraq's government declared IS defeated in late 2017, but the Sunni extremists retain sleeper cells and still launch periodic suicide attacks.

The US and Iran are both

major allies of Iraq and share an enmity towards IS, but Tehran also considers Washington its arch foe and has long pressed for a withdrawal of US troops from its neighbour.

Pro-Iran armed factions stand accused of carrying out around 50 rocket and drone attacks this year against US interests in Iraq.

Since last year, the principal role of the remaining US troops - now totalling 2,500, after drawdowns under Biden's predecessor Donald Trump - had already been to train, advise and support the Iraqi military in its fight against IS.

Biden's announcement therefore indicated little major change of policy.

AFP

keep up the fight against the remnants of the Islamic State group - while also keeping a damper on Iran's influence in Iraq.

Since last year the principal role of the remaining US troops in Iraq has been to train, advise and support their Iraqi counterparts to battle Islamic State.

But powerful pro-Iran political factions, which are crucial to Kadhemi retaining power, are overtly hostile to the US presence, and are accused of being behind rocket and drone attacks on bases in Iraq where US forces operate.

The Iraqi Resistance Coordination Committee, a group of militia factions, threatened to continue the attacks unless the United States withdraws all its forces and ends the 'occupation'.

A drone attack was carried out Friday on a military base in Iraqi Kurdistan that hosts American troops, but did not cause any casualties. A US State Department statement on the lower-level bilateral meetings that accompanied the Biden-Kadhemi summit emphasised US respect for Iraq's sovereignty.

AFP

someone who tries to use problems for his own political interests'.

The main concern from Washington is to lend enough support to Iraqi security forces to

factions to push US troops from his country.

A senior US official who would not be identified praised Kadhemi for being pragmatic and 'a problem solver rather than



A Palestinian man rides a motorcycle past rubble from buildings destroyed during the latest conflict between Hamas and Israel (AFP)

## HRW accuses Israel, Hamas of 'war crimes'

Jerusalem - Human Rights Watch said on Tuesday that both Israel and Gaza rulers Hamas 'apparently' committed 'war crimes' during a May conflict, calling for the incidents to be probed as part of ongoing international investigations.

The 11-day conflict saw Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in Gaza fire thousands of rockets towards Israel, which pounded the strip with hundreds of airstrikes.

In a report released on Tuesday, HRW said it had investigated three Israeli attacks that 'killed 62 Palestinian civilians where there were no evident military targets in the vicinity', interviewing Palestinians in Gaza and analysing data from the sites and digital imagery.

It listed a May 10 strike in Beit

Hanoun, one on May 15 at the Al-Shati refugee camp and a series of airstrikes on May 16 in Gaza City as the focus of its investigation, but noted 'other Israeli attacks during the conflict were also likely unlawful'.

The rights group also noted the 'indiscriminate' rocket attacks by Palestinian militants that targeted Israeli civilians, which HRW said would be addressed in a forthcoming report.

The Israeli and Palestinian attacks 'violated the laws of war and apparently amount to war crimes', HRW said.

The prosecutor at the International Criminal Court in March announced the opening of a full investigation into the situation in the Israeli-occupied territories.

AFP

## Mediterranean migrant death toll 970 this year: UN

Geneva, Switzerland - The deaths of 57 migrants off the Libyan coast brings the number of lives lost on the central Mediterranean crossing route this year to around 970, the United Nations said on Tuesday.

At least 57 migrants drowned after their boat sank off Libya, said the UN's International Organization for Migration - the latest tragedy on the dangerous Mediterranean Sea crossing to Europe.

Among those missing are at least 20 women and two toddlers, the IOM told reporters in Geneva.

The ship left the Libyan port of Khoms, some 120km east of the capital Tripoli, on Sunday, before it ran into trouble, took on water and sank.

"Local fishermen and the Libyan coastguard rescued 18 people from the water," said IOM spokesman Paul Dillon.

"Survivors told our staff who regularly respond to these heart-wrenching scenes that at least 57 people are missing.

"Our staff in Libya provided emergency medical assistance, food, water and comfort to the survivors, who are from Nigeria, Ghana and The Gambia.

"This latest tragedy pushes the 2021 death toll on the central Mediterranean route to roughly 970 men, women and children."

The IOM said there had been a rise in departures this year on the central Mediterranean route, an increase in the number of interceptions, and more arrivals.

AFP

# Lebanon's new PM begins bid to form much-delayed Cabinet

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanon's new prime minister-designate Najib Mikati on Tuesday held consultations with political parties that he said 'unanimously' agreed on the need to put together a government quickly to rescue the crisis-hit country.

But after nearly a year of extreme drift, an economic crisis described by the World Bank as one of the world's worst since the 1850's and continued squabbling among political players, he faces an uphill battle.

Mikati, a billionaire who has already twice served as prime minister, took on the task on Monday, days after fellow veteran politician Saad Hariri threw in the towel.

The last government resigned amid public outrage over a deadly explosion of hundreds of tonnes of poorly stored fertiliser at Beirut port last August.

The institutional vacuum is holding up a potential financial rescue plan for the country, which defaulted on its debt last



Lebanon's President Michel Aoun (left) meets with two-time premier Najib Mikati at the presidential palace in Baabda, east of Beirut on Monday (AFP)

year.

On Tuesday, Mikati met with top political parties, including the powerful Shiite Hezbollah movement and the Free Patriotic Movement founded by President

Michel Aoun.

"There was unanimous agreement from all blocs and lawmakers on the need to speed up the process of Cabinet formation," Mikati said after consultations

ended.

The meetings are the customary official step that follows a new prime minister's designation, but the high-stakes horse-trading has yet to even begin.

## Scepticism

Following a meeting with Mikati, Hezbollah lawmaker Mohammad Raad said his party is ready to 'cooperate seriously' with the new PM-designate.

FPM chief Gebran Bassil, accused by critics of repeatedly obstructing previous efforts to form a new government, said his party would stand aside this time.

We will 'not to participate in the next Cabinet, which means we will not get involved in the formation process'.

In an interview with *An-Nahar* newspaper, Mikati vowed his lineup would be 'purely technical' and tasked with bridging the gap to elections due next year.

Several lawmakers, including deputy speaker Elie Ferzli, backed this push on Tuesday.

"The government will consist of specialists," Ferzli said. "As for the nominating process, it will rest on Mikati and his agreements with the president."

The designation of 65 year old Mikati, Lebanon's richest man and to many a symbol of its corrupt oligarchy, was met with general scepticism.

A native of Tripoli, Lebanon's second city and one of its poorest, he was accused by a state

prosecutor in 2019 of illicit enrichment, a charge he denies.

"How can I trust a thief who stole from me and my children and their future?" asked 57 year old Beirut resident Mohammed Deeb, after Mikati's designation.

"As long as this (political) class is still in power, nothing will change."

On Sunday evening, dozens of protesters gathered outside Mikati's Beirut home, accusing him of corruption and cronyism.

Lebanon's former colonial ruler France and other Western governments stopped short of welcoming Mikati's designation and simply urged him to swiftly deliver a competent lineup.

But Lebanon's bickering politicians view Mikati as a consensus candidate, who may be capable of easing the near-year-long political deadlock. Mikati promised his government would work on implementing a French roadmap conditioning a huge aid package on reform and transparency.

AFP

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC

# Tanzania to begin vaccination drive

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania - Tanzania's Health Ministry said it will begin a mass vaccination drive on Wednesday, in a reversal of the policies of the country's late COVID-sceptic leader.

Former president John Magufuli was one of a handful of world leaders who scoffed at the new coronavirus, shunning masks and vaccines while insisting the disease could be fended off by the healing power of prayer.

His successor President Samia Suluhu Hassan says the country is now battling a third wave of COVID infections and has told Tanzanians to follow health guidelines to curb the spread of the virus.

Hassan will be getting a jab herself as she launches the inoculation campaign in the financial capital Dar es Salaam, Health Minister Dorothy Gwajima said a statement late on Monday.

The programme will begin with the single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.



A man washes his hands with chlorinated water at the Mabibo market in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (AFP)

The East African country received just over one million doses at the weekend from Covax, the global initiative to ensure lower-income countries receive jabs.

