

Rise in vegetable prices hits consumers

Vegetable prices surged over 20% and fruit prices 7.6% in July year-on-year

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A sharp increase in vegetable and fruit prices, driven by rising import costs and reduced local supply due to seasonal and climatic factors, has hit Omani consumers hard.

Vegetable prices surged by

over 20% in July 2024 compared to the same month last year, while fruit prices saw a 7.6% increase, according to the latest Consumer Price Index data released by National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The sudden spike in fruit and vegetable prices was a key contributor to Oman's overall inflation rate, which increased to 1.53% in July from 0.7% in June. Additionally, as a result of higher fruit and vegetable prices, the sultanate's annual food inflation rate jumped sharply to 4.53% in July.

Muscat Daily spoke with consumers and agricultural experts on the price rise.



Ghoshn al Rashidi, Secretary of Omani Agriculture Association, attributed the high vegetable prices primarily to a shortage in local products. Although climatic

conditions have had a minor impact on agricultural production, these have contributed to the current situation.

Farmer Khaled al Bouiqi in-

formed that local vegetable production typically peaks from December to June, when prices are lower due to higher volume of produce.

However, with current imports being more expensive, prices have risen.

Economic analyst Nasser al Hosani suggested several measures to mitigate these price increases, including establishing more greenhouses to cultivate a variety of crops, reclaiming arable land in North Batinah and Dhofar, and encouraging Omani youth to pursue careers in farming.

"The situation reflects a broader issue affecting many

families, highlighting the need for sustainable solutions to ensure affordable access to fresh produce," Hosani added.

Private sector employee Ali al Balushi is among the many consumers feeling the pinch. "Prices of essential vegetables like carrots and tomatoes have soared, with onions now costing about 700 bz." The price rise has placed significant strain on his monthly budget.

The current prices have "severely impacted" the budget of Ismail Khan, another private sector employee. "We're forced to cut back extra spending on fruits. With rising costs, maintaining a

balanced diet has become challenging. It's worrying because we understand the importance of nutrition in our health."

Sameer Verma, an engineer, highlighted the difficulties faced by families whose diet comprise mostly fresh produce. "We are a vegetarian family, and this spike in fruit and vegetable prices has hit us hard. Fruits like berries and melons, which were once a regular part of our diet, are now too expensive. Even basic items like onions have become costly. It's frustrating because fresh produce is crucial for our health, but the current prices make it tough to prioritise nutrition."

Sri Lanka offers visa-free entry to Omanis starting October

Muscat - Sri Lanka has announced visa-free entry for citizens of 35 countries, including Oman, with effect from October 1, 2024.

The Omani Embassy in Sri Lanka confirmed the announcement, stating that the visa-free access will initially be available for six months and reviewed thereafter.

The new travel policy follows a Sri Lankan Supreme Court interim order on August 2, which suspended the e-visa portal operated by IVS-GBS and VFS Global.

In addition to Oman, the visa-free list includes India, the UK, the US, China, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Australia, Denmark, Poland, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Nepal, Indonesia, Russia



and Thailand. Other nations on the list are Malaysia, Japan, France, Canada, the Czech Republic, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Israel, Belarus, Iran, Sweden, South Korea and New Zealand.

The move is seen as a significant effort to boost Sri Lanka's tourism sector, which has faced

challenges in recent years, particularly after 2019.

Sri Lanka's tourism industry showed signs of recovery in the first half of 2024, earning US\$1.5bn, up from US\$875mn during the same period last year, according to the country's central bank.

CPA doubles fines for selling used tyres

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has doubled the fine for violation of regulations related to the ban on selling used tyres. The fine, previously set at RO500, has been doubled to RO1,000 as part of amendments to existing regulations.

The decision to amend certain provisions of the original ruling - No 257/2015 - aligns with the Consumer Protection Law issued via Royal Decree No 66/2014 and its executive regulations. The amendments were approved by the Board of Directors of the authority.

The new regulation stipulates that anyone found in violation of the ban on circulating used tyres will face an administrative fine of up to RO1,000. If the violation is repeated, the fine will be doubled. Additionally, if the violation continues, an extra fine of RO50 per day will be imposed, with a maximum limit of RO2,000.

This decision, signed by Dr Saud bin Hamoud bin Ahmed al Habsi, Chairman of Board of Directors of CPA, came into effect



on August 19. According to provisions of the old decision (No 257/2015), it is prohibited to trade in used tyres of any type or size in Oman.

Trading in unused tyres - 24 months after production date for passenger cars, buses and light trucks, and 30 months for heavy trucks - is also prohibited.

Businesses are required to provide consumers a tyre warranty, valid for at least one year from the date of sale. Tyre purchase invoices must include information about country of manufacture and date of production; tyre type, heat tolerance and weight capacity; tyre size and appropriate air pressure; and the maximum speed it can handle.

Businesses are also obligated to transport used tyres to locations designated by the relevant authorities for disposal.

Gaza ceasefire needed now: UN Special Coordinator

Palestinian Territories - At an open briefing of the United Nations Security Council on the Palestinian situation on Thursday, it was informed of the need of an immediate humanitarian pause and a long-term peace deal considering the fact that polio is spreading through the Gaza Strip and humanitarian and health agencies are overextended.

"We need a ceasefire now," Tor Wennesland, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said, as he stressed that individual and collective capacities to manage the current crises in the Middle East "are stretched beyond their limits".

Detailing the "staggering toll on human life" that the war in Gaza continues to levy, reverberating violence throughout the region and the over 200,000 Palestinians affected by evacuation orders over the past month, he reported that UN agencies and humanitarian organisations continue to deliver life-saving assistance "with remarkable courage" through all available crossing points.

"The scale of destruction is immense, and will take years - if not decades - to recover," Wennesland said, adding that the UN is working to repair almost-entirely defunct water, sanitation and hygiene systems in Gaza. And while the eyes of the international community focus on Gaza, he pointed out that the occupied West Bank is "a tinderbox of violence and tension".

03

Safety urged after 4 die in hiking accident in Wadi Tanuf

04

Gold imports surge 41% in first 5 months of 2024

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RECOGNISING OMANI TALENT

Oman calls for stronger Arab cooperation on disaster risk reduction

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Sultanate of Oman has stressed on the importance of a unified Arab strategy for better management of disaster risks, besides an enhanced regional co-operation.

Oman made the call during its participation in the second meeting of Arab ministers on risk reduction, held at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo on August 21.

The Omani delegation was led by H E Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of Oman to Egypt and the permanent representative to the League of Arab States.

During the meeting, H E Rahbi outlined Oman's efforts in disaster risk management, including the develop-



ment of robust national emergency systems and early warning mechanisms. He noted that Oman's proactive stance on disaster preparedness is due to its geographical vulnerabilities.

H E Rahbi also highlighted the work of the National Emergency Management Committee in Oman, which annually updates the national emergency plan. This plan outlines the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in risk reduction by preventing the effects of disasters, ensuring the continuity of essential services, and strengthening monitoring and early warning systems. The committee also promotes community awareness and collaboration among various stakeholders.

To support these efforts, Oman has established the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Center, which provides vital early warning services for a range of risks and disasters, playing a key role in reducing the impact of potential threats.

Additionally, Oman has created a working team comprising members from all relevant authorities to assess potential risks, including economic, social, and health-related dangers. Based on these assessments, a national registry has been developed, and records for short-term and medium-term risks have been issued, with work ongoing on a long-term risk register.

The meeting also addressed broader regional concerns, with H E Rahbi highlighting the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. He called for increased Arab and international cooperation to address the political and environmental instability affecting the region.



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Fisheries sector poised for RO50mn investment boost

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources (MAFWR) in Oman has announced 24 new investment opportunities in the fisheries sector, valued at over RO5mn. Additionally, it is planning projects with a combined investment of more than RO45mn.

Investing in Oman's fisheries sector presents a promising opportunity for profitable and sustainable returns, officials said. The government's continuous support and the rising demand for marine products make it an attractive option for investors, they explained.

According to the ministry, fish production in Oman reached approximately 219,323 tonnes by the end of the first quarter of 2024, with a total value of RO142.6mn.

Khalid bin Salem al Amri, Head of the Fisheries Investment Department, highlighted the ministry's efforts to attract investors. "The facilities provided by the ministry include a grace period of up to two years for paying rental fees, creating investment opportunities, and generating jobs for Omani youth," he said.

The ministry has offered, in a public auction, 24 investment opportunities to establish, manage, and operate fish markets, collection centres, shops, marine

MAFWR enforces kingfish ban

Our Correspondent
Salalah

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources (MAFWR) has called on fishermen to adhere to a two-month ban - from August 15 to October 15 - on catching and trading kingfish.

This ban, issued under a ministerial decision (No. 230/2014), aims to protect kingfish populations and promote sustainable fishing practices.

Salim bin Sultan al Araiimi, Director of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources in Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, South Sharqiyah, explained that the ban applies to kingfish shorter than 65cm and prohibits all activities related to the fish, including buying, selling, transporting, storing, and exporting during this period. "The goal is to ensure sustainable fishing and protect the kingfish population," he said.

Artisanal fishing landed 12,000 tonnes of kingfish in 2023, a significant increase from 5,000 tonnes in 2022. This rise indicates a substantial economic benefit for fishermen.

RO45mn, on the 'Tatwir' platform of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

These projects include developing and managing fishing ports in Liwa and Seeb, establishing a fish market in Masirah, building a fish freezing and packaging factory in Dibba, and investing in a fish market in the Wudam al Sahil area of Musannah.

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Health meet stresses on public, private cooperation

Our Correspondent
Salalah

The 8th Oman International Dermatology Conference and Exhibition concluded on Saturday in Salalah with a call to enhance skin care by using modern diagnostic and treatment technologies.

The conference also highlighted the importance of cooperation between public and private sectors, recommending adherence to global treatment protocols and fostering communication with dermatology associations in the GCC and around the world. Participants emphasised the need to develop a unified national protocol for managing common skin diseases, based on the latest international guidelines. They stressed the importance of ongoing education and training for all doctors involved in dermatology, including family doctors and general practitioners.

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Calls for more safety after 4 die in hiking accident in Wadi Tanuf

Our Correspondent
Nizwa

A hiking trip in Nizwa turned tragic as 16 hikers went missing after being swept away in Wadi Tanuf during heavy rains in the area.

Rescue teams of Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in Dakhliyah, working with citizens of the area, located the group, finding four individuals dead and transferring four others to hospital with injuries ranging from moderate to critical.

According to Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), the group of multinational hikers encountered unexpected weather conditions.

Royal Oman Police (ROP) reported that among the deceased were a citizen and three individuals of Arab nationalities. One person, reported to be in critical condition, was transported by police helicopter to Nizwa Hospital for urgent medical care.

The accident prompted both CDAA and ROP to urge citizens and residents to follow safety guidelines strictly when engaging in outdoor activities. They emphasised the importance of checking weather conditions before setting off on such trips and registering location and participant data through the Nidaa application.



(Supplied photo)

Following the accident, people took to social media to express concern and call for improved safety measures. On X, Salem Mohammed wrote, "Oman is beautiful and has many mountain trails. If you go on a mountain hike, make sure

there is a local person who is familiar with the area and its terrain."

Hamed al Rasbi highlighted the responsibility of tour organisers, stating, "This is a sport fraught with danger. The organising company should have

taken safety and security factors into account, including weather conditions."

Another citizen, Majeed al Maskari, voiced his concern about the need for regulations, asking, "Isn't it time to make rules and regulations to organise such hiking groups because of the risks and dangers they pose to participants and to the police? Lives are lost and serious injuries are sustained on an ongoing basis. When will this stop?"

Abdullah al Saadi stressed the importance of preparedness, saying, "The tragic incident in Wadi Tanuf shows the importance of taking all necessary precautions when practising such activities, especially in rugged areas, taking into account weather conditions and ensuring the readiness of teams and individuals for emergency conditions."

Speaking to Muscat Daily, mountaineer Khalid al Balushi said, "Hikers should choose the right trail according to their fitness level. Once you have selected a trail, obtain a map of the area, read reviews and gather proper data."

Highlighting the importance of monitoring weather, he added, "Every hike should be well organised and have a prepared plan. Participants must prepare and train well."

Documentary ‘Sand Girl’ wins two awards at Indian film fest

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omani documentary film *Sand Girl*, directed by Salah al Hadhrami, was recently feted at the Roshani International Film Festival in India, winning awards for Best Actress and Best Screenplay.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Hadhrami said, "A ten-minute film, *Sand Girl* tells the story of a woman living in Sharqiyah Sands who, despite her modest means, generously hosts and honours her guests. It portrays the traditional Omani and Arab custom of hospitality, regardless of the guest's nationality."

The awards at the Roshani International Film Festival follows several others at various festivals this year. It won Best Direction at Oman Desert International Film Festival, Jury Award at the 11th Muscat International Film Festival, and Best Documentary Film at Digital Gate International Film Festival in Algeria in May 2024.

Emphasising the importance of film festivals, Hadhrami noted



Salah al Hadhrami



that these facilitate the exchange of cinematic experiences and stimulate healthy competition. "These opportunities drive filmmakers to refine their skills and explore diverse cinematic cultures."

He also highlighted the role of workshops and exhibitions at these festivals, which provide crucial platforms for filmmakers to collaborate and advance their craft.

Reflecting on the success of Omani films, Hadhrami said, "The awards for *Sand Girl* underscores the significant strides

Omani cinema is making on the international stage. It showcases the commitment of Omani directors to use films to celebrate and promote Oman's rich traditions and customs."

Sand Girl will also participated in the Lebanese Independent Film Festival and Atlas International Film Festival in Morocco in the coming months. "Participating in festivals and engaging with international audiences are essential for advancing Omani culture and enhancing the global profile of Omani cinema," Hadhrami added.

Astronomy society to take 12 students to NASA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Astronomical Society (OAS) is set to take 12 students of Ahmed bin Majeed Private School on a visit to NASA's Kennedy Space Center in November. The opportunity will provide students a hands-on experience in the field of space ex-

ploration.

Prior to the visit, the students will participate in a practical project in collaboration with NASA through which they will receive certificates recognising their work.

A senior OAS official said, "This marks the first time the society has organised such a trip, offering Omani students a

unique opportunity to engage with space science and foster international relationships in the field of astronomy."

The visit will coincide with National Day celebrations on November 18.

OAS is working closely with officials of both the Omani and US embassies to ensure the trip's success.

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BRIEFS

Oil prices drop 2.2% last week

Oil prices decreased during last week over demand fears in the world's biggest oil consumers and lingering hopes for a Middle East ceasefire.

The global benchmark Brent crude traded at \$77.94 per barrel on Friday, down by around 2.2% relative to the closing price of \$79.68 a barrel on Friday previous week.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI), the American benchmark, traded at \$73.83 a barrel at the same time on Friday, a decrease of about 3.7% from the previous Friday's session, which had closed at \$76.65 per barrel.

Oil prices are set for a weekly drop amid weaker than expected economic indicators in the US and China, the world's largest crude consumers. Lower economic growth expectations for China and the US triggered worry over a drop in oil demand in the countries.

Meanwhile, for months, the US, Qatar, and Egypt have been working towards an agreement between Israel and Hamas to ensure a prisoner exchange and cease-fire and allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza.

Oman's gold imports surge 41% in first 5 months of 2024

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman's gold imports saw a significant rise this year, increasing by 41% to reach RO176.6mn in the first five months of 2024, compared to RO125.1mn in the same period of 2023, according to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

During the January-May 2024 period, Oman imported approximately 8,443 kilograms of gold, up from 5,675 kilograms in the same period in 2023, recording an year-on-year increase of over 48%.

The United Arab Emirates was the largest exporter of gold to Oman, with a value of RO170.4mn as of the end of May 2024. Hong Kong followed with RO3.173mn, and Turkey with RO1.420mn.

In contrast, Oman's gold exports during the same period dropped by 23%, totaling RO14.69mn, compared to RO18.99mn in the first five months of 2023.

The total weight of gold exported by Oman in 2024 was about 510 kilograms, down from 924 kilograms in the same period of the previous year.

