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THURSDAY, 29 JULY 2021
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Students over 12 to get vaccines soon

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has received 2,623,180 doses of COVID-19 vaccines and 2,000,072 individuals have been vaccinated so far, according to H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health. The sultanate is expecting 3.3mn more doses of vaccines in the next two months.

On Wednesday, the Ministry of Health announced that it will start administering the second dose of vaccine to those who have completed ten weeks since the first starting Sunday, August 1, 2021. Appointments must be booked through Tarassud + or covid19.moh.gov.om

In an interview with Oman TV on Tuesday evening, H E Dr Sa'eedi said that the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the impact of the pandemic will meet on Thursday and announce appropriate measures.

He informed that more than 50 per cent of citizens and residents and over 95 per cent of General Education Diploma students have been immunised.

According to the minister, Oman will receive 3,313,190 doses of vaccines in August and September, and 1.4mn doses from October to December. "Oman has already booked 7,698,940 doses of vaccines," he said.



In Oman, COVID-19 deaths occurred mostly in individuals over 60 who did not accept vaccines

H E DR AHMED AL SA'EEDI

H E Sa'eedi added that plans are afoot to vaccinate 320,000 students in the age group of 12 to 18 years soon in a joint effort coordinated by the ministries of Health and Education to help them return to classrooms next semester.

He noted that COVID-19 cases are decreasing owing to several reasons, including adherence to precautionary measures and vaccination. The emergence of the Delta variant had led to an

alarming rise in infections after a downward trend between October 2020 and January 2021.

"Most cases in Oman today are of the fast-spreading Delta variant. This strain affects people of all ages. The infection it causes is also more severe than previous strains. In Oman, COVID-19 deaths occurred mostly in individuals over 60 who did not accept vaccines."

H E Sa'eedi reiterated that the pandemic is not yet over; it is ongoing and its social and economic effects are clearly visible. "The level of burden borne by the health sector is immense. We came close to a collapse in healthcare systems when the total number of patients in ICUs crossed the 500 mark. The Supreme Committee had no choice but to opt for measures like complete closure when cases exceeded several times the capacity of the healthcare sector."

Clarifying on vaccine supply, he said, "Any delay in procuring these is a result of scarcity across the world, not due to financial limitations or the government not trying to obtain doses."

"Vaccination is not mandatory in Oman, but it is the responsibility of the government to protect society from infectious diseases. We are studying measures for those who refuse to take the vaccine."

World Race Walking Championships to be held in the sultanate in 2022

Muscat - World Athletics announced at its annual congress in Tokyo on Wednesday that Oman is the host of the 2022 World Race Walking Team Championships. The event will take place from March 1 to 6, 2022, at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre and will be organised in partnership between Oman Sail, the Oman Athletics Association and OCEC.

The event will be held for the first time in the Middle East and is expected to attract 1,700 athletes.

The bid for the event by Oman Sail was based on its expertise in hosting international events of world-class standards as well as its network with international federations of various sporting disciplines.

Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said, "We are delighted to be able to lend our expertise in managing large



(Supplied photo)

international events in order to make sure the World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships are a huge success. As hosts, this is a prime opportunity to develop the sultanate as an attractive venue for interna-

tional athletics and inspire our own people to pursue their sporting ambitions. The country prides itself on its authenticity and will offer a warm welcome to athletes from around the world in 2022."

Following the announcement, Mohammed al Asmi, board member of Oman Athletics Association, said, "This is a great opportunity to enhance athletics in Oman."

Continued on Page 03

Economic cost of consumption of tobacco equals 1% of Oman's GDP

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The economic cost of the consumption of tobacco products in Oman is equivalent to one per cent of its GDP, according to a new GCC-wide survey. The survey showed a clear increase in the economic cost of tobacco consumption in the GCC countries in general and the sultanate in particular.

This was revealed when the

National Committee for Tobacco Control convened its 11th meeting under the chairmanship of H E Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, Undersecretary for Health Affairs in the Ministry of Health.

The meeting reviewed the composition of the committee; new members were added from Sultan Qaboos University and other concerned authorities. The meeting touched upon the results of an economic cost survey of smoking and second-hand

smoke exposure in the sultanate and GCC states carried out under the supervision of the Health Council.

The committee highlighted the importance of a media plan in promoting awareness on the hazards of tobacco products. During the meeting, it was agreed to form a joint team to develop a media plan. The team will consist of representatives from several ministries and Oman Cancer Association.



(ONA)

8TH NATIONAL DEFENCE COURSE GRADUATION HELD

The National Defence College held a graduation ceremony for the eighth national defence course on Wednesday under the auspices of H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister. A number of senior officers from the Sultan's Armed Forces, Royal Guard of Oman, Royal Oman Police and other military and security authorities participated in the course alongside several officials from ministries, civil government bodies and institutions

See more on Page 03



Auction Announcement

Oman Airports Management Company S.A.O.C (OAMC) would like to invite qualified business to participate in the Request for Proposal (RFP) for "Harvesting and Collection of the Coconut fruits from the Precincts and Perimeters of Salalah Airport, Sultanate of Oman"

Required Proposal Guarantee/Bond: all participating companies must provide a bank guarantee, issued by a locally registered bank, for the sum of OMR 50/- addressed to Oman Airports Management Company, valid for 90 days from the Closing Date of Submission of the proposals.

RFP Collection: RFP documents may be collected from the Commercial Office located at Oman Airport's Commercial Office at Salalah Airport from 1st of August, 2021 till 5th of August, 2021, between 8.00 AM and 3.30 PM upon receipt of document fees of OMR 50 paid at the finance department at Oman Airport Head Quarter or to be paid in the Commercial Office at Salalah Airport - Oman Airports Administration Offices, Office Number # 607. The proposer must mention company name, contact name, telephone number and E-mail address, or submit a business card.

Submission: the proposal must be submitted in one sealed envelope, comprising both Technical proposal and Financial proposal, each in one separate envelope indicating the RFP number, The RFP title, addressed to The Chairman of the Commercial Committee - Oman Airports Management Company, no later than 12th of August, 2021, at 3.00 PM.

The proposal must be submitted at the Commercial Office, located at Oman Airports Administration Office at Salalah Airport Office Number # 607 or by email on: retail@omanairports.com. The exterior of the envelope should bear no indication or marking which may reveal the identity of the proposer.

Headquarter Address:
Salalah Airport
Oman Airports Administration Office at Salalah Airport
Oman Airports Management S.A.O.C,
Salalah, Sultanate of Oman.

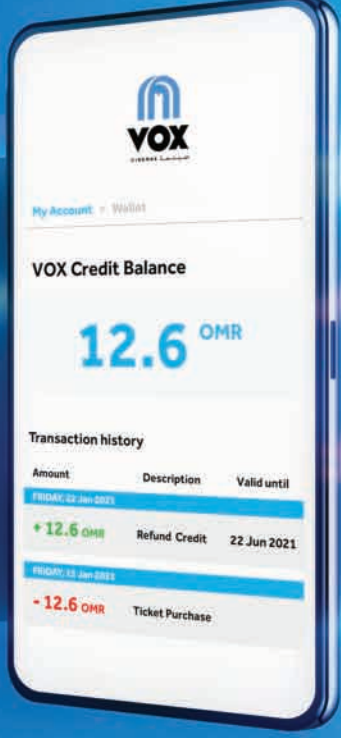
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صندوق مزون الأول
The First Mazoon Fund

THE FIRST MAZOOON FUND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

The First Mazoon Fund Financial Statements for the period ended June 30, 2021

The primary objective of the fund is to achieve capital appreciation through a diversified portfolio of equity and bond investments in public companies listed at GCC Markets and MENA region.

A summary of financial results is as follows:

Figure 1:

	For the period ended June 30, 2021 (OMR)	For the period ended June 30, 2020 (OMR)
Total Income	1,728,552	(736,192)
Total Expenses	(223,512)	(137,974)
Profit (Loss) for the Period	1,505,040	(874,166)
Profit (Loss) per Unit	0.199	(0.144)
NAV per Unit	1.210	0.921

Fund Performance:

For the year ended June 30, 2021 the performance of The First Mazoon Fund is as follows:

Figure 2:

	March 31, 2021	March 31, 2020
Net Asset Value (OMR)	9,128,506	7,057,601
Number of Outstanding Units	7,546,431	7,659,841
Net Asset Value per Unit*	1.210	0.921
FMF Fund Performance for the period	19.65%	(10.82)%
Benchmark Performance for the period	22.35%	(16.06)%

The First Mazoon Fund's NAV increased by 19.65% (net of all expenses) to reach RO 1.210 per unit for the six-month period ended 30 June 2021. This compares with increase in the benchmark Index S&P GCC Composite index of 22.35% resulting in an underperformance of 2.74%.

Market Performance:

During the first half of 2021, most of the GCC regional markets extended gains driven by higher oil prices. The Abu Dhabi and the Saudi Markets indices led the gains to rise by 35.48% and 26.13%, respectively. The Kuwait market index managed to close with 15.16% gains in addition to the Dubai and Oman markets indices closing higher with returns of 12.78% and 11.06%, respectively. The Bahrain market index closed higher with a 6.59%, followed by the Qatar market index that gained 2.82%. The S&P GCC Index registered gains of 22.35% during the period.

Figure A: Index Returns

Index	YTD (June 30, 2021)
Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange	35.48%
Saudi Stock Exchange (Tadawul)	26.13%
S&P GCC Index	22.35%
Boursa Kuwait	15.16%
Dubai Financial Market	12.78%
Muscat Securities Market	11.06%
Bahrain Bourse	6.59%
Qatar Exchange	2.82%

Economy and Markets

Second quarter of 2021 exhibited macro-economic led maneuvering across asset classes. Reflation theme was dominant, supported by stronger global growth expectations while inflation surprises were steep and on the upside. The World Bank also released its semi-annual Global Economic Prospect report during this period which estimated that the global economy will likely expand by 5.6% this year, up from its 4.1% forecast in January. It further mentioned that that this acceleration in growth will be led by a 6.8% expansion in the U.S. and by 6.5% in Chinese growth. While the expectations about firmer growth became more wide-spread amongst market participants on account of re-opening up of economies, inflation acceleration – both at the core and aggregate level- also became prominent in Q2. Sizeable price rise were seen across the globe in house prices, container freight rates, commodity prices (in both metal and non-metals), and more specifically in the energy complex. Brent crude oil prices went up by \$12 per barrel to end at US\$75 in Q2, on account of sizeable incremental global demand as the economies continued to re-open post normalization of the pandemic.

Going forward, the assessment for Q3 appears to be more complex. In the near term, there is a possibility that global inflation has likely peaked in the near-term as is being currently highlighted by leading indicators – the 10-year breakeven inflation and the S&P GSCI commodity index. Additionally, there are still fears about the Delta variant and the associated rise in new infections although the death counts due to new cases has been remained low, thereby suggestive of strong vaccine efficacy. However, this macro uncertainty of rising global case counts is leading to a possibility of slower global growth than what the World Bank estimates. Also, sharp appreciation in Yuan is likely to slow down Chinese growth relative to market estimates. EPS growth estimates in the US are expected to be revised downwards (where it has exceeded its previous high in 1999 of 19%); similar downward revisions in EPS growth are expected elsewhere. Such a "growth scare" scenario is now getting embedded via a rising dollar and declining global 10-year bond yields, which peaked around mid-May 2021 despite sharply higher inflation rates globally.

In such a scenario of slower growth and elevated inflation (which tends to be sticky even as growth moderates) – modest stagflation – positioning of the investment portfolio is likely to assume a modest defensive posture.

relative to Q2, as profit margins and EPS growth estimates peak. In the GCC, a similar portfolio bent could be looked at so as to provide better risk-adjusted returns and minimize volatility in the portfolio.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Fund Management Body, I extend my thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq bin Taimour for his government's progressive policies and constant encouragement to the financial services sector.

I also take this opportunity to thank the members of the Fund Management Body for their valuable time and guidance, the CMA, MSM & MCD for their support and cooperation, the fund manager and service providers for their efforts and you, our valued unitholder, for your continued support and trust.

Chairman

The First Mazoon Fund

July 27th, 2021

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income For 30 June 2021

	Six Months Period Ended 30 June 2021 RO	Six Months Period Ended 30 June 2020 RO
Income		
Dividend income	207,865	126,779
Interest income	308	71
Foreign exchange loss	2,663	-
Total income	210,836	126,850
Net realised gain/(loss) on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	895,783	(957,114)
Net unrealised gain/(loss) on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	618,519	92,972
Net investment income	1,725,138	(737,292)
Expenses		
Management fees	(58,088)	(50,145)
Performance fee	(81,566)	-
Transaction costs	(51,049)	(50,075)
Custody fees	(5,787)	(4,477)
Management body fees	(10,206)	(17,918)
Foreign exchange loss	-	(3,899)
General and administrative expenses	(13,404)	(10,362)
Total expenses	(220,100)	(136,876)
Profit and total comprehensive income Increase in net assets attributable to the unitholders for the period	1,505,039	(874,166)
Profit per unit	0.202	(0.119)

Statement of financial positionAs at 30 June 2021

	30 June 2021 RO	30 June 2020 RO
ASSETS		
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	8,336,057	4,535,588
Other receivables	920,825	2,524,305
Cash and cash equivalents	2,550	41,032
Total assets	9,259,433	7,100,925
LIABILITIES		
Payables and accruals	130,927	43,324
Net assets attributable to the unitholders	9,128,506	7,057,601
Total liabilities and net assets attributable to unit holders	9,259,433	7,100,925
Net assets attributable to the unit holders per Unit	1.210	0.921

For more information please contact:

Ubhar Capital SAOC, P.O. Box 1137, Postal Code 111 CPO, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24 949 032/030, Fax: 24949099, Email: ubhargcfund@u-capital.net, website: www.u-capital.net

Restraint during lockdown hailed

Shaddad al Musalmay
Muscat

As Oman continues to confront COVID-19, there is appreciation and gratitude for the public's co-operation with the authorities, including Royal Oman Police, in their efforts to ensure the health and safety of all.

The public's commitment to the authorities' decisions was evident during the complete lockdown in Eid al Adha holidays and the ongoing evening lockdown to help prevent the spread of coronavirus in the country.

H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, has thanked and appreciated citizens and residents for their commitment to following the decisions of the Supreme Committee during the full lockdown in Eid al Adha.

"We are fully satisfied with the decision. I must thank and appreciate the citizens and residents for their commitment to the decisions of the Supreme Committee. The results of the complete closure will appear after ten to 14 days but things are moving in the right direction," he said.

The Supreme Committee's ban on night movement and closure of commercial activities from 5pm to 4am will continue till July 31. However, the committee is expected to announce new decisions on Thursday. "There will be a meeting when appropriate decisions will be taken regarding the movement ban," H E Dr Sa'eedi said.

According to Royal Oman Police, citizens and residents have shown great restraint and there have been a limited number of violations.

"We thank citizens and residents for their cooperation and commitment to abide by the decisions. Most of those who are out on the road in the evening are in an emergency or they have permission to do so," a police



518 cases reported, deaths drop

Muscat - The Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 518 COVID-19 cases and 14 related deaths in a 24-hour period on Wednesday. With this, the total number of cases registered in the sultanate has now reached 295,935, including 3,802 deaths.

The number of hospitalisations is also showing a downward trend. 'Sixty-three patients were admitted to hospitals across the country in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of inpatients to 641, including 272 in intensive care units,' an MoH statement said.

The total number of recoveries now stands at 277,632 after 622 COVID-19 patients were reported as recovered on Wednesday, accounting for a recovery rate of 93.9 per cent.

**14
DEATHS**

I am grateful for everything they are doing to protect the public during this pandemic

HAMDOON AL FARSI

personnel manning a checkpoint in Muscat said.

Besides enforcing the law, Royal Oman Police officers are also tasked with responding to health crises. "We are here for society's safety. So cooperation is much needed," another police

officer said.

According to motorists who need to venture out during movement ban hours, police personnel continue to serve the country with dedication. "I am grateful for everything they are doing to protect the public during this pandemic. They do all this to protect us even if it requires them to stand under the sun. So we must cooperate fully," said Hamdoon al Farsi, a resident of Ghubra.

H E Dr Sa'eedi has reiterated that it is the responsibility of every individual to protect themselves when going to work, shopping or any other place during the day when movement is allowed.

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

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Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated abelow.

Tender No.	No E- Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/21/054	39/2021/MM/ HQ-30	Supply of Batteries for Traffic Light (E- Tender)	Rial 25	07/08/2021	12/08/2021	Specialist

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission.Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Tender Bonds shall be placed in the Office No (B3 - 040) in the Third floor at Secretariat of Interior Committee for Tenders in Muscat Municipality, Head Office, Darsait.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@ita.gov.om) or call (+96824166670).

New initiative to develop Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In efforts to protect endangered turtles and create sustainable facilities for tourism, the Environment Authority (EA) is currently implementing a project to develop the Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve with the support of Oman India Fertiliser Company.

The reserve in Jinz Beach in South Sharqiyah governorate is a world-renowned nesting site of green turtles (Cheloniemydas). It is perhaps one of the most important nesting places in the coastline of the Indian Ocean.

An EA official said the 150-day project started on July 18 and will end on December 24. The project includes construction of a 450m wall to protect turtles, four viewing platforms, a circular



walkway adjacent to the wall, and three canopies.

The project aims to create facilities for tourists to allow them to watch turtles without disturbing the marine creatures. "It will add to the aesthetic value of the

nesting site," the official said.

The Ras al Jinz Reserve was established via a Royal Decree in 1996 to preserve one of the rarest natural elements of the country and includes an interactive museum.