"The launch of the vaccina-

tion exercise is historic to our nation in the fight against the coronavirus," said Gwajima, who under Magufuli had promoted a vegetable smoothie and other purported natural cures to ward off COVID.

"The administration of vaccines is one of the measures that is trusted world over in the fight against viral diseases including COVID-19," she added, calling on other government leaders to promote the campaign.

## Vaccine apathy

Anti-vaccine sentiment, often fuelled by conspiracy theories and mistrust, has played out across Africa and limited jab uptake.

Josephat Gwajima, a Tanzanian archbishop and MP, recently came under fire after asking his congregation not to get vaccinated, arguing there was not sufficient research to prove the vaccines will not lead to future health issues.

Tanzania, a country of 58mn people, is among the three nations on the continent yet to begin inoculating its citizens, along with Eritrea and Burundi.

The government stopped releasing COVID-19 data in April 2020, with Magufuli saying that issuing the figures was scaring people and describing vaccines as 'dangerous'.

But after Magufuli's death in March, Hassan created an expert taskforce to advise her government about how to best

handle the pandemic.

The Health Ministry issued new health guidelines on July 25, including mandatory wearing of face masks on public transport.

But compliance has been poor, especially in overloaded buses.

Gwajima, the Health Minister, said last week that the number of COVID cases had increased to 858 since the start of the third wave.

She also said that 29 people have died, but did not give a timeframe.

When the government stopped releasing the figures, it had reported 509 cases and 16 deaths.

Magufuli, nicknamed the 'Bulldozer' for his uncompromising leadership style, died of what the government said was a heart condition after a mysterious three-week absence.

His critics say he had COVID-19. AFP

## 70% of EU adults have at least one shot: Chief

Brussels, Belgium - EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Tuesday that 70 per cent of adults in the bloc have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Overall, 57 per cent of over-18s are now fully vaccinated across the 27 nations, she said in a statement.

"These figures put Europe among the world leaders," von der Leyen said.

"But we need to keep up the effort."

The European Commission president sounded a warning over the 'very dangerous' Delta variant of the virus that has increasingly taken hold on the continent and seen infection rates begin to tick up again. "I therefore call on everyone to be vaccinated."

AFP

## Indonesia reports record 2,069 deaths in 24 hours

Jakarta, Indonesia - Indonesia reported a record 2,069 coronavirus deaths in 24 hours on Tuesday as the Southeast Asian nation faces its deadliest COVID-19 surge since the pandemic began.

Tuesday's grim tally was nearly 600 deaths higher than the previous day and topped last week's daily record 1,566 deaths, the Health Ministry said.

New infections also shot up to just over 45,000, from about 28,000 on Monday.

The eye-watering data comes after Indonesia this week loosened virus curbs by allowing small shops, streetside restaurants and some shopping malls to reopen after a three-week partial lockdown.

But health experts warned it could trigger a fresh wave of cases, as the highly infectious Delta variant tears across the vast archipelago, which has overtaken India and Brazil to become the global pandemic epicentre.



Passenger ship *Umsini*, which has been readied to accommodate over 800 patients for isolation from Wednesday, is docked in Makassar, South Sulawesi on Tuesday (AFP)

Shopping malls and mosques in less affected parts of the country also got the green light to open their doors from Monday, to limited crowds and with shorter hours. Offices were still under shutdown orders.

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation where tens of millions live hand to mouth, has avoided strict lockdowns seen in some other countries.

But the government has been widely criticised for its handling of the pandemic and policies that critics say prioritised Southeast Asia's largest economy over public health.

President Joko Widodo has pointed to falling daily infection and hospital occupancy rates, including in the hard-hit capital Jakarta, as justification for the easing. AFP

## Melbourne decides to lift lockdown after containing Delta outbreak

Melbourne, Australia - Melbourne has decided to lift coronavirus lockdown late on Tuesday, as authorities signalled a Delta variant outbreak in Australia's second-biggest city had been contained.

Neighbouring South Australia state will also ease stay-at-home rules, but the country's largest city Sydney was facing a likely extension to a lockdown now in its fifth week.

After almost two weeks under stay-at-home orders, millions in Melbourne and surrounding Victoria state will exit their fifth lockdown just before midnight on Tuesday.

The state had now 'seen off two Delta outbreaks' in recent months, premier Dan Andrews said.

"It's not over, though, and we've got to be vigilant against this virus, the Delta strain, in the days and weeks and months ahead until we get as many people vaccinated as we possibly



This file photo shows a pedestrian walking through a quiet street of Melbourne, during the ninth day of the lockdown on July 24 (AFP)

can," he added.

"That is some time away."

Schools, restaurants and shops will reopen but restrictions including mask-wearing will remain.

For at least two weeks, people cannot invite visitors into their homes and numbers at outdoor gatherings will be limited. Victoria detected ten new

cases on Monday, with all in quarantine while infectious.

In Sydney, officials announced 172 new cases linked to an outbreak that began in June when a local driver contracted the virus from an international flight crew.

Australia was lauded for its early pandemic success, after slamming shut its international borders and moving quickly to quash COVID-19 clusters.

But with a largely unvaccinated population, it has struggled to respond to the highly contagious Delta variant, repeatedly sending cities into lockdown.

Roughly 13 per cent of Australians have been vaccinated, with low supplies of Pfizer-BioNTech shots and scepticism about the AstraZeneca jab.

The country has recorded more than 33,000 infections and 920 COVID-related deaths in a population of 25mn. AFP

## Afghanistan requires negotiated settlement, says NATO chief

Brussels, Belgium - NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg on Tuesday reiterated calls for a 'negotiated settlement' with the Taliban in Afghanistan, admitting the country faced a 'deeply challenging' security situation as foreign troops leave.

'The security situation in Afghanistan remains deeply challenging, and requires a negotiated settlement', Stoltenberg wrote on Twitter.

'NATO will continue to support Afghanistan, including with funding; civilian presence; and out-of-country training,' he tweeted after speaking to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

Since early May, violence has surged as the Taliban launched a sweeping assault just days after US-led NATO forces began a withdrawal which is now almost complete.

The deadly advance has seen the insurgents capture scores of districts, border crossings and encircle several provincial capitals.

The fighting continues across

the rugged countryside as peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban have so far failed to reach a deal to end the war.

Most of NATO's 10,000-strong force have already pulled out of the country after a decision by President Joe Biden to bring Washington's troops home after two decades.

The United Nations warned on Monday that Afghanistan could see the highest number of civilian deaths in more than a decade if the Taliban's offensives across the country are not halted.

The US descended on Afghanistan and its Taliban government in 2001 in the wake of the 9/11 attacks by Al Qaeda, which had sought sanctuary in the country.

There are serious fears that the Taliban's advance could see the collapse of the country and unravel the tenuous gains made in 20 years of costly involvement in the country. AFP

## China braces for more rain as death toll from floods in Henan province rises to 71

Beijing, China - The death toll from floods in central China's Henan province rose to 71 on Tuesday as a tribute at a subway where 14 people died was sealed off in a sign of sensitivity to public criticism of the government's handling of the disaster.

Torrential downpours dumped a year's rain in just three days last week on the hardest-hit city of Zhengzhou, flooding subway cars and trapping more than 500 commuters during rush hour last Tuesday.

Images of passengers inundated by shoulder-height water went viral on Chinese social media.

The city government announced on Tuesday the names of those who perished in the subway, a rare attempt at transparency after people started leaving flowers at the entrance to the station.

'Extreme rains caused severe water logging in parts of subway line 5, and the retaining walls that protected the subway lines crumbled,' the government statement said.

Subway guards eventually



Rescuers evacuate residents from a flooded area in Weihui, Xinxiang city, in Henan province on Monday (AFP)

blocked access to the floral tribute, but a video published by state-run *West China Metropolis Daily* on Tuesday showed a group of people pushing aside the yellow barricades on Mon-

day night chanting 'let the spirits of those who died come back home!'

One of the victims, identified in the official list by his last name Sha, was days short of his 34th

birthday.

'Who would have thought that you were only one stop away from home, but you will never come back again,' his wife wrote on China's twitter-like

Weibo. Sha's wife, who declined to give her name, told Jimu news that she was suing the metro operator for negligence.

Foreign journalists covering the floods have been harassed online and on the ground, as sensitivity towards any negative portrayal of China mounts.