The United States was the leading importer of Omani gold by the end of May 2024, with



During the January-May period of 2024, Oman imported approximately 8,443 kilograms of gold, up from 5,675 kilograms in the same period in 2023

imports valued at RO7.228mn, followed by the UAE with RO6.04 million imports.

The NCSI data also showed a substantial increase in the re-exports of gold from Oman, which surged by 826% to RO52.682mn during the first five months of 2024, compared to RO5.690mn in the same period of 2023.

The total weight of re-exported gold was about 2,084 kilograms in the first five months of this year, up from 1,247 kilograms in the corresponding period of previous year.

Iran was the top destination for Oman's re-exported gold, with a value of RO41.594mn. Turkey and the UAE followed

with RO3.833mn and RO3.346mn, respectively.

In Oman, the average price of 24-karat gold rose to RO29.950 per gram by the end of the second quarter of 2024, up from RO26.400 per gram in the first quarter. Similarly, the average price of 21-karat gold increased to RO25.833 per gram, compared to RO22.717 per gram.

By the end of the second quarter of 2024, the number of institutions and establishments involved in the retail sale of gold and jewelry in Oman reached 771, with 536 located in the Muscat Governorate.



Oman's trade with Europe rises to RO878mn in first 5 months of 2024

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman's trade with European countries reached RO878.4mn in the first five months of 2024, marking a 9.5% increase compared to RO802.2mn bilateral trade recorded during the same period in 2023. However, trade balance between Oman and European continent remained in favour of Europe.

According to statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, Oman's total exports to Europe amounted to RO197.3mn from January to May 2024, compared to RO120.4mn in the same period last year.

On the import side, Oman's total imports from European countries stood at RO620.3mn

during the first five months of this year, reflecting a 1.5% decrease compared to RO630.1mn in the corresponding period of 2023.

Re-exports from Oman to Europe saw a significant increase of 17.4%, rising to RO60.8mn from RO51.8mn in the same period of 2023.

Germany led European countries in trade with Oman. By the end of May 2024, Omani exports to Germany totaled RO9.2mn, while imports from Germany were valued at RO88.6mn. Re-exports to Germany reached RO19.8mn in the first five months of this year.

Belgium ranked second, with Omani exports to the country amounting to RO6.0mn, imports at RO100.9mn, and re-exports to Belgium totaling RO2.4mn.

Saudi GDP growth set to turn positive in second half

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia's economic growth is expected to turn positive in second half of 2024 with GDP set to grow at 1.7% in 2024 and 4.7% in 2025, research firm CreditSights said.

The kingdom's real GDP shrank 0.4% year-on-year in Q2 2024, according to preliminary government data, as oil related activities declined. In 2023, real GDP shrank by 0.8% after rising 7.5% in 2022.

"To a large extent this recession was self-inflicted, with the authorities deliberately reducing oil production by 8.5% to support global prices--as well as the kingdom's public finances," said Regis Chatellier, Head of EM Sovereign Strategy at CreditSights, as reported by Zawya.

The recession is likely at an end as the decline in real GDP was by lower year-on-year in Q2 2024, compared to -1.7% in Q1

2024 and -4.3 in Q4 2023.

Saudi Arabia's terms of trade, however, remain supportive. If crude prices stay close to \$80 per barrel, the external surplus should be slightly positive this year, CreditSights noted.

The kingdom's sovereign US dollar bonds have slightly underperformed this year (+2.7% year-to-date versus +.0% for EM IG index); they now trade 25 basis points tighter than the EM IG index.

The fiscal deficit could widen if oil prices were to decline, but CreditSights believes that the risk is limited given the global economic and geopolitical context.

"We maintain our 'Outperform' call on Saudi Arabia's sovereign bonds," said Chatellier. The risk-reward is relatively attractive at current market levels, especially in the long-end of the curve.

Malaysia working on FTA with GCC countries: Minister

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - Malaysia's Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry Tengku Zarful Abdul Aziz said on Friday that his country is holding talks on a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

A bilateral free trade agreement with the United Arab Emirates is being finalized, he told Malaysian news agency BERNAMA, expecting that the



Tengku Zarful Abdul Aziz

signing would be by the end of this year.

Aziz noted that Malaysia aims to hammer out a free trade agreement with the six GCC member states as one bloc to strengthen trade relations with this region.

He added that Saudi Arabia, the largest economy in the region, is currently undergoing negotiations for a free trade agreement between Malaysia and the GCC countries.

Malaysia currently has seven bilateral free trade agreements and nine multilateral free trade agreements with several countries, Aziz informed.

The free trade agreement with the GCC countries will be the first of its kind for Malaysia with an Arab country, this reflects the rapid growth of trade relations with the Arabian Gulf States, he added. KUNA

Fed chief says 'time has come' for rate cuts

Washington, US - US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell sent a straightforward message to markets in a key speech on Friday, saying "the time has come" for the central bank to begin lowering interest rates.

Speaking at the Kansas City Fed's annual economic symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Powell said, "The time has come for policy to adjust."

"The direction of travel is clear," Powell added, "and the timing and pace of rate cuts will depend on incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks."

Powell's speech comes just over three weeks out from the Fed's September 17-18 meeting, which should see the central bank announce its first interest rate cut since 2020.

Powell acknowledged recent softness in the labour market in his speech and said the Fed does not "seek or welcome further cooling in labor market conditions."

The July jobs report rattled markets earlier this month, revealing that there were just 114,000 jobs added to the economy last month while the unemployment rate rose to 4.3%, the highest since October 2021. Data earlier this week also showed that 818,000 fewer people



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JEROME POWELL

were employed in the US economy as of March, suggesting reports have been overstating the strength of the job market over the last year.

"It seems unlikely that the

labour market will be a source of elevated inflationary pressures anytime soon," Powell said.

Ahead of Powell's speech, investors had priced in nearly 100% odds the Fed would lower

rates next month, with odds on a cut of 0.25% vs. 0.50% standing at roughly two to one.

"Four and a half years after COVID-19's arrival, the worst of the pandemic-related economic distortions are fading," Powell said.

"Inflation has declined significantly. Our objective has been to restore price stability while maintaining a strong labour market, avoiding the sharp increases in unemployment that characterised earlier disinflationary

episodes when inflation expectations were less well anchored. While the task is not complete, we have made a good deal of progress toward that outcome."

Powell's remarks on Friday were reminiscent of those he delivered at Jackson Hole in 2022, in which the Fed chair offered a direct assessment of the economic outlook and, at the time, the need for additional rate increases.

"At this podium two years ago, I discussed the possibility that addressing inflation could bring some pain in the form of higher unemployment and slower growth," Powell said.

"Some argued that getting inflation under control would require a recession and a lengthy period of high unemployment. I expressed our unconditional commitment to fully restoring price stability and to keeping it until the job is done."

Friday's speech more or less suggests that the job is indeed done.

"All told, the healing from pandemic distortions, our efforts to moderate aggregate demand, and the anchoring of expectations have worked together to put inflation on what increasingly appears to be a sustainable path to our 2% objective," Powell said. (Source: Yahoo Finance)



جینتکو

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GENERAL ELECTRIC & TRADING CO. L.L.C

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO CUSTOMERS

GENERAL ELECTRIC & TRADING CO. L.L.C. (GENETCO) Wishes to inform its valued customer to collect back their Home Appliances / Electronics / Air-Conditioners / Electrical / Office automation equipments sent to our service centre prior to 30.06.2024

This is valid for one month starting from the day of this publication. GENETCO will not be responsible for any equipment not collected within one month period.

Kindly bring receipt to collect your Items
For more information please contact
For all Canon Camera / Printers / Scanners / Fax / Copiers : 24705791 / 24705795 / 80070003
For all Home Appliances / Electronics / Air conditioners / Electrical items : 80070004

Bank Muscat Al Tharwa Fund



OFFER NOTICE

This advertisement is a summary of the prospectus of Bank Muscat Al Tharwa Fund ("Prospectus") approved by the Financial Services Authority of Oman ("FSA") vide its Administrative Decision No. [KH/45/2024] dated 22 August 2024. Bank Muscat Al Tharwa Fund (the "Fund") is an open-ended investment fund established by Bank Muscat SAOG ("BM") registered in the Sultanate of Oman as a specialized bank and licensed as an Investment Fund Manager in accordance with the regulations of the FSA. Terms used but not defined in this advertisement shall have the meaning given to them in the Prospectus.

This advertisement summary should not be relied on for making an investment decision and is not intended to be a substitute for reading the whole Prospectus. Each investor should read the Prospectus and Articles of Association of the Fund in full before making their investment decision. This advertisement summary has been extracted from the unofficial translation of the Prospectus prepared in Arabic and approved by the FSA.

Fund Name	Bank Muscat Al Tharwa Fund.
Fund Sponsor	The Fund is sponsored by Bank Muscat, who will subscribe for 5% of the capital of the Fund which is in accordance with the Executive Regulations of the Capital Market Law.
Fund Address	Bank Muscat Al Tharwa Fund, Bank Muscat S.A.O.G. Asset Management Division P.O. Box 134, Postal Code 112, Ruwi Sultanate of Oman.
Fund Objectives	The primary objective of the Fund is to generate regular income and capital appreciation by investing in a diversified portfolio of equity and fixed income instruments in the GCC and international markets.
Term	Open-ended.
Subscription Start Date	1 September 2024.
Subscription Closing Date	12 September 2024.
Fund's Financial Year	From 1st January until 31st December of each year, first year will commence from the end of the Initial Subscription Period until 31st of December of the same year.
Fund Currency	Rial Omani and United States Dollar.
Fund Capital	Minimum: 2,000,000 Rials Omani (two million Rials Omani).
Administrator	Gulf Custody Company S.A.O.C.
Issue Manager	Bank Muscat SAOG.
Investment Manager	Bank Muscat SAOG.
Investment Advisor	N/A
Legal Advisors	Al Busaidsy, Mansoor Jamal & Co.
Collecting Banks	Bank Muscat SAOG, Meethaq Islamic Bank, Ubarhar Capital SAOC
Custodian	Gulf Custody Company S.A.O.C
Initial Subscription Price	0.101 OMR including 1 Baiza as an issue expense.
Initial Subscription Period	1 September 2024 to 12 September 2024.
Minimum Subscription for initial Issue	The minimum Initial Subscription shall be OMR 50 per Subscriber and thereafter in multiples of OMR 50.
Maximum Subscription	Open.
Subscription Fees	Subscription fees: 1% on total invested amount plus any applicable VAT and taxes only during the Continuous Offer Period
Redemption of Units	Unitholders may redeem the Units following the conclusion of the Initial Subscription Period. The minimum value of Units that may be redeemed by a Unitholder is OMR 50.
Redemption Fees	None.
Net Asset Value (NAV)	The Net Asset Value per Unit is the Net Asset Value divided by the number of Units in issue. The valuation of the Units will be carried out on each Valuation Day. NAV per Unit will be published as per the guidelines of the FSA. The Net Asset Value is the value of the assets attributable to the Fund (including accrued income) less the attributable liabilities (including accrued charges and expenses and provisions for contingent liabilities as appropriate). Each purchase, issue, sale or redemption of Units shall be reflected in the first calculation of NAV following any such transaction.
Management Fee	The Investment Manager is entitled to a management fees of 1.25% per annum of the Net Asset Value of the Fund plus any applicable VAT and other taxes. The management fee will be calculated based on the daily NAV of the Fund and paid monthly in arrears.
Risk Factors	Investments in the Fund shall be exposed to risks. The Fund does not guarantee any returns. Please refer to Chapter XIII of the Prospectus for further discussions on key risk factors applicable to this Fund.
Auditor	Crowe Mak Gazali LLC.
Taxation	As per the Income Tax Law No. 28 of 2009 (as amended), income accruing to investment funds set up in Oman under the Securities Law shall be exempted from tax in Oman. However, the income earned by the Fund may be subject to foreign taxation to the extent income is derived from other jurisdictions. Please refer to Chapter XIV of the Prospectus.
Eligible Investors	The Fund is open for investment to retail and non-retail investors within and outside Oman who are not US Persons. All investors, including investors located outside of Oman, are responsible for ensuring they inform themselves of, and are permitted to subscribe for Units under, all applicable laws and regulations, including the laws and regulations of Oman and of their jurisdiction (if different). Please also carefully read the information set out in the Important Notice, in the Prospectus.
Advisor Fees	N/A.
Performance Fees	The Investment Manager will be paid an amount equivalent to 10% of the amount exceeding hurdle rate of 7%. The performance fees shall be calculated based of the closing NAV of the Fund at the end of year. The performance fees will be paid on pro rata basis if the full year is not completed.
Other Fund Expenses	The Fund will also deduct other operating expenses as discussed in detail in Chapter XII of the Prospectus.
Dividends	The Fund's dividend policy is set within the framework of the Executive Regulations, wherein the Investment Manager will make a recommendation to the Management Body on whether to distribute or reinvest the dividends, any proceeds and returns from investments or other balances available to the Fund. The Management Body of the Fund may decide to distribute by way of dividends or other distributions to Unitholders of the Fund or reinvest in the Fund any dividends, proceeds and returns from investments or other balances available to the Fund as deemed appropriate by the Management Body after considering the recommendations of the Investment Manager.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FUND

Investment Objective

The primary objective of the Fund is to generate regular income and capital appreciation by investing in a diversified portfolio of equity and fixed income instruments in the GCC and international markets.

Investment Strategy

The Fund will primarily invest in equity and equity related securities, fixed income and fixed income related securities. The remaining assets of the Fund not invested in the above asset classes will be invested in cash or cash equivalent including short-term money market instruments and money market funds. The Fund may also invest in initial public offers, mutual funds and private placements including those managed by the investment manager. The Fund may deal in, and own funds in, foreign currencies apart from the currencies in which it has invested and which are freely convertible in Omani Rial and United States Dollar.

The maximum allocation to each of these asset classes is as follows; (1) Equity and equity equivalents at 75% of the Fund's Net Asset Value, (2) Fixed-income securities at 75% of the Fund's Net Asset Value, and (3) Cash & Cash equivalents at 25% of the Fund's Net Asset Value. However, there is no guarantee or assurance that the investment objective of the Fund will be achieved. The Fund doesn't assure or guarantee any returns.

Fund's Management Body

The Articles of Association of the Fund and the Prospectus form the foundations of the constitution of the Fund and unless any of their provisions are in conflict with the Securities Law and the Rules and Executive Regulations for Investment Funds or Directives issued by the FSA (that are currently in force during the date of this notice), the provisions mentioned therein shall be complied with.

The Fund shall be managed and supervised by the Management Body elected by the General Meeting in accordance with the provisions of the Articles of Association.

The members of the Management Body shall be not less than three and not more than five, including the chairman and vice chairman. The chairman or anyone authorized by the chairman shall represent the Fund before third parties and the courts.

The Articles of Association shall determine the term of office of the Management Body provided it shall not be more than five years from the date of formation. The first Management Body shall be appointed by the sponsor of the Fund in coordination with other sponsors (if any), provided its term shall not be more than one year from the date of the Fund's registration in the FSA's funds register.

Where any member's position falls vacant prior to the end of the term, the other members, representing at least the majority of the remaining members of the Management Body, may elect a replacement member until the end of the term.

The following members have been nominated by the Sponsor for the first Management Body, which shall initially comprise 4 individuals, whose names are given below:

- Mr. Ghusein Hilal Abdullah Al Abri
- Mr. Hussein Abdul Redha Al Lawati
- Mr. Suleiman Abdullah Khalifa Al Balushi
- Mr. Youssef Ali Balushi

SUBSCRIPTION CONDITIONS AND PROCEDURES

Subscription Eligibility and remedies of the Fund in the case of breach of subscription requirements

Investment in the Units offered is open to Omani and non-Omani institutions/individuals and other juristic persons other than US Persons provided that they meet the eligibility requirements specified in the subscription application.

The Fund is not open to investment from Sanctioned Persons or persons (including persons owned or controlled by such persons) located or headquartered in jurisdictions that are subject to Embargoes.