86% of sodial media users scammed

Muscat - Online scammers have hit a substantial number of people in Oman, if the latest survey conducted by a global leader in cybersecurity solutions recently has to be respected.

A whopping 86 per cent of the respondents in Oman confirmed that the scammers have reached either them or their loved ones via social networks - in most cases pretending to be someone known in dire need of help.

The survey was organised by Kaspersky, a global leader in cybersecurity solutions and services, which stated that the 'users may not recognise immediately who the person on the other side of the screen is'.

"Though nearly a majority of the respondents mentioned that they or their loved ones identified the scammers immediately (56 per cent), 43 per cent still needed to start a dialogue for doing this," Kaspersky said.

"Social media are highly integrated in our daily life and scammers just cannot miss the opportunity to reach users directly through all the popular platforms. The fraudsters may find your personal data in your social media account and use it, for example with social engineering methods," commented



We shouldn't forget about basic security rules. It's better to hide private data and double-check your interlocutor

MAHER
YAMOUT

Maher Yamout, senior security researcher at Kaspersky.

"In this case, we shouldn't forget about basic security rules. For example, it's better to hide private data and double-check your interlocutor if he urgently asks to transfer money or open a suspicious link."

People also try to stay safe from scammers through special apps and programs.

According to the survey, at least 12 per cent respondents use antivirus to protect themselves against online scams.

NDC holds graduation ceremony

Muscat - The National Defense College (NDC) held a graduation ceremony for the Eighth National Defence Course under the auspices of H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister.

A number of senior officers from the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), the Royal Oman Police (ROP), military and security departments, as well as senior officials from the ministries, government civil authorities and institutions took part in the course.

Air Vice Marshal Saleh bin Yahya al Maskari, NDC Commandant, said, "The course included elites from various military, security, and civilian bodies, who received high-level academic and scientific qualifications, including studies in national, regional and international matters."

H E Sayyid Badr said, "We congratulate the graduates for exceeding the requirements of this course with their abilities and perseverance. We wish them success in the field of national service and in the service of His Majesty the Sultan."

World Race Walking Championships to be held in the sultanate in 2022

Continued from Page 01

"We have seen in the past how enthusiastic the Omani people are for home grown and international events and to be able to bring a major championship to the country has the potential of positioning athletics as one of the leading sports in Oman. We are excited to provide the stage for the world's best race walkers to perform and anticipate an amazing debut for Oman as hosts of the event."

Each national athletics federation will select a squad to represent their country in Oman. The event will feature male and female 20km races, U20 male and female 10km races and Masters categories, scheduled for March 4, 2022. The following day, there will be a 35km combined race. The week of racing in Muscat will include a celebration of athletics with 1km and 2km Kids' Run and Park Run Festival

events either side of the main competition with a health and fitness exhibition on site to inspire budding local athletes to become more active.

Eng Said al Shanfari, CEO of Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, said, "We are immensely proud to have been chosen to host the championship. The sultanate has enjoyed a period of rapid sporting growth and earned a strong reputation as excellent hosts as a result. We look forward to delivering another inspiring competition which will have a profound effect on the nation's youth and further raise the country's profile internationally."

Muscat will provide a spectacular backdrop to the event, offering world-class accommodation and hospitality for athletes and race officials while also lending a rugged and rich cultural experience to the championship. Racing will centre around Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre

in the heart of Muscat.

The route will take competitors through pristine landscaped gardens featuring a variety of elevations to challenge the racers and provide a perfect viewing platform for a live audience within the Spectators Village. Training camps will be set up at Barceló Mussanah Resort, duseitD2 Naseem Resort and Golden Tulip in Nizwa to allow the competitors to acclimatise before embarking on the race.

This will be the first time the World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships will be held in the Middle East and the first time outside China that an Asian nation hosts the event. The event was originally due to be held in Minsk, Belarus, but travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic forced it to be rescheduled. Oman now has the opportunity to make history and usher in a new era for athletics in the sultanate.



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Shariah Compliant Fund

Al Kawthar Islamic Shariah Compliant Fund

“Value added exposure to GCC Markets”

BOARD OF DIRECTOR REPORT FOR THE QUARTER ENDED JUNE 30TH, 2021.

Dear Unitholders,

On behalf of the board, I am pleased to present the results of Al Kawthar Fund (Shariah Compliant) for the Quarter ended June 30th, 2021.

The fund continued its superior performance and gained 8.9% during the quarter. On YTD basis, the fund has gained 20.4%. Moreover, the fund has given an annualized 3-year return of 10.2%. The fund value at the end of the period was RO. 6.41mn and the Net Asset Value per unit stood at RO 1.187.

Fund Performance

Period	Al Kawthar
Last 3 Months 2021	8.92%
YTD	20.4%
Full Year 2020	5.49%
Full Year 2019	7.62%
Full Year 2018	5.19%
Last 3 Years Annualized	10.21%

Resumption of economic activity as vaccinations picked up in most countries led global markets to continue their positive performance during the quarter. Oil prices rose 18.4% during the period as a result of faster recovery from lockdown implications and vaccination roll-out. Thus helping regional markets.

Abu Dhabi market lead GCC markets as it gained 15.6%. Saudi also extended its gains and closed with a 10.9%. Kuwait All Shares and Dubai were on green notes, reporting gains of 10.6% and 10.2%. Oman displayed a resilient performance and increased 9.6% during the quarter. Bahrain market rebounded again and gained 8.9%. Qatar market was the lowest performer during the quarter, gaining 3.2%.

Brief Summary of Accounts

Particulars	6 Months 30 JUN 2021 RO	6 Months 30 JUN 2020 RO
Revenues	1,185,738	(448,421)
Total Comprehensive Income	1,099,532	(522,961)
Net Asset Value	6,414,665	4,778,715
Fund Capital	5,402,871	5,399,527
NAV per unit	1.187	0.885

Outlook

The GCC market outlook appears to be challenging and volatile as valuations become expensive and oil prices being clouded with uncertainty as OPEC+ major players were unable to come to an agreement to increase supply. However rapid rollouts of Covid-19 vaccinations to boost the investment sentiments. Government Stimulus and strong fundamental recovery as well as the expected tourism revival due to upcoming events (e.g. EXPO 2020 and FIFA 2022) should benefit regional markets. We remain cautiously optimistic for the rest of year. The fund's investment strategy continues to build a fundamentally strong portfolio with sustainable growth and dividend yield. The active approach aims to maximize returns and protect the portfolio from downside risks in the event of a market correction.

Distribution of Interim Cash Dividend

In light of the profit achieved for the six months ended 30th June 2021, it was decided to distribute an interim cash dividend of 5%.

On behalf of the members of the Board of Directors, I would like to acknowledge and thank our valued unit holders for their continued support.

We pay our tributes to His Majesty, Haitham Bin Tarik, for his inspiring leadership and vision that will continue to lead us further on the path to greater prosperity.

Rawan Ahmed Al Said
Chairperson

INTERIM UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2021

	30 June 2021 Unaudited	31 December 2020 Audited	30 June 2020 Unaudited
ASSETS			
Current assets			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	6,254,345	5,558,036	4,165,627
Receivables	32,714	10,047	175,336
Cash and cash equivalents	247,399	75,596	549,090
TOTAL ASSETS	6,534,458	5,643,679	4,890,053
UNITHOLDERS' FUNDS			
Fund capital	5,402,871	5,399,527	5,399,527
Retained earnings/(Accumulated losses)	1,011,794	182,112	(620,812)
Total Unitholders' funds	6,414,665	5,581,639	4,778,715
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Accruals and other payables	78,529	30,886	86,167
Due to a related party	41,264	31,154	25,171
Total liabilities	119,793	62,040	111,338
TOTAL UNITHOLDERS' FUNDS AND LIABILITIES	6,534,458	5,643,679	4,890,053
Net asset value per unit	1.187	1.034	0.885

INTERIM UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR SIX-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

	Three-month period from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021 Unaudited	Six-month period ended 30 June 2021 Unaudited	Three-month period from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020 Unaudited	Six-month period ended 30 June 2020 Unaudited
INCOME				
Dividend income from financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	61,841	129,255	58,752	109,150
Realised gain/(loss) on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	226,096	320,413	13,148	(307,732)
Unrealised gain/(loss) on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	279,769	729,372	368,301	(245,723)
Foreign exchange gain/(loss)	4,463	6,698	(2,465)	(4,116)
	572,169	1,185,738	437,736	(448,421)
EXPENSES				
Management, custodian and fund administration fees	(32,113)	(60,286)	(23,144)	(48,814)
General and administrative expenses	(14,522)	(25,920)	(11,410)	(25,726)
	(46,635)	(86,206)	(34,554)	(74,540)
Net profit/(loss) for the period	525,534	1,099,532	403,182	(522,961)
Earnings/(loss) per unit	0.097	0.204	0.073	(0.095)

تثمير
TATHMEER

صندوق تنمية المتنوع للأسهم الخليجية
TANMIA GCC Diversified Fund

BOARD OF DIRECTOR REPORT FOR THE QUARTER ENDED JUNE 30, 2021.

Dear Unitholders,

On behalf of the board and myself, I am pleased to present the report for the quarter ended 30th June 2021 of TANMIA GCC Diversified Equity Fund (TATHMEER).

During the quarter ended 30th June 2021, the Fund has delivered strongest performance and returned a gain of 9.93%. The performance is consistent over the long term with an annualized 3 years returns of 11.45%. The Fund value in USD stood at 24.43mn and the Net Asset Value per unit stood at USD 1.23.

Performance

Period	TANMIA GCC Fund
Last 3 Months 2021	9.93%
Full Year 2020	2.56%
Full Year 2019	11.87%
Full Year 2018	12.25%
Last 3 Years Annualized	11.45%

Most Global equity markets continued the uptrend although as economic activity show signs of recovery despite the appearance of Covid-19 variants. Vaccinations have proven to be effective against the variants and is continuing to be rolled out in most countries, aiding investor sentiments. Oil prices rallied during the quarter to reach the high \$78, a level that has been absent since 2015.

GCC markets performed well and capitalized on the rising oil prices and the revival of demand. Abu Dhabi market topped the regional competition with a gain of 15.6%. Saudi market ended the quarter with a 10.9% gain. Kuwait all shares and Dubai markets reported a gain of 10.6% and 10.2% respectively. Oman's MSX surged to close with a 9.6% return, while Bahrain reported an 8.9% gain. Qatar's Market continued its lackluster performance and ended the quarter up 3.2% only.

Brief Summary of Accounts

Particulars	For the 6 Months ended 30 June 2021 (USD)	For the 6 Months ended 30 June 2020 (USD)
Revenue for the period	5,011,305	(3,044,223)
Total Comprehensive income/(loss) for the period	4,728,885	(3,290,258)
Net Asset Value	24,427,673	20,193,721
Fund Capital	19,811,321	22,502,775
Net Asset Value per unit	1.23	0.90

The promising performances of global markets continue to spill over into our regional markets. Government spending continues to support markets as vaccination programs are ongoing. Upcoming global events such as the World cup and Expo are expected to yield benefits for regional markets. However, stretched valuations are a concern and the direction of oil prices is momentarily unclear due to disagreements within the OPEC+ group. Therefore, we maintain a cautiously positive view on the markets and believe that our approach and strategy of stock picking and portfolio management shall ensure steady and positive returns over the medium to long term.

Distribution of Interim Cash Dividend

In light of the profit achieved for the six months ended 30th June 2021, it was decided to distribute an interim cash dividend of 5%.

On behalf of the members of the Board of Directors, I would like to acknowledge and thank our valued unit holders for their continued support.

We pay our tributes to His Majesty, Haitham Bin Tarik, for his inspiring leadership and vision that will continue to lead us further on the path to greater prosperity.

Rawan Ahmed Al Said
Chairperson

INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2021

	30 June 2021	31 December 2020	30 June 2020
ASSETS			
Current assets			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	23,846,677	21,294,781	17,595,279
Receivables	579,232	491,976	1,159,818
Cash and cash equivalents	442,688	1,276,114	1,890,798
Total assets	24,868,597	23,062,871	20,645,895
UNITHOLDERS' FUNDS			
Fund capital	19,811,321	21,420,644	22,502,775
Retained earnings/(Accumulated losses)	4,616,352	1,406,829	(2,309,054)
Total Unitholders' funds	24,427,673	22,827,473	20,193,721
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Accruals and other payables	332,167	140,437	369,969
Amount due to a related party	108,757	94,961	82,205
Total liabilities	440,924	235,398	452,174
Total unitholders' funds and liabilities	24,868,597	23,062,871	20,645,895
Net asset value per unit	1.23	1.07	0.90

INTERIM STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE SIX-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

	Six-month period ended 30 June 2021	Six-month period ended 30 June 2020
INCOME		
Dividend income on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	439,538	560,847
Realised gain/(loss) on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	2,056,635	(1,943,512)
Unrealised gain/(loss) on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	2,513,527	(1,642,756)
Foreign exchange gain/(loss)	1,351	(21,323)
Finance income	254	2,521
	5,011,305	(3,044,223)
EXPENSES		
Management and custodian fees	(204,535)	(178,862)
General and administrative expenses	(77,885)	(67,173)
	(282,420)	(246,035)
Net profit/(loss) for the period	4,728,885	(3,290,258)
Earnings/(loss) per unit	0.23	(0.15)

OCA spreads awareness on bone tumour and sarcoma

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Cancer Association (OCA) has marked the month of July spreading awareness on 'Bone Tumours and Sarcoma', keeping in line with its mission to spread awareness on all cancers and support the patients, their families and the community, besides highlighting the importance of early diagnosis for total cure.

Continuing with its awareness programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic, the OCA is organising a zoom meeting every month with experts to discuss different cancers, their causes, early signs and symptoms, screening programmes and different modalities of treatment.

'A bone tumour is a lump or mass of abnormal tissues formed by uncontrollable division of cells in the bone. Most bone tumours are benign (not cancerous). Benign tumours are usually not life threatening and in most cases



Benign tumours are usually not life threatening and in most cases will not spread to other parts of the body

will not spread to other parts of the body. Tumours can either be benign or malignant (cancerous),' an OCA statement said.

'Benign tumours aren't cancerous. While benign bone tumours are local and unlikely to be fatal, they're still abnormal cells and may require treatment. They can grow and could compress surrounding healthy tissue caus-

ing future issues. As for malignant bone tumours, there is primary bone cancer that contributes to less than one per cent of cancers. They are of three types - osteosarcoma, Ewing sarcoma family of tumours, and chondrosarcoma,' the OCA stated.

'Secondary bone cancers, usually in adults, start in other or-

gans and spread to the bones. Usually originating from kidney, breast, prostate, lungs and thyroid. Multiple myeloma is the most common secondary bone cancer mostly in older adults in the bone marrow; suspected causes is genetic, radiation treatment or injuries.'

According to the OCA, symptoms of bone tumours include swelling and dull ache that continues to be constant and painful. Later swelling can cause fever and night sweats. While diagnosis of bone tumours includes imaging (X-rays, CT scan, MR, PET scan, Arteriogram, bone scan) and laboratory tests (blood and urine, alkaline phosphatase), treatment is mostly surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

'As for sarcomas, this is a rare secondary malignant bone tumour of connective tissue origin, most common in bones, muscles, tendons, cartilage, nerves, fat, and blood vessels in the arms and legs,' the OCA said.

Initiative launched to empower museums

Muscat - The National Museum and the Smithsonian Institution - the world's largest museum and research complex and the United States' preeminent cultural centre - have collaborated for a series of six seminars on 21st century curatorship for Omani museum professionals, specialists and students to boost Oman's cultural institution. The series which started on July 27, will continue throughout the year.

The seminars are hosted by Dr Paul Michael Taylor, an anthropologist who is curator for Asian, European, and Middle Eastern Cultures, as well as director of the Asian Cultural History Program at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History.

'He will lead a team of experts to share new research, museum technologies, and insights to advance cultural studies at museums and historic sites,' the National Museum said in a statement.

Under Dr Taylor's leadership, the Asian Cultural History Program has hosted 'Heritage' projects focused on research, exhibition, collection improvements, virtual engagement, and international outreach and training in various regions of the world.

Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, secretary general of the National Museum, said, "Oman's museums captivate visitors with objects that tell the stories of Oman and offer a sense of place. The trainings with scholars and experts from the Smithsonian Institution advance the mission of the National Museum and keep our heritage relevant in the modern age. We appreciate the contin-



Many cultural traditions, craft techniques, and forms of indigenous music are in danger of being lost

DR PAUL MICHAEL
TAYLOR

ued support of the US Embassy in Oman, which makes this collaboration possible."

H E Leslie Tsou, US Ambassador, said, "Museums are a public good and an important investment. Strengthening Oman's museums preserves Oman's beautiful culture and links us all to Oman's rich heritage. Preserving cultural heritage is and will continue to be important to both our countries."

According to Dr Taylor, "The Smithsonian Institution has a great interest in capacity-building in the museum field. Around the world many cultural traditions, craft techniques, and forms of indigenous music are in dan-

ger of being lost, but in our collaboration with the National Museum of Oman, we see professionals, scholars, students, and even ordinary citizens dedicated to preserving Omani history, heritage, culture, and craft, under royal patronage."

The first lecture was titled 'Visitor Services: Greeting, Ticketing, Crowd Management' and was presented by Dr Taylor.

He will also present four follow-on lectures on 'The History of Representing Cultures in Museums and Cultural Centres, with an Introduction to the Smithsonian'; 'Virtual Exhibitions, and other Museum Uses of the Web'; 'Program Development: Developing Dynamic Programming and Visitor Engagement'; and 'Activities of a Modern Museum or Cultural Center: Thriving in the 21st Century'.