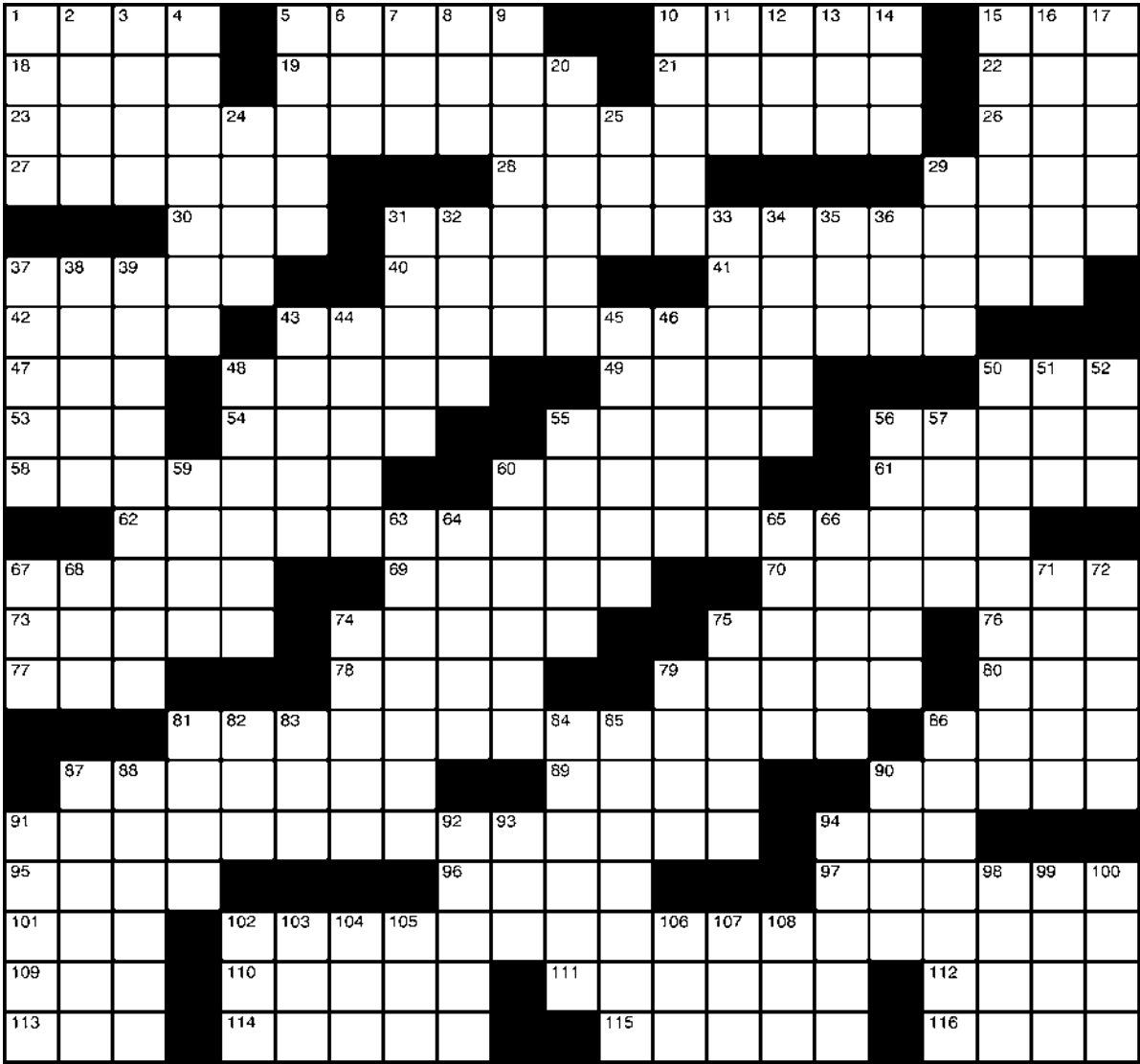
Reporters from AFP were forced to delete footage by hostile residents and surrounded by dozens of men while reporting on a submerged traffic tunnel in Zhengzhou.

Heavy downpours that began July 17 have affected almost 13 million people, damaged nearly 9,000 homes and caused economic losses in Henan estimated at 13.9bn yuan (US\$2bn).

Forecasters said on Tuesday more heavy rain is expected as the remnants of Typhoon In Fa pass through the area.

Cities still reeling from the last week's floods, including Xinxiang, Hebi and Anyang, are likely to see the heaviest downpours from July 27 to 29, Henan's meteorological observatory said in a statement. AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Wan
- 5 Bean pod tree
- 10 False, at times
- 15 Vicious viper
- 18 Distinct entity
- 19 Richard Lovelace girl
- 21 "M\*A\*S\*H" character
- 22 New Orleans-Detroit dir.
- 23 Furious M.P.s?
- 26 River of Wales
- 27 Untraditional, musically
- 28 First Holy Roman Emperor
- 29 Marquee name
- 30 "\_\_\_ been real . . ."
- 31 Bait loser?
- 37 Common nut tree
- 40 Flat plinth
- 41 Make \_\_\_ about it: pull back
- 42 "\_\_\_! poor Yorick"
- 43 Arctic photos?
- 47 Bro's kin
- 48 Places of worship: Yiddish
- 49 "The Younger" or "The Elder"
- 50 A wee amount
- 53 Actor Scheider
- 54 Trader's concern
- 55 Denim favorite
- 56 Money wagered
- 58 One \_\_\_: singly
- 60 "\_\_\_ Attraction"

- 61 Muffed a catch, e.g.
- 62 Nitwit slave master?
- 67 Tree with sweetness
- 69 Child who does no wrong
- 70 Fabulous mythical Greek beast
- 73 Great Lake Indian region
- 74 Take \_\_\_: sit down
- 75 Stiff Victorian dress fab.
- 76 100 square meters
- 77 U.N. name of fame
- 78 Wing: prefix
- 79 Attention getters
- 80 Crow call
- 81 Extra lodger?
- 86 Mal de \_\_\_
- 87 Nine-sided figure
- 89 Two queens
- 90 Designer's standard
- 91 Local devastation?
- 94 Communicator Buchanan
- 95 Was obligated to
- 96 Mild oath: arch.
- 97 Town's theater district
- 101 Part of USMA
- 102 Undersized raconteurs?

- 109 Siam add-on
  - 110 Millionaire pool
  - 111 Certain moths variety
  - 112 Son of Seth
  - 113 Soak flax, say
  - 114 Texas shrine
  - 115 Remains
  - 116 Computer output
- DOWN**
- 1 Mountain lion
  - 2 Med. School course
  - 3 Italian island resort
  - 4 Peoples
  - 5 Fetal membranes
  - 6 Jolson and Pacino
  - 7 Hwy.
  - 8 Santa greeting
  - 9 Deceives
  - 10 \_\_\_ the sea
  - 11 On the \_\_\_: running
  - 12 Fuss
  - 13 Took off
  - 14 Fem. title
  - 15 Heel \_\_\_: jig step
  - 16 Proceeds surreptitiously
  - 17 British nobles
  - 20 Moves in accordance with
  - 24 Court procedure
  - 25 Native: Suffix
  - 29 Male heirs
  - 31 Takes it easy
  - 32 Class of nos.
  - 33 Implant

- 34 NYC and London areas
- 35 TV special programming
- 36 \_\_\_ potato
- 37 Iraq port
- 38 "The Waste Land" author
- 39 A cinch
- 43 Chew with vigor
- 44 European blackbird: var.
- 45 Acetone derivative
- 46 16th century dance
- 48 Mucky stuffs
- 50 "It's a \_\_\_ lie"
- 51 Alibi \_\_\_: excuse maker
- 52 Turner or Kennedy
- 55 Thailand/Laos ethnic group
- 56 Green finches
- 57 Not kosher
- 59 Mah-jongg piece
- 60 "The Barber of Seville" barber
- 63 London areas across the Thames
- 64 Show scorn
- 65 Plume producer
- 66 Soot
- 67 Brooks of the movies
- 68 "Exodus" character
- 71 Up in arms

- 72 Staircase post
- 74 Cook's coverup
- 75 London domestics: colloq.
- 79 French girl friend
- 81 Prune, in Scotland
- 82 Chum
- 83 Ottoman official
- 84 Sedative
- 85 "\_\_\_ and Englishmen . . ."
- 86 Demolished
- 87 Not at all
- 88 Breakfast fare
- 90 Knights' protection
- 91 "Iliad" author
- 92 Disagreement
- 93 Res. squad
- 94 Push against
- 98 Musical Horne
- 99 Horse gait
- 100 Bones: L.
- 102 Resort
- 103 Daughter of Loki
- 104 \_\_\_ pro nobis
- 105 Toronto museum: abbr.
- 106 Military div.
- 107 Verbal vote
- 108 Make a stab at

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



**ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Welcome back to the world of the living. You've been working hard lately and haven't taken time out to do much of anything else -- so play, of course, has been at the very bottom of that list. Well, it's time to make up for all that, starting tonight. Get in touch with your friends and family members. The universe has arranged for all of you to be in the mood for love, laughter and lots of hugs.



**LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

That invitation to get out of the house and celebrate sounds good, doesn't it? So no matter what you're up to tomorrow morning, why not pretend that you have nothing but time and the luxury of sleeping in as late as you like? You might be tired, but you'll amble into work with a great big grin and a terrific attitude, and just about everyone will be tickled for you.



**SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

In your opinion, life is far too short to waste on organising. You'd much rather go out and play with interesting, unusual people and leave the scrubbing to others. At the moment, however, you're actually in the mood to clean, and as usual, you won't be doing it halfway. You might try to stop yourself before you wash the paint off the walls.



**TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

Here's another blessed day off from feeling as if you and you alone are responsible for everything that happens in and around your world. This makes two in a row, so you may begin to feel a bit spoiled, but that doesn't mean that you should let guilt creep into the equation. You've earned this, so enjoy it with the companion you've chosen to share in the good feelings.



**VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

An authority figure who isn't exactly across the street is still reachable, and you know it. So whether you decide to consult with them via a long-distance call or an email, you can still reap the benefits of their experience -- if you're smart enough to back away from your pride long enough to ask. There's no shame in looking for advice. What's shameful is refusing to ask for it.



**CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

If anyone is fond of 'just the facts,' it's you. Embellishing those facts or adding details that have more to do with wishful thinking than the absolute truth just isn't your style. Mention all those things to anyone who approaches you now and insists that you give them your opinion on the story they're just dying to share. Otherwise, mention that you also won't be shy.



**GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

You're still in the mood to deal with facts and figures, to talk things over in an unbiased, objection fashion and, in general, to take care of business. That's not your usual style. You'd much rather play than work, and you've always put pleasure right at the top of your priority list. You won't even recognise yourself, so don't be surprised if your loved ones are caught a bit off guard by all this.



**LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

There's only so much you can do, and you can still only be in one place at a time. So when your family members and your best friends all insist on your time and attention at the same moment, you'll have a decision to make -- and you'll need to make it quickly. Your only option is to figure out what your personal priorities are and to act on them.



**AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You come off as freewheeling and risk-loving, but when it comes right down to it, you're as bound to duty and responsibility as any of your famously diligent friends. You don't advertise it for precisely the reason you won't be happy about letting it show now: Because there's always someone who wants to put you in a position of authority.



**CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

Someone you love is acting as if you're the one and only priority in their life -- and while you're not used to this, you're not about to argue about it. They've been working far too hard for far too long, and you're just glad to be seeing them. While you have their attention, of course, you might want to schedule one of those nice, long heart-to-heart chats. Make some coffee.



**SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

It's time to start recognising all of the attention you have been getting for what it truly is! That hottie is not looking at the clock behind you, they're looking at you -- and wondering if you're single. Those complimentary emails you keep getting from your boss are not the kind of emails that they send to everyone else -- you're someone they are watching with an eye toward the future.



**PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

If anyone deserves some quality time with strictly platonic acquaintances -- the kind who want nothing more from you than a couple of good giggles and some intelligent, charming company -- it's you, especially after what you've been dealing with lately. All those thoughts about what's important and what's not take the fun out of things.



**TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE**

**1. Which day is observed as World Food Day?**

- a. September 10
- b. August 16
- c. November 4
- d. October 16

**2. The decade 1981-1990 was observed as International Decade for**

- a. Peace
- b. Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation
- c. Women
- d. Children

**3. Which year is observed as Poverty Eradication Year by SAARC?**

- a. 1998
- b. 1997
- c. 1996
- d. 1995

Answers: 1.b 2.d 3.b

**KIDS COLOURING**



**DO YOU SUDOKU?**

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

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

**BOGGLER**

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| L | T | E | P |
|   |   |   |   |
| D | R | I | I |
|   |   |   |   |
| L | N | A | A |
|   |   |   |   |
| E | S | G | I |

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

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

**SUDOKU EASY ANSWER**

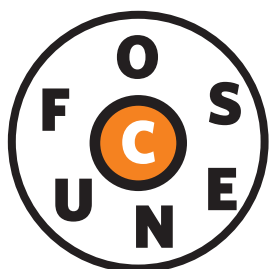
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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 3 |
| 1 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| 5 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 8 |
| 4 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 9 |
| 8 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| 3 | 5 | 9 | 1 | 4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

|          |         |              |        |
|----------|---------|--------------|--------|
| PAID     | BROIL   | BEEL         | ABASH  |
| ALLY     | SAURA   | PINDA        | NADIA  |
| RAINCATS | ANDDOGS | GLAIS        |        |
| IDEALIST | DEE     | ESTER        |        |
| MAINO    | PENS    | DIORAMA      |        |
| ASPIRE   | DIARTS  | TREMORS      |        |
| SELICE   | HORSE   | AROUND       | NSA    |
| TAGS     | WANE    | ELDO         | AKIIN  |
| RIG      | TURN    | STURFILE     | BLEND  |
| ANISETTE | OPERA   | TROVES       |        |
| NEMED    | ESSAV   | LAIRS        |        |
| LANGED   | PUBET   | DRAWNSHOP    |        |
| APORT    | ARE     | DIOWETAILING | IDIA   |
| MOVE     | ARE     | CITY         | PNJIN  |
| ALT      | ITAL    | STURKEY      | ALBOUT |
| SHOWISH  | OSTER   | SPASMS       |        |
| ONESTOP  | PANS    | OTIC         |        |
| LIARUS   | EGG     | SCENARITO    |        |
| GAMIN    | SINAKEN | THEGRASS     |        |
| AGAVE    | IAMA    | NIGER        | DCIIT  |
| SELLES   | ELY     | GREENS       | SETIS  |

**WORD BUILDER**

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

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

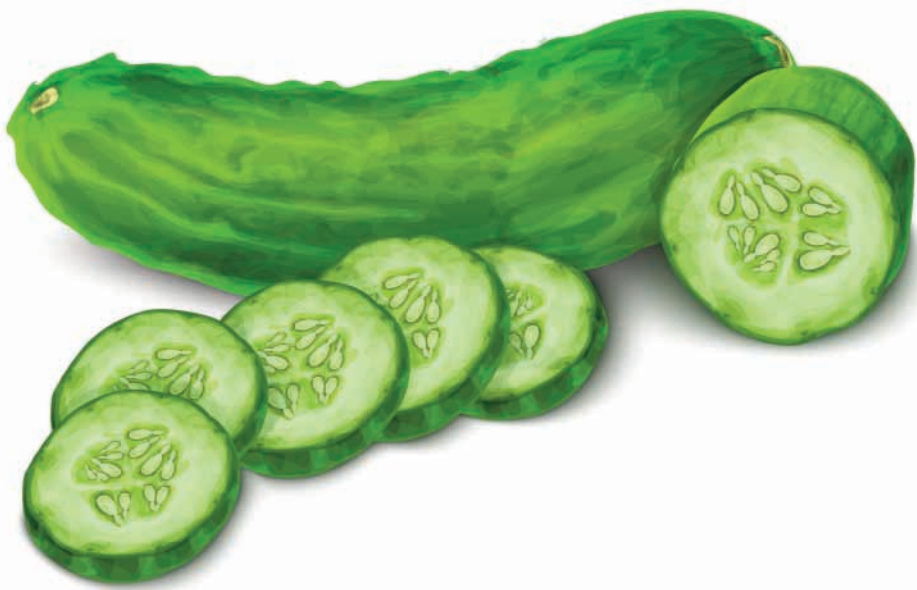


MAIN COURSE: CUCUMBERS

COOL

Platters

Make your summer lunches or dinners really cool. How about cucumbers for main course? You read that right – don't dismiss cucumbers as just an ingredient for salads, they can be used in multiple creative recipes as starters, main course, and even desserts. Consider some really cool cucumber recipes for the hottest days in Oman:





A close-up photograph of several Caprese Cucumber Bites. Each bite consists of a thick slice of cucumber topped with a layer of green pesto, a round slice of white mozzarella, a halved cherry tomato, and a fresh basil leaf. They are secured with a wooden toothpick. In the background, a can of Biondi's Genovese Pesto is visible.