The Fund, the Investment Manager and the Investment Advisor and their affiliates seek to comply with all applicable anti-money laundering, economic sanctions, anti-bribery and anti-boycott laws and regulations applicable to them and in the jurisdictions in which they conduct business, other applicable laws and regulations relating to the prevention of money laundering and other similar applicable laws and regulations (collectively, the "Anti-Corruption and Anti-Terrorism Laws") as may be amended from time to time.

As such, by submitting a subscription application each Subscriber represents and warrants to the Fund that they and all of their beneficial owners are not: (i) in breach of the Anti-Corruption and Anti-Terrorism Laws, (ii) US Persons, (iii) Sanctioned Persons or otherwise listed on any economic sanctions list or (iv) persons (including persons owned or controlled by such persons) located or headquartered in jurisdictions subject to Embargoes. The Fund has the right at any time to procure information from the Subscriber to verify the accuracy of these representations and warranties and the Subscriber is required to provide any such requested information promptly upon receipt of any such request.

Should the representations and warranties of the Subscriber given under the relevant paragraphs in the Prospectus be false or misleading, the Fund shall have the right to freeze the account of the Subscriber and a right to compulsorily redeem, at its sole and absolute discretion and at any time, the relevant Subscriber's Units at the prevailing NAV less the costs and liabilities caused to the Fund as a result of the Subscriber's breach of such representations and warranties.

The Fund shall comply with all requirements of Oman law relating to the prevention of money laundering, anti-bribery, anti-terrorism, trade embargoes and economic sanctions, now or hereafter in effect.

Initial Subscription Application

Minimum Size for Fund's Establishment

The Fund will be established with a minimum initial size of OMR 2,000,000 on cumulative basis for the Units. In the event that subscriptions received during the Initial Subscription Period are less than OMR 2,000,000 on cumulative basis, then all application money received during the Initial Subscription Period shall be refunded to the respective applicants.

Initial Subscription Forms

Potential investors may obtain Initial Subscription Forms and a copy of the Prospectus from the main office(s) of the Collecting Bank or from the office of the Issue Manager. The Initial Subscription Forms will also be available on the digital platforms of Bank Muscat S.A.O.G. According to the subscription date mentioned in this document.

Initial Subscription Price

During the Initial Subscription Period, Units will be allotted at a price of OMR 0.101 per Unit comprising of OMR 0.100/- value of the Unit and OMR 0.001 charges towards issue expenses.

Minimum Subscription for Initial Issue

The minimum Initial Subscription shall be OMR 50 per Subscriber and thereafter in multiples of OMR 50.

Maximum Subscription for Initial Issue

There is no maximum limit on subscription.

Initial Subscription Period

The Initial Subscription Period shall be from 1 September 2024 to 12 September 2024 during Business Hours of 8AM till 2PM.

Mode of subscription during the Initial Subscription Period

- Each Subscriber should contact one of the Collecting Banks/Agent for further guidance on the channel made available by the Collecting Banks/Agent for submission of a Subscriber's application.
- Subscribers shall complete and submit the Initial Subscription Form through one of the Collecting Banks/Agent, along with payment in the form accepted by the relevant Collecting Bank/Agent towards the Units and ensuring that the documents in support of the information furnished referred to above are provided.
- In case of payment of the value for the subscription made through cheque/demand draft, the same shall be submitted in favor of "Bank Muscat Al Tharwa Fund" or as otherwise advised by the relevant Collecting Bank/Agent.
- Once completed, the relevant Collecting Bank/Agent will validate the Subscriber's application on and will provide the Subscriber with a copy of the acknowledgement of their application. Each Subscriber should ensure that they receive a copy of the acknowledgement from the relevant Collecting Bank/Agent.
- Before filling in the Initial Subscription Form, each Subscriber is required to examine this Prospectus and read the conditions and procedures governing subscription for Units. Each Subscriber shall have the responsibility of submitting all particulars, ensuring correctness and validity of information provided in the Initial Subscription Form when submitting the application.

Subscription during the Initial Subscription Period on Behalf of minor children

- Any person aged less than 18 years as of the first day of the Initial Subscription Period will be considered a minor.
- A father may subscribe on behalf of his minor children.
- If an Initial Subscription Form is submitted on behalf of a minor by any person other than the minor's father, the person submitting the Initial Subscription Form will be required to attach a legally valid power of attorney authorizing him or her to deal in the funds of the minor through sale, purchase and investment.

Bank Account and Documentation Details

- Along with the duly completed Initial Subscription Form, the Subscriber is required to submit a document confirming the correctness of the bank account number as provided for in the Initial Subscription Form.
- In case the Subscriber is applying for subscription through a Collecting Bank/Agent in which he/she does not hold an account, he/she can subscribe by submitting any document from his/her bank evidencing his/her account number and name such as the upper portion of the bank account statement issued by the bank containing these particulars only or a letter or any document issued by the said bank containing the said information. The Subscriber shall ensure that the evidence submitted is clearly readable and contains the account number and full name of the account holder.
- An application for subscription which contains the bank account number of a person other than the Subscriber shall be rejected, except for an application made on behalf of minor children that contains bank accounts particulars of their father or legal guardian.
- A copy of a valid power of attorney duly endorsed by the competent legal authorities must be submitted in the event the subscription is made on behalf of another person (with the exception of a subscription made on behalf of minor children by their father).
- In case of applications by juristic persons (non-individuals), which are signed by a person in his/her capacity as an authorized signatory, a copy of adequate and valid documentation evidencing their authority should be provided.
- Set out below is a check list for documentation that must be submitted by applicants for Units, together with any other documents that may be deemed necessary by the relevant Collecting Bank/Agent, the Registrar or Transfer Agent or the Administrator or may be requested by the authorities concerned.

Applicant	Documents Required
Omani Male & Female – 18 years and above	Copy of National ID Card/Passport
Non-Omani Nationals	Copy of Passport
Minor below 18 years, Both Omani and Non-Omani Nationals	Copy of birth certificate of the minor and a copy of the identity card or passport of the legal guardian.
Companies and Enterprises	Commercial registration copy or its equivalent for overseas registered companies
Authorities and Pension	Copy of constitutive decree or decision
Proof of bank account	The applicant shall indicate a bank account number along with proof of bank account for the receipt of dividends and other distributions on the application

Investor Identification and Anti-Money Laundering

The Investment Manager, the Issue Manager, the Collecting Banks/Agent, the Registrar and Transfer Agent and the Administrator reserve the absolute right to require further verification of the identity of each potential Unitholder or that of the person or entity on whose behalf the potential Unitholder is applying for Units. Each potential Unitholder will provide evidence in a form and substance satisfactory to the Investment Manager, the Issue Manager, the Collecting Banks/Agent, the Registrar and Transfer Agent and the Administrator of its identity and, if so required, the source of its funds, within a reasonable time period as determined by the Investment Manager, the Issue Manager, the Collecting Banks/Agent, the Registrar and Transfer Agent and the Administrator. Pending the provision of such evidence, an application for Units will be postponed. If a potential Unitholder fails to provide satisfactory evidence within the time specified, or if a potential Unitholder provides evidence but the investment Manager, the Issue Manager, the Collecting Banks/Agent, the Registrar and Transfer Agent or the Administrator are not satisfied with such evidence, the subscription application may be rejected, in which event any money received by way of application will be returned to the applicant by bank transfer to the account from which the monies originated, without any addition thereto and at the risk and expense of the applicant.

The Investment Manager, the Issue Manager, the Collecting Banks/Agent, the Registrar and Transfer Agent and the Administrator reserve the right to request such information as is necessary to verify the identity of a prospective Unitholder. In the event of delay or failure by the applicant to produce any information required for verification purposes, the Investment Manager, the Issue Manager, the Collecting Banks/Agent, the Registrar and Transfer Agent and the Administrator may in their discretion refuse to accept the application from such potential Unitholder and the subscription monies relating thereto.

If any person who is a resident of Oman suspects that a payment made in relation to the Fund contains the proceeds of criminal conduct, that person is required to report such suspicion pursuant to the Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism Law promulgated by Royal Decree 30/2016, as amended.

Unitholders will also be expected to comply with the anti-money laundering regulations of their respective jurisdictions to the extent that they are applicable to their investment in the Units.

Collecting Banks

Subscribers shall submit duly filled in Initial Subscription Forms for initial subscription to one of the following Collecting Banks during their official working hours in the Initial Subscription Period:

- Bank Muscat SAOG
- Meethaq Islamic Bank
- Ubarhar Capital SAOC

The Collecting Bank shall have the right not to accept an Initial Subscription Form that reaches the Collecting Bank after Business Hours on the Subscription Closing Date.

The Collecting Bank receiving Initial Subscription Forms shall be required to accept the Subscription Forms after confirmation of compliance with the procedure and subject matter, in line with the requirements as provided for in the Prospectus. Hence, the Collecting Bank shall instruct Subscribers to comply with and fulfill any requirement that may appear in the Initial Subscription Form.

Acceptance or rejection of applications for subscription of Units

The Collecting Bank receiving the initial subscription shall not accept Initial Subscription Forms under the following circumstances:

- if the Initial Subscription Form does not bear the signature of the applicant;
- in case of failure of payment of the full value of the Units subscribed;
- if the value of the Units subscribed for is paid through cheque and if the same is dishonored for any reason;
- if the Initial Subscription Form is submitted under joint names;
- if the Subscriber has subscribed through more than one Initial Subscription Form in the same name;
- if the supporting documents referred to in this Prospectus are not enclosed with the Initial Subscription Form;
- if the Initial Subscription Form does not contain all the particulars of the bank account of the applicant;
- if any particulars of the bank account held by the applicant as provided for in the Initial Subscription Form are noted to be incorrect;
- if the particulars of the bank account provided for in the application are found to be not relevant to the applicant, with the exception of applications submitted in the names of minor children, who are allowed to make use of the particulars of the bank accounts held by their father;
- in case of failure to submit any relevant power of attorney with the application as required by this Prospectus in respect of the person who subscribes and signs on behalf of another person (with the exception of a father who subscribes on behalf of his minor children);
- if the application has not complied with the legal and organizational requirements as provided for in this Prospectus or applicable laws and regulations; or
- for any other reason as deemed appropriate in the best interests of the Fund.

In the event that following acceptance of an Initial Subscription Form and before delivery of the same to the Issue Manager, a Collecting Bank/ Agent or the Registrar and Transfer Agent observes that the Initial Subscription Form does not comply with legal requirements as provided for in the Prospectus, the relevant Collecting Bank/ Agent or the Registrar and Transfer Agent will endeavor to contact the Subscriber so as to rectify the position. In case of failure to rectify the position within the period referred to, the Collecting/ Agent or the Registrar and Transfer Agent Bank shall return the Initial Subscription Form to the Subscriber, together with the subscription money before expiry of the period specified for handing over of the applications to the Issue Manager.

The Collecting Bank/ Agent or the Registrar and Transfer Agent shall submit a comprehensive report to the Issue Manager furnishing the details of the Initial Subscription Forms that are required to be rejected and reasons behind such rejection.

Allotment of Units and refund of money following the Initial Subscription Period

Following the completion of the Initial Subscription Period, the Issue Manager will arrange to allot Units within fifteen (15) days from the Subscription Closing Date and the Issue Manager, the relevant Collecting Bank/Agent or the Registrar and Transfer Agent shall refund the subscription money to applicants whose application has been rejected. The Issue Manager will send allotment notices to the applicants who have been allotted Units, at the addresses as specified in their Initial Subscription Forms.

The refund of subscription amounts in respect of which Units have not been allotted during the Initial Subscription Period (whether on account of rejection of the application) may be undertaken by electronically transferring such amounts to the bank account numbers provided in the Initial Subscription Forms.

Responsibilities & Obligations

The Issue Manager and the Collecting Bank/ Agent or the Registrar and Transfer Agent receiving Initial Subscription Forms shall abide by the responsibilities and functions specified pursuant to the instructions and regulations laid down by the FSA. They shall also abide by any other responsibilities that are provided for in the agreements entered into between them and the Fund.

The parties concerned shall be required to take remedial measures with regard to the damages arising from any negligence committed in the performance of the functions and responsibilities assigned to them. The Issue Manager shall coordinate with the regulatory authorities in order to take all necessary actions and procedures in this regard.

Enquiry & Complaints:

Subscribers who intend to seek clarifications or file complaints with regard to the issues related to the allotment or rejected applications may contact the branch of the Collecting Bank/ Agent or the Registrar and Transfer Agent where the subscription was made. In case of absence of any response from the branch, the Subscriber may contact the person concerned as hereunder:

Bank	Key person	Postal Address	Phone No.	Email
Bank Muscat SAOG	Khalid Al Hinal	PO Box 134, Ruwi, Postal Code 112 Muscat, Oman	+968 2480 1032	Fundbackoffice@bankmuscat.com

In case of initial subscriptions, If the Collecting Bank/ Agent or the Registrar and Transfer Agent receiving the Initial Subscription Form fails to arrive at a solution or settlement with the person who has subscribed, it shall refer the subject matter to the Issue Manager, and keep the Subscriber posted of the progress and development in respect of the subject matter of the dispute. The Subscriber shall also keep in touch with the Collecting Bank that received the Initial Subscription Form only so as to know the decisions arrived at.

Expected time schedule for completion of allotment of Units following the Initial Subscription Period

#	Statement	Date
1	Date of FSA approval of the Prospectus	22 August 2024
2	First day of the Initial Subscription Period (Subscription Start Date)	1 September 2024
3	Closing Date	12 September 2024
4	Due date for Issue Manager to receive Initial Subscription Forms from the Collecting Bank	15 September 2024
5	Notifying FSA of the result of the approved subscription application	17 September 2024
6	Approval of FSA with regard to the proposal for the allotment of Units	19 September 2024
7	Commencement of refund and dispatch of the notices regarding allotment of Units	22 September 2024
8	Commencement of subsequent subscriptions to the Fund	26 September 2024

Subscription for Units after the Initial Subscription Period

Following the closure of the Initial Subscription Period, eligible investors may subscribe for Units in the Continuous Offer Period, which shall commence three months after registration of the Fund on the register of investment funds maintained by the FSA or the date the Fund has published its first NAV, whichever is later.

Subscribers during the Continuous Offer Period must submit a duly completed Subscription Form to the Administrator, during Business Hours along with payment for the Units, on any Business Day along with documents in support of the subscription applications (refer to pages 41 and 42 of the Prospectus).

Office Address of the Issue Manager:

Investment Banking and Capital Markets Division
Bank Muscat S.A.O.G.

P.O. Box 134, PC 112, Ruwi

Email: ImanYa@bankmuscat.com

Telephone: +968 2476 7032

Office Address of the Administrator:

Gulf Custody Company SAOC

PO Box 1110, PC 114, Muttrah Port District,

Sultanate of Oman

Email: gccotrade@gulfcustody.com

Telephone: +968 2421 6941

Subscription For Units During Continuous Offer Period

For subscriptions for Units after the Initial Subscription Period, each prospective investor must complete and execute the Subscription Form and submit it to the Registrar and Transfer Agent along with the applicable documentation in original or certified form (in accordance with instructions contained therein) and procure that subscription amounts in cleared funds are received by the Administrator no later than 11.00am (Oman local time). (a) The Fund will allot Units based on the NAV computed as mentioned in this Prospectus after considering applicable sales charges on T+2 days. Applications and funds received after 11:00 am will be deemed as received the next Business Day.

Rejection of Applications

The Registrar and Transfer Agent may reject any Subscription Form, which does not comply with the requirements set out on page 39 of the Prospectus which apply mutatis mutandis to applications for subscription of Units during the Continuous Offer Period once the Fund has reopened for continuous subscription and redemption of Units.

Refund of subscription applications received after the Initial Subscription Period

The Administrator shall effect all refunds for subscription applications received after the Initial Subscription Period within three (3) Business Days from the relevant Valuation Day.

Clarifications and complaints

Subscribers that apply for Units during the Continuous Offer Period may contact the office of the Registrar and Transfer Agent (at the address set out in this Prospectus) in relation to any enquiries or for registration of any complaints.