In addition, a sixth lecture will be presented regarding the 'Exhibition Development: A case study on Money as Material Culture: Collections and Curation at America's Money Museum' by Douglas Moud from the Money Museum in Colorado, in the United States.

The seminar series is supported by the US Embassy in Oman with a focus on visitor management, exhibition development, cultural preservation and virtual exhibitions.

Previously, the US Embassy facilitated similar training opportunities by sending specialists from the National Museum, the National Records and Archive Authority and what was previously the Ministry of Heritage and Culture to the United States for a multi-week International Visitor Leadership Program.



UNITED GCC FUND



Chairman's Report

Dear Investors,

We are glad to present the second quarter financials of the United GCC Fund. Your fund has reported performance of 20.61% for the first half of the year against the S&P GCC benchmark returns of 22.35%, for the first six-month period of 2021.

Oil prices continued the upwards move, heading for quarterly gains, wherein, Brent increased by 15.8%, as optimism grew over the fuel demand outlook during the summer driving season of the United States, the world's top oil consumer. Prices were also boosted after data from China showed that factory activity expanded at its fastest this year in May. Sharp drop in US crude and gasoline inventory reinforced the strong demand narrative. Moreover, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, an alliance known as OPEC+, are scheduled to meet during July to discuss extending its deal on cutting oil supply beyond April 2022.

Amid the continued virus outbreak, the emergence of newer highly transmissible variants of the virus is a big risk to gradual reopening of global economies. Albeit, the progress most countries have made with their vaccination programs are keeping investors' nerves calm. On the Global economic front, during the month, the US fed ruffled markets by simply mentioning possible interest rate hikes around 2023, sending shock waves across the global markets in the middle of the month, but the prospects of continued or even increased US fiscal spending helped to bolster market confidence.

Regionally, on macro-economic front, Oman introduced a 5% VAT on most goods and services from 16 April 2021, the authorities estimate that the VAT will raise OMR 400mn (USD 1bn) per year. This, together with improved realization of oil and governmental apparatus restructuring should bode well for Omani economy going forward. In UAE, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed announced the Dubai 2040 Urban Master plan which aims to make Dubai the world's best city to live in. It also envisages to grow UAE's population from 3.3 million to 5.8 million over the next 20 years. UAE government also announced its aim to double size of economy over the next 10 years to reach Dh3 trillion by 2031. With this in mind, recent regulatory changes - such as amendments to the commercial companies' law and the offer of citizenship to talented residents is expected to support the country's plan to boost output. Saudi Arabia is planning to raise about \$55bn over the next four years as it aims to step up its nascent privatization programme. The programme is part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's drive to overhaul the state-dominated, oil-revenue driven economy and modernize the kingdom. In MENA region, Central bank of Egypt has kept its benchmark interest rates on hold in recently held meeting. Albeit, poorly performing tourism sector weighs on the Egyptian economy, Egypt received just 500,000 tourists over the January-March, compared to 2.4mn in the same period in 2018.

Recovery in oil prices and improving investors sentiments provided the tailwind for regional equities. GCC markets have delivered strong performance in Q2. The S&PGCC Composite Index was up 9.2%. It was well supported by 15% and 11% gains in the Abu Dhabi's ADX and Saudi Arabia's Tadawul indices, followed by Oman, Dubai, Kuwait Bahrain & Qatar with gains of 10.8%, 9.89%, 9.88%, 9.15% & 2.61%. Albeit, Investors continue to be wary of the pace and extent of some market performances.

Looking ahead for rest of 2021, we remain caution on the markets and are keenly looking forward for the corporate earnings season ahead.

I take this opportunity to thank all our patrons, investors and other stakeholders for placing their faith in us. We remain motivated and committed to deliver.

Yours sincerely

Mustafa Ahmed Salaman

Chairman, Investor's committee- United GCC Fund



Unaudited condensed interim statement of Comprehensive Income for the six-month period ended 30th June 2021

	Six months ended 30th June 2021	Six months ended 30th June 2020
	RO Unaudited	RO Unaudited
Income		
Interest income	43	4,022
Dividend income	297,556	260,742
Fair value change on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	2,334,487	(253,538)
Realized gain/(loss) on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	517,609	(1,576,041)
Other Income	-	2,301
Foreign exchange (loss)/gain	13,077	(71,535)
Net investment income/(loss)	3,162,772	(1,634,049)
Expenses		
Management fees	(71,598)	(57,712)
Custody and administration fees	(12,530)	(10,100)
General and administrative expenses	(104,173)	(112,975)
Incentive fee provision	(200,802)	-
	(389,103)	(180,787)
Profit and total comprehensive income/(loss) for the period and increase/(decrease) in net assets attributable to the unit holders	2,773,669	(1,814,836)
Profit/(loss) per unit	0.232	(0.148)

Unaudited condensed interim statement of Financial Position at 30th June 2021

	As at 30th June 2021	As at 31st December 2020
	RO Unaudited	RO Audited
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	655,563	118,493
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	15,187,070	13,327,038
Other receivables	1,502	1,299
Total assets	15,844,135	13,446,830
LIABILITIES		
Payables and accruals	254,213	49,107
Net assets attributable to unitholders	15,589,922	13,397,723
Total liabilities and net assets attributable to unitholders	15,844,135	13,446,830
Net assets attributable to the unitholders per unit	1.302	1.121

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Kudos to Muscat Daily's sports coverage

I have found *Muscat Daily's* coverage of sports events very interesting.

Wednesday's story 'Disappointed Adawi vows to bounce back' - with a superb headline - is a timely interview of the young debutant swimmer Issa al Adawi at Tokyo 2020 Olympics. It was an excellent read.

Even the previous day's piece 'Adawi set for 'Dream' debut' gave a full picture of the young Olympian and also detailed out his mother's illustrious background, hailing from Japan.

Muscat Daily's Sports pages are full of good articles and are a visual treat as well.

Keep up the good work *Muscat Daily*.

Vinod Raghavan
Ruwi

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Hotel industry continues to reel from pandemic impact



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's hotel industry continues to reel from historic drop in revenues and mounting losses due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than 16 months into the pandemic, hotels in Oman are still struggling with low occupancy rates amid ongoing travel restrictions around the world.

Latest data released by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI) still paints a gloomy picture for the hotel industry.

Total revenues of Omani hotels - within 3 to 5 star categories - further plunged by 35.8 per cent to RO37mn in the first half of 2021 compared to RO57.67mn recorded in the same period of 2020.

Hotels are among the hardest hit sectors by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The data shows that the sultanate's hospitality sector face growing financial stress as hotels face a dearth

of guests and tourists amid travel restrictions.

Mounting losses

With very low occupancy rates due to the pandemic, hotels are facing revenues collapse and mounting losses. Overall occupancy rates in Oman's 3 to 5 star category hotels still remain very low at 34 per cent during January-June period of 2021 compared with 32.8 per cent occupancy recorded in the same period a year ago, the NCSI data showed.

Salalah Beach Resort Company, a luxury 5-star resort that offers a beachfront location in Dhofar, reported a net loss of more than RO475,000 for the first half of 2021 against a net loss of RO303,818 in the same period of 2020.

In its financial report submitted to the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), Salalah Beach Resort said its various projects planned earlier are on hold and discussions are ongoing with hotel operators to defer such in-

vestments until the situation improves and stabilizes.

The MSX-listed Hotels Management Company International, which owns and operates The Chedi Muscat Hotel, reported a net loss of RO1.192mn for the first half of 2021.

'The vaccination campaign has gained momentum and if the authorities maintain the same pace, Oman will soon be taken out of red list in most of our main source markets,' Hotels Management Company International said in its financial report.

Ubhar Hotels & Resorts Company announced a net loss of more than RO499,000 for the first half of this year against a net loss of RO316,952 in the same period of 2020. Ubhar Hotels & Resorts Company and its subsidiary own and operate Golden Tulip Hotel, Nizwa and Park Inn Hotel, Muscat.

Meanwhile, total number of guests at Oman's hotels increased 22.6 per cent to reach 522,329 during six months ended June 2021 from 425,905

guests in the same period of 2020.

The NCSI statistics showed that domestic guests seem to have supported the sultanate's hotels to stay afloat despite restrictions due to the pandemic. Many hotels, since the beginning of 2021, had announced promotional packages and staycation offers to attract Omani citizens and residents. Number of Omani guests rose by 164 per cent to 369,666 in the first half of 2021 from 139,798 Omani guests during the same period in 2020.

This was followed by 74,127 Asian guests this year compared to 42,722 in the first half of 2020, comprising a rise by 73.5 per cent.

Number of GCC guests reached 6,318 followed by the Oceanians with 2,956, the Africans with 1,966, and 15,458 guests from other nationalities. Number of Arab guests (non-GCC) reached 21,630 during January - June period while the European guests stood at 21,215 and Americans at 8,993.

CONDOLENCES



The Board of Directors, Management and Staff of

Taageer Finance Company

express their heartfelt condolences on the sad and untimely demise of

Mr. V.V. Suresh Kumar
(General Manager)

May the Almighty bless the departed soul in eternal peace and grant enough strength and courage to his family members to bear this irreparable loss.



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Google parent Alphabet profit soars as ads surge

San Francisco, US – Google parent Alphabet has reported quarterly profit that had nearly tripled, as money poured in from ads on its search engine and YouTube video platform.

"There was a rising tide of on-line activity in many parts of the world, and we're proud that our services helped so many consumers and businesses," Alphabet chief executive Sundar Pichai said of the quarter.

The internet titan reported that profit nearly tripled from last year to US\$18.5bn on revenue that rose sharply to US\$61.9bn.

Google is among the tech companies that saw use soar as the pandemic accelerated a trend toward working, shopping, socializing and more online.

Pichai credited long-term investments in artificial intelligence and cloud computing as powering the internet giant's performance.

The strong quarter also reflected "elevated consumer on-line activity and broad-based strength in advertiser spend," as the global economy strives to recover from damage done by the pandemic, according to chief financial officer Ruth Porat.

Pichai opened an earnings call by urging people to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Google is on track to generate US\$130bn in overall ad revenue this year, an increase of some 25 per cent from a year earlier, according to eMarketer.

That would give the California-based tech colossus 28.6 per cent of the worldwide digital ad market, with Facebook in second



Alphabet chief executive Sundar Pichai

place with just shy of 24 per cent, the market tracker projected.

"YouTube was the fastest-growing segment during the quarter and points to the continued strength of video advertising for both direct response and brand goals," said eMarketer principal analyst Nicole Perrin.

Revenue at the global video sharing platform topped US\$7bn, a leap from the US\$3.8bn brought in during the same period a year earlier, according to Alphabet.

Meanwhile, daily views at the YouTube Shorts service that competes with sensation TikTok surged past 15bn in the quarter, according to Pichai.

Google's cloud computing business, which competes with powerhouses Amazon and Microsoft, is positioned to attract more business given its strengths in analyzing data for companies and defending against threats such as ransomware, Pichai said.

"Companies have really started thinking deeply about their vulnerabilities," he told financial analysts on an earnings call. "It is definitely an area where we are seeing a lot of conversations, a lot of interest."

Demand is also growing for tools that enable employees to get jobs done remotely as companies explore hybrid ap-

proaches that combine working from home and the office.

"Google Workspace continues to show strong growth, particularly in the enterprise space, because we have designed the product to meet the challenges of hybrid work," Pichai said.

Google recently reopened its campuses to workers who want to return voluntarily to California offices abandoned early in the pandemic. "I was excited to see so many people in person," Pichai said. "We're giving employees more flexibility in how and where they work, and will continue to invest in our site in the US and elsewhere."

AFP

Pfizer now sees \$33bn in 2021 COVID-19 sales, up from \$26bn

New York, US - Pfizer sharply increased its 2021 projection for revenues tied to its COVID-19 vaccine on Wednesday, forecasting the delivery of 500mn more doses compared with earlier expectations.

The US drugmaker, which has partnered with Germany's BioNTech on the vaccine, estimates delivering 2.1bn doses, generating US\$33.5bn in sales. The company's May forecast was for US\$26bn in sales.

Pfizer also lifted its full-year profit outlook as well as the expected range for 2021 revenues.

Pfizer chief executive Albert Bourla said more than a billion doses of the vaccine have been delivered, saying "the speed and efficiency of our efforts with BioNTech to help vaccinate the world against COVID-19 have



been unprecedented."

Pfizer said the pre-tax profit margin on the COVID-19 vaccine sales was in the 'high-20s' in terms of per cent, the same as the earlier forecast. Pfizer reported second-quarter profits of US\$5.6bn, up 59 per cent from the year-ago period on 92 per cent increase in revenues to US\$19bn.

Pfizer has launched clinical

studies on a possible third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine as a booster shot. Bourla has said such boosters could amount to a 'durable' revenue stream for the company. US health officials have thus far not far backed a third shot for the broad population, but officials are studying the need for a third shot in immunocompromised people.

AFP

Apple's Q2 profit jumps to \$22bn

San Francisco, US – Apple said Tuesday its profit in the just-ended quarter nearly doubled amid improving consumer spending and a 'growing sense of optimism' as pandemic lockdowns eased.

The California tech giant's profit rose to US\$21.7bn on growth in iPhone sales and its increasingly important digital services.

Revenue surged 36 per cent from a year ago to US\$81.4bn, the best ever for the tech titan's fiscal third quarter.

"This quarter saw a growing sense of optimism for consumers in the United States and around the world, driving renewed hope for a better future,"

AFP



Apple chief executive Tim Cook

chief executive Tim Cook told a conference call.

"We are especially humbled that our technology has continued to play a key role in keeping our customers connected."

Cook said an easing of pandemic lockdowns helped boost

consumer spending in many parts of the world, with Apple benefitting from that.

He maintained that Apple can continue to grow as consumers seek new devices for superfast 5G wireless networks.

"We're only in the early innings of 5G, but already its incredible performance and speed have made a significant impact on how people can get the most out of our technology," he said.

"Customers love iPhone 12 for its superfast 5G speeds."

Revenue from iPhone sales jumped some 50 per cent and posted increases for its services such as digital payments, music, streaming television and gaming.

AFP



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REPORT ON MATERIAL EVENTS & SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOR THE PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS ENDED ON 30 JUNE 2021

MATERIAL EVENTS

In the annual general meeting of the company held on 15 March 2021 the shareholders declared bonus shares to the shareholders at 10% of paid up share capital or one bonus share for every ten shares held

MATERIAL CHANGES IN FIGURES

Sales – During the period the company achieved a sales turnover of RO 3.756 million compared to RO 2.887 million for the same period last year, an increase of 30%.

Gross Profit – During the period the company made a Gross Profit of RO 1.740 million compared to a Gross Profit of RO 1.261 million for the same period last year, an increase of 38%.

Selling & Distribution Expenses – During the period the company incurred RO 288,607 as Selling & distribution expenses compared to RO 331,333 for the same period last year, a decrease of 13%.

General & Administration Expenses – During the period the company incurred RO 467,992 as General & administration expenses compared to RO 379,987 for the same period last year, an increase of 23%.

Profit before tax – During the period the company earned Profit before tax of RO 525,183 compared to Profit before tax of RO 48,772 for the same period last year, an increase of 977%.

Income tax – During the period Company provided income tax of RO 79,201 compared to RO 8,450 provided for the same period last year, an increase of 837%.

Total Comprehensive Income (after tax) – During the period the company earned a total Comprehensive Income (after tax) of RO 445,982 compared to a total Comprehensive Income (after tax) of RO 40,322 for the same period last year, an increase of 1006% due to above reasons.

Chief Executive Officer

The complete accounts of Gulf Mushroom Products Co. SAOG will be delivered to any shareholder or other interested party who requests them, in either Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of written request.

M/s Gulf Mushroom Products Co. SAOG

P.O. Box: 383, Postal Code: 320, Barka, Sultanate of Oman, Fax: 00968 26883955, Email: info@gulfmushroom.com

Unaudited Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021

	30/06/2021	30/06/2020
	RO	RO
Non-current sssets	12,611,118	13,135,710
	12,611,118	13,135,710
Current assets		
Inventories	1,273,118	1,298,818
Receivables & Prepayments	1,303,775	1,011,450
Bank and Cash	689,827	582,028
Total current assets	3,266,720	2,892,296
Total assets	15,877,838	16,028,006
Current liabilities		
Bank overdraft/Wakala	-	690,000
Term loans	890,589	868,305
Trade & Other creditors	1,320,029	1,030,238
Lease liability	7,755	7,231
Taxation	65,293	-
Total current liabilities	2,283,666	2,595,774
Non-current liabilities		
Term loans	5,083,110	5,645,650
Deferred Tax	552,158	508,116
Lease liability	25,620	32,846
End of service benefits	346,909	303,766
Total non-current liabilities	6,007,797	6,490,378
Total liabilities	8,291,463	9,086,152
Net Assets	7,586,375	6,941,854
Shareholders' funds		
Share capital	4,160,527	3,782,297
Legal Reserve	848,858	781,106
Special Reserves	12,405	12,405
Revaluation Reserve	1,379,890	1,412,890
Accumulated Profit	1,184,695	953,156
Total shareholders' equity	7,586,375	6,941,854
Net assets per share (RO)	0.182	0.184

Unaudited Statement of comprehensive Income for Six months ended 30 June 2021

	6 Months ended 30/06/2021	6 Months ended 30/06/2020
	RO	RO
Turnover/Revenue	3,755,892	2,887,377
Direct Expenses	(2,016,228)	(1,626,851)
Selling & distribution expense	(288,607)	(331,333)
Indirect expenses	(467,992)	(379,987)
Other Income	5,993	9,917
Profit before depreciation & net financing costs	989,058	559,123
Depreciation	(307,261)	(324,817)
Profit before net financing costs	681,797	234,306
Net financing costs	(156,614)	(185,534)
Profit before tax	525,183	48,772
Income tax	(79,201)	(8,450)
Profit for the period	445,982	40,322
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the period	445,982	40,322
Profit per share (RO)	0.011	0.001

Metaverse: Next internet revolution?