### Caprese Cucumber Bites

**Ingredients**  
**For the cucumber bites:**  
1 cucumber - sliced into 2cm thick rounds  
1 can shredded tuna - drained  
3tbsp pesto  
Ground black pepper, to taste  
½ cup halved cherry tomatoes  
6-8 basil leaves  
½ cup mini mozzarella balls

**For the glaze**  
1 cup balsamic vinegar  
1tbsp sugar

**Method**  
Add balsamic vinegar and sugar to a small saucepan and place over medium high heat. Bring mixture to a boil, then reduce to medium low and simmer for 15-20 minutes, stirring until the balsamic vinegar turns into a thick syrup like consistency.

Remove from heat and set aside. (If the mixture hardens up, just reheat it over a low flame.)

In a bowl, add the tuna, pesto and freshly ground black pepper and combine well. Place about 1tbsp of tuna-pesto mixture on each cucumber round. Top with a mozzarella ball, half cherry tomato, and a basil leaf. Secure the assembly with a toothpick. Serve on a platter, drizzled with balsamic reduction.

Roasted Cucumber Curry

Ingredients

- 2 cucumbers
- 1 cup diced tomatoes
- 1 onion – sliced
- 2 green chillies – slit
- 2tsp ginger garlic paste
- 2tsp red chilli powder
- ½tsp turmeric powder
- 1tsp garam masala
- 2tsp coriander powder
- 1 cup grated coconut
- 2tbsp white vinegar
- 2tbsp oil
- 1 sprig curry leaves

Method

Grind together all the spice powders, ginger garlic paste, vinegar and coconut to form a smooth paste. Heat oil in a wok and add the curry leaves, fol-

lowed by the onions. When the onions get translucent, add the tomatoes and fry for a minute. Cover the lid and let it cook on medium flame for two minutes. Add the ground coconut paste and continue cooking for 10 minutes, covered, on low flame. Add 1 cup water and let the curry boil for 4-5 minutes. Meanwhile, cut each cucumber into half and place them on a hot grill till the skins get slightly charred stripes. Slice the cucumber halves into semi-circular wedges and add to the boiling curry. Let it simmer for 5 minutes. Serve hot with steamed rice.



Cucumber Sesame Noodles

Ingredients

- 4 cucumbers – spiralised
- 1tbsp toasted sesame oil
- 1tbsp seasoned rice vinegar
- 2tsp low sodium soy sauce
- 1tsp sriracha sauce
- 1tsp toasted white sesame seeds

Method

Use a spiraliser to cut the cucumbers into neat spirals resembling noodles. If you do not have a spiraliser, try this: Cut off the ends of the cucumber and pierce a bamboo skewer right through the centre, from end to



end. Now, beginning at one end of the skewered cucumber, place your knife at a slight angle from the cut end and cut down till the knife touches the skewer. Rest

the blade firmly against the skewer and continue cutting spirals by turning the cucumber. Keep the spiral as thin as possible, until you reach the other end. Place your cucumber noodles in a large bowl, drizzle sesame oil, rice vinegar, soy sauce and sriracha and toss until evenly coated. Taste and adjust sauces, as needed. Sprinkle sesame seeds and refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving. You may add steamed shrimps or shredded chicken as an interesting garnish.



Smoked Salmon Cucumber Rolls

Ingredients

- 1 long cucumber - cut in rounds and ends removed
- ½ cup cream cheese – softened
- ½ cup smoked salmon - cut into thin strips

Method

Using a vegetable peeler, peel the cucumber into 15cm long strips. Dab the cucumber strips gently with a paper towel to absorb excess moisture. Gently spread about 1-2tsp of cream cheese along the length of each cucumber strip. Press a strip of smoked salmon on top of the cream cheese, then roll the cucumber up as tightly as possible. Secure each roll with a toothpick, if they don't stay rolled up on their own.

# Ahmad set to make British GT return at Snetterton

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

For Oman's experienced driver Ahmad al Harthy, it has been a mixed season over the past year and a half as he has been on and off the tracks. It has been more than five months since Ahmad competed with his last track outing at the 2021 Asian Le Mans Series in Dubai, UAE.

The Omani racer is now set to make a welcome return to action as he gets back behind the wheel of his Oman Racing Aston Martin Vantage GT3 car to compete at the British GT Championship at the Snetterton circuit on August 7-8.

He will team up with Aston Martin Racing factory driver Charlie Eastwood.

*I'm delighted to return to racing in the UK, back in British GT, with Oman Racing and looking forward to competing at Snetterton once again*

AHMAD  
AL HARTHY



Ahmad, British GT3's runner-up in 2014, was due to contest last year's campaign with Jonny Adam and TF Sport until the global pandemic put

paid to his entry.

The Omani racer is no stranger to success at the circuit in Norfolk, UK, winning in 2013 behind a Porsche car. He returns

alongside Eastwood with whom he won the 2019 24 Hours of Spa before going on to clinch that year's GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Pro-Am title.

"I'm delighted to return to racing in the UK, back in British GT, with Oman Racing and looking forward to competing at Snetterton once again," said Ahmad.

"It is still a very challenging year with COVID-19 continuing to cause so many difficulties globally, but I'm very proud to represent Oman in the British GT and we would love to get some good results at Snetterton."

The Snetterton event is the fifth and sixth round of the nine-round British GT Championship and Ahmad, for now, has confirmed only taking part at Snetterton.

Ahmad added, "We haven't been in the car since our last round in Asian Le Mans, although we have got some testing

before next weekend so hopefully we'll get back to speed very fast. I'm obviously really looking forward to teaming with Charlie [Eastwood] again as well, he's a great driver and knows our Aston Martin inside out."

The No 97 Oman Racing Aston Martin Vantage GT3 is engineered by top British squad TF Sport which is headed by Tom Ferrier.

"TF Sport have been in constant contact with us throughout these months where we've been working incredibly hard behind the scenes in Oman to put a programme together," added Ahmad

"These races in British GT are the first of several exciting outings we're planning during the remainder of 2021."

## Krunal tests positive, T20I called off

**SRI LANKA VS INDIA**

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka on Tuesday postponed the second T20I against India just hours before its start, after an Indian player tested positive for coronavirus. Allrounder Krunal Pandya was found positive during a routine check, Sri Lanka Cricket said in a statement.

India confirmed that Pandya, 30, had tested positive. The BCCI said that the entire squad was undergoing more tests and the teams will play the game on Wednesday in Colombo.

AFP



## Former England bowler Hendrick passes away

London, UK - Former England bowler Mike Hendrick has died aged 72, his old county Derbyshire announced on Tuesday.

Hendrick, who took 87 wickets in 30 Tests between 1974 and 1981, had been suffering from bowel and liver cancer in recent years. He was part of three Ashes-winning series and appeared in 22 ODIs, including the 1979 World Cup final against West Indies.

AFP

# Aussie bowlers shine in ODI series win over WI

**WEST INDIES VS AUSTRALIA  
THIRD ODI**

Bridgetown, Barbados - Australia's varied bowling attack once again dominated a suspect West Indies batting line-up on the way to a series-clinching six-wicket win in the final fixture of the three-match One-Day International series at Kensington Oval in Barbados on Monday.

Opening batsman Evin Lewis played a lone hand with an unbeaten 55 as the tourists bundled out the home side for 152 off 45.1 overs batting first with Mitchell Starc leading the rout with figures of three for 43.