Subsequent Subscription Fee

Subscription for Units during the Continuous Offer Period shall carry a subscription fee of up to 1% of the NAV plus any applicable VAT and taxes. This subscription fee shall be charged to the Subscriber at the discretion of the Investment Manager or the Management Body in full or in part.

Minimum and Maximum Subscription after initial Issue

The minimum subscription for Units in the Fund shall be OMR 50 (exclusive of Subscription fees and any applicable VAT and taxes). There shall be no maximum limit on Subscription.

Investment Manager & Issue Manager	Administrator/Custodian	Legal Adviser	Collecting Banks	Registration and Transfer Agent
Bank Muscat. Better Everyday.				

MoE honours ‘outstanding’ GED students in gala event

The Ministry of Education (MoE) held a ceremony to honor outstanding students of the General Education Diploma for the academic year 2023-24 under the auspices of H E Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, and in the presence of H E Dr Madiha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education.

A number of Their Excellencies the Ministers, the honoured members of the State Council, Their Excellencies the Undersecretaries, a number of teachers, and parents of the honoured students also attended the honouring ceremony that was held at the Grand Events Hall of the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center in Muscat on Wednesday.

The ceremony programme included the MoE's speech, delivered by H E Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary in the ministry.

"This ceremony comes to honour the distinguished students in the General Education Diploma, its equivalent levels and international qualifications in the schools of the Sultanate of Oman for the academic year 2023-24. Today, it is our duty to congratulate and celebrate them for what they have achieved to deserve such an honour," the undersecretary said.

H E Ambosaidi emphasised that one of the goals of Oman Vision 2040 is to strengthen the national partnership between the government sector and the private sector so that all are together in building this country



Today, it is our duty to congratulate and celebrate them for what they have achieved... We call on them to invest their excellence in what support our country and help achieve its goals...

H E DR ABDULLAH AMBOSAIDI

and serving its generations.

"This ceremony today is nothing but an authentic model that confirms the seriousness of this partnership and its successful achieved results, as our annual ceremony comes with the generous support of Occidental Oman Company, and we truly have to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to them for supporting the youth of the country."

In this regard, H E Ambosaidi called upon distinguished students who successfully passed this stage to continue their excellence in the upcoming educa-

tional stages, and to strive to achieve success no less than what they have achieved in this stage. "We also call on them to invest their excellence in what support our country and help achieve its goals. We can only extend our highest expressions of thanks and gratitude to everyone who contributed to reaching this goal and everyone who persevered towards it from parents, school administrations, teachers, and everyone who contributed to this excellence."

Nasser al Maskari, Director of Social Responsibility at Occiden-



H E Dr Abdullah Ambosaidi

tal Oman, delivered the sponsoring company's speech. "At Occidental Oman, through our social responsibility strategy, we attach great importance to supporting and investing in education, as it is a sustainable investment that has a positive impact on successive generations.

"This exclusive sponsorship that we are providing today for the honouring ceremony of out-

standing students holding a general diploma is not the first, and will not be the last, as the beginning of this project was limited in its first years to schools in the concession areas due to the privacy enjoyed by these areas, and then this honour was generalised to include schools in all governorates of Oman.

Our partnership with the Ministry of Education is a long-standing partnership that has been strengthened in many community projects that have had a positive impact on society, and which directly aim to develop the education system in the sultanate."

Students Abdul Aziz al Zadjali from South Batinah governorate and Elaf al Darmaki from Muscat governorate gave speeches on behalf of the distinguished students. This moment is the beginning of a new journey of challenges and achievements.



Sohar International wins ‘Best Mobile Banking App Oman 2024’ award

Sohar International, Oman's best bank, has once again affirmed its position as a leader in the digital banking landscape by winning the prestigious 'Best Mobile Banking App Oman 2024' award at the World Business Outlook Annual Awards 2024, held in Singapore.

This accolade highlights the bank's relentless commitment to digital innovation and its strategic focus on delivering an unparalleled customer experience, the bank stated, adding that the award serves as a testament to Sohar International's successful digital transformation strategy, which has significantly enhanced its mobile banking app, integrating cutting-edge technologies that offer customers seamless and efficient solutions tailored to their evolving needs.

"As a result, Sohar International has set new benchmarks in the industry, solidifying its leadership in the ever-evolving world of digital banking," it asserted.

Commenting on this milestone, Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said that the digital transformation at Sohar International was not merely an initiative but "it is a cornerstone of our strategic vision, reflecting the global shift towards digital banking". As the financial landscape rapidly evolves, particularly within Oman, he underlined that the bank staff members are assertively positioning Sohar International as a leader and a game-changer, steering the future of digital banking in the Sultanate.

"Our commitment to innovation goes beyond keeping pace with global digital trends - it's about redefining them. By continuously expanding the horizons of what banking can deliver, we remain steadfast in our pursuit of becoming a world-class Omani services company that helps customers, communities, and people prosper and grow. This recognition not only highlights our unwavering dedication to digitalisation but also underscores our alignment with

Oman's national digital goals, further solidifying our role in contributing to a digitally inclusive society."

Sohar International's strategic digital offerings extend beyond mobile banking, encompassing a comprehensive suite of services for both retail and corporate clients. As part of its ongoing commitment to innovation, Sohar International continues to set new standards in the banking industry, ensuring that its customers receive the highest level of service and support at every stage of their lives.

Sajeel Bashiruddin, Chief Digital Officer at Sohar International, commented on the recognition, stating: "This accolade highlights our steadfast dedication to digi-

Digital transformation is a cornerstone of our strategic vision, reflecting the global shift towards digital banking

AHMED AL MUSALMI

Chery Group gets first-time entry into Fortune Global

Chery Holding Group Co, Ltd has recently made its debut on the 2024 Fortune Global 500 list, ranking 385th with an impressive revenue of US\$39.0917bn.

"This historic achievement not only marks another milestone for China's automotive industry but also underscores Chery's strong presence and potential on the global stage as China's No.1 auto exporter," the company stated.

The Fortune Global 500 list is one of the most prestigious and authoritative rankings for assessing the strength of large global companies. It provides insights into the rankings of major corporations from different countries, as well as changes in operational quality, such as return on sales, return on equity and total factor productivity.

This year, the total revenue

of companies on the Fortune Global 500 list is approximately US\$41tn, a slight increase of 0.1% from the previous year, with the minimum revenue threshold for entry being US\$32.1bn.

China has 133 companies on the list, with a combined revenue of around US\$11tn in 2023.

Chery, making its debut on the list, represents China's independent automotive brands. Founded 27 years ago from humble beginnings, Chery thrived during China's rapid automotive development and significant transformation periods.

Today, Chery boasts 14.2mn global users, operates in over 80 countries and regions and has become one of the most internationalised Chinese automotive brands on the Fortune Global 500 list.

Oman Air introduces region's next-level business travel with Business Studio

To cater to shifting demand and in line with global consumer trends, Oman Air has announced its new Business Studio.

The new cabin, which will replace the airline's First Class product, will retain its spacious cabin layout, classic lie-flat seats, and WiFi connectivity, but with more affordable fares and a re-defined service approach that is tailored to the needs of modern travellers.

Featuring predominantly on its London and Bangkok services, the new higher-tier Business experience offers all the features of premium flying along with Oman Air's award-winning service and hospitality, giving guests the room to work, connect and rest like never before, whether travelling for business or premium leisure.

"Inspired by valuable guest feedback and to adapt and evolve in line with global market trends, we have strategically re-



efined our premium offering to deliver greater value and appeal," said Con Korfiatis, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Air.

He pointed out that the traditional First Class experience witnessed diminished demand. "After careful analysis and benchmarking against industry standards, we decided to retire the product," he added.

"This decision allows us to focus on delivering an exceptional Business Class experience

that better meets modern traveller expectations and is more closely aligned with the demographics targeted by the national tourism objectives, such as such as wellness, adventure and MICE. Moreover, we're offering it all at a more competitive price point."

Oman Air's new Business Studio offers the best Business Class available anywhere in the region with one of the world's most generous pitches at 82", privacy walls for every seat.

First Socca Gulf Cup to be hosted in Oman next month

The first Socca Gulf Cup will be held in Salalah in the Sultanate of Oman from September 1 to 4 with the participation of eight teams from the Gulf countries.

As part of the Socca Oman convoy to promote the 2024 Socca World Cup, Oman is hosting the event to be held for the first time in the Middle East and Asia.

The Socca Gulf Cup is being organised by the Sports Makers Company, in cooperation with the Governor of Dhofar, Dhofar Municipality and the Directorate General of Culture, Sports and Youth in Dhofar governorate.

The tournament will be held at Hawana Resort in partnership with Al Fanar Hotel, a release

stated.

The Socca Gulf Cup is the 3rd continental competition that is taking place in 2024 after Socca Copa America and Socca EuroCup. 'It will be a major event for the Middle East countries as part of the holistic strategy of ISF,' the release added.

The draw for the Socca Gulf Cup was held last Monday at the Sultan Qaboos Complex for Culture and Entertainment under the patronage of H E Dr Mohad bin Saeed Baawain, Minister of Labour, and in the presence of a number of invited personalities from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

"The first Socca Gulf Cup is the second stop of the Socca



Waleed al Obaidani

Oman convoy after the success of the first station in Nizwa, which witnessed a public attendance of more than one hundred thousand visitors to various events Caravan," said Waleed al Obaidani, president of the Soca Middle East Federation and ex-

ecutive director of Sports Makers.

Through the Socca Gulf Cup, Obaidani said, the organisers are looking forward to laying the first brick in the development of the six-sided football game at the level of the Gulf countries and the Middle East, a goal that they set in partnership with those in charge of the game in the various countries participating in the tournament.

According to him, the Gulf Socca Cup will be an opportunity for a number of Gulf teams to qualify to Socca World Cup and catch up with qualified teams from America, Europe and East Asian countries, in addition to African countries and Australia.

Lexus ES: Captivating luxury and prowess

The Lexus ES is an everyday luxury car unmatched in its tech frameworks, ultimate luxurious interiors and delivers an exhilarating city-life experience.

In a statement here in Oman, the company called upon car lovers to discover the Lexus ES range and experience one of the top-selling saloons in the premium luxury category.

'Indulge in sublime comfort, spaciousness and distinctive performance output,' it added.

The Lexus ES speaks an impressive design language, spelling remarkable efficiency from every angle. From the headlights to the sleek profile, the Lexus charmer is available in three powertrain options, the ES250, ES350 and the hybrid ES300h.

The engine power transmissions vary across trim levels. The ES consists of a 2.5L, 16-Valve, DOHC, VVT-iE that produces 204 Hp @ 6600 rpm and 24.8 Kg.M torque @ 4000 - 5000 rpm. The other variant is powered



by a bigger 3.5L, 24-Valve V6, DOHC, VVT-iW delivering 298Hp @ 6500 - 6600 rpm and 36.3 Kg.M torque @ 4600 paired with Direct Shift 8-Speed Automatic Transmission.

The exceptional power of the ES300h, the hybrid, ceases the day with its auto charging capability

through its electric engine simultaneously saving up the fuel during braking or decelerating. The hybrid is equipped to save fuel meanwhile eliminating the need to plug in a power cord.

The exterior boasts the new design front grille blended with the Bi-LED headlamps. It makes

a powerful strike with a rear spoiler moonroof with tilt & slide, a unique power retractable outer rear-view mirror with auto tilt-down on reverse mode. An added side protection moulding and door handle garnish is available as part of the luxury chrome package.

The avant-garde interior fittings on the steering wheel don a 3-spoke leather & wood finesse with a wireless charging tray, head-up display, tri-zone air conditioning with driver, passenger and rear side wooden trims with ambient lighting and inner handle illumination, an interactive

12.3-inch touchscreen display. Feel welcomed by adjusting the legroom to your comfort with its 8-way power adjustable front seats' cushion length & memory for the driver seat.

Lexus introduced a comprehensive set of safety features for an enabling a composed state of mind and make your journey pleasurable. The sedan is

equipped with a parking brake w/brake hold, auto parking, anti-theft system, auto speed sensing door lock function, child restraint seat anchors on rear, pop-up hood, tyre pressure warning system, front and rear sonar-guided parking assistance system, front curtain shield, rear airbags for both sides including knees, as well as an adaptive cruise control option.

The company called upon car lovers to discover the Lexus ES range and experience one of the top-selling saloons in the premium luxury category; to indulge in sublime comfort, spaciousness and distinctive performance output

equipped advanced technologies such as the blind spot monitor, rear cross-traffic alert, all-speed adaptive cruise control alert, lane tracing assist, pre-crash assist, SRS airbag, adaptive high-beam system.

Moreover, it offers advanced safety features such as the elec-

Lexus provides a bespoke experience to its customers. Delve into luxury and enhance your driving experience with your automobile adapted to the latest technologies. Visit your nearest Lexus showroom to learn more about Lexus Oman and its incredible product line-up.

Meethaq Islamic named Oman's 'trusted institution'

Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat has been honoured as a trusted institution in Islamic banking in the Sultanate of Oman by the prestigious International Business Magazine Awards 2024.

This esteemed recognition underscores Meethaq Islamic Banking's unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional Islamic banking solutions that cater to the diverse needs of customers.

Speaking on the occasion, Ali bin Ahmed al Lawati, assistant general manager, Meethaq Corporate Banking, expressed his pride in receiving this prestigious award. "This recognition is a testament to Meethaq's commitment to providing world-class Sharia-compliant products and services to both retail and corporate customers," Lawati said.

"We extend our gratitude to the International Business Magazine Awards team for acknowledging Meethaq's leadership position in the



sultanate's market. We remain steadfast in pursuit of excellence, continuously adapting to market trends and innovating to ensure our offerings align with the highest standards of quality and sharia'a compliance."

In valuing Meethaq's strong bond with its customers, Lawati added, "We would also like to extend our sincere appreciation and support to all our valued customers for their confidence and belief in the Sharia-compliant services and solutions offered by Meethaq Islamic Banking. Meethaq is dedicated to delivering unpar-

alleled value propositions and services that align with the evolving needs of its valued customers and contribute to enhancing their banking experience."

Meethaq Islamic Banking remains committed to upholding its pioneering leadership presence in the sultanate's banking industry by offering a comprehensive range of value-added products and services.

These sharia'a-compliant solutions undergo rigorous sharia'a-compliance certification by the Sharia'a Supervisory Board and adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Central Bank of Oman. This commitment to transparency and adherence to Islamic principles has solidified Meethaq's position as a trusted financial partner in Oman.

Building upon its legacy of success, Meethaq Islamic Banking has continually expanded its footprint in Oman, currently operating 29 branches distributed across the sultanate.



Genetco signs footballer Fayeze al Rusheidi as brand ambassador

Genetco, a leading distributor of prestigious brands Gree, TCL, Hitachi, Best, and Canon, is thrilled to announce the signing of an exclusive agreement with Oman's national football team goalkeeper and captain Fayeze al Rusheidi.

Following his historic save that secured a cup victory for Oman, Fayeze became a national football hero and continues to lead the Oman team with distinction. As part of this agree-

ment, Fayeze will serve as Genetco's brand ambassador, promoting the company's diverse portfolio of brands through various social networking and brand promotion activities. This partnership underscores

Genetco's commitment to supporting Omani society and reflects the company's pride in being an Omani-owned enterprise.

Fayeze expressed his excitement about the partnership. "I

am honoured to be a part of Genetco, a company that not only represents world-class brands but also stands as a proud supporter of the Omani community. I look forward to promoting Genetco's values and contributing to its success."

The agreement was officially signed during a ceremony led by the Genetco team, including Saif al Harthi, Head of HR; Ananth, CFO; and Dr Ambuj Khare, COO. They all expressed their enthusi-

asm for the collaboration and its potential to further enhance the company's brand presence in Oman.

Genetco remains committed to its mission of delivering excellence to the Omani market and building strong relationships within the community. This partnership with Fayeze represents a significant milestone in Genetco's ongoing efforts to connect with and support the people of Oman.

Indian School Al Maabela commemorates India's Independence Day

Indian School Al Maabela celebrated India's 78th Independence Day with grandeur, marked by a series of events that highlighted the rich cultural heritage of India and a commitment to environmental sustainability.