Paris, France – Imagine a world where you could sit on the same couch as a friend who lives thousands of miles away, or conjure up a virtual version of your workplace while at the beach.

Welcome to the metaverse: a vision of the future that sounds fantastical, but which tech titans like Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg are betting on as the next great leap in the evolution of the internet.

The metaverse is, in fact, the stuff of science-fiction: the term was coined by Neal Stephenson in his 1992 novel 'Snow Crash', in which people don virtual reality headsets to interact inside a game-like digital world.

The book has long enjoyed cult status among Silicon Valley entrepreneurs – but in recent months the metaverse has become one of the tech sector's hottest buzzwords, with companies pouring millions of dollars into its development.

Facebook fuelled the excitement further Monday by announcing the creation of a new team to work on Zuckerberg's vision of the metaverse.

"This is going to be a really big part of the next chapter for the technology industry," Zuckerberg told tech website The Verge last week. Over the next five years, he predicted, Facebook would transition from "primarily being a social media company to being a metaverse company".

As with many tech buzzwords, the definition of the metaverse depends on whom you ask. But broadly, it involves blending the physical world with the digital one.

With the help of augmented reality glasses, it might allow you to see information whizz before your eyes as you walk around a city, from traffic and pollution updates to local history.



This file photo shows Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on stage at a developers conference

But metaverse enthusiasts are dreaming of a future in which the idea could be extended much further, allowing us to be transported to digital settings that feel real, such as a nightclub or a mountaintop.

As workers have grown weary of video-conferences during the pandemic, Zuckerberg is particularly excited about the idea that co-workers could be brought together in a virtual room that feels like they are face-to-face.

Digital casinos and Gucci handbags Games in which players enter immersive digital worlds offer a glimpse into what the metaverse could eventually look like, blurring virtual entertainment with the real-world economy.

As far back as the early 2000s, the game Second Life allowed people to create digital avatars that could interact and shop with real money.

More recently, plots of land in Decentraland – a virtual world where visitors can watch con-

certs, visit art galleries, and gamble in casinos – have sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars in MANA, a cryptocurrency.

The hugely popular video game Fortnite has also expanded into other forms of entertainment, with 12.3mn people logging in to watch rapper Travis Scott perform last year. Fortnite's owners Epic Games said in April that US\$1bn of funding raised recently would be used to support its 'vision for the metaverse'.

And on Roblox, a gaming platform popular with children, a digital version of a Gucci bag sold in May for more than US\$4,100 – more than the physical version would have cost.

Cathy Hackl, a tech consultant who advises companies on the metaverse, said the next generation was more comfortable with the idea of attaching real meaning to virtual experiences and objects.

"My first concert was in a stadium. My son's first concert was (American rapper) Lil Nas X on

Roblox. Just because it happened in Roblox, it didn't make it less real for him," she said.

Exhilarating, or dystopian? Hackl rejects the dystopian vision presented in 'Snow Crash' of a virtual world where people go to escape the horrors of reality, an idea that emerged again two decades later in the novel and Steven Spielberg movie 'Ready Player One'.

Nor does she think the metaverse would necessarily involve everyone shutting out their neighbours with virtual reality headsets around the clock.

Facebook has invested heavily in technology that allows people to feel like they are physically somewhere else, such as its Portal video-calling devices, Oculus headsets and its Horizon virtual reality platform. But even Zuckerberg has admitted that existing virtual reality headsets are "a bit clunky", requiring far greater development for the kind of experiences he has described.

AFP



LG launches 4K OLED TV line-up in Gulf region

LG Electronics (LG) has announced the availability of its latest industry-leading OLED televisions in the Gulf region – a flagship TV line-up upgraded with features such as a new OLED panel, greater colour accuracy and contrast, an enhanced AI processor and re-designed webOS interface for an even more seamless end-user experience.

LG’s 2021 OLED TVs, spearheaded by the G1 and C1 series, represent the company’s most comprehensive range of OLED TVs to date, with exciting new models that build on the brand’s legacy of superior picture quality. LG’s latest G1 series features OLED evo, the next step in the evolution of OLED TV technology that delivers better luminosity for higher brightness and punchy images with amazing clarity, detail and realism.

Sizes catering to every home

When it comes to the ultimate viewing experience of OLED, LG’s C1 series boasts a host of size options, including a 48-inch TV typically favoured by gamers, to the all-new 83-inch model, offering a truly cinematic, full-screen experience from the comfort of home. Both the G1 and C1 OLED series are compatible with LG’s new Gallery Stand 1 – an attractive alternative to the

sleek, flush-to-the-wall Gallery Design mount LG has previously pioneered.

Enhanced processor and AI control

Bringing the full experience together on the G1 and C1 OLED series is LG’s latest intelligent processor, the (Alpha) 9 Gen 4 AI. The processor utilises deep learning to enhance and upscale content on LG’s self-emissive displays. The new processor also features AI Picture Pro – recognising onscreen objects such as faces and bodies and distinguishes between foregrounds and backgrounds, processing each object independently to make images more three-dimensional and lifelike. With its ability to detect content genre, the 9 Gen 4 processor further optimizes picture quality, the amount of light in scenes and ambient conditions in various viewing environments.

Additionally, the processor incorporates a new version of LG’s AI Sound Pro, which delivers two major additions for the 2021 OLED line-up.

LG’s 2021 OLED TV lineup also features Natural Language Processing (NLP) to understand voice-activated commands and questions in various languages, including English, Arabic, French, Spanish and Russian.

Sophos acquires Braintrace to boost cybersecurity

Sophos, a global leader in next-generation cybersecurity, announced that it has acquired Braintrace, further enhancing Sophos’ Adaptive Cybersecurity Ecosystem with Braintrace’s proprietary Network Detection and Response (NDR) technology. Braintrace’s NDR provides deep visibility into network traffic patterns, including encrypted traffic, without the need for Man-in-the-Middle (MitM) decryption. Located in Salt Lake City, Utah, Braintrace launched in 2016 and is privately held.

Braintrace’s developers, data scientists and security analysts have joined Sophos’ global Managed Threat Response (MTR) and Rapid Response teams. Sophos’ MTR and Rapid Response services business has expanded rapidly, establishing Sophos as one of the largest and fastest-growing MDR providers in the world, with more than 5,000 active customers.

Braintrace’s NDR technology will support Sophos’ MTR and Rapid Response analysts and Extended Detection and Response (XDR) customers through integration into the Adaptive Cybersecurity Ecosystem, which underpins all Sophos products and services. The Braintrace technology will also serve as the launchpad to collect and forward third-party event data from firewalls, proxies, virtual private networks (VPNs), and other sources. These additional layers



of visibility and event ingestion will significantly improve threat detection, threat hunting and response to suspicious activity.

“You can’t protect what you don’t know is there, and businesses of all sizes often miscalculate their assets and attack surface, both on-premises and in the cloud. Attackers take advantage of this, often going after weakly protected assets as a means of initial access. Defenders benefit from an ‘air traffic control system’ that sees all network activity, reveals unknown and unprotected assets, and exposes evasive malware more reliably than Intrusion Protection Systems (IPS),” said Joe Levy, chief technology officer, Sophos.

“We’re particularly excited that Braintrace built this technology specifically to provide better security outcomes to their Managed Detection and Response customers. It’s hard to beat the effectiveness of solutions built by teams of skilled practitioners and developers to solve real world cybersecurity problems.”

Ooredoo subsidiary offers peace of mind with DR management platform

Backing up businesses when they need it most, data2cloud, an Ooredoo subsidiary, offers total peace of mind with its state-of-the-art Disaster Recovery (DR) Management platform.

The pay-per-use service is designed to suit all kinds of businesses, large and small, keeping systems and data safe and available, ensuring uptime, maximising productivity and helping them save unnecessary costs. Managed from Ooredoo’s brand new, award-winning data centre, data2cloud continues to provide its customers with the latest technologies to drive their most important business goals.



Better to be safe than sorry, and especially in recent times, whether its a sudden global health crisis or simply a power

outage, todays businesses need to be prepared. No matter what the business objectives or IT environment, the hands-on support with this solution will make sure business customers get the most from their digital transformation.

Data2cloud’s top-notch technology allows for businesses to always be prepared. And what’s more, the on-hands support means that companies can save costs and work more effectively.

The end-to-end solution offers automated DR processes and real-time visibility which is tied into the organisation’s own objectives in terms of availability, Recovery Time (RTO), and Recovery Points (RPO). It also includes replication, monitoring, workflow automation, testing and reporting, automated

failover, real-time dashboard of service health, RPO, RTO and data replication.

Data2cloud offers cutting-edge cloud computing services across Oman. A virtual ‘office in the sky’, it uses Ooredoo’s super-fast, reliable network and world-class infrastructure via the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) accredited Data Centre, which guarantees around 99.98 per cent uptime, and local data resiliency. To access the DR service, email sales@data2cloud.om. Or, to find out more about data2cloud, visit www.data2cloud.om.

The National Detergent Co. S.A.O.G.			
P.O.Box 3104, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of oman			
REPORT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THE SIX MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2021			
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am privileged to present the un-audited interim results of the Company for the six months period ended 30 June 2021.			
Results for the period			
During the period, the Company has achieved sales revenue of RO 8,980,034 (30 June 2020 RO 10,816,020). While the Company has maintained market share, the overall market decline has impacted sales revenue. Further, higher sales and demand for health and hygiene care products due to covid in 2020, has been reduced and return to normal level during current year.			
There was a de-growth in value sales due to the global Covid pandemic and resulting restrictions in the marketplace. Gross profit margin decreased despite cost control measures, as raw materials prices have gone up compared to the last year.			
The Profit after tax for the period was RO 166,328 compared to RO 843,528 in the corresponding period of last year.			
Omanisation			
The Company’s efforts to improve the Omanisation at various levels of the organization including the senior and middle levels, with adequate training inputs, continued during this period. The Omanisation percentage was maintained at above 44%, including senior levels of the Company.			
Compliance with Internal Regulations and Control System			
The Company has in place an internal control system, commensurate with the size and nature of its business. The Company utilizes the services of an internationally reputed audit firm, for conducting periodic internal audit and the Audit Committee reviews the accounts at regular intervals. The Company complies with all the local laws and regulations.			
Future Outlook			
The current Covid environment has created unprecedented uncertainty, which has resulted in less consumer demand for our category of products. All of our retail customers are showing double digit declines in year-on-year sales. To reduce this impact, NDC is focusing on controlling costs and introducing new products that closely meet consumers’ needs.			
There is also uncertainty in future raw material and packaging costs. With oil prices increasing over 2020, the Company expects raw materials and packaging materials to increase impacting overall margins and profitability.			
Acknowledgement			
On behalf of the Board of Directors and myself, I thank His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said for his continuous support and encouragement to the industrial sector in the Sultanate of Oman.			
I would like to express gratitude to all the Ministries for their cooperation. I would also like to thank all the shareholders for their confidence reposed in the Board of Directors, the Auditors for their cooperation and support and our employees for their dedication and efforts.			
Board of Directors			
Note: 1. The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder on request either in Arabic or English within 7 days of receipt of the request. 2. Shareholders and investors are advised to read the full financial statements. 3. Certain comparative figures have been reclassified in order to conform to the presentation for the current period.			
UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION At 30 June 2021			
	30 June 2021 RO	30 June 2020 RO	Audited 31 December 2020 RO
Assets			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	14,691,481	15,231,972	14,930,105
Lease Assets	1,162,238	858,524	770,818
Advance for capital purchases	48,526	42,276	72,828
Total non-current assets	15,902,245	16,132,772	15,773,751
Current assets			
Inventories	3,938,051	3,763,874	4,538,741
Trade and other receivables	5,845,356	7,299,091	6,175,407
Cash and cash equivalents	835,941	667,674	966,037
Total current assets	10,619,348	11,730,639	11,680,185
Total assets	26,521,593	27,863,411	27,453,936
Equity			
Share capital	1,701,250	1,701,250	1,701,250
Share premium	364,263	364,263	364,263
Legal reserve	567,083	567,083	567,083
Revaluation reserve	7,917,250	7,917,250	7,917,250
Retained earnings	3,171,052	3,704,267	3,880,298
Total equity	13,720,898	14,254,113	14,430,144
Liabilities			
Non-current liabilities			
Lease liabilities	1,052,176	699,858	653,113
Deferred taxation	1,687,037	1,668,130	1,679,695
Provision for employees' end of services benefits	732,597	719,372	744,112
Total non-current liabilities	3,471,810	3,087,360	3,076,920
Current liabilities			
Current portion of long term loans	-	247,017	-
Current portion of lease liabilities	96,288	123,458	93,354
Short term borrowings	4,354,172	4,000,391	3,000,000
Trade and other payables	4,860,818	6,032,461	6,716,986
Taxation	17,607	118,611	136,532
Total current liabilities	9,328,885	10,521,938	9,946,872
Total liabilities	12,800,695	13,609,298	13,023,792
Total equity and liabilities	26,521,593	27,863,411	27,453,936
Net assets per share	Bzs 807	Bzs 838	Bzs 848
UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME For the period ended 30 June 2021			
	30 June 2021 RO	30 June 2020 RO	
Revenue	8,980,034	10,816,020	
Cost of sales	(6,609,928)	(7,427,351)	
Gross profit	2,370,106	3,388,669	
Selling and distribution expenses	(1,511,925)	(1,794,698)	
Administrative and general expenses	(593,143)	(635,329)	
Other operating income	41,461	20,906	
Profit from operations	306,499	979,548	
Finance costs	(138,737)	(137,364)	
Foreign exchange gains/(loss)	(1,434)	1,344	
Finance costs –net	(140,171)	(136,020)	
Profit before tax	166,328	843,528	
Taxation	(24,949)	(127,871)	
Profit and total comprehensive income for the period	141,379	715,657	
Basic earnings per share	Bzs 8	Bzs 42	

Own a premium Infiniti QX50 at low EMI

Infiniti Oman has announced low EMI on the Infiniti QX50 which delivers the promise of a premium motoring experience. Customers can benefit from a starting EMI rate of RO236 on the Infiniti QX50. Subject to credit approval.

A senior spokesperson at Infiniti Oman said, "The highly-rated Infiniti QX50 has been created to meet the needs of today's premium car buyers and to deliver ultimate levels of comfort, design and technology. Its key features include ample space, engine power and efficiency rolled into one unique vehicle. The crossover embodies everything the brand stands for – beautiful design, advanced technology, and empowering performance. Customers can benefit immensely by making the best use of Infiniti Oman's special EMI on Infiniti QX50."

Versatility, efficiency, and performance

Infiniti QX50 provides the highest level of versatility, efficiency, and performance in luxury mid-size crossovers. The VC-Turbo engine delivers the strong and convincing performance of a V6 and the fuel economy of a 4-cylinder engine, which allows users to harness the exhilarating



performance of 268 hp and 380 nm at 4,400 rpm of torque.

VC-Turbo engine

The VC-Turbo engine is the world's first production-ready variable compression ratio engine, transforming on demand. A breakthrough in combustion engine design, the 2.0lt VC-Turbo engine adjusts its compression ratio to optimise power and efficiency.

A multi-link system continuously raises or lowers the pistons' reach to transform the compression ratio. High compression ratios aid efficiency, while low ratios enable greater power and torque. The VC-Turbo offers any compression ratio between 8:1 (for performance) and 14:1 (for efficiency), maximising driver control.

The engine delivers 268 hp (200 kW) and (380 Nm) and fuel economy of 14.1km/l combined, front-wheel drive; 13.6km/l combined, all-wheel drive). Front-wheel drive models offer a 35 per cent improvement in fuel efficiency over the previous V6 gasoline QX50; all-wheel drive models offer a 30 per cent improvement.

The engine is paired with a continuously-variable transmission (CVT), for seamless power delivery. Its infinite number of gears perfectly matches the engine's ability to transform.

Flexibility

The QX50 is built on an all-new platform, featuring a front-engine, front-wheel drive-based layout. Engineered with flexibility of application in mind, the new platform sets new standards for refinement, rigidity and interior space in the compact premium SUV segment.

The platform's layout allows for higher levels of packaging efficiency than before, resulting in the QX50's ideal interior proportions for passengers and cargo.