That effort lifted his series wicket haul to 11 and confirmed the left-arm pacer as 'Man of the Series'. "It's my role in the team to use whatever pace and swing I have consistently through my spells," said Starc in putting his performances in the match and the series in context.

Fellow new ball bowler Josh Hazlewood was at his most miserly in claiming two for 18 while the trio of spinners Adam Zampa, Ashton Agar and Ashton Turner combined for the other five wickets. Matthew Wade's unbeaten 51 led Australia to the target with almost 20 overs to



Australian players celebrate their win

spare. He received good support from Alex Carey (35) and Mitchell Marsh (29) after the West Indies prised out the openers early and the slow bowlers, led by Akeal Hosein, threatened to give their team a fighting chance at defending that modest target.

Batting challenges were the defining features of the match as exemplified by Lewis' effort at the top of the West Indies order when his captain, Kieron Pollard, chose to bat on winning the toss for the first time in the series.

Forced to retire hurt at the start of the innings when he

edged a delivery onto his helmet, Lewis returned at the fall of the fifth to prevent an abject capitulation in finishing on unbeaten 55 off 66 balls with three sixes and five fours.

He suffered for a lack of support though with only four others getting into double-figures and no-one else going past 20.

**Brief scores:** West Indies 152 in 45.1 overs (E Lewis 55; M Starc 3-43, J Hazlewood 2-18, A Agar 2-31, A Zampa 2-29) lost to Australia 153 for four in 30.3 overs (M Wade 51 n.o., A Carey 35).

AFP

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TOKYO 2020

MEDALS TABLE

(Only selected nations)



|                | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |
|----------------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| Japan          | 10   | 3      | 5      | 18    |
| USA            | 9    | 8      | 8      | 25    |
| China          | 9    | 5      | 7      | 21    |
| ROC*           | 7    | 7      | 4      | 18    |
| Great Britain  | 4    | 5      | 4      | 13    |
| South Korea    | 3    | 2      | 5      | 10    |
| Australia      | 3    | 1      | 5      | 9     |
| Canada         | 2    | 3      | 3      | 8     |
| France         | 2    | 2      | 3      | 7     |
| Germany        | 2    | 0      | 3      | 5     |
| Kosovo         | 2    | 0      | 0      | 2     |
| Italy          | 1    | 5      | 6      | 12    |
| Chinese Taipei | 1    | 2      | 3      | 6     |
| Brazil         | 1    | 2      | 2      | 5     |
| Switzerland    | 1    | 2      | 2      | 5     |
| Slovenia       | 1    | 1      | 1      | 3     |
| Serbia         | 1    | 1      | 1      | 3     |
| Tunisia        | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |

(ROC\* - Russian Olympic Committee)



Bermuda's Flora Duffy celebrates after crossing the finish line to win the women's triathlon competition at the Odaiba Marine Park in Tokyo on Tuesday (AFP)

Smallest Bermuda's biggest achievement

Women triathlete Flora Duffy celebrates 'cool moment' after making Olympic history

"I have achieved my dream of winning a gold medal, but also winning Bermuda's first gold medal," she said.

"It's bigger than me and that's a really cool moment. That was the longest kilometre of my life (the final one of the run).

"I think I can get used to being called Olympic champion for the rest of my life."

Bermuda's only previous Olympic medallist was boxer Clarence Hill, who won a bronze

in 1976. For Duffy it was a welcome reward after persistent injuries and a diagnosis of anaemia in 2013.

She quit the sport after failing to finish the event at the 2008 Beijing Games and started working in a shop before studying for a degree and returning to the sport.

Taylor-Brown suffered the intense frustration of a flat rear tyre in the cycling section of the race, leaving her 22 seconds behind the leading quartet going

into the running section but she quickly made up the lost ground.

It was an emotional moment for Zaferes, whose father, Bill, died suddenly in April.

He was responsible for her taking up the sport after persuading her to compete with him in a Father's Day Triathlon in 2007.

"We saw a rainbow during the race and I thought 'hey dad'," she said. "I mean, everything came together for me. I know I didn't win but it feels like it."

AFP

Bout of boxing and biting!

Morocco's Youness Baalla (L) and NZ's David Nyika



BOXING

Tokyo, Japan - Moroccan heavyweight boxer Youness Baalla attempted to bite David Nyika's ear during his defeat to the New Zealander at the Tokyo Olympics on Tuesday.

The 22-year-old was subsequently disqualified for unsports-

manlike behaviour, although he was already out of the Games anyway following his unanimous-points loss in the round-of-16 bout.

Footage shows Baalla trying to bite Nyika's right ear as the two boxers hold each other.

AFP

TRIATHLON

Tokyo, Japan - Triathlete Flora Duffy revelled in a 'cool moment' after delivering the first Olympic gold medal in history for the tiny island of Bermuda in Tokyo on Tuesday.

The 33-year-old crossed the line in the women's race in 1hr

55min 36sec, more than a minute ahead of Britain's Georgia Taylor-Brown, with US athlete Katie Zaferes taking bronze.

Duffy's success makes Bermuda the smallest nation or territory in terms of population - around 70,000 - ever to win a gold medal at a Summer Games.

HEAD OVER HEELS



Brazil's Italo Ferreira celebrates on the podium after winning the gold in the men's surfing event of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Tsurigasaki Surfing Beach, in Chiba, on Tuesday (AFP)

Werth's 'worth' in gold

EQUESTRIAN

Tokyo, Japan - Isabell Werth became the first rider to win seven equestrian Olympic gold medals when Germany took the team dressage title in Tokyo on Tuesday.

The 52-year-old has accrued six team titles and one individual gold in six different Games.

Werth - who also extended her record haul of Olympic medals to 11 - takes sole possession of the record she held jointly with late compatriot Reiner Klimke.

Werth and her horse *Bella Rose 2* - who performed to a musical medley of *Ode To Joy*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Beethoven* - scored 2740.5 points. The German all-women trio won a 14<sup>th</sup> team crown since 1928 with 8178 points.

Werth, Dorothee Schneider and Jessica von Bredow-Werndl will also be serious contenders for the individual title on Wednesday.

Despite the victory, Werth was unimpressed by the seven judges' tally.

"I'm so happy about her (*Bella Rose 2*) and I'm long enough in the sport to deal with it, and to cope with it," she said.

"I think she deserves more, but it is like it is."

Bredow-Werndl - the last to ride - was a figure of joy at the end as she jumped off *TSF Valera* and hugged one of the coaches.

The US took silver with 7747 points. Their three riders - including Steffen Peters who was on the bronze medal-winning team in 2016 - shedding a few tears. Britain added bronze to the



Gold medallist Isabell Werth of Germany rides on her horse after the medal ceremony of the team dressage competition in Tokyo on Tuesday

I'm so happy about her (Bella Rose 2) and I'm long enough in the sport to deal with it

ISABELL WERTH

gold and silver they won in 2012 and 2016 respectively, scoring 7723 points.

British rider Charlotte Dujardin will hope she can bounce back on her mount *Gio* on Wednesday and become only the second rider to win three successive individual Olympic titles.

AFP



TOKYO 2020

# OSAKA: PAINFUL HOME OLYMPIC DEFEAT SUCKS

TENNIS

Tokyo, Japan - Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka conceded the pressure of trying to win an Olympic gold at home was a 'bit much' after a 6-1, 6-4 defeat to Marketa Vondrousova ended her title dreams on Tuesday.

Osaka, who lit the Olympic cauldron and was one of the faces of the Games, struggled in an error-strewn display that blew the draw wide open after the earlier exits of world No 1 Ashleigh Barty and third seed Aryna Sabalenka.

"How disappointed am I? I mean, I'm disappointed in every loss, but I feel like this one sucks more than the others," said the four-time Grand Slam winner.

Asked what went wrong, she replied, "Everything - if you watch the match then you would probably see. I feel like there's a lot of things

that I counted on that I couldn't rely on today."

The third-round defeat follows a turbulent few months for Osaka, who abandoned her French Open campaign in May after refusing to attend press conferences, citing the need to preserve her mental health.

Osaka also skipped Wimbledon, saying she had been battling depression and anxiety, before returning in Tokyo for her first

Olympics, including her starring role at the opening ceremony. But ultimately the sky-high expectations placed on the world's highest-paid women athlete proved tough to handle.