The event was graced by H E Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, as the Chief Guest. He was accompanied by his wife, Divya Narang.

The day also witnessed the presence of several distinguished dignitaries, including Jayapal Detha, Second Secretary, Embassy of India; Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman, Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman; Syed Salman, vice chairman, BoD and director-in-charge, ISAM; Krishnendhu S, chairperson of the grievance committee, BoD and director-in-charge, ISAM; Vinoba M P, senior principal and education advisor, BoD; Shamim Hussain, president, SMC, ISAM; Dr Vikas Rao, convenor; Syed Najeeb Rafiq, chair-



person, PSC; along with other esteemed SMC members. The Social Science department of ISAM presented an Art Gallery which showcased India's freedom struggle from 1857 to 1947.

The event commenced with an auspicious tree plantation drive under the initiative *Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam*, a step towards a greener tomorrow. The school ground resonated with the Royal Oman Anthem and the Indian National Anthem, setting a patriotic tone for the day.

The celebration continued with a vibrant march past by students from seven Indian schools in the capital, showcasing their discipline, coordination, and pride in their respective institutions.

After receiving the guard of honour, H E Narang in his address, commended the efforts of the students and the school, emphasising the importance of cultural plurality, which is vividly reflected in India's diverse traditions, languages, and festivals.

His words underscored the unity in diversity that defines the nation and reverberated with India's Independence Day theme of 'Viksit Bharat'. He spoke about the aspirations of the Indian populace and highlighted how the nation is focused on progress and development.

The chief guest was also felicitated with a memento, acknowledging his role as a beacon of inspiration to young and old alike.

ISM celebrates 78th Independence Day with unwavering patriotism

On August 15, Indian School Muscat celebrated India's 78th Independence Day with great enthusiasm and patriotic fervour.

The NMPH was adorned with festive decorations, creating a vibrant atmosphere.

The event was honoured by the presence of Dr Subramanian Muthuraman, chair of the academic sub committee of the Indian School Muscat management committee, as well as members of the board of directors, school management committee, Principal Rakesh Joshi, senior vice-principal administration, other vice-principals, assistant vice-principals, teachers, students and their parents.

India's national anthem, which sparked a sense of na-

tionalism in all attendees, marked the commencement of the programme.

Gayathri Amarkumar, head girl of the senior section, ex-



tended a warm welcome to the gathering. The moment was truly uplifting as the chief guest read excerpts from the President's message, which highlighted the vision set by

the nation's leaders in their pursuit of progress and prosperity. The patriotic song sung by the school choir stirred a deep sense of pride and nationalism in the audience. The atmosphere was filled with a mix of joy, hope, and pride, as everyone appeared to be deeply touched by these emotions.

Honouring the supreme sacrifices of the nation's great warriors, the impressive digital presentation on India's advancements in science and technology since 1947 served as both a tribute to these legends and a message for the youth to continue their legacy. The vibrant dance performance by the school's blooming buds added a dynamic touch to the grand celebration.

Zelensky: Will not allow Ukraine to turn into a ‘grey zone’

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Saturday that whatever Moscow brought to the country - the ongoing conflict - 'has now returned to their home', as Ukraine celebrates Independence Day amid an incursion into Russia's Kursk region.

"913 days ago, Russia unleashed war against us, including through the Sumy region. It violated not only our sovereign borders but also the limits of cruelty and common sense. It was endlessly striving for one thing: to destroy us.

"Instead, today we celebrate the 33rd Independence Day of

Ukraine. And whatever the enemy was bringing to our land has now returned to their home," Zelensky said in a video address from the border region of Sumy.

Arguing that Ukraine's retaliation for the ongoing conflict will be 'worthy, symmetrical, long-ranged', Zelensky went on to say: "They will know that sooner or later, a Ukrainian response will reach any point in the Russian Federation that is a source of danger to the life of our state and our people."

He also said Ukraine will not allow its territory to turn into a 'grey zone', adding that Russian President Vladimir Putin 'will not



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky

dictate any of his red lines to us'.

Zelensky's comments come amid Kyiv's incursion into Russia's border region of Kursk, which began on the night of August 5-6 when Ukrainian forces entered the town of Sudzha, about 10km (6.2 miles) from the border.

Putin accused Ukraine of carrying out a 'large-scale provocation' and 'indiscriminate shooting', describing the incursion as a 'terrorist attack'.

Days later, Zelensky admitted that it was an 'operation' by Ukrainian troops aimed to create a 'buffer zone' against Russian attacks.

Ukraine's Independence Day is celebrated annually on August 24 and marks the day when the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic adopted the country's Declaration of Independence.

Meanwhile, US President Joe Biden spoke to Zelensky on Friday, announcing a new military aid package ahead of Ukraine's Independence Day.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, who also spoke with his Ukrainian counterpart Rustem Umerov on Friday, said on social media the package was worth US\$125mn.

Agencies



Germany: Police widen manhunt after Solingen stabbings kill 3

Solingen, Germany - Police have widened a manhunt after three people were killed and five severely wounded in a knife attack at a festival in the western German city of Solingen.

Officers have extended the manhunt beyond Solingen and set up roadblocks around the city. No detailed description of the suspect has been provided so far, with police seeking information about the Friday night attack.

"Both victims and witnesses are currently being questioned. The police are currently searching for the perpetrator with a large team," police said.

Officials have also asked for the general public to help in the search.

However, police warned residents who observed anything suspicious not to act on their own initiative but to call the police emergency number.

A police spokeswoman rejected media reports that described the incident as a 'terrorist attack'.

A large police presence was deployed to the scene in the wake of the attack, in which the assailant was said to have 'stabbed people indiscriminately with a knife'. The attack began around 9:45pm (1945 GMT).

The festival, called a 'Festival of Diversity,' was part of a series of events to celebrate the city's 650th anniversary.

Solingen is a city of some 150,000 people located between Düsseldorf and Cologne.

Herbert Reul, the interior minister of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, where Solingen is situated, has visited the scene of the killings, expressing shock at the incident.

"Out of nowhere, someone starts stabbing people at random," he said.

"We in North Rhine-Westphalia, we are deeply shocked and united in grief," he added.

He said a woman and two men had been killed in the attack. Police have said the

search for the assailant has been made more difficult by the lack of indications as to his appearance or location.

"I think that is our huge problem. We don't have that many details on the attacker yet," said Alexander Kresta, spokesman for the police in nearby Wuppertal.

He said witnesses to the crime were in a state of shock.

"They are receiving professional care from us at the moment, and we are, of course, questioning them to get some more precise details," he said.

Kresta said police were currently acting on the founded assumption that the attacker

Both victims and witnesses are currently being questioned. The police are currently searching for the perpetrator with a large team

POLICE

had acted alone.

The premier of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Hendrik Wüst, has said the entire region is under shock following the attacks in Solingen.

"North Rhine-Westphalia is united in shock and grief," he wrote on the messaging app X, formerly Twitter. "In these dark hours, the people in our state and beyond are in Solingen with their hearts and thoughts," he wrote, adding that 'an act of most brutal and senseless violence has hit our state in the heart'.

Tim-Oliver Kurzbach, the mayor of Solingen, has written online of 'shock, horror and great grief' in the city following the attack. "We all wanted to celebrate our town's anniversary together and now we have to mourn the dead and injured," he wrote on the city's Facebook page.

DW

Taliban impose new restrictions on women, ban public speaking

Now, women are prohibited from singing, reciting, or reading aloud in public

Kabul, Afghanistan - With the enactment of new laws on 'vice and virtue' by a government ministry that forbids women's voices and bare faces from public life, women's lives in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan have become even more limited, Global News reported.

The Ministry for the 'Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice', which was founded in 2021 following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, released the legislation on Wednesday.

That was the year that the military of the United States and other Western nations, including Canada, left the country, leaving a power vacuum that the militant group swiftly filled.

According to The Associated Press, which has reviewed the 114-page document, the new rules encompass many aspects of daily public life. This is the first official statement of 'virtue laws' in Afghanistan since the takeover.

On Thursday, ministry spokesman Maulvi Abdul Ghafar Farooq stated: "We assure you that this Islamic law will be of great help in the promotion of virtue and the elimination of vice." The laws were endorsed by supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada the previous day.

Article 13 of the document addresses women, detailing how they should dress and behave in



Women are now required to cover their entire body, including their face, in public to prevent temptation and avoid tempting others

A lot of these rules were in place already but less formally and now they are being formalised. I think this is a sign of...a gradual escalation of the crackdown

HEATHER BARR

public.

Women are now required to cover their entire body, including their face, in public to prevent temptation and avoid tempting others.

As a result, the commonly worn hijab, which covers only the hair and neck without covering the face, is no longer deemed acceptable, Global News reported.

Women are now prohibited from singing, reciting, or reading aloud in public, as a woman's voice is considered 'intimate' and

should not be heard. It is not clear whether speaking is also prohibited.

Additionally, the laws state that women are not allowed to look at men who are not related to them by blood or marriage, and vice versa.

Violating these rules could lead to warnings, property confiscation, or detention for up to three days. The ministry has already

been implementing similar morality standards and reports having detained thousands for breaches.

Heather Barr, associate director of Human Rights Watch's women's rights division, commented: "A lot of these rules were in place already but less formally and now they are being formalised. I think this is a sign of what we've been seeing over the last three years which is a steady and gradual escalation of the crackdown."

These new laws follow the Taliban's imposition of severe restrictions on women's freedoms since their takeover. In 2022, the group prohibited women from attending school beyond the sixth grade, whereas previously, women were allowed to attend high schools and universities.

An Afghan woman, who was just a year away from completing her law degree, told Global News last year that she 'couldn't speak

for a few minutes' upon learning she would have to forgo her education. "Home is like jail for us and we will fight until we legalise our basic human rights without any discrimination," she said.

In 2022, the Taliban also prohibited women from working at non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Another woman who spoke to Global News shared that her family was plunged into poverty after she lost her job at an NGO.

"I am the breadwinner of my family. We are just four persons in my family: me, my sister and my parents. My father is sick now. We don't have anything in our kitchen to prepare for dinner or for our night," she said. "It's so hard for me. I don't know how I can continue my life."

ANI

North Korea to reopen to Western tourists

Seoul South Korea - Nearly five years after North Korea sealed its borders to the outside world due to the coronavirus pandemic, its officials indicated that it will once again open up to Western tourists.

Travel companies that previously took small groups of visitors into the North received word from their partner organisations in Pyongyang in the middle of August that the first tours could resume in December. The northern city of Samjiyon is likely to be the initial destination.

"It was unexpected but welcome, and we asked for further information, but no more than what we have announced was available."

Other specialist travel firms, including KTG Tours, received a similar notification.



Russian nationals have been allowed to visit North Korea as tourists since February 2024

Koryo Tours, which is based in Beijing, took the first foreign tourists into North Korea in 1993. Over the following decades, it has given around 30,000 curious outsiders a glimpse into the lives of people living under a strict communist dictatorship.

The last Western tour group visited in January 2020, shortly before Pyongyang decided to close the country's borders in an effort to isolate itself from the global pandemic. Many other countries limited travel to stop the spread of infection; they eventually lifted restrictions as

fears of coronavirus faded. Now, travel agencies say there is huge interest in North Korea, which is the last country in the world to reopen after the pandemic.

"We have inquiries from many countries, and it is clear there is a lot of pent-up demand from folks wishing to see the

place for themselves," Cockerell told DW.

The main reason that people give for wanting to travel to North Korea is 'because it is there', he added, although there are many 'country collectors' and 'completists' looking to visit every nation on Earth.

"It is obviously not the easiest place to visit and, of course, there are a great many restrictions, rules and regulations there, so it is not somewhere that people go to for no reason or just casually," Cockerell said. "Those who do go there really want to. They want to see what they can, do what they can and learn as much as possible."

"That leads to highly engaged groups of visitors and a fascinating experience," he added.

DW

Israel turn 'safe zones' in Gaza into heaps of rubble

Gaza City, Palestine - Israeli forces have turned the designated 'safe humanitarian zones' within the Gaza Strip into heaps of rubble and ashes, leaving only 9.5 per cent of the territory as so-called 'safe zones' for displaced civilians, the Palestinian Civil Defence in Gaza said on Saturday.

According to a statement released by the authority, at the onset of Israel's ground invasion of Gaza in early November 2023, Israeli forces pushed hundreds of thousands of civilians from northern Gaza to southern Gaza, claiming these areas were 'safe humanitarian zones'.

Initially, these zones covered 230sqkm (89 square miles) or 63 per cent of Gaza's total area, including agricultural land and commercial, economic, and service facilities spread across 120sqkm (46 square miles).

As the Israeli military offensives continued, the size of these so-called safe zones shrank dramatically, the statement said.

The authority explained that by early December 2023, following Israel's incursion into Khan Younis in southern Gaza, the designated humanitarian areas were reduced to 140sqkm (54 square miles), accounting for 38.3 per cent of Gaza's total area. These areas included some agricultural land as well as economic, commercial, and service establishments.

Further reductions occurred in May 2024, during Israel's incursion into Rafah, when the humanitarian zone shrank to 79sqkm (30.5 square miles), or 20 per cent of Gaza's total area, the statement added.



The ongoing reduction of these safe zones has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, as civilians have fewer places to escape the violence

By mid-June 2024, the zone was reduced to 60sqkm (23 square miles), accounting for just 16.4 per cent of Gaza's total area. The area encompassed roads, streets, service areas, and even cemeteries, none of which could be considered truly safe havens for displaced civilians, it said.

In mid-July 2024, the area deemed 'safe' by the Israeli forces was reduced again, this time to 48sqkm (18.5 square miles), or 13.15 per cent of Gaza's total area.

Finally, as of August 2024, the Israeli army has reduced these 'safe humanitarian zones' to a mere 35sqkm (13.5 square miles), or 9.5 per cent of Gaza's total area. This zone includes only about 3.5 per cent of agricultural, service, and commercial areas,

further shrinking the spaces where civilians can seek refuge, the authorities said, detailing how Israeli forces systematically destroyed the 'safe zones'.

The ongoing reduction of these safe zones has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, as civilians have fewer places to escape the violence.

14 Palestinians killed

Meanwhile, at least 14 Palestinians were killed, including four women and four children, and dozens of others were injured as the Israeli army continued its assault on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, targeting Khan Younis and Nuseirat Camp with airstrikes early on Saturday morning.

According to the Palestinian

news agency Wafa, 11 Palestinians were killed and 15 others were injured when Israeli fighter jets bombed a house in the Al-Amal neighbourhood west of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

Separately, three more Palestinians were killed and several others injured in an Israeli airstrike on a residential apartment in the Ayn Jalut Towers in Nuseirat Camp of central Gaza, the news agency said.

Death toll surges to 40,334

The Israeli army killed 69 more Palestinians in attacks on the Gaza Strip, taking the total death toll to 40,334 since October of last year, the Health Ministry in

the enclave said on Saturday.

A ministry statement said 93,356 Palestinians have been injured as a result of the extensive bombardment of Gaza since October 7, 2023.

"Israeli forces killed 69 people and injured 212 others in five 'massacres' against families in the last 48 hours," the ministry said. "Many people are still trapped under rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them," it added.

Israel has continued its brutal offensive on the Gaza Strip following an attack by the Palestinian group Hamas last October 7, despite a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire.

Anadolu Agency



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Israeli army to withdraw 1km from Philadelphi Corridor: Report

Jerusalem - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pledged to US President Joe Biden that the Israeli army will withdraw one kilometre from the 14km-long Philadelphi Corridor, which runs along the Gaza-Egypt border while leaving a minimal number of military sites in the area.

The pledge comes as part of ongoing discussions between Israel and the US regarding the military offensive on the Gaza Strip and the broader implications for regional security, reports Israel's Channel 12.

The broadcaster claimed that Egypt has agreed to provide Hamas with updated maps of Israeli army positions in the Philadelphi Corridor, although Cairo has made no official statement on the matter.

According to the channel, during a phone call with Biden on Wednesday evening, Netanyahu agreed to two specific conditions in response to US pressure.