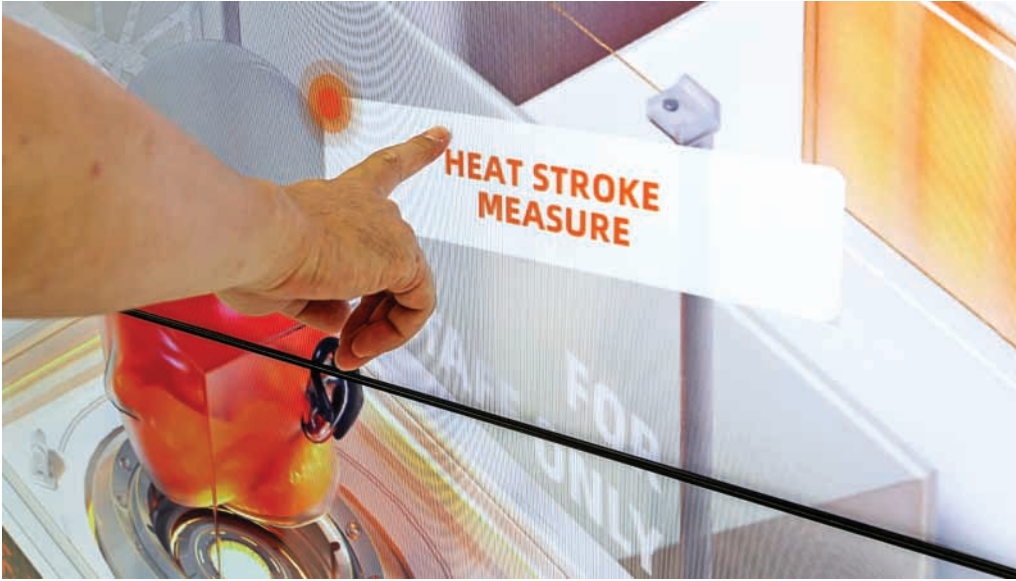
The QX50 represents the first automotive use of SHF (Super High Formability) 980 MPa high-tensile steel, further strengthening the all-new platform. The high-tensile material can be moulded into unprecedented shapes, saving weight

and representing a torsional rigidity improvement of 23 per cent over the current QX50. This rigidity allows the car to resist flex and vibrations, as well as reduce the level of noise transmitted to the cabin.

Authentic sophistication

Remaining true to the design of the QX50 Concept and QX Sport Inspiration, the QX50's aerodynamic exterior reinterprets Infiniti's distinctive Powerful Elegance design language and signature design cues for the SUV segment. It combines a confident stance with intelligent packaging, while deep character lines highlight the influence of human artistry in the design process.

At 1,678mm in height, the QX50 stands out on the road. Its elevated driver position maximises visibility, for a clear view whether driving or parking. Aerodynamic efficiency is key to the QX50's design – the drag coefficient is reduced by 6 per cent compared to the previous QX50. Its hood, bumpers, A-pillar, tailgate and enclosed underbody are all specially designed to encourage airflow over, around and under the vehicle, with minimal turbulence.



Cloud technology to reduce heatstroke risk at Olympics

Alibaba Group, the Worldwide TOP Partner of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), announced a new cloud-based solution to help Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 onsite staff reduce the risk of getting heatstroke during the summer in Tokyo.

Through an intelligent ear-worn device, the technology helps keep track of the body temperature and heart rate of the Olympic onsite staff in Tokyo. Based on the body temperature, heart rate and the environment index, a cloud-based system will identify the level of heatstroke risk in real time for individual working staff. Alerts will then be sent to those being exposed to a high level of risk along with recommended precautionary measures – such as drinking

more water – to reduce the chances of getting heatstroke.

The heat index in the surrounding environment including temperature, humidity and direct or radiant sunlight will be monitored through multiple heat stress WBGT (Wet Bulb Globe Temperature) meters set up at 14 Olympic competition venues.

Hidemasa Nakamura, chief of the Main Operations Centre (MOC) of the Tokyo Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, said, "The Tokyo Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games is working on various measures to protect working staff from the heat. Although it is expected to be extremely hot during the Olympic Games, we will provide support for the staff working

for the operation of the Games. The cloud-based technology provided by Alibaba plays an important role here. The technology is used for WBGT measurement at the venue and the monitoring and prediction of the heat stroke risks for the staff. By working with Alibaba together with our other Worldwide Olympic partners, the organising committee is determined to provide a safe tournament environment."

"Leveraging our leading cloud technology, we hope to contribute to the safe and smooth operation of the Olympic Games," said Selina Yuan, general manager of International Business, Alibaba Cloud Intelligence. For more information visit: <https://www.alibabacloud.com/olympics/home>

Napier opens new DIFC office

Napier, provider of advanced anti-financial crime compliance solutions, has announced it has extended its global footprint by opening a new office at Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), the global financial centre and leading FinTech hub in the MEASA region.

Strategically located between East and West, DIFC is recognised as the leading financial center in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA). Located in the recently inaugurated Innovation Hub, part of the Dubai Future District, Napier's new UAE base puts the RegTech provider at the center of the region's largest collection of financial services companies.

Salmaan Jaffery, chief business development officer at DIFC Authority, said, "The world's leading financial and FinTech institutions are based at DIFC and we are delighted to welcome Napier into the fold. Our new Innovation Hub is the region's largest and most comprehensive innovation ecosystem and provides FinTechs at all stages of their evolution with unparalleled access to a community of like-minded entrepreneurs, experts and technology innovators such as Napier.

"We want to connect a wide range of large and small financial institutions and technology companies and create strong partnerships."

Sony Middle East & Africa introduces Alpha ZV-E10 for creators

Sony Middle East & Africa announced a new Alpha series interchangeable lens camera for creators, the Alpha ZV-E10. The new camera combines Sony's advanced imaging technology with extensive usability and a custom-built feature set that is optimised for creators.

At its core, the Alpha ZV-E10 features a 24.2-megapixel (approx. effective) APS-C Exmor CMOS sensor and BIONZ X image processing engine to produce high-quality imagery with high-sensitivity, detailed texture depiction and beautiful natural bokeh. Additionally, the Alpha ZV-E10 includes the acclaimed video-specific features favoured in the popular digital camera ZV-1 including "Background Defocus" that can smoothly switch between a blurred (bokeh) and sharp background, as well as the "Product Showcase Setting" mode that allows the camera to automatically shift focus from the subject's face to an object being highlighted.

"With the introduction of the new Sony's interchangeable lens camera, the Alpha ZV-E10, we are excited to meet the growing needs of today's creators," said

Murat Gebeceli, head of Digital Imaging, Sony Middle East & Africa.

"The new Alpha ZV-E10 pairs the versatility and excellent image quality of a larger-sensor interchangeable lens camera with user-friendly features that are specifically designed for still and video, making it an ideal tool for both still and video creators looking to transition to a more advanced set up."

The Alpha ZV-E10 features a video-first design in a lightweight form factor (approx. 12 oz./343g) and includes the popular side-opening Vari-angle LCD Screen that allows creators to connect external mics on top of



the camera. This simplifies their setup while still allowing users to see the screen in selfie shooting mode and from high and low angles.

In addition to the screen, the Alpha ZV-E10 includes several other easy-to-use functions that are specifically designed for still and video, including a new Still/Movie/Slow and Quick motion button located on the top of the camera that allows creators to easily change between their desired shooting mode with just one touch.

The new camera also includes advanced video features such as 4K video shooting and Slow Motion with high picture quality (FHD 120p). Electronic image stabilisation with Active Mode is also available and delivers stable video recording even while walking and shooting hand-held. Further, the Alpha ZV-E10's advanced AF (autofocus) technology provides fast, precise AF with excellent tracking performance, as well as high quality audio for clear sound recording. The Alpha ZV-E10 allows the user to expand their creative expression by utilising the ideal lens for each individual scene they want to shoot.

MG Motor brand gains in popularity in Middle East

New car buyers across the GCC continue to snap up MG cars in record numbers, with the British-born brand recording best-ever six month sales of over 20,000 vehicles in the GCC and the Middle East. Despite the challenges faced in 2020, consumers showed their appreciation of the MG line-up throughout the year, as the brand broke into the top 10 of car manufacturers for the first time ever.

The growing popularity of the brand has been replicated over the first six months of 2021. MG's biggest market in the region continues to be Saudi Ara-

bia, where the brand sold 12,200 units in the first half of 2021. In Oman – and during the first six months of the year – the brand witnessed impressive growth of 263 per cent, contributing to a strong 5.3 per cent market share, the highest ever to be registered in the GCC for a single market. The brand's outstanding performance allowed it to jump two positions to take 8th place in the list of the GCC's best-selling brands.

MG has recently enjoyed an unparalleled level of demand for its range of cars, and with each year there has been an increase

in breadth and quality of the products. The Middle East's 'Best Sub-compact Sedan' for 2020, the MG5 and the new 2021 MG ZS contributed to a solid 55 per cent of the overall sales for MG especially during the month of Ramadan.

The MG ZS ranked 2nd in its segment with 4,635 units sold and an overall contribution of 23 per cent to the brand's overall sales. In parallel, buyers took a special liking to the MG 5 with 6,800 units sold. The people's favourite sedan registered growth of 88 per cent compared to 2020.

Tom Lee, managing director of MG Motor Middle East, commented, "The increase in sales for the MG brand during the first half of the year, and especially during the month of Ramadan, demonstrates the trust customers are putting in our products and in our brand.

"I am proud of the support and the efforts of the MG team, as well as our distributors as they continue to build and grow the MG brand in the region. In particular, we are working hard to maintain the supply of vehicles during the global semi-conductors shortage."



Afghanistan will become 'pariah' if Taliban seize power by force: US

New Delhi, India - Afghanistan would become a 'pariah state' if the Taliban take control by force, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday, as a top-level delegation from the insurgent group visited China to assure officials of their international obligations.

"An Afghanistan that does not respect the rights of its people, an Afghanistan that commits atrocities against its own people would become a pariah state," Blinken told reporters in India, where he is on his first official visit.

In China, the Taliban's leadership assured Beijing the group will not allow Afghanistan to be used as a base for plotting against another country.

A delegation including co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar is in China for talks as the insurgents continue a sweeping offensive across Afghanistan - including areas along their shared border.

Their frontier is just 76km long - and at a rugged high altitude without a road crossing - but Beijing fears Afghanistan could be used as a staging ground for Uyghur separatists in Xinjiang.

Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naeem told AFP those concerns were unfounded.

"The Islamic Emirate assured China that Afghanistan's soil would not be used against any country's security."

"They (China) promised not to interfere in Afghanistan's affairs, but instead help to solve problems and bring peace."

Beijing confirmed the thrust of the talks, which were led on the Chinese side by Foreign Minister



India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (right) and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken hold a joint news conference, in New Delhi on Wednesday (AFP)

The Taliban says that it seeks international recognition, support. The taking over of the country by force and abusing the rights of its people is not the path to achieve those

ANTONY BLINKEN

Wang Yi.

But in Kabul Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani urged the international community "to review the narrative of the willingness of the Taliban and their supporters on embracing a political solution".

"In terms of scale, scope and timing, we are facing an invasion that is unprecedented in the last 30 years," he warned in a speech on Wednesday.

"These are not the Taliban of the 20th century... but the manifestation of the nexus between

transnational terrorist networks and transnational criminal organisations."

In New Delhi, Blinken warned the Taliban they would have to change if they wanted global acceptance.

"The Taliban says that it seeks international recognition, that it wants international support for Afghanistan. Presumably it wants its leaders to be able to travel freely in the world, sanctions lifted, etc," he said.

"The taking over of the country by force and abusing the rights of its people is not the path

to achieve those objectives."

Analysts say China, whose stated foreign policy position is non-interference in other countries' issues, is uneasy about the religiosity of the Taliban given their proximity to Muslim majority Xinjiang province.

But the meeting gifts legitimacy to an insurgent group craving international recognition - and a potential diplomatic shield at the UN - to match their military march across the nation.

"Wang Yi pointed out, the Afghan Taliban is a crucial mili-

tary and political force in Afghanistan," Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters in Beijing.

"China has throughout adhered to non-interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs... Afghanistan belongs to the Afghan people," he said, in stark contrast to the 'failure of US policy towards Afghanistan'.

Taliban officials have cranked up their international diplomacy in recent months, seeking global recognition for when they hope to return to power.

AFP

Syrian doctor in Germany charged

Berlin, Germany - A Syrian doctor living in Germany has been charged with crimes against humanity including torture and one case of murder, prosecutors said on Wednesday, in Germany's latest move against alleged abuses committed in Syria.

The suspect, identified as Alaa M., was arrested on June 19, 2020 and initially charged with two instances of torturing detainees at a prison in the city of Homs in 2011. But he has now been charged with a slew of additional crimes, including killing one person and another 18 counts of torture.

Alaa M. worked as a doctor at military hospitals in Homs and Damascus in 2011 and 2012, when he allegedly carried out horrific abuses including setting fire to the genitals of a teenager.

In one case, he is accused of beating a prisoner, pouring flammable liquid on his wounds before setting them on fire and kicking him in the face so hard that three of his teeth had to be replaced.

In another, he allegedly administered a lethal injection to a prisoner who tried to resist being beaten.

He is also accused of torturing a detainee who was suffering from epilepsy by punching him in the face, hitting him with a plastic pipe and kicking him in the head. The man died later.

AFP

Trusting West does not work: Iran's Khamenei

Tehran, Iran - Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that the outgoing government's experience of engaging with world powers including the United States shows that 'trusting the West does not work'.

President Hassan Rouhani's signature diplomatic achievement, a 2015 nuclear deal with major powers, gave Iran some relief from international sanctions in exchange for limits on its nuclear programme.

But it was torpedoed in 2018 by then US president Donald Trump, who unilaterally withdrew from the agreement and reimposed punishing sanctions. "Future generations should use this experience. It was made clear during this government that trusting the West does not work," Khamenei told outgoing President Hassan Rouhani and members of his cabinet.

Rouhani's government has been holding talks with major powers since April on bringing Washington back into the agreement, but a deal now seems unlikely until after he hands over to President-elect Ebrahim Raisi next month.

Khamenei said Washington has conditioned its return to the 2015 deal on including 'a sentence ... that (says) some issues be talked about in the future, or we will have no agreement'.

"With that sentence, they want to have an excuse for their next meddlings with the (deal) itself - missiles and regional issues," his official website quoted him as saying.



Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during a meeting with President Hassan Rouhani, in Tehran on Wednesday (AFP)

One of the major criticisms of the 2015 deal raised by Trump was its failure to address Iran's ballistic missile programme or its alleged interference in regional affairs.

But Tehran has always rejected bringing non-nuclear issues into the agreement, which is known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Khamenei also criticised the US for refusing to 'guarantee that (it) will not violate the agreement in the future' by pulling out unilaterally, as Trump did in 2018.

"Whenever you postponed issues with agreements with the West or negotiations with the West and America and the like, you were stuck and could not progress," he told the Rouhani government.

"Because they don't help. They are the enemy after all."

AFP

16,000 more work permits for Palestinians: Israel

Jerusalem - Israel announced on Wednesday it is to issue 16,000 more permits for Palestinians from the occupied West Bank to work in its construction and hotel industries, taking the total to over 100,000.

"Israel intends to increase by 15,000 workers the quota of Palestinian residents of Judea and Samaria (the southern and northern West Bank) working in the field of construction," the Israeli military body responsible for civil affairs in the occupied Palestinian territories, COGAT, said.

Another 1,000 permits will be issued to Palestinians working in Israeli hotels, it added.

The new permits will bring the number of Palestinians allowed to work in Israel to 106,000, with another 30,000 Palestinians authorised to work in Jewish settlements in the West Bank, a



Israeli security forces use a crane to remove illegally built modular homes as they evacuate settlers in the Beit Dror outpost, in the hills south of the West Bank city of Hebron, on Tuesday (AFP)

security official said.

The announcement followed discussions between Israeli De-

fence Minister Benny Gantz and Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas.

The Israeli government is expected to approve it next week, the security source said, adding:

Chinese national wounded in gun attack in Pakistan

Karachi, Pakistan - At least one Chinese national was wounded in a gun attack in the southern Pakistani megacity of Karachi on Wednesday, police said, in the latest assault targeting Chinese citizens in the country.

Local police said two masked assailants riding on a motorbike fired at a car carrying two Chinese nationals, who were working at a nearby factory in the city.

One of the passengers sustained an injury to his arm in that attack.

"He is stable as fortunately he was not hit on any vital part of his body," Javed Akbar Riaz, the police chief of Karachi's southern district, told AFP.

Chinese Foreign Ministry



Security officials examine a vehicle that was carrying Chinese nationals after it came under gun attack in Karachi on Wednesday (AFP)

spokesman Zhao Lijian also confirmed the incident.

"China is following this matter closely and the relevant case is still under investigation," said Zhao.

"This incident is an isolated case. We are fully confident that the Pakistani side will ensure the safety of Chinese nationals and assets in Pakistan," he added.

The shooting comes just

weeks after nine Chinese nationals were killed in northwest Pakistan when their bus carrying a team of engineers, surveyors and mechanical staff to a nearby dam site was targeted in a bombing.

The security of Chinese workers has long been an issue of concern in Pakistan. Large numbers of them are based in the country to supervise and build infrastructure projects.

Pakistani officials have continued to offer only vague details about the nature of the attack on the dam workers.

However Beijing has been increasingly more explicit about the blast with a recent report in Chinese state media suggesting the assault was carried out by

"We want to apply it as fast as possible. It's in the interest of both sides."

Jobs in Israel offer higher wages than those in Palestinian-administered areas of the West Bank but Palestinians complain they do not get paid as much as their Israeli counterparts or enjoy similar labour protections.

The head of COGAT, Major General Rissan Alian, said the additional work permits 'will strengthen the Israeli and Palestinian economies, and will largely contribute to the security stability in the area of Judea and Samaria'.

The secretary general of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, Shaher Saad, said: "Israel desperately needs this number of workers, especially since they have lost a lot of foreign labour because of corona."

AFP

Uyghur militants or the Pakistani Taliban. No group has claimed responsibility for the bombing.

Islamabad is Beijing's closest regional ally, with China pouring billions of dollars into Pakistan in recent years to boost the nation's infrastructure.

But Chinese-funded projects have sparked resentment, particularly among separatist groups, who say locals see little benefit, with most jobs going to outsiders.