"I definitely feel like there was a lot of pressure for this. I think it's maybe because I haven't played in the Olympics before and for the first year (it) was a bit much," said Osaka.

*I think it's maybe because I haven't played in the Olympics before and for the first year (it) was a bit much*

NAOMI OSAKA

Vondrousova, the 2019 French Open runner-up, called it 'one of the biggest wins of my career'.

Ukrainian fourth seed Elina Svitolina, the highest-ranked women's player left in the competition, recovered to defeat Greece's Maria Sakkari 5-7, 6-3, 6-4.

Wimbledon runner-up Karolina Pliskova, seeded fifth, slumped to a 4-6, 2-6 loss to Italy's Camila Giorgi.

There were also third-round wins for Switzerland's Belinda

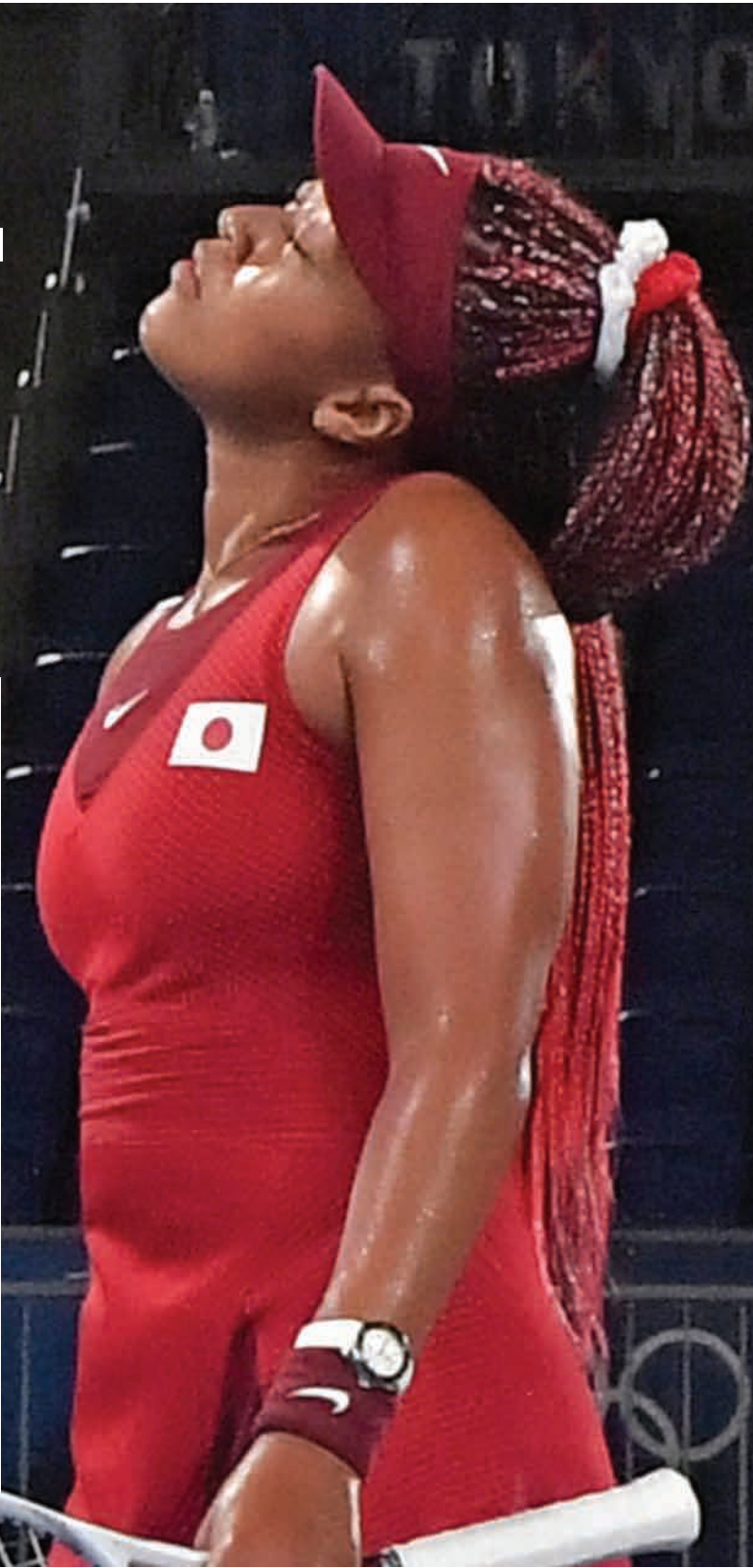
Bencic and Garbine Muguruza while Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova ended the run of Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo, who dumped Barty out in round one.

Earlier, men's third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas advanced to the third round as he avenged last month's Wimbledon loss to Frances Tiafoe, winning 6-3, 6-4.

Kei Nishikori will now single-handedly take on the challenge of becoming Japan's first Olympic tennis champion after Osaka's exit. The 2016 bronze medallist overcame a second-set wobble to defeat American Marcos Giron 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 6-1.

Britain's Liam Broady upset Polish seventh seed Hubert Hurkacz 7-5, 3-6, 6-3. He will meet Frenchman Jeremy Chardy, who beat 11th-seeded Aslan Karatsev in three sets.

AFP



# McKeown crowned backstroke queen

Australia's Kaylee McKeown



SWIMMING

Tokyo, Japan - World-record holder Kaylee McKeown upstaged American arch-rival Regan Smith to claim the 100m Olympic backstroke crown on Tuesday as Russia and Britain clinched titles to limit powerhouse US to a single gold.

Australian sensation McKeown, who shattered Smith's world record last month, flew through the water at the Tokyo Aquatic Center to touch in 57.47 seconds, a new Olympic record and only fractionally outside her own world best. Smith had to settle for third behind Rio Olympic bronze medallist Kylie Masse of Canada.

In a day of upsets, American 100m breaststroke world-record holder and defending champion Lilly King was beaten, as was teammate and 100m backstroke champion Ryan Murphy. King was stunned by 17-year-old compatriot Lydia Jacoby, who swam a scintillating final 50m to touch in 1:04.95 and edge her into bronze, with South Africa's Tatjana Schoenmaker taking silver.

Murphy was also dethroned, with Evgeny Rylov leading a Russian one-two. The 24-year-old hit the wall in 51.98sec to pip teammate Kliment Kolesnikov, who finished in 52.00, ahead of Murphy in 52.19. It snapped a streak of six straight Olympic titles for the US in the event.

Britain pulled off a sensational gold-silver double in the men's

## Aussie coach apologises for wild victory celebrations

Tokyo, Japan - An Australian swimming coach whose wild victory celebrations at the Tokyo Olympics went viral online has apologised for tearing off his mask in defiance of strict coronavirus rules. Coach Dean Boxall flipped out after his swimmer Ariarne Titmus won gold in the 400m freestyle ahead of fierce American rival Katie Ledecky on Monday.

Roaring with delight, the shaggy-haired swim guru kicked the air and hammered his fists, before thrusting his hips against a perspex barrier. He also tore off his face covering and threw it across the Tokyo Aquatic Centre's spectator-free stands as an anxious volunteer hovered nearby, prevaricating about whether to put an end to the histrionics. "I just lost it in the moment," Boxall said.

AFP

200m freestyle. Tom Dean took the honours when he came from behind in the final 50m to set a new national record of 1:44.22, with Scott grabbing silver ahead of Brazil's Fernando Scheffer.

AFP

# Surfing's coming home! Hawaiian claims gold

SURFING

Ichinomiya, Japan - Hawaiian surfer Carissa Moore said she was bringing Olympic gold home to the sport's roots after winning a historic inaugural title at the Tokyo Games on Tuesday.

Moore beat South African Bianca Buitendag in the final to become surfing's first women's Olympic champion, shortly after Brazil's Italo Ferreira won the men's title.

The American dedicated her victory to her home island, more than a century after legendary Hawaiian Duke Kahanamoku first pushed for surfing to be included at the Games. "It means everything - surfing is Hawaii's sport, and that's where it started," she said.

"I hope I am a good ambassador for our sport and the aloha spirit and for our people. It gives the people of Hawaii hope that

they can do anything they dream of."