Netanyahu has consented to evacuate one kilometre of the Philadelphi Corridor and minimise the number of military sites in the area.

The report did not specify when the withdrawal would take place or how many military sites would remain.

According to the report, Netanyahu promised not to jeopardise the agreement with Hamas if the movement agreed to keep Israeli forces in the Philadelphi Corridor.

He also accepted a US proposal to prevent the movement of armed groups and weapons through the Netzarim Corridor, which separates northern and southern Gaza, and to forego demands for checkpoints or military sites under Israeli control in this area, the media outlet claimed.

The channel did not go into detail about the US's proposed solution for the Netzarim Corridor.

On Wednesday, the Israeli website Walla reported that, at Netanyahu's order, Israeli negotiators provided Egypt and the US with maps showing a continued Israeli military presence along the Philadelphi Corridor as part of the first phase of the agreement, albeit on a smaller scale. This proposal was reportedly rejected by Egypt.

Hamas has not yet commented on Netanyahu's new proposal regarding the Philadelphi Corridor.

The proposal comes as a Hamas delegation is scheduled to arrive in Cairo later Saturday to review the progress of ceasefire talks.

The Philadelphi Corridor, a 14km (8.69-mile) demilitarised buffer zone along the border between the Gaza Strip and

Netanyahu has consented to evacuate 1km of the Philadelphi Corridor and minimise the number of military sites in the area

Egypt, remains one of the major sticking points in Israel-Hamas negotiations.

Neither the Israeli government nor the US administration has issued an official statement on the reported pledge.

For months, the US, Qatar and Egypt have been trying to reach an agreement between Israel and Hamas to ensure a prisoner exchange and ceasefire and allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza. But mediation efforts have been stalled due to Netanyahu's refusal to meet Hamas' demands to stop the war.

Anadolu Agency

Russia, Ukraine exchange prisoners of war

Istanbul, Turkey - Russia and Ukraine on Saturday exchanged prisoners of war with 115 military personnel from each side, mediated by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

A statement by the Russian Defence Ministry said that the 115 Russian servicemen captured by Ukrainian forces in the border region of Kursk were returned from territory under Kyiv's control.

All released Russian military personnel are currently in neighbouring Belarus, the statement said, adding that they will be transferred to Russia and will receive treatment and rehabilitation in medical institutions run by the Defence Ministry.



They are released in exchange for 115 Ukrainian military personnel, the statement added.

It said the United Arab Emirates (UAE) helped with mediation efforts during the swap.

"Another 115 of our defenders have returned home today. These are warriors of the National Guard, the Armed Forces, the Navy, and the State Border Guard Service," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said of the prisoners' swap on X, formerly Twitter.

"I am grateful to each unit that replenishes our exchange fund. This helps to advance the release of our military personnel and civilians from Russian captivity. I thank our team and partners, the UAE, for bringing our people back home," he added.

Russia and Ukraine have carried out 55 exchanges of prisoners of war since the conflict between both countries began on February 24, 2022.

Before the latest swap, the two countries each exchanged 95 prisoners of war in July.

Anadolu Agency

Morocco: Years-long strategy to claim Western Sahara pays off

Rabat, Morocco - For Morocco's King Mohammed VI, this summer could go down in history. For five decades, the Western Sahara, a territory to the south of the country, has been at the centre of a conflict which might now end. The phosphate-rich region with direct access to the Atlantic Ocean is home to the around 160,000 local Sahrawi people who have been seeking autonomy ever since Spain withdrew from the area in 1975.

The Sahrawis are represented by the Polisario Front, which is backed by neighbouring Algeria. But Rabat claims the territory belongs to Morocco. As a consequence of this on-going dispute, Morocco and Algeria have clashed repeatedly, and have cut ties in 2020, even though Algeria does not seek control of the Western Sahara itself.

Over the past years, Morocco has gained more and more support for its claim on the region and this summer, France changed its

diplomatic stance, too.

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the coronation of King Mohammed VI, the 61-year-old monarch received a congratulatory letter by French President Emmanuel Macron in which he said that from now on, France will be supporting Morocco's plan for the Western Sahara.

This plan, which was initially proposed by Rabat in 2007, includes creating autonomous political institutions in the region as well as pushing economic development including a port at the Atlantic Ocean. However, Morocco will be holding control over foreign affairs, defence and currency. "France's recognition is an extremely symbolic move that might seal the fate of the Western Sahara conflict," Sarah Zaaimi, a researcher and the deputy director for communications at the Washington-based think tank Atlantic Council, told DW.

Thomas M Hill, director of North Africa Programmes at the



Morocco is increasingly successful in claiming the Western Sahara region with its access to the Atlantic Ocean

Washington-based think tank United States Institute of Peace concluded in an op-ed this month that the Western Sahara conflict 'is over' and that the indigenous Sahrawi independence movement is left with no choice but to eventually settle for some form of autonomy within Morocco.

Acting with an eye on migration

France is only the latest state to recognise the Western Sahara region as Moroccan territory.

Spain did so in 2022, as did the United States as part of a 'quid pro quo' for Rabat's normalisation of diplomatic ties with Israel in 2020. The Gulf countries and various African and Latin American countries regard the Western Sahara as Moroccan, too.

About the same number of countries support the Polisario Front and the quest for independence by the Sahrawis. However, support for this side has been stalling. The UN neither recognises the sovereignty claims of

Morocco nor those of the Polisario Front. The international body endorses a UN-led referendum for the local Sahrawis instead.

This is also the position of the European Union, despite first Spain's and now France's changed stances.

Alice Gower, director of geopolitics and security at the London-based consulting firm Azure Strategy, highlights that France's diplomatic turnaround after years of keeping neutral on the topic is less driven by the de-

sire to end the actual dispute over the Western Sahara. "France's recognition has little practical effect on the ground," she told DW.

"Macron's move has undoubtedly been in part motivated by transactional politics as migration is a fiercely contested issue in France," she said. The Western Sahara has become one of the most frequented departure points for aspiring migrants and France hopes that Mohammed VI will help curb migration to Europe. In addition, France also has a high level of interest in avoiding a power vacuum in the increasingly volatile region that includes unstable and warring countries like Libya and Sudan.

"Macron desires to prop up the Moroccan monarchy, which has been suffering a crisis of legitimacy in recent years amid rising Russian and Iranian influence in neighbouring Algeria and broader security concerns across the Sahel," Gower said.

However, France's decision

also has the potential to 'throw Algeria more in the arms of the Russian Iranian axis, and push Algeria into a counter move, particularly in light of its upcoming presidential elections in early September', Atlantic Council's Zaaïmi told DW.

Zine Labidine Ghebouli, a political analyst on Algeria and postgraduate scholar at the University of Glasgow, is therefore worried that 'the region may be heading towards the moment when the Polisario Front decides that it is more appropriate and more useful to intensify its military campaign rather than waiting for a diplomatic solution that may not come'.

So far, however, the Sahrawi news agency only reported that the Polisario Front has asserted that resolving the situation in occupied Western Sahara necessitates the 'strict and firm implementation' of international legitimacy resolutions.

DW

INDIA

'India can help stop Russia-Ukraine war'

New Delhi is not a mere audience to the war, but it is on the side of peace, says foreign affairs expert

New Delhi - Using its influence, India can intervene and stop the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, said foreign affairs expert Robinder Sachdev on Saturday, adding that New Delhi is not a mere audience to the war, but it is on the side of peace.

Repeating Prime Minister Modi's recent statement that India is not neutral in the war and that the only side the country is favour of is the side of peace, Sachdev said: "As the Prime Minister said, we are not supporting either side in any war. The only side we are supporting is the side of peace. So when Zelensky says that India should support Ukraine and not Russia, I think he is very mistaken. Prime minister has clearly said, and that has been India's position, that we are not neutral in this war. We are not taking sides in this war. We are taking the side of peace," Sachdev added.

"Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky said that India can stop this war and can put the Russian economy in the right place. Certainly, India has influence, trust and an honest friendship with Russia and Putin, as Zelensky says. But he wants India to use its influence to create an outcome that is favourable to Zelensky. They want to settle a war but on their own terms. Russia has its own terms and conditions for ending the war. The issue is that India can play the role of an honest broker between the two, as well as the Western NATO and American allies. But both sides



PM Narendra Modi exchanges greetings with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on his arrival at Mariinsky Palace, in Kyiv on Friday (ANI)

will have to adjust their positions," he said.

This, however, isn't the first time that Prime Minister Modi has strongly put forward the country's stance on the conflict between Moscow and Kyiv, earlier too PM Modi had said that

this is 'not an era of war', added Sachdev.

"This is the era to live and let live. And that philosophy comes from India's civilisational legacy of Gautam Buddha, Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda. And the world

knows that. So when prime minister says in Poland or in Ukraine that we come from the land of Buddha and Gandhi, the world notices. And also let us remember one thing. In this world of today, no nation, no big power country is talking about a middle

path, a common sense like India is doing," he added.

The Foreign Affairs expert said that the world is talking in terms of power struggles and violence, but India is suggesting the path of peace. "Be it America, China, European countries,

Russia all of them are talking the language of dominance and competition. None of them is talking in the language of coexistence and peace. India is the only big power that is talking the language of peace. And therefore the world listens (to India)," he said.

Sachdev added that the recent visits to Poland and Ukraine by PM Modi are crucial to our foreign policy. "This visit by Prime Minister Modi is gear-changing for India and our for-

come so weak that it becomes fully dependent upon China. So it is in Russia's and India's interest that this conflict end as soon as possible so that Russia does not become so weak that it has to become dependent upon China," he said.

Sachdev added that the US and other countries want India to stop oil imports from Russia. "But we continue nevertheless to support our oil needs. "The US asks India to influence Russia to act per its terms. If we stop

Be it America, China, European countries, Russia, all of them are talking the language of dominance and competition. India is the only big power that is talking the language of peace

ROBINDER SACHDEV

foreign policy. Prime Minister Modi has decided that we will play a proactive role in helping to end this conflict," he said.

"Russia understands India very well. Russia is a mature country and we have immense trust between Russia and India. Prime Minister's first visit outside India in his third term was to Russia. Russia in a way also looks forward to India's role in this conflict because it would also want this conflict to end at some time. But, it will want the conflict to end on its own terms which is the essential dispute. In any case, Russia also wants an end to this conflict in some time. Russia also does not want to be-

importing oil from Russia, its economy will fall. But, the West must understand that if we stop importing oil from Russia, how will our oil needs be met? Ukraine must understand that we aren't taking oil from Russia for the benefit of their economy, but for our needs," he said.

Sachdev said that India has maintained its stance on peace and ceasefire. "Across all wars that have taken place in the world - even the case of Israel and Gaza - India has maintained its stance of siding with peace and ceasefire. Even if Zelensky says that we must be on his side, we will be on the side of peace." ANI

1st reusable hybrid rocket launched



India launches 'RHUMI-1' at Thiruvandhahai in Chennai on Saturday (ANI)

Chennai, Tamil Nadu - India launched its first reusable hybrid rocket 'RHUMI-1', developed by the Tamil Nadu-based start-up Space Zone India (SZI) with Martin Group, from Thiruvandhahai in Chennai on Saturday.

The rocket, carrying three Cube Satellites and 50 PICO Satellites, was launched into a suborbital trajectory using a mobile launcher. These satellites will be collecting data for research purposes on global warming and climate change. RHUMI Rocket is equipped with a generic-fuel-based hybrid motor and electrically triggered parachute deployer, RHUMI is 100 per cent pyrotechnic-free and 0 per cent TNT.

The mission RHUMI is led by Anand Megalingam, the founder of the Space Zone, under the mentorship of Dr Mylswamy Annadurai Former Director of ISRO Satellite Centre (ISAC).

The RHUMI-1 rocket combines the advantages of both liquid and solid fuel propellant systems to improve efficiency and reduce operational costs.

SZI is an aero-technology company in Chennai that aims to provide low-cost, long-term solutions in the space industry.

SZI provides hands-on training experience on Aerodynamic principles, Satellite Technology, Drone Technology and Rocket Technology. It also creates awareness of the career options in this industry. SZI works with private institutions, engineering and art and science colleges, and private and government schools.

In 2023, through mission 'Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Students Satellite Launch - In 2023' over 2,500 students contributed in designing and construction of a student satellite launch vehicle. ANI

IAF team takes off for first Egypt International Airshow

New Delhi - The Indian Air Force contingent with its team of five Sarang helicopters is on its way to the first edition of the Egypt International Airshow, the IAF said on Saturday.

The helicopters are being airlifted by C-17s for the airshow at Al-Alamein International Airport from September 3-5, the Air Force statement said. In a post on X, the Air Force said: "Lock, stock, and barrel...the Sarang team is on their way to the first edition of the Egypt International Airshow! The IAF contingent with its five Sarang helicopters (ALH Mk1) being airlifted by C-



The IAF contingent, comprising a team of five Sarang helicopters is on their way to the first edition of the Egypt International Airshow (ANI)

17s for the airshow at Al-Alamein Intl Airport from 3rd to 5th Sep 24. IAF Sarang team, flying the indigenous 'Dhruv' ALH, represents the spirit of 'Atmanirbharta' and showcases India's aviation excellence."

Earlier on August 14, the first phase of India's largest multilateral air exercise 'Tarang Shakti' involving the air forces of Germany, France, Spain, and the UK concluded at Sullur in Tamil Nadu.

Speaking at the concluding press conference, IAF Chief, Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari, conveyed his appreciation to all

participating friendly foreign countries.

"He stated that the first phase of the largest multinational air exercise in six decades, conveyed the message of friendship and cooperation, besides involving brilliant performances. The canvas of the exercise was well spread covering aspects of flying and maintenance practices to sports and yoga," IAF posted on X.

The chiefs of the German, French and Spanish Air Forces, appreciated the capability of IAF to host such a complex exercise. ANI

Jammu and Kashmir: What to expect as elections return?

Jammu and Kashmir is set for a local election, the first to vote in their local administration since 2014, with the polling set to be held in three phases between September 18 and October 1.

The union territory took part in the national polls this summer, with chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar saying people chose 'ballots over bullets' and praising the 58 per cent turnout in June. While announcing the local poll schedule in Jammu and Kashmir, Kumar said he hopes for a similar response in the upcoming vote.

The Himalayan region, which is claimed by both India and Pakistan, has been embroiled in violence since the start of armed insurgency there in 1989. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the ensuing violence.

New Delhi still in control

During the last such election,



First-time voters after casting their vote for the 6th phase of the Lok Sabha polls in J-K on May 25 (ANI)

Jammu and Kashmir were still considered a state. State governments were elected every six years, but the last one, the coalition of regional Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), did not last a full term - it was elected in 2014 and lost its majority in 2018.

Then, in 2019, the govern-

ment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi revoked Jammu and Kashmir's semi-autonomous status and split the state into two federally administered territories. This granted New Delhi much more direct control over the restive region that has struggled with insurgency.

And even after the local polls

are done and the new administration is in place, its officials will still have to leave many key decisions about the region's economy and security to the national government in New Delhi and to its local representative, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

A spokesman for the PDP told DW that his party wants to

see the region regain its status as one of India's states.