In April a suicide blast at a luxury hotel hosting the Chinese ambassador in southwest Balochistan province killed four people and wounded dozens. The ambassador was unhurt.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

US tells vaccinated people in high COVID risk areas to mask again

Washington, US - People vaccinated against COVID-19 in high-risk parts of the United States should resume wearing masks indoors, the top health authority said on Tuesday, a major reversal in guidance that underscored the country's struggle to suppress the Delta variant.

President Joe Biden said the announcement showed that America needs to 'do better' on vaccinations, adding that a vaccine mandate for the country's more than two million federal workers was now 'under consideration'.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention director Rochelle Walensky cited new data that shows rare breakthrough cases involving Delta have an increased risk of onward transmission.

"In areas with substantial and high transmission, CDC recommends fully vaccinated people wear masks in public indoor settings," she said.

As recently as last week, the CDC had defended its surprise decision in May that vaccinated people did not have to wear masks indoors in most circumstances.

In another setback, the White



A sign offers thanks for wearing masks, outside a supermarket in Indian Valley, California, on Tuesday (AFP)

House on Tuesday also ordered all its staff to mask up again due to local transmission rates in Washington.

According to the latest CDC data, 63 percent of the country's more than 3,200 counties are experiencing substantial or high transmission.

Substantial is defined as being between 50 and 100 daily cases per 100,000 people over seven days, while high is defined as more than 100 daily cases per

100,000 over seven days.

Biden said he would lay out new steps on Thursday to overcome the lag in vaccinations after the country's strong start to its program.

Viral load

In a separate address to the US intelligence community, when asked about a possible vaccine mandate for US federal workers, Biden replied: "That's under consideration right now."

Los Angeles announced on Tuesday that it would require city officials to provide proof of a coronavirus vaccination or a weekly negative test.

"The fourth wave is here, and the choice for Angelenos couldn't be clearer - get vaccinated or get COVID-19," Mayor Eric Garcetti said.

"If you're a city employee, we're now going to require you to either show that you're vaccinated or take a weekly test, and

we're committed to pursuing a full vaccine mandate."

On Monday, the Veterans Affairs department said it would require its frontline health workers, some 115,000 people, to get the shot, becoming the first federal agency to institute the requirement.

Walensky stressed that so-called 'breakthrough' cases among people who are vaccinated remain rare - shots reduce the risk of symptomatic disease seven-fold, and hospitalisations and deaths by a factor of 20.

However, new CDC research showed that when a vaccinated person does become infected, their viral load is similar to an unvaccinated person.

"That leads us to believe that the breakthrough infections, rare as they are, have the potential to forward transmit at the same capacity of an unvaccinated person," she said.

To stem the spread of the Delta variant, the CDC will recommend schools adopt universal masking, including teachers, staff, students and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, when they reopen in fall, she added.

Former president Donald

Trump, widely accused of mishandling the virus while in office, slammed the latest recommendations.

"We won't go back. We won't mask our children," he said in a statement. 'Brave Americans learned how to safely and responsibly live and fight back.'

Infection numbers in the United States are now swelling, thanks to the Delta variant, which accounts for around 90 percent of cases.

The latest seven-day average of daily cases is more than 56,000, similar to levels last seen in April.

Huge death toll

In total, more than 610,000 people have died of COVID-19 in the United States.

Forty-nine per cent of the US population is fully vaccinated, but the vaccination rate is heavily skewed towards politically liberal parts of the country.

Walensky stressed she saw masks as a 'temporary' measure, adding: "What we really need to do to drive down these transmissions in areas of high transmission is to get more and more people vaccinated."

AFP

UK offers Kenya 817,000 doses

London, UK - Britain said on Wednesday it was offering 817,000 coronavirus vaccine doses to Kenya, as it rolls out a promised 100mn jabs for global distribution.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson formally agreed to the donation during his meeting with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta at the UK leader's country retreat at Chequers, northwest of London, later on Wednesday.

The pair are due to host a fundraising summit in London on Thursday - to be attended by other world leaders as well as business, charity, education and youth representatives - focused on global education efforts.

Around half of the donated Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine doses will be dispatched to Nairobi this week, Downing Street said.

'As friends and allies, we are sharing UK vaccine doses to support Kenya's fight against the pandemic,' Johnson added in a statement.

Britain has committed to sharing 100mn vaccine shots by the middle of next year.

AFP

Sydney lockdown extended by four weeks as virus outbreak grows

Sydney, Australia - Millions of Sydney residents will spend another month in lockdown, authorities announced on Wednesday, citing a still-fast-growing coronavirus outbreak and stubbornly low vaccination rates.

Australia's biggest city had been due to exit five weeks of lockdown on July 30, but the restrictions will now remain in place until August 28 as case numbers continued to climb.

"I appreciate personally what we're asking people do for the next four weeks but it is because we want to keep our community safe and want to make sure we can bounce back as quickly as possible," New South Wales state premier Gladys Berejiklian said.

Officials announced 177 new cases linked to the Sydney outbreak, which began mid-June when a driver for an international flight crew contracted the virus.

People living in hotspots have



Police patrol an area near Bondi Beach in Sydney on Wednesday (AFP)

been urged not to leave their neighbourhoods, but those living alone will be allowed to create a 'singles bubble' with another person.

During the lockdown, Sydney residents can leave their homes only for exercise, essential work, shop for necessities such as food, and medical reasons.

In recent weeks, police have doled out fines to those violating the restrictions.

Berejiklian said police would step up compliance efforts, while imploring Sydneysiders to

report others breaking the rules.

"We really need people to do the right thing at all times. Do not let your guard down."

The announcement came as Melbourne awoke to the end of its fifth virus lockdown, after beating the Delta variant for the second time in recent months.

It was a victory won through 'determination and hard work', according to Victoria state premier Dan Andrews.

They were among the roughly eight million people in Victoria and South Australia

states who exited lockdown overnight after local outbreaks of the highly contagious variant were contained.

Johnny Sandish, who owns a cafe in central Melbourne, said his business was under major financial pressure and the first morning of post-lockdown trade was quieter than expected.

"We're losing a lot of money, almost going broke," he said.

"There's no money coming in the business, only going out."

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 Delta variant, which has repeatedly sent cities into lockdown.

About 13 per cent of Australians have been vaccinated. The country has recorded more than 33,000 infections and 921 COVID-related deaths so far.

AFP

More than half of German population fully vaccinated

Berlin, Germany - More than half the population of Germany is now fully vaccinated, Health Minister Jens Spahn said on Wednesday, but concerns are growing about a slowdown in uptake.

'41.8 million Germans now have full protection, while 61.1 percent have received at least one shot. The more people who get vaccinated, the safer we will be in autumn and winter,' Spahn wrote on Twitter.

Germany's vaccination campaign accelerated in the spring after a sluggish first few months, yet the country remains some way off the 80 per cent targeted for herd immunity.

The inoculation drive has slowed to a snail's pace in recent weeks, sharpening fears of a fourth wave of infections driven by the more contagious Delta variant.

With case numbers also rising, the debate over how to convince more people to take the vaccine is set to become a key issue in the national elections



This file photo shows a man receiving Pfizer-BioNTech's Comirnaty vaccine at a doctor's practice in Suhl, eastern Germany on May 6 (AFP)

scheduled for September 26.

Unlike other European countries such as France and Greece, Germany has so far ruled out introducing compulsory jabs for certain parts of the population.

Last week, Chancellor Angela Merkel urged citizens to get vaccinated to curb what she called a 'clear and worrying dynamic' in the infection rates.

"Every vaccination... is a small step towards a return to normality," she said.

Merkel's chief of staff Helge Braun has also mooted possible further restrictions on public life for the unvaccinated, even if they can show a recent

negative test.

"Vaccinated people will definitely have more freedom than unvaccinated people" if case numbers rise again in the autumn, said Braun.

Germany has seen low infection numbers over the summer compared to many of its European neighbours, but cases have been creeping up over the past weeks.

On Wednesday, official figures showed 2768 new cases over the last 24 hours, while the incidence had risen again to reach 15 cases per 100,000 over a seven-day period.

AFP

Record virus cases in Tokyo as more regions weigh emergency

Tokyo, Japan - Daily virus cases in Tokyo topped 3,000 for the first time on Wednesday, as several neighbouring regions weighed emergency restrictions to tackle a surge in infections.

Tokyo, which is already under a virus state of emergency as it hosts the Olympics, reported 3,117 cases, and Governor Yuriko Koike called on people to avoid 'unnecessary, non-urgent outings'.

Japan's vaccination programme started slowly, and only just over 25 per cent of the population has had two jabs.

"I want young people to get vaccinated. Young people's behaviour is the key. I'm asking them please for their cooperation," Koike said.

Japan has seen a compara-



Despite the report of a record 2,848 new daily cases the previous day, commuters swarm a train station in Tokyo on Wednesday (AFP)

tively small coronavirus outbreak, with around 15,000 deaths despite avoiding harsh lockdowns.

The state of emergency in place in Tokyo mostly limits bar and restaurant opening hours and bans them from selling alcohol, though experts have warned compliance is dropping and cases are surging among young people.

Cases are also rising elsewhere, and three regions surrounding Tokyo - Chiba, Saitama and Kanagawa - are now considering seeking a virus emergency from the national government.

The spike in cases is likely to increase scrutiny of the Olympic Games, with persistent concerns over whether the event

could drive infections.

Olympic participants face various restrictions, including regular testing and limits on their movement.

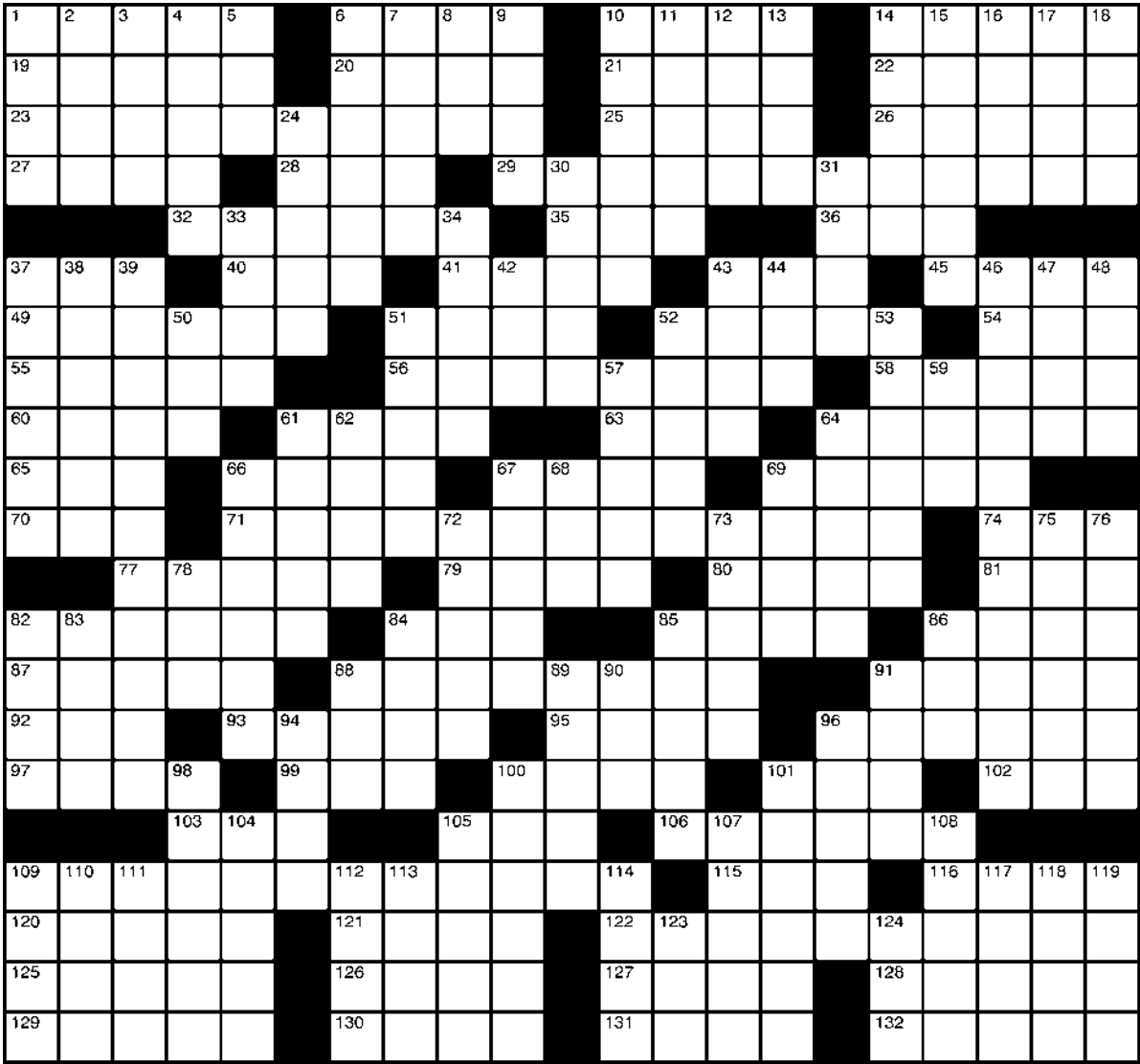
And 124,358 tests of Olympic athletes and team officials this month revealed just 22 confirmed positive cases, according to Tokyo 2020 organisers. The figure does not include tests at airports.

Government spokesman Katsunobu Kato called on Japanese to avoid meeting and drinking in groups, suggesting people 'watch the Olympic Games at home'.

Fans are barred from almost all Olympic venues, though people have been showing up at competitions on public roads.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 "Au Revoir Les Enfants" Louis
6 About 1/28 ounce
10 Pool hall sticks
14 Reeked
19 Aka
20 Taylor of film
21 Before date or room: L.
22 Hiawatha's craft
23 Once in a while programming
25 Silents actress
Naldi
26 Conductor Previn
27 Brit "bye- bye"
28 L.L.D. holder
29 Alternative listening location
32 Pinking shears design
35 Many, many years
36 Imitate
37 USA's uncle
40 Actress Susan ____
41 "Golden Pond" bird
43 Bus. legal status
45 Business degrees
49 NYSE worker
51 Hanging plant often
52 Lends a hand
54 C minus XXXIX
55 Stringed playthings
56 Unilateral
58 Kowtow

- 60 Car maintenance job
61 Nursery items
63 Polka ____
64 Airy dessert
65 "____ only as directed"
66 Roof-overhang part
67 Bottom-heavy fruit
69 The March King
70 To be, in Madrid
71 Location phrase
74 Cpl. or Sgt.
77 Drive away
79 Oh, yes!
80 ____ transit
81 Morning moisture
82 Actress icon Liz
84 Clean air agcy.
85 Sup
86 Ugly Duckling's future
87 Fish bait: pl.
88 Kitchen H2O
91 Cacophony
92 Army foot soldiers: abbr.
93 Author Jong
95 Detective or singer
Carter
96 Cavalry soldier type
97 Danson and
Turner
99 Baseball bat wood
100 Warning signal
101 Lush
102 Ldrs.

- 103 Dernier ____: Fr.
105 N. Mex. neighbor
106 ____ of hard knocks
109 World capital, to some
115 Vegas article?
116 Nobel prize
120 Author Nin
121 Lois or Lovers'
122 School org. gettogether
125 Succinct
126 Automotive pioneer
127 Psychic's reading matter?
128 Patois
129 Does the crawl, say
130 Story line
131 Ollie's partner
132 Leg joints
DOWN
1 Actor Dillon
2 Part of T.A.E.
3 Agenda
4 Bolivian capital
5 Chicago-Richmond dir.
6 Like sequins
7 Rodeo rope
8 Winner's take?
9 Food paste
10 Grand or Bryce
11 AFL or CIO, for one
12 Two of Caesar's last words

- 13 Scorch
14 Rascal
15 File of two or more
16 "The King ____"
17 SNL's Dunn
18 Boat stabilizer
24 Basketball player
30 Gaseous lights
31 Valid statement
33 ____ of March
34 Secluded valleys
37 Phonograph needle, for one
38 Stimulate
39 Opie's address
42 Panzer's quest
43 Yeah, sure!
44 Homer's neighbor
46 Short-order order
47 Logging gear
48 Father
50 Female hare, e.g.
51 Hallway
52 Put on a pedestal
53 Brownies or Cubs
57 Sun Valley state
59 Out of, in Ulm
61 More obedient
62 Elliptical
64 Bullwinkle, for one
66 Exhibit
67 Nonsense!
68 Alien's initials
69 Bridge
72 Iota follower
73 Know-it-all's grin
75 Terminated
76 ____ manual

- 78 Shade tree
82 Tease
83 Super-dooper
84 "Into ____ life..."
85 Knocks out
86 Gun's offspring?
88 "____ the season..."
89 "There was ____ woman..."
90 Pewter ingredient
91 US/VV. Eur. alliance
94 Parade botcher
96 Caftanlike
98 Internal split
100 Truthful
101 Wizard
104 Levitates
105 Apartment with a deed
107 Barton or Bow
108 Admit
109 Long distance phone service
110 Again
111 Rani's dress
112 Goo
113 "____ in the Saddle": 1944 film
114 April night owls
117 Cash's "I Walk the ____"
118 "Picnic" playwright
119 Conceited personalities
123 Egyptian king, for short
124 BPOE member

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You might not realise it at first, but whenever you're in a group of people today, laughing and having a good time, you are actually creating something -- energy, strong support and friendship. Right now, you'll find that group settings are a great source of productivity, even if the group is a chatty and relaxed one. So try to be as collaborative as possible.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Someone you know who has a huge ego is going to get knocked down a peg or two today -- and you are going to find the spectacle exceedingly entertaining. But seeing another person humbled should not make you gloat. You can be proud of being a bit wiser than certain people -- but if you get too cocky about it, you're sure to end up making a fool of yourself, too!