Ferreira claimed the gold medal in the men's event despite snapping his board on the first wave in his final against Japan's Kanoa Igarashi. But he recovered to turn in an imperious performance. "I think it's one of the best days of my life, for sure," said Ferreira, the 2019 world

champion. Australia's Owen Wright took the bronze medal, less than six years after suffering a serious head injury that left him needing to learn to walk and surf again. He beat much-fancied Brazilian Gabriel Medina for the bronze, after Igarashi had ousted the world No 1 in a spectacular semifinal.

Moore went into the women's competition as the world No 1, and was helped along the way by upsets that eliminated several of her main rivals. Underdog Buitendag knocked out seven-time world champion Stephanie Gilmore and world No 6 Caroline Marks on her way to the final.

"I'm so honoured to be representing the US and wearing the gold medal and bringing it back to Hawaii," said Moore.

AFP



Carissa Moore



American Carissa Moore in action on Tuesday

## TOKYO 2020



# BILES WITHDRAWAL STUNS OLYMPICS

Tokyo, Japan – US gymnastics superstar Simone Biles sent shockwaves through the Olympics on Tuesday, tearfully citing concerns for her mental health after a dramatic withdrawal mid-competition during the women's team final.

The 24-year-old four-time Olympic gold medalist – one of the faces of the Tokyo Games – got off to a shaky start at the Ariake Gymnastics Centre with a lacklustre opening vault.

Stunned on-lookers watched as Biles was led off the competition floor before returning wearing a tracksuit. Soon afterwards, USA Gymnastics confirmed she would sit out the remainder of the final with an unspecified medical issue.

Speaking to reporters after the final – eventually won by Russia's team – Biles said concerns for her mental wellbeing prompted her decision to withdraw.

"At the end of the day, I have to do what's right for me and focus on my mental health and not jeopardise my health and my wellbeing," she said.

"I just think mental health is more prevalent now in sports and it's not just like we have to set everything aside, we also



Simone Biles is disappointed after her withdrawal during the artistic gymnastics women's team final on Tuesday

have to focus on ourselves. Because at the end of the day, we're human too so we have to protect our mind and our body rather than just go out there and do what the world wants us to do."

If Biles fails to recover in time for Thursday's individual all-around competition, it would mark a stunning turn of events at a Games which she had been strongly expected to dominate.

Biles later began crying as she revealed a loss of confidence in

her abilities. "I just don't trust myself as much as I used to," she said, flanked by her US teammates. "I feel like I am also not having as much fun. That just hurts my heart that doing what I love has been taken."

The US team, clearly unbalanced by the drama surrounding their talismanic leader, were foiled in their bid for a third straight Olympic title after wins in London and Rio.

Led by Angelina Melnikova,

Russia prevailed with a total of 169.528. The US scored 166.096 and Britain had 164.096.

Competing as the Russian Olympic Committee because they are banned from using the Russian flag and anthem due to doping sanctions, the team emulated the Russian men who won gold 24 hours earlier – the first time in Olympic history one country has won both titles.

While the Russians celebrated, the US team put their

arms around Biles. "She's my idol, she's my inspiration," said teammate Sunisa Lee.

## Netherlands set up last-8 clash with US

Elsewhere, the Netherlands rounded off their high-scoring group-stage campaign with an 8-2 thrashing of China on Tuesday to set up a quarterfinal clash with the United States in the women's football event.

Earlier, the US again produced a below-par performance again in a 0-0 draw with Australia which was enough to see them finish second in Group G behind Sweden. European champions the Netherlands finished top of Group F with runners-up Brazil, who beat the Zambians 1-0 on Tuesday.

Sweden made it three wins from three by seeing off pointless New Zealand 2-0 to book a quarterfinal clash with Japan.

The hosts, the 2011 World Cup winners, edged through as one of the best two third-placed teams after a tense 1-0 win over Chile.

Britain, bidding for a first women's Olympic football medal, finished top of Group E thanks to Canadian Nichelle Prince's 85th-minute own goal in a 1-1 draw.

Canada will face Brazil, with the Britons taking on the Aussies. AFP

## Victories for Australia, India and Belgium

### HOCKEY

Tokyo, Japan – Australia's stranglehold in men's hockey continued with another superb display to see off the challenge of Rio 2016 gold medallists Argentina, winning 5-2, while India also claimed a crucial 3-0 win over Spain in Pool A at the Oi Hockey Stadium on Tuesday.

Belgium men consolidated their place at the top of the Pool B standings with a 9-4 win against South Africa. Also in Pool B, Germany put their title campaign back on course with a 5-1 win over Great Britain.

Australia continued their fine Tokyo form to take their Pool A points tally to a maximum nine from three matches.

On a milestone day for Birendra Lakra (200 caps) and Amit Rohidas (100 caps), India recorded their second win of the competition. It was the perfect response after their previous 7-1 defeat at the hands of Australia,

to remain on-track for a quarter-final berth with six points.

India scored twice in the opening period with Simranjeet Singh scoring from open play before Rupinder Pal Singh guiding home a penalty corner. Rupinder then scored in fourth quarter for their third goal, from a penalty corner.

A hat-trick from London 2012 Olympic gold medalist Florian Fuchs helped Germany to their second win while a third win in succession ensured world champions Belgium finished three points clear at the top of Pool B, with Germany (second), Netherlands (third) and Great Britain (fourth) tied on six points but separated by goal difference.

### Other results:

#### Men's Pool A:

Japan 2 New Zealand 2

#### Pool B:

Netherlands 4 Canada 2

AFP



Australia's Jeremy Thomas Hayward (second from left) celebrates with his teammates after scoring against Argentina in Tokyo on Tuesday

## OMAN AT OLYMPICS

# 'Disappointed' Adawi vows to bounce back

Omani swimmer bows out on his debut with a sixth-place finish in 100m freestyle heat

Ashok Purohit  
Muscat



Issa al Adawi

Tokyo Aquatics Centre in the past couple of days saw world records tumbling, Olympic marks set and world and Olympic champions making a splash. The venue can be overwhelming at times, especially for a debutant.

Nerves probably took over Oman's Issa al Adawi as he made his debut at the Olympic Games on Tuesday with the result not going his way as he finished sixth in the preliminary heat of the 100m freestyle swimming event.

The 22-year-old student of Chukyo University in Japan was himself 'disappointed' with his efforts as he clocked 51.81 seconds to bow out of the Games. In his exclusive remarks to *Muscat Daily* after his debut, which he had earlier called a 'dream', Adawi said, "Yes, I am disappointed with the result. I have done better than this and my personal best is 51.69s."

"My preparations had gone well and I had worked hard to make it a memorable debut. Unfortunately, it didn't happen.

I was confident of not only bettering my personal best but also finishing around mid-50s."

The lanky swimmer did not have the best of the starts in heat three of the event. He had the slowest reaction time of 0.63s among the eight competitors and completed the first turn in 24.57s, placing him sixth, which was where he ended.

Despite the disappointment, Adawi vowed to bounce back. "This failure is a lesson for me and it makes me more moti-

vated than ever to aim to break my personal best. I know that I can do better. I am now looking ahead for next major championships and my aim is clear – to improve upon my career-best time of 51.69."

Yemen's Mokhtar al Yamani won the heat three with a time of 50.52s. Following the conclusion of all the nine heats, Italy's Thomas Ceccon emerged as the fastest qualifier with a time of 47.71s to advance with 15 others. American Caleb Dressel, who won a 4x100m relay

gold on Monday for his team, was the next best with a time of 47.73s. The cutoff for the top-16 closed at 48.44s with Great Britain's Jacob Whittle making it as the final qualifier. Adawi's timing placed him 53<sup>rd</sup> among the 70 competitors.

### Next up for Oman is sprinter Mazoon

Oman's next event will be on Friday when sprinter Mazoon al Alawi will compete in the 100m women's preliminary heat.

Amur al Khanjari, 20, the sultanate's other Olympic debutant, will be in action in the 81kg Group B event on July 31 (Saturday) at the Tokyo International Forum.

Oman's star sprinter Barakat al Harthi will be in action in men's 100m preliminary heat on Saturday while experienced marksman Hamed al Khatri will compete in the 50m rifle three position men's qualification round on August 2.

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