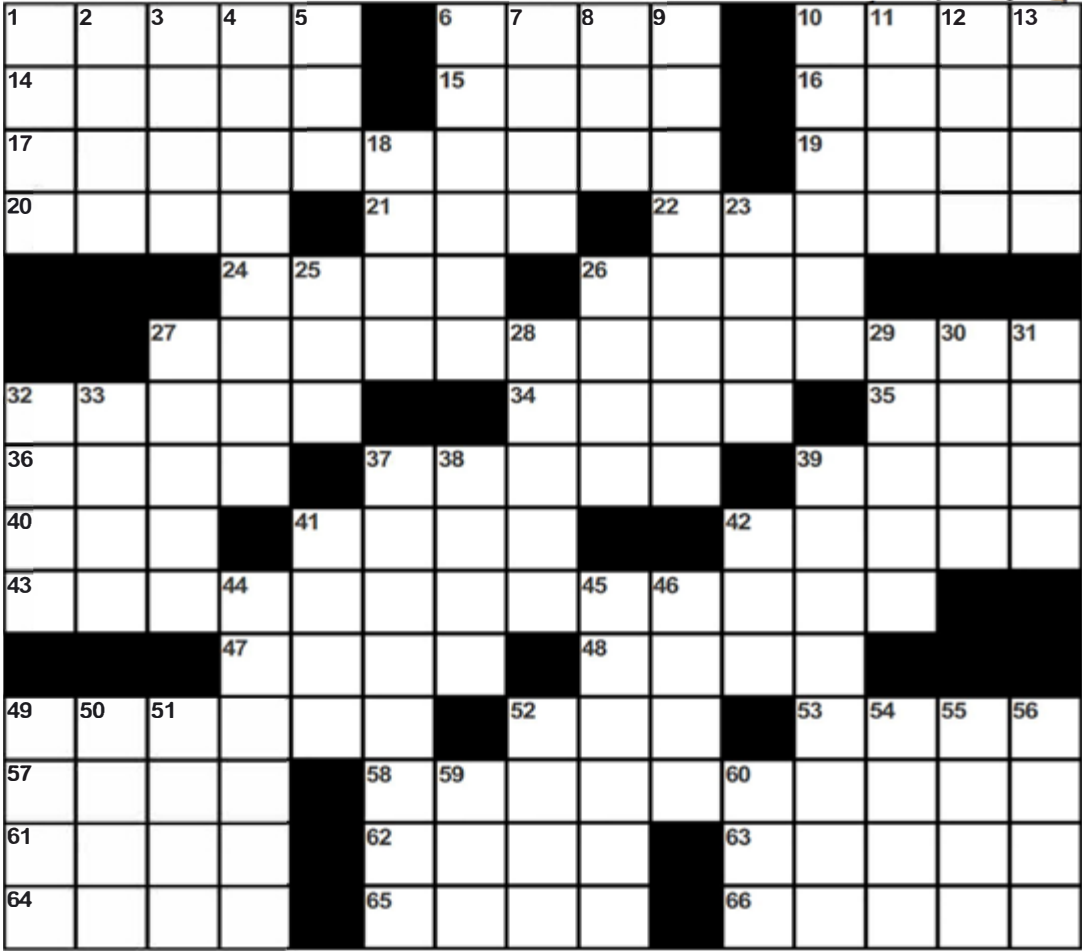
"This is not what we hoped for and want statehood restored. But at least we will have people's representation in the assembly and a voice for the people that has not been heard," PDP spokesperson Mohit Bhan said.

Another regional political party, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, has already vowed to push for an India-Pakistan dialogue on Kashmir, introduce laws to protect jobs and land, and seek the release of political prisoners.

It also wants local officials to regain their former power.

"We are determined to have statehood restored. The government has already made this promise to the Supreme Court. If it does not restore statehood willingly, we will pursue justice through the court," the National Conference vice president, Omar Abdullah, told local media. DW

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Rice with spice
6) Canned fare since 1937
10) Take-out shop
14) Florida citrus city
15) Mata_
16) Libidinous god
17) Shaving mishaps
19) Musical Simone
20) Place for a patch
21) Word on a dollar
22) Like a banjo
24) Great in scope
26) It may be rigged
27) Madison Square Garden team
32) Dean Martin song subject
34) Argus' many
35) Derby or bowler
36) McEntire sitcom
37) Bond and Smart, for two
39) Timbuktu's land
40) Having four sharps
41) Blueprint detail, briefly
42) Home run, in slang
43) Trade school subject
4 7) Send to the canvas
48) Expensive wrap
49) London's Downing,

e.g.

- 52) Swab's implement
53) Flapjack-selling chain
57) Fictional sleuth Charlie
58) Ones forbidden to emigrate from the USSR
61) Still-life vessels
62) Codebreaker Turing
63) City on the Seine
64) Trombone accessory
65) Shopper's reminder
66) Sugary

DOWN

- 1) Popular barbecue meat
2) Words of confidence
3) Veg out
4) Bum soother
5) A long way off
6) Japanese religion
7) Walk nervously
8) Object of Indiana Jones' quest
9) Bloopers
10) Alaskan national park
11) Cork's land, to poets
12) Over the limit
13) Words to an old chap
18) Apt to snoop
23) Takes the gold
25) Leave speechless
26)_ terrier (dog breed)
27) "Check"
28) Modern composer Steve
29) Chews the fat
30) Crinkly veggie
31) Tend to the sauce
32) Diva's delivery
3 3) Diner handout
37) Like the colors of the rainbow
38) Eat like a chicken
39) Short, heavy woolen coat
41) Hook's sidekick
42) Sardine can material
44) Danish seaport
45) Dollar total
46) Playful bites
49) Pond gunk
50) NO _ TRAFFIC
51) Go on a tirade
52) Advanced degs. for curators
54) Bring on board
55) Any of Steinbeck's Joads
56) Soft "Hey you!"
59) One of football's Man-nings
60) Mini-albums, for short

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your stubborn attitude might become a problem for you today. Love life will gain strength. Health conditions are likely to improve. Financially, situations will strengthen as a huge amount of money inflow is expected. It's a pleasant day for you today. Interacting with people around you is what you will be occupied with. A major change is likely to take place in your life. Your Lucky color is Gray. Your Lucky number is 15.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You will find yourself cherishing the small things in life. Health conditions will improve. Encounter with an acquaintance is likely to occur. This friend might delight you with a pleasant surprise. End of a job or a relationship are in sight. Inflow of money from a new project is likely to improve your financial conditions. Your lucky colour is brown. Your lucky number is 10.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

If you have been thinking of entering into a new enterprise with respect to love life, then you must go for it as fortune seems to be smiling at you. Financially, you will feel secure and are likely to extend your helping hand to a friend or relative. Students are likely to receive some good news with respect to their academic fields. Workload will give you a headache and you may resort to medications. Your lucky colour is red. Your lucky number is 30.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. When Dartmoor Prison first opened in 1809 what was its purpose?

- A. To house prisoners-of-war
B. To house serious offenders
C. A correctional house for young offenders
D. A workhouse

2. Which of these describes a boisterous, knockabout style of humour?

- A. Bostick
B. Yardstick
C. Slapstick
D. Chapstick

3. Who was the first British monarch of the House of Windsor?

- A. George V
B. Victoria
C. Edward VII
D. Stephen

Answers: 1.A 2.C 3.A



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Office workers may expect a promotion. It's a good day to trust your instincts and to pursue what you find pleasure in. Do not let your anxiety and fear hold you back. Financially, you might have to deal with some crisis so, keep a close on your spending today. Talking about your romantic life, you have no other option but to walk off in disappointment as no change can be anticipated in this field. Your lucky colour is black. Your lucky number is 4.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You may lose your temper today. But it is advised to stay positive and leave the circumstances as they are. Things will improve as time will pass. Health wise, you might incorporate a new fitness related activity in your daily routine. Financially, an inflow of huge amounts of money can be anticipated. Complications are likely to arise in relationships. Your lucky colour is green. Your lucky number is 23.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You may feel that you are a sack full of duties and responsibilities in your personal life. This may give you the mental pressures. For those who are seeking justice in judicial matters, it may end in disappointment as the time is not favourable for you in this respect. Your lucky colour is yellow. Your lucky number is 4.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Those in search of their soul mates might find them today. You might plan a vacation with your family and friends outside the city. Financial crises and even health issues are also expected to arise. But not to worry and let time heal everything; you just need to have faith in yourself. Mental health can also be seen improving. In all, it's a decent day for you. Be careful with the paperwork today. Your lucky colour is yellow. Your lucky number is 17.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Professionally, growth can be anticipated by those in office jobs. You seem to be celebrating a successful completion of a project. Try to maintain distance with those who are trying to dominate you and pull your morale down. Health and wealth-related matters will be in your favour today. Your lucky colour is blue. Your lucky number is 11.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

For those who are seeking justice in judicial matters, it may end up in disappointment as the time is not favourable for you in this respect. Your determination and integrity will help you achieve your goals. Good news from a family member can be expected. Financial conditions can be seen improving. Your lucky colour is brown. Your Lucky number is 7.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Love life can be seen gaining strength. Those who are committed may desire to bring a new dimension in their love life. Health issues might disturb you, so, avoid exertion. Opportunities might come your way and it's a good time to grab them. The hard work you have been doing since a very long time will bear fruitful outcomes today. Financially, things will be in your favour today. Your lucky colour is orange. your lucky number is 12.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

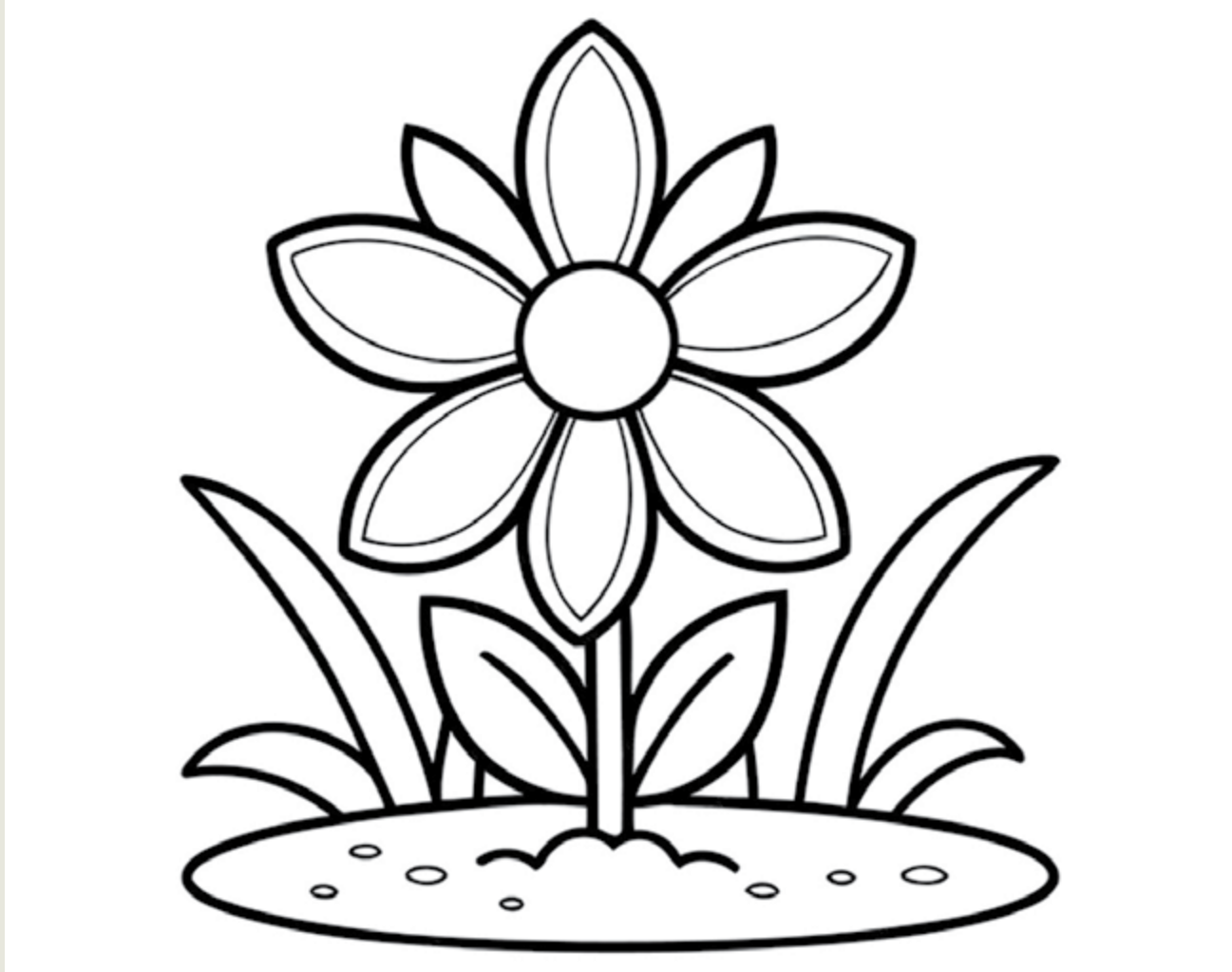
Comeback of your ex-lover can be anticipated. Health wise, some heart-related issues might trouble you, so take care. Avoid uttering harsh words. Someone close to you will make you dance to their own tunes. You may feel like questioning such a behaviour but it's recommended to stay quiet as this is being done for your own benefit. Your lucky colour is purple. Your lucky number is 9.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You will be in an indecisive mood today regarding your investments. Dedicate minutes of your life to yourself which will help you analyse the situation pretty well. Be careful with money related matters today. Some health issues might bother you today. Your love life will gain strength. Good news from your spouse can be expected. Your lucky colour is black. Your lucky number is 14.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

A	P	O	R
H	L	R	S
E	O	A	D
R	E	Y	L

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

SOLUTION

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



Sergi Roberto

Como sign ex-Barca midfielder Roberto

Como, Italy - Former Barcelona midfielder Sergi Roberto has joined newly-promoted Serie A side Como, the Italian club said on Friday.

The former Barcelona captain, who had joined the Spanish side as a 14-year-old, signed with Como as a free agent after his Barca contract ended last season.

"Sergi has played his whole career so far at one of the best clubs in the world," manager Cesc Fabregas told the club website.

"He is a versatile player and can adapt to many different positions, midfield, full-back, with his passing accuracy and strength he is the definition of a box to box player. His experience will be crucial for the season ahead."

Roberto, 32, won seven La Liga titles and lifted two Champions League trophies with Barcelona.

He represented Spain 11 times, scoring one goal.

Como is coached by former Arsenal, Barcelona and Chelsea midfielder Fabregas.

HAALAND HITS HATTRICK

Manchester City crush Ipswich, Brighton stun United

Manchester, England - Manchester City scored three goals in less than four minutes after conceding a shock early goal to crush promoted Ipswich Town 4-1 in the Premier League on Saturday.

Erling Haaland netted a hat-trick and Kevin De Bruyne also scored as City stayed perfect in their quest for a fifth consecutive league title and Ipswich remained without a point.

"Last season (Haaland) struggled a lot, especially at the beginning," City manager Pep Guardiola told reporters. "He felt tired and niggles most of the time. This time with the rest with no Euros, he has arrived with a good vibe. The numbers are unbelievable."

Sammie Szmodics fired Ipswich into a surprise lead in the seventh minute when Ben Johnson sent him in behind City's defence and Ederson mishandled his shot which rolled into the net.

The visitors' goal fired up City who netted three times in 191 seconds, sparked by Haaland's penalty in the 12th minute.

De Bruyne capitalised on an error by keeper Arijanet Muric to put City ahead and Haaland grabbed his second when De Bruyne chipped a ball over the top and the big Norwegian beat Muric to it.



Manchester City's Erling Haaland celebrates after scoring against Ipswich Town

The crossbar spared Ipswich more first-half blushes as Rico Lewis and De Bruyne smashed shots off the woodwork in quick succession.

Haaland completed his hat-trick with a rocket from just outside the 18-yard box in the 88th minute, the goal-scoring machine's fourth of the young season.

Brighton win

Brighton & Hove Albion beat Manchester United 2-1 to stay perfect in the Premier League after Joao Pedro scored a late winner in the fifth minute of added time to give new manager

Last season (Haaland) struggled a lot, especially at beginning. He felt tired and niggles most of the time. This time with no Euros, he has arrived with a good vibe.

PEP GUARDIOLA

Fabian Huerzeler a victory on his home debut.

Brighton striker Danny Welbeck scored the opener against his former club before Amad Diallo drew United level in the second half and the game looked destined for a draw until the dying minutes.

In another match, goalkeeper Jordan Pickford's error and Son Heung-min's brace helped Tottenham Hotspur to a comprehensive 4-0 victory over hapless Everton. Yves Bissouma and Cristian Romero were also among the goals as Tottenham eased to their first win of the campaign.



Joachim Andersen

Fulham sign Danish defender Andersen

Fulham, England - Fulham have signed Danish centre back Joachim Andersen from fellow Premier League club Crystal Palace on a contract until the summer of 2029, with an option to extend by a further year, the West London club announced on Friday.

Financial details were not disclosed by either club, but British media reported that the deal was worth around 30 million pounds (\$39.56 million).

The 28-year-old, capped 36 times for Denmark, had joined Palace in 2021 from Ligue 1 club Olympique Lyonnais, making 113 appearances across all competitions for the Selhurst-based side.

He also spent the 2020-21 season on loan at Fulham. "It's really nice to be here. Feels a little bit like coming home, so it's a good feeling," Andersen told FFCTv.

"I know the club, I know how Fulham are playing, I know many players, I know some staff, so I didn't need anyone to convince me because I knew a lot of things already."

Gundogan's return a big boost for Manchester City

Manchester, England - In the summer of 2023, Ilkay Gundogan said an emotional goodbye to Manchester City after seven years of service, 14 major trophies and the perfect ending, having just captained his team to the treble.

"It's amazing what we achieved," Gundogan wrote in a goodbye note in The Players' Tribune as he headed off to Barcelona. "Yes, the football was sensational at times. But the people were even better. I will remember you all for the rest of my life. Thank you for everything."

Those are not the words of someone who thought they'd be back a year later.

Gundogan's return to Man City is among the least-expected transfers of the summer, and yet his homecoming makes perfect sense.

Pep Guardiola has missed Gundogan. Man City never adequately replaced him for the 2023/24 season, and the recent departure of Julian Alvarez has only increased the need for a goalscoring playmaker.

"(Gundogan) called me and asked me the situation, the chance to come back and we said yes immediately," Guardiola told reporters on Friday.



Manchester City's Ilkay Gundogan during a team training session

"He played really well last season and I know how competitive it is. I love his qualities and he will give us an incredible alternative."

"If he has to play (Saturday) then he knows everything. He is always in the right position and everyone is so thrilled and happy that he is back. I am sure it is the same from the fans."

Gundogan described City's offer as the "perfect package" and

Guardiola agreed.

"It is a privilege for all of us (to be at the club). It is an honour," the manager said. "The club is being ran for everyone amazingly. (The players) have everything they need to perform at the highest level possible. That is why it is a comfortable place to work."

Gundogan was the first player through the door after Guardiola's arrival in 2016.

Chelsea exploring additional striker options, says Maresca

London, England - Chelsea will not shy away from bringing in a new number nine before the transfer window deadline if the player improves the squad, coach Enzo Maresca said on Friday.

Chelsea have splashed out over 160 million pounds on signing players such as Pedro Neto, Joao Felix, Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall and goalkeeper Filip Jorgensen.

The West London club have strikers Christopher Nkunku and Nicolas Jackson and Marc Guiu is another option after the 18-year-old joined from LaLiga club Barcelona in July. "I just communicate the players that I like and the players I don't like. Hopefully, we can find solutions for them because at the end, when you find solutions, everyone is happy," Maresca told reporters.

"We don't need to sign players just for signing players. If we sign a player to make us improve, we will sign players, otherwise we are happy with the way we are."

"If we have a chance to bring a number nine that makes us better, we are going to try."

The Italian's side travel to Wolverhampton Wanderers in the Premier League on Sunday and Portuguese Neto could play against his former club.

"Pedro, the last time he played



Enzo Maresca

We don't need to sign players just for signing. We sign a player to make us improve otherwise we are happy with the way we are.

ENZO MARESCA

90 minutes was in February. You can imagine, a long time ago. We need with him, and seven or eight more players... we need to also build the physical condition," Maresca said.

Portuguese Felix could also feature at Molineux, having returned to Chelsea on a permanent deal after spending six months on loan during the 2022-23 season.



Eddie Howe with Kieran Trippier

Newcastle manager Howe rejects Trippier exit rumours

London, England - Newcastle United manager Eddie Howe said he was surprised by reports that Kieran Trippier wants to leave the Premier League club, and praised the defender's professionalism since his return from Euro 2024.

Trippier rejoined Newcastle late after playing for England at the European Championship, and did not feature in the 1-0 Premier

League victory over Southampton on Saturday.

"He's trained really well since he came back from the Euros -- I think he's only had two weeks of training, hence the reason why he didn't start last week," Howe told reporters on Friday.

"The situation is business as usual, Tripps has trained really well this week. I'm surprised by a

lot of the stories that have come out. (He's) a valuable member of the squad. His professionalism has been first class."

Trippier, who played six of England's seven games at Euro 2024, has been linked to Everton, where he would reunite with manager Sean Dyche they spent three years at Burnley together.

"I'm not really sure where this

has come from. He's preparing as we all are for the game on Saturday. His leadership skills, his ability with the ball, his assist record, everything he brings to the group we definitely want here."

Newcastle travel to Bournemouth on Sunday. Bournemouth kicked off their campaign with a 1-1 draw at Nottingham Forest.

LEVERKUSEN WIN THRILLING OPENER

Last-gasp Wirtz goal gives reigning champions win at Gladbach in Bundesliga opener

Moenchengladbach, Germany - A stoppage-time goal by Florian Wirtz secured a 3-2 win for champions Bayer Leverkusen at Borussia Moenchengladbach in the Bundesliga season opener on Friday, extending their unbeaten league run into the new campaign.

Leverkusen were awarded a penalty deep into stoppage time for Ko Itakura's foul on substitute Amine Adli and Wirtz scored on a rebound to earn the visitors the three points.

Granit Khaka opened the scoring for Leverkusen in the 12th minute with a powerful strike from outside the box before Wirtz doubled their lead in the 38th on a rebound.

But defender Nico Elvedi pulled one back for Gladbach just before the hour mark from close range and Tim Kleindienst nutmegged Leverkusen defender Edmond Tapsoba to level for the hosts five minutes from time.

Leverkusen became the first team ever to go unbeaten across an entire Bundesliga campaign last season and have now extended that streak to 35 games.

In Bundesliga history, only two teams enjoyed longer undefeated runs across multiple campaigns: Bayern Munich with 53 games from 2012 to 2014 and Hamburg SV (36 games from 1982 to 1983).

Leverkusen, who beat VfB



Bayer Leverkusen's Florian Wirtz celebrates with teammates after scoring against Borussia Moenchengladbach

Stuttgart on penalties to win the German Supercup on Saturday, moved in front through Khaka early on as the Switzerland midfielder grabbed a rebound and smashed the ball inside a top corner.

Jeremie Frimpong broke into the box with the ball later in the half and Alejandro Grimaldo's close-range attempt was saved by Gladbach keeper Jonas Omlin before Wirtz landed a rebound to increase the advantage.

But Gladbach, who narrowly avoided relegation playoffs last season to finish 14th on 34 points, stood up to the title-holders and Kleindienst thought he pulled one back for the hosts just before halftime. The forward bundled the ball in with a diving header but his goal was disallowed for a foul following a VAR review.

Gladbach eventually made it past Leverkusen defence through Elvedi in the 59th minute after goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky denied his header, and Kleindienst earned his share late in the game - a goal that stood following a VAR review for possible offside.

The game was interrupted early in the second half when the field was filled with smoke after fans started using pyrotechnics, halting the play for just under 10 minutes. Leverkusen next host RB Leipzig on August 31 while Gladbach travel to VfL Bochum.



Bayer Leverkusen manager Xabi Alonso celebrates with his players

'We have to be more aggressive'

Moenchengladbach, Germany - Bayer Leverkusen manager Xabi Alonso asked for more character after his side beat Borussia Moenchengladbach 3-2 in the Bundesliga season opener on Friday through yet another stoppage-time winner.

Leverkusen were awarded a penalty deep into added time and Florian Wirtz scored on a rebound to earn the visitors the three points after Gladbach's Ko Itakura fouled substitute Amine Adli.

"It was an intense first Bundesliga game for us. A lot of things happened in the second half, it was full of emotion right to the end.

We did well in many phases," Alonso told a press conference.

"But we weren't always so compact today, we were also a bit passive in some phases. We have to do that better. We have to be more aggressive.

"It's difficult to explain why we always score late goals. We can't train that and I can't influence it. It's the mentality of the team."

Champions Leverkusen, who set a European record of 51 consecutive games without loss across all competitions last season, kept their unbeaten streak intact with a number of late equalisers.

"We said at halftime that we must not let up and not think that the game is over," said former Gladbach player Granit Khaka.

"At the end of the first half, we started not being consistent enough in our passing game and losing easy balls. Here at home, Gladbach never die, you could see that in the (goals for) 1-2 and 2-2."

"I had the feeling that we made it unnecessarily difficult for ourselves," added Wirtz, who scored two goals on the night, including the decider."



Jude Bellingham

Bellingham expected to miss several weeks after suffering muscle injury

Madrid, France - Real Madrid midfielder Jude Bellingham sustained a muscle injury during training, the Spanish club said on Friday, and will miss key games for club and country.

The 21-year-old, who was a key player last season when Real won the Champions League and LaLiga titles, will be sidelined for several weeks.

"Following tests carried out today on our player Jude Bellingham by the Real Madrid Medical Services, he has been diagnosed with an injury to the plantaris muscle in his right leg. Pending evolution," Real said in a statement.

He will miss Sunday's LaLiga clash against Real Valladolid and England's Nations League matches next month against Ireland and Finland. Real coach Carlo Ancelotti, who usually talks to the media one day before each Real game, decided to change the schedule so he could hold his final training session behind closed doors.



Worried players call for help after Nacional player Juan Izquierdo collapsed on the field

Uruguay suspends football over Izquierdo's health

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Uruguay suspended all football activity for the weekend on Friday due to "the delicate health situation of Juan Izquierdo", after the Nacional defender suffered an irregular heartbeat during the match against Sao Paulo in the Copa Libertadores.

Izquierdo, who replaced Sebastian Coates at halftime, fell to the ground unconscious in the 84th minute without coming into contact with another player.

Still unconscious, the 27-year-old was taken off the pitch in an ambulance. He is being treated

at the intensive care unit of the Albert Einstein Hospital in Sao Paulo.

"Given the delicate health situation of footballer Juan Izquierdo, we inform our decision to suspend the professional football activity scheduled for this weekend," said the association for the rights of professional footballers in Uruguay, Mutual (MUFP).

"Our priority at the moment is to look after Juan's wellbeing, so we will closely follow his evolution in the coming hours," the association added.

Barcola hits double as PSG thrash Montpellier

Paris, France - Bradley Barcola scored twice as Ligue 1 champions Paris St Germain hammered Montpellier 6-0 in their first home game of the season on Friday.

PSG were dominant throughout the encounter at the Parc des Princes to record a second straight win following their 4-1 victory at Le Havre in their league opener last week.

"I'm very happy because it's our first home game. We wanted to give the fans some joy. It was a perfect evening. I felt it in training, the intensity of the pressing increased," PSG manager Luis Enrique told DAZN.

"We scored six goals but we could have scored 10. Today was our night... the players were incredible. It's a great feeling."

Barcola opened the scoring in the fourth minute following a great solo run down the left flank before Marco Asensio doubled the lead, sending the ball into the net after a brilliant team move through a weak defence from the visitors in the 24th.

Barcola netted his second with a tap-in off a Ousmane Dembele pass eight minutes after the break, while Achraf Hakimi coolly slotted home from Nuno Mendes' pinpoint long-



Paris St Germain's Bradley Barcola celebrates after scoring against Montpellier

I had a lot of fun. The coach asked everyone to press together. You have to make a lot of effort, but you get used to it as you go along. I've realised that I can make a difference.

BRADLEY BARCOLA

range cross five minutes later.

"I had a lot of fun, I felt free. The coach asked everyone to press together. You have to make a lot of effort, but you get used to it as you go along," Bar-

cola said.

"I've realised that I can make a difference. Pushing the ball like that on the first goal is something I've been doing since I was very young."

Warren Zaire-Emery got on the scoresheet on the hour mark off Dembele's second assist and substitute Lee Kang-in sealed the rout with a fine effort from the edge of the box eight minutes from time.

PSG will be looking to continue their perfect start to the campaign away against Lille on Sept. 1, while Montpellier host Nantes a day earlier.

"There have only been two games but I'm really pleased with what I've seen," Luis Enrique added.

Teenager Estevao gets first Brazil call-up

Sao Paulo, Brazil - Striker Estevao Willian, the 17-year-old sensation nicknamed 'Messinho', was called up to the Brazil squad for the first time on Friday by coach Dorival Jr for next month's World Cup qualifiers as Neymar continues to recover from injury.

Estevao, who will join Chelsea next year, will partner former Palmeiras teammate and new Real Madrid recruit Endrick. The

youngsters will be alongside Vinicius Jr, who was also called up in a bid to create a potent forward line. "I have always invested heavily in young players throughout my career. He is a player who has been emerging and showing great things. It is up to us to believe. I ask that we have a little patience with these kids. As was the case with Endrick," Dorival said in a press conference.

Neymar was not included in the squad because he is still recovering from a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and meniscus in his left knee. The striker, who underwent surgery, also missed the Copa America.

"No need to comment. Everyone knows how important he is (Neymar). But everything has to happen at the right time and in the right place. I have no doubt

that, as soon as he recovers, he will be included again," added Dorival. The 62-year-old manager, who took over in January, left out Barcelona winger Raphinha and Manchester United midfielder Casemiro.

Brazil, sixth in South American qualifiers with only seven points, host Ecuador in Curitiba on Sept. 6 before facing Paraguay four days later in Asuncion.



Estevao Willian



Mushfiquir Rahim

Mushfiquir big ton hands Bangladesh lead against Pakistan

Rawalpindi, Pakistan - Mushfiquir Rahim turned the tables on Pakistan on a hot and humid fourth day in Rawalpindi with an innings of 191 by being a figure of patience, and exhibiting controlled aggression and compact technique. His 11th Test hundred was also his first against Pakistan in the format. Mushfiquir's two century partnerships poured water on any hopes the hosts had of taking a first-innings lead at the start of the day. Riding on his knock, Bangladesh first took a sizeable lead of 117 runs by putting up 565, and then adding to Pakistan's jitters by dismissing Saim Ayub late in the day, with the hosts still trailing by 94 runs with a day left in the game.

Bangladesh's opening bowlers Shoriful Islam and Hasan Mahmud swung the ball beautifully in the ten overs Pakistan had to see through. They drew multiple edges out of which only one carried, beat the edges of the bat consistently, and bowled stifling lines to create several tense moments for Pakistan to concede only 23 runs.

Mushfiquir's century partnership with Litton Das didn't last long on Saturday, and when he added another hundred with No. 8 Mehidy Hasan Miraz, it made Bangladesh only the second team with two century partnerships after the fall of the fifth wicket in a Test innings against Pakistan.

Mushfiquir's two century partnerships poured water on any hopes the hosts had of taking a first-innings lead

Mehidy gave Mushfiquir company in a massive stand of 196 runs for the seventh wicket with his seventh Test half-century - and only his second outside Bangladesh - which first loosened Pakistan's grip on the game, and then strengthened their own by taking a lead after lunch.

Kamindu, Chandimal to Sri Lanka's rescue

Kamindu Mendis and Dinesh Chandimal forged a 101-run partnership for an unbroken seventh wicket to steer Sri Lanka to 291 for six at lunch on day four of the first Test against England on Saturday, after a rain-hit morning session. The visitors resumed on 204-6 at Old Trafford, with England looking to rack up early wickets and lay the foundation for a victory.

Kamindu (101 off 175 balls) helped to keep England at bay however, and scored his third Test century to leave the match tantalisingly poised with two sessions of the fourth day still to come.

SINNER NEEDS 'SOME CLEAN AIR'

World No 1 fires trainer and physio after scandal

New York, US - World number one Jannik Sinner announced he had fired his trainer and physiotherapist after he escaped a doping ban despite failing two drug tests in March.

The Italian tested positive for the steroid clostebol, which can be used to build muscle mass, after his physio Giacomo Naldi applied an over-the-counter spray to a cut on his own hand before carrying out treatments on Sinner. The spray was given to Naldi by trainer Umberto Ferrara.

The Australian Open champion was cleared of fault or negligence by a tribunal last week, accepting Sinner's explanation that he had inadvertently been contaminated with