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

The give and take of ideas is not always an effortless experience -- your ego can get involved, and trying to 'win' a debate can distort the exchange. Whenever you share ideas, you need to focus solely on accurately conveying what you think, not on proving that you're the only person who's 'right.' And you definitely can't make things personal.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Some weird behaviour that has been going on in your social circle right now might be meant to get a rise out of you -- and you simply can't ignore it anymore. Give it some of your attention today, and push back when the comments get too pushy or provocative. Set aside time early in the day to start the conversations you need to have. Be bold and honest.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

If you don't have anything to look forward to, then make something to look forward to -- you need to remind yourself that you're in charge of your life. It's time to stop waiting for other people to make things happen! Reorganise your day -- do your morning routine in the afternoon, and see how that feels. You'll be surprised at how a change in your schedule can energise you.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You can never be sure what the future will hold -- but you should still try to plan for it. To some extent, you can make your future happen the way you want it to. Today, try to lay the foundation for a few important things you hope to do someday -- whether that means requesting vacation time from work or upping the ante on your retirement savings.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

New people can add vitality and energy to your life, but they can also distract you from other important things. There are many work or school issues that need your full attention. Be careful about accepting too many invitations -- you might not have as much free time as you think you do, and it would be a real shame to start something you can't follow through with.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Someone you know very well could be working too hard at having a good time. This person wants to be the life of the party but is perhaps losing sight of what 'fun' really means. Try to schedule some time for just the two of you -- create a relaxed situation that will encourage him or her to talk about what's going on. Your listening skills are needed in this situation.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

The fact that you'll have a lot of high energy will do more than fuel your own productivity -- it could make some inspiring changes within your group of friends. In all your activities, your enthusiasm will bubble up from deep inside you -- and this enthusiasm will be contagious. Without realising it, you'll show people options they've never considered before.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Just as one bad apple can spoil the whole barrel, one bad idea can ruin a healthy team dynamic. So watch out for unusual, untested theories. You have to be diligent in your professional role and stay focused on the greater good. Don't let peer pressure, fancy titles or outright bullying intimidate you into going along with the crowd if you know that the crowd is going in the wrong direction.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Change affects different people in different ways. Expect your reaction to a major transition to be unlike anyone else's. You have always been open to new experiences, and right now you are very eager to see things get mixed up in your life. This is not the case for everyone close to you, though -- and you must be sensitive to this fact. Ask people what their feelings are.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

If you have a somewhat busy day today, make an effort to get things done as soon as you can -- you will need some free time in the afternoon so you can daydream about your future. Sound silly to schedule fantasy time? It's not -- in fact, it's just as important as a doctor's appointment or a staff meeting. Your imagination requires maintenance.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The year 1985 was declared as the International Year of

- a. Blind
b. Youth
c. Children
d. Gandhi Women

2. Which of the following festivals is celebrated on Prophet Mohammed birthday?

- a. Eid al Zuhā
b. Eid-e-Milād
c. Eid al Fitr
d. Muharram

3. 'Rosh Hashanah' is the new year's day of which communities?

- a. Jews
b. Muslims
c. Hindus
d. Shinto

Answers: 1.b 2.b 3.a

VOX CINEMAS
BLOCKBUSTERS ARE BACK
WHERE THEY BELONG
Witness the magic of movies the way they were meant to be seen...on the big screen.

Jungle Cruise
Synopsis: Dr. Lily Houghton enlists the aid of wisecracking skipper Frank Wolff to take her down the Amazon in his ramshackle boat. Together, they search for an ancient tree that holds the power to heal -- a discovery that will change the future of medicine

The Box
Synopsis: A music producer fallen from grace finds an artist - Ji Hoon who has everything needed to make it big and discovers the one thing holding him back, paralyzing stage fright

Snake Eyes
Synopsis: An ancient Japanese clan welcomes tenacious loner Snake Eyes after he saves the life of their heir apparent. Upon arrival in Japan, the Arashikage teach him the ways of the ninja warrior while also providing him a home.

Norm: Family Vacation
Synopsis: Overwhelmed with his Kingly duties, Norm's crown is stolen and he embarks on a journey to find it in conjunction with repairing his family's relationship.

Book your tickets at voxcinemas.com or the VOX app

KIDS COLOURING

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

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JULY 28)

P	A	L	E	C	A	R	O	B	A	L	A	R	M	A	S	I	P
U	N	I	T	A	L	T	H	E	A	R	A	D	A	R	N	N	E
M	A	D	H	O	U	S	E	O	F	C	O	M	M	O	N	S	D
A	T	O	N	A	L	O	T	T	O	S	T	A	R	S	T	A	R
I	T	S	L	O	O	S	E	F	I	S	H	O	O	K	S		
B	E	E	C	H	O	R	L	O	N	O	B	O	N	E	S		
A	L	A	S	C	O	L	D	S	N	A	P	S	H	O	T	S	
S	I	S	S	H	U	L	S	C	A	T	O	S	B	I	T		
R	O	Y	L	O	S	S	L	E	V	I	S	S	T	A	K	E	
A	T	A	T	I	M	E	F	A	T	A	L	E	R	R	E	D	
S	I	M	P	L	E	S	I	M	O	N	L	E	G	R	E	E	
M	A	P	L	E	A	N	G	E	L	G	R	I	F	F	I	N	
E	R	I	E	S	A	S	E	A	T	C	R	I	N	A	R	E	
L	I	E	P	T	E	R	A	H	E	M	S	C	A	W			
S	P	A	R	E	R	O	O	M	A	T	E	T	E				
N	O	N	A	G	O	N	P	A	I	R	M	O	D	E	L		
H	O	M	E	L	A	N	D	S	I	L	I	D	E	S	P	A	T
O	W	E	D	E	G	A	O	E	R	I	A	L	T	O			
M	I	L	L	S	H	O	R	T	S	T	O	R	E	T	E	L	L
E	S	E	P	E	R	O	T	E	G	G	E	R	S	E	N	O	S
R	E	T	A	L	A	M	O	S	T	A	Y	S					



8 MISTAKES TO AVOID

SUMMER

runners

As temperatures soar in Oman, hanging up your workout schedules and slumping in the couch is not the solution. You must work out, but with a little caution and care

Many regular morning runners often feel they are doing well by maintaining their daily workout plans in summer and even try to outdo themselves. The results may not be good as one might be vulnerable to disorders and invite undue fatigue without realising it. Exercising outdoors might seem like the perfect opportunity to work up a sweat and burn more fat, but those who workout smart know very well that it is a good move to go slow on workouts in summer. Intensive workouts in increased levels of heat and humidity can lead to serious health risks.

Also, remember, a morning workout should not be a mandatory habit. Rather, it should follow a good night's sleep. Many people dash out to maintain their early morning workouts even though they have missed sleep the previous night due to some reason. They get a sense of fulfillment by keeping up their commitment. However, this is not an appropriate action and must be avoided at all costs.

Less sleep means disturbed leptin and ghrelin levels which are two of the main hormones that have been recognised to have a major influence on energy balance and that can also hamper appetite. Lack of sleep interferes with your ability to metabolise carbs efficiently. It makes it easier for your body to store fat and increases insulin resistance, blood pressure, and risk of having heart disease.

Here are eight common mistakes people do when working out in summer:



1 Not drinking water unless thirsty
Thirst is not the right way to stay hydrated. According to Mayo Clinic, when you are thirsty, there is a strong chance you are already dehydrated, having lost as much as one to two percent of your body's water content. With that water loss, you are more likely to start experiencing cognitive impairments like stress, agitation, and forgetfulness.

Exercising in the heat means needing water to regulate your temperature. Not drinking enough water will cause fatigue to set in, reducing your performance. Hence, keep a bottle of water with you for long workouts and keep sipping at intervals not at the end of your run or workout.



2 Skipping sunscreen
With summer, comes an increased UV Index, increasing your chance of sunburn, even when it is cloudy. Getting sunburnt can increase your risk of melanoma skin cancer, according to Cancer Research UK. Once you are sunburnt, putting more sunscreen on will not help the sunburn that has already emerged. It is recommended to use a sweat-proof SPF of 30 or higher. Reapply every two hours of moderate exercise, or every 45 to 60 minutes during rigorous exercise.



3 Not keeping track of time
Summer temperatures begin to climb earlier in the day. If possible, avoid exercising outdoors between 10am and 3pm to miss the hottest part of the day. If you have the option, exercise in shaded areas instead

of in a direct path of sunlight. Try changing your workout schedule to early mornings or late evenings. At these times, the sun isn't as intense, so it is cooler outdoors and you are more likely to find some shade to rest in.



4 Wearing unsuitable clothes
Skin hugging clothes or polyester blends are not your best options when exercising outside, though they might give you a more sporty appearance for your workout. Avoid body hugging t-shirts/tights or lycra slacks or shorts. Instead, wear loose-fitting, light-coloured, cotton blend clothing. These help you stay cooler and limit the post-workout stench.



5 Not consuming electrolytes
The hotter it is, the more you are going to sweat. Additional sweat means greater loss of electrolytes. If working out extensively or intensely outdoors, make sure to recover with more than just water. Rehydrate with a drink that will replace your lost sodium, but avoid the artificial ingredients and added sugars that are in popular sports drinks. Something healthier, like coconut water or a chilled milkshake, will be good.



6 Being unrealistic about performance
When temperatures rise, you can expect a drop in performance levels, especially when doing high-intensity cardio. So, it makes better sense to set realistic, 'hot day' personal records. Avoid the mistake of ignoring your exhaustion and trying to overdo it so that you maintain your performance records. When you exercise in summer, it can be easy to brush off lethargy but you need to adhere to indications of tiredness which suggest a slowdown. If you feel dizzy or nauseated, simply take a break.



7 Ignoring the weather
It can be tempting to put on your workout gear and step outside without first checking the forecast. In Oman, you do not have to worry about it being too cold or freezing, but checking humidity levels and temperatures would indicate how your body is going to respond outdoors. Also, rain forecasts will guide you to choose the right path or location for outdoor exercises. If a heatwave is underway, you need to be ready for it, to make suitable amendments to your schedule and workout.



8 Avoiding rain runs
Many people who workout outdoors regularly, avoid going out when it rains. It might be helpful, if showers are forecasted, to plan a run in the rain. Running in the rain helps cool you off, so you can still enjoy some outdoor cardio during summer showers. Also swimming laps, doing water aerobics and taking up other water sports, like water skiing, surfing, wakeboarding, playing water volleyball, or canoeing/kayaking are all great forms of physical activity that are safe in the sun with occasional dips in the water.



TOKYO 2020

OMAN AT OLYMPICS

Alawi first Asian to be named chief referee at marathon swimming



Abdulmonem al Alawi

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

In a rare honour, a first for an Asian and an Arab official, Oman's Abdulmonem al Alawi has been named the chief referee at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games marathon swimming for the women's 10km event.

Alawi, who is attending as a FINA (world swimming body) official for the second successive Olympics, will be the chief referee for the race that is due to be held on August 4.

A long-standing member of the FINA Technical Open

Water Swimming Committee, Alawi was an assistant referee at the 2016 Rio Olympics in the 10km women's marathon.

Alawi was first elected to the FINA committee in 2013 and this is the first time that an Arab and an Asian official has been appointed as the chief referee at the Olympic Games marathon swimming.

Marathon swimming (open water) was first introduced at the Olympics in 2008 at the Beijing Games.

Alawi was delighted on



Hamed al Khatri (R) trains in Tokyo on Tuesday

receiving the confirmation of his appointment and told *Muscat Daily* from Tokyo on Tuesday that he was 'proud and honoured' to be the first Asian and an Arab to be handed such a big responsibility.

"This [appointment] means a lot to me. I have been officiating in swimming events since 1986 and I

believe this is like climbing Mt Everest summit - to be named the chief referee at the Olympic Games. I thank the Oman Swimming Association (OSA), Oman Olympic Committee and

the FINA for their support over the years," said Alawi.

The official, who has been also an OSA board member, hails from Sur city and has over the years officiated more than 150 domestic, regional and international competitions after receiving the FINA referee badge in 1995.

Khatri's coach hopes for a good show

Meanwhile, the national shooting coach Sultan al Rusheidi has 'high hopes' from his experienced marksman Hamed al Khatri, 36, who will be competing in his second

successive Olympic Games in the 50m rifle three positions.

Khatri's qualifying round will be held on August 2 and the shooter is currently training under Rusheidi in Japan.

"Following the confirmation of Khatri's invitation card for Tokyo, he has been undergoing daily training sessions. He has good experience, having won the competitions at the Gulf and Arab levels. I am confident, and I hope, that he can improve upon his personal best score at the Games," said Rusheidi.

The other three Omani participants are sprinters Barakat al Harthi (men) and Mazoon al Alawi (women) in 100m race and lifter Amur al Khanjari.

Mazoon will compete in the 100m preliminary heat three on Friday. Mazoon's personal best is 11.84s and at Rio Olympics in 2016, the sprinter did advance to the next round. She is expected to repeat her Rio performance. Barakat is scheduled to race on Saturday.

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

@ashokmuscat



Kento Momota reacts after a point against Heo Kwang-hee on Wednesday

World No 1 Momota makes shock exit

BADMINTON

Tokyo, Japan - Japanese world badminton No 1 Kento Momota blamed his own 'weakness' as he crashed out of the Tokyo Olympics in the first round on Wednesday.

Unseeded South Korean Heo Kwang-hee beat Momota 21-15, 21-19 to end his gold-medal bid after just two games, a day after Japanese tennis superstar Naomi Osaka also made an early exit.

Momota won a record 11 titles in 2019 to cement his place as the undisputed best badminton player in the world.

But he was almost forced to retire last year after a car crash that left him with career-threatening injuries, and he admitted his killer instinct of old had not yet returned.

"Previously, when a game went like this, I would be able to recover and think clearly," said a visibly stunned Momota.

"I would have been able to pull

through. But I couldn't recover tonight, and that's down to my weakness."

Momota fractured his eye socket in the accident in January last year which killed the driver of the vehicle taking him to the airport after winning the Malaysia Masters.

He suffered double vision and needed surgery on a bone near his eye that delayed his comeback, leaving him fearing his career was over.

He returned to make his Olympic debut in Tokyo - five years after being banned from the 2016 Rio Games for illegal gambling. Momota's early exit follows similar upsets for high-profile Japanese athletes, including tennis player Osaka and gymnast Kohei Uchimura.

Badminton No 2 seed Chou Tien-Chen also suffered a fright on Wednesday, but saw off 19-year-old Canadian Brian Yang 21-18, 16-21, 22-20.

AFP



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TOKYO 2020



MEDALS TABLE

(Only selected nations)



	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Japan	13	4	5	22
China	12	6	9	27
USA	11	11	9	31
ROC*	7	10	6	23
Australia	6	1	9	16
Great Britain	5	6	5	16
South Korea	4	2	5	11
Germany	3	2	5	10
France	3	2	3	8
Netherlands	2	6	3	11
Canada	2	3	4	9
Hungary	2	1	2	5
Slovenia	2	1	1	4
Kosovo	2	0	0	2
Italy	1	6	8	15
Switzerland	1	3	2	6
Chinese Taipei	1	2	3	6
Brazil	1	2	2	5

(ROC* - Russian Olympic Committee)

Djokovic to take on Nishikori in quarters

TENNIS

Tokyo, Japan - Novak Djokovic set up a quarterfinal with Japan's Kei Nishikori at the Tokyo Olympics on Wednesday as gold medal rival Daniil Medvedev struggled with the heat, even asking the chair umpire who would be responsible if he died.

World No 1 Djokovic continued his bid for a calendar Golden Slam by defeating 34th-ranked Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain 6-3, 6-1 to extend his winning run to 21 matches.

Nishikori, the 2016 bronze medallist, beat Ilya Ivashka of Belarus 7-6 (9/7), 6-0, while fourth seed Alexander Zverev and Frenchman Jeremy Chardy also progressed.

After lobbying organisers to push back the 11am start time to avoid the worst of the punishing heat and humidity, Djokovic said



Serbia's Novak Djokovic in action on Wednesday (AFP)



he was pleased Thursday's matches would begin at 3pm. "I think it's great. In my opinion it should have been done a few days earlier, but it is what is and I think it's better than starting at 11," said Djokovic.

Medvedev stayed on course to meet Djokovic in the men's

final as the Russian second seed overcame Italy's Fabio Fognini 6-2, 3-6, 6-2. But the two-time Grand Slam runner-up

Kei Nishikori reacts after his victory (AFP)

again found the temperatures testing as the extreme weather policy was implemented, with the heat index topping out at 37°C. "Even from the first set I didn't feel good enough with my breathing. I felt like my diaphragm was blocked, I couldn't breathe properly," said Medvedev, who took a medical timeout and received two visits from the trainer.

Asked by the umpire if he was OK during the second set, the Russian replied: "I can finish the match, but I can die. If I die, are

you going to be responsible?"

Medvedev set up a last-eight clash with Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta. Stefanos Tsitsipas bowed out after the Greek third seed lost 2-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 to Frenchman Ugo Humbert.

Ukraine's Elina Svitolina, the highest-ranked player left in the women's draw, reached the semifinals with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Camila Giorgi of Italy. The fourth seed will next play Marketa Vondrousova. Spain's Paula Badosa retired due to heatstroke after losing the first set 6-3 to Vondrousova, leaving the court in a wheelchair.

Swiss ninth seed Belinda Bencic beat French Open runner-up Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in three sets. She will play Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina, who beat two-time Grand Slam winner Garbine Muguruza 7-5, 6-1. AFP

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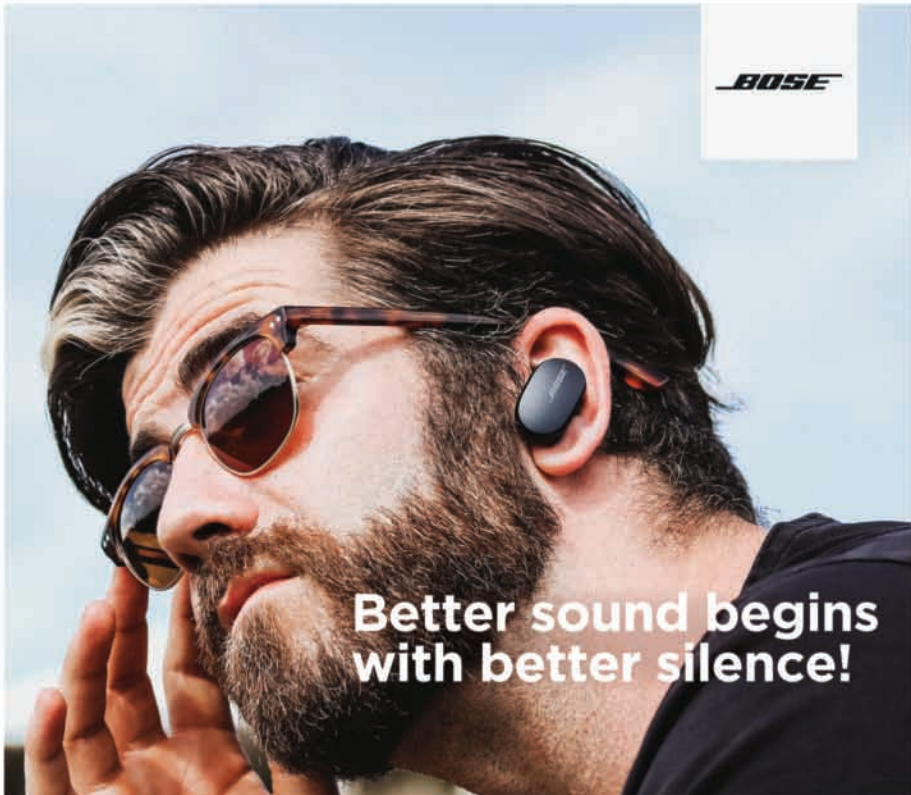
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Brazil's Richarlison celebrates after scoring against Saudi Arabia

Richarlison fires Brazil into last-8

MEN'S FOOTBALL

Tokyo, Japan - Richarlison continued his fine form at the Olympics with a double as Brazil eased into the quarterfinals after a 3-1 win over Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, as Germany exited the men's tournament and hosts Japan progressed with a thrashing of France.

Reigning champions Brazil, who won gold for the first time in Rio de Janeiro, finished top of Group D and will face Egypt in the last-eight on Saturday. The Germans, runners-up to Brazil in 2016, bowed out after a 1-1 draw with the Ivory Coast. The Ivorians held on to seal second spot in the group for a quarterfinal against Spain.

The Spaniards scored only twice in the group stage, with a 1-1 draw against Argentina enough to edge them through.

Egypt saw off Australia 2-0

with goals from Ahmed Yasser Rayan and Ammar Hamdy.

France crashed out as their defence proved fragile again in a 4-0 loss to Japan. The home side, who reached the semifinals in London in 2012, made it three wins from three and booked a match against New Zealand.

South Africa's slim hopes of reaching the quarters were ended by a 0-3 loss to Mexico in a game which ended with both teams a man down. The Mexicans will take on South Korea, in the same half of the draw as Brazil and Egypt.

South Korea finished top of Group B after a 6-0 thrashing of ten-man Honduras and were joined in the knock-out stage by the Kiwis, who played out a goalless draw with Romania to finish above their opponents on goal difference.

AFP



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TOKYO 2020

RAISING THE BAR



Daiki Hashimoto competes in the horizontal bar event of the artistic gymnastics men's all-around final on Wednesday (AFP)

Nerveless Japanese teen becomes the youngest men's all-around gymnastics champion

Had I cried, I thought it would have been as if I were feeling satisfied with where I am now. I thought the champion must not cry but only look forward

DAIKI HASHIMOTO

Tokyo, Japan - Japanese teenager Daiki Hashimoto had no time for tears as he became the youngest ever men's all-around Olympic gymnastics champion with a superb final horizontal bars routine at the Tokyo Games on Wednesday.

The nerveless 19-year-old edged out China's Xiao Ruoteng with Russian world champion Nikita Nagornyy taking bronze, and kept dry-eyed on the podium despite the enormity of his accomplishment. "Had I cried, I thought it would have been as if I were feeling satisfied with where I am now. I thought the champion must not cry but only look forward," he said.

The boy from the Tokyo suburbs succeeds his illustrious compatriot Kohei Uchimura, the 2012 and 2016 all-around champion who chose not to go for a hat-trick after persistent shoulder injuries.

Biles in the audience

After Japan took silver behind Nagornyy's Russians in the team event on Monday, Hashimoto was determined to go one better at the Ariake Gymnastics Centre which 24 hours earlier had been the scene of Simone Biles' dramatic withdrawal from the women's team final.



Australia's Ariarne Titmus (R) reacts next to USA's Kathleen Ledesky after winning the final of the women's 200m freestyle race on Wednesday (AFP)

Biles, who earlier also withdrew from Thursday's all-around final, citing mental struggles, turned up with the silver-medal winning US women's team to support their compatriots Sam Mikulak and Brody Malone.

The pullout overshadowed another busy day at the delayed 2020 Games, where US swimming great Katie Ledesky bounced back from her second defeat by Australia's Ariarne Titmus to win her first gold in Tokyo.

The world record-holder is dominant in the women's

1,500m and didn't disappoint, producing a commanding swim to claim gold in 15:37.34. Team-mate Erica Sullivan (15:41.41) was second and Germany's Sarah Kohler (15:42.91) third.

'Terminator' Titmus

Ledesky, who won four gold medals at the Rio 2016 Games, lost her 200m freestyle crown to Titmus, two days after also ceding her 400m title to the Australian. Ledesky, 24, is just the fourth woman swimmer to claim six Olympic gold medals.

However Titmus, nicknamed

'Terminator', is emerging as one of the stars at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre. She powered through the 200m field to touch in a new Olympic record time of 1min 53.50sec, with a sluggish Ledesky fifth. Hong Kong's Siobhan Haughey took silver (1:53.92), with Canada's Penny Oleksiak third (1:54.70).

Japan's Yui Ohashi completed a medley double, winning the 200m event to go with the 400m gold she secured on Sunday, while world record-holder Kristof Milak powered to the men's 200m butterfly gold.

Britain's freestyle swimmers brought the morning session to a thrilling climax, narrowly missing out on a world record in the 4x200m freestyle as they beat the Russian team by more than three seconds.

Elsewhere, Dutch rider Annemiek van Vleuten won the women's cycling time trial and Slovenia's Primož Roglič powered to Olympic gold in the men's time trial.

Fiji retained their men's rugby sevens title with a typically free-flowing 27-12 win over New Zealand.

In men's basketball, the US bounced back to hammer Iran 120-66 after they fell to a strong French team for their first

Olympic defeat in 17 years.

Shi Zhiyong won the men's 73kg weightlifting with a world-record total of 364kg, giving China their fourth gold of the competition.

The US made history as the first 3x3 basketball Olympic champions when their women beat the Russian Olympic Committee 18-15. Latvia took the men's title.

At the Oi Hockey Stadium on Wednesday, an Oceania derby match triumph over New Zealand guaranteed Australia a top-two finish in men's Pool A hockey competition.

Pool leaders Australia beat New Zealand 4-2 to make it four wins from four matches.

In another men's Pool A game, Spain gave their hopes of securing a place in the quarterfinals a real boost with a 4-1 win over hosts Japan.

Other results

Women's hockey

Pool A: Netherlands 5-0 South Africa
Great Britain 4-1 India
Germany 4-2 Ireland

Pool B: New Zealand 1-2 Spain
Japan 0-1 Australia
Argentina 3-2 China
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Man Utd agree deal to sign Varane

London, UK - Manchester United have agreed a deal with Real Madrid to sign France centre-back Raphael Varane, the English Premier League (EPL) giants announced on Tuesday.

"Manchester United is delighted to announce the club has reached agreement with Real Madrid for the transfer of French international defender and World Cup winner, Raphael Varane, subject to a medical and to player terms being finalised," said a club statement. It is not expected, however, that Varane will be able to undergo a medical until next week because of current UK coronavirus restrictions.

No fee has been disclosed but British media reported value the deal at US\$47mn rising to US\$66.6mn with add-ons. The 28-year-old Varane, a 2018 World Cup winner, has one season left on his contract at Real.

Sri Lanka level series with last-over victory



SCOREBOARD		
INDIA		
R Gaikwad	c Bhanuka b Shanaka	21 (18)
S Dhawan	b Dananjaya	40 (42)
D Padikkal	b Hasaranga	29 (23)
S Samson	b Dananjaya	7 (13)
Nitish Rana	c de Silva	
	b Chameera	9 (12)
B Kumar	not out	13 (17)
N Saini	not out	1 (1)
Extras:	(b 1, w 11)	12
TOTAL: 132 for five in 20 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-49, 2-81, 3-99, 4-104, 5-130		
Bowling: D Chameera 4-0-23-1, C Karunaratne 1-0-6-0, A Dananjaya 4-0-29-2, I Udana 1-0-7-0, W Hasaranga 4-0-30-1, D Shanaka 2-0-14-1, R Mendis 2-0-9-0, D de Silva 2-0-13-0		
SRI LANKA		
A Fernando	c Chahar b Kumar	11 (13)
M Bhanuka	c Chahar b Kuldeep	36 (31)
S Samarawickrama		
	b Chakravarthy	8 (12)
D Shanaka	st Samson b Kuldeep	3 (6)
D de Silva	not out	40 (34)
W Hasaranga	c Kumar b Chahar	15 (11)
R Mendis	c Gaikwad b Sakariya	2 (5)
C Karunaratne	not out	12 (6)
Extras:	(lb 3, w 3)	6
TOTAL: 133 for six in 19.4 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-12, 2-39, 3-55, 4-66, 5-94, 6-105		
Bowling: B Kumar 4-0-21-1, C Sakariya 3-4-0-34-1, V Chakravarthy 4-0-18-1, R Chahar 4-0-27-1, Kuldeep Yadav 4-0-30-2		





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SRI LANKA VS INDIA SECOND T20I

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Dhananjaya de Silva hit an unbeaten 40 as Sri Lanka defeated India by four wickets in the COVID-19 delayed second T20 international to level the series at 1-1 on Wednesday.

Chasing 133 for victory, Sri Lanka relied on an unbeaten 28-run seventh-wicket partnership between de Silva and Chamika Karunaratne, who made 12, to achieve their target with just two balls to spare in Colombo.

Earlier India posted 132 for five after they fielded four debutants following their allrounder Krunal Pandya testing COVID-19

positive and eight of his close contacts forced to sit out the game, which was postponed hours before the scheduled start on Tuesday. The third and deciding T20I is on Thursday.

Sri Lankan spinner Akila Dananjaya led a disciplined Sri Lanka bowling attack with two for 29. Dananjaya, who bowls a subtle mix of finger spin and wrist spin, took the key wicket of skipper Shikhar Dhawan, bowled for 40.

The left-handed Dhawan put on a brisk 49-run opening stand with debutant Rituraj Gaikwad (21) and carried on in the same vein with Devdutt Padikkal (29), also playing his first T20I.

But Waniindu Hasaranga

bowled the left-handed Padikkal in the 16th over with his leg-spin as India found it tough to push the run rate.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Sanju Samson and debutant Nitish Rana also failed to boost India's total as they fell to Dananjaya and pace bowler Dushmantha Chameera respectively.

Dhananjaya de Silva, who was named the Player of the Match said, "I am very happy to contribute. In my mind, I wanted to bat till the 20th over. I thought this was my opportunity. When you play against India, it's very tough."

India skipper Dhawan said he was 'proud of his boys'. "The surface had turn and it was stop-

ping a bit. Of course, we knew one batsman was short and we knew we had to construct the innings smartly and we had to content ourselves at some point.

"But we were 10-15 runs short. I am very proud of the boys because we gave a very good fight. That never dying attitude and taking the game to the last game while defending just 132, credit to both bowlers and batters."

Agencies



Al Omaniya Financial Services (SAOG)

Values stronger than money



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



Economy: Oman moved rapidly and decisively to manage the Covid-19 crisis with the containment measures and health support to the population including vaccine rollout. Omani Banks are well-capitalized and are able to maintain liquidity despite a slight increase in NPL ratio and a decline in profitability though the NPLs may tend to increase post the deferment.

Crude prices have been steadily rising thanks to the continued OPEC production cuts and hopes of improved demand. VAT has been successfully introduced in April 2021 and it is expected to contribute to the revenue stream. Policies aimed at enhancing productivity like reforms for labor market flexibility and promoting investment may improve the business climate. A forward-looking assessment of the asset quality of banks and FLC by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) will ensure maintenance of adequate capital buffers to withstand any credit risk and a data-dependent loan moratoria by the CBO will ensure that relief is targeted only to distressed borrowers, where viable.

Financial Highlights

For the second quarter ending 30th June 2021, the company has earned a net

operating income of RO 5104K compared to RO 5201K for the same period last year showing a marginal decline. The profit before ECL Provision stood at RO 3025K against RO 2996K for the same period last year. The company achieved a profit of RO 1155K after ECL provision and tax for the period as compared to RO 596K for the same period last year, showing an increase by 93.79%. The company's Loan Book stands at RO 100 million as on 30th June 2021 against RO 127.6 million as on the same date last year.

The company has provided RO 1666K towards Estimated Credit Loss for the period ending 30th June 2021. The Total Estimated Credit Loss and reserve interest stands at RO 10.857 Million as of 30th June 2021.

Capital Enhancement

The company's compulsorily convertible bonus stock bonds are listed and the company is well capitalised with a healthy capital adequacy ratio of 37%.

Concerns

The emergence of new variants of COVID-19 could prolong the impact of the pandemic and further intensify vulnerabilities at the individual and corporate borrower level resulting in increased credit risk, reduced net margins and dilution of the NPA coverage. Fiscal consolidation measures undertaken by the government could weigh on economic growth and social pressures could create headwinds for reforms. As per directives of the CBO and the Supreme Committee to combat COVID, the company has been processing deferment requests received from the COVID affected borrowers to delay the

installments thus impacting the cash flows of the company. The company has a strong liquidity buffer in the form of liquid deposits with commercial banks and the company is confident of sailing through this crisis. The Company has taken all possible measures to contain the spread within the office premises and is extending all possible health support to its staff.

Prognosis

We continue to foresee an extremely challenging period ahead. The company is well aware of the current economic scenario and has initiated proactive mitigating measures. The company is fundamentally strong with solid net worth, clean loan book, lowest Non Performing Loans and high Non performing asset coverage.

Acknowledgement

On behalf of the company and the Board of Directors, I would like to express my deep gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik for his vision and leadership, which is taking the Sultanate on the new path of development and prosperity.

We are also grateful to the Central Bank of Oman, Capital Market Authority and other regulatory authorities for their guidance and support. We also thank our shareholders, bankers, dealers and customers for their continued trust, confidence and support. Last, but not the least, we acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the management and staff of the company.

Khalid Said Al Wahaibi
Chairman

Note : The complete report is available with the Muscat securities Market. The Complete financial statements of the company together with the financial statements of any subsidiary company required to file financial statements would be available to any shareholders or interested party on request in Arabic or English within seven days as of the date of request.

P.O. Box 1087, Jibroo, PC 114, Sultanate of Oman. Tel: 24724700, Fax: 24813258

UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME For the period 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2021

	Amount In RO '000	
	II Quarter ended 30 June 2021	II Quarter ended 30 June 2020
Instalment Finance Income	5,460	6,240
Other income	1,974	2,273
Total Revenue	7,434	8,513
Interest Expense	(2,330)	(3,312)
Administration & operational costs	(2,079)	(2,205)
Provision for expected credit loss, net	(1,666)	(2,295)
Profit before Taxation	1,359	701
Provision for taxation	(204)	(105)
Net Profit	1,155	596

UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT

	Amount In RO '000	
	30 June 2021	30 June 2020
Assets		
Gross Instalment Finance Receivables	110,621	136,505
Less : Provision for ECL, including reserved finance interest	10,585	8,944
Net Instalment Finance Receivables	100,036	127,561
Deposit with CBO	250	250
Cash & Bank balances	84,891	89,263
Land and Buildings	809	850
Other assets	1,080	1,298
Total Assets	187,066	219,222
Liabilities		
Deposits	2,000	4,228
Bank borrowings	102,749	137,323
Unsecured Compulsorily Convertible Bonus Bonds	5,569	5,569
Trade Creditors & Other liabilities	13,067	9,267
Total Liabilities	123,385	156,387
Equity		
Share Capital	29,194	29,194
Legal Reserve	9,731	9,731
Share Premium	112	112
Exchange Reserve	-	518
Special Reserve for Non Performing Assets	4,998	4,998
Retained Earnings	19,646	18,282
Total Equity	63,681	62,835
Total Liabilities & Equity	187,066	219,222

Note: Contingent Liability of Nil (2020 - Ro.750K) is outstanding as of 30th June 2021 towards Bank Guarantees issued on behalf of the customer. Place : Muscat - Date : 30 June, 2021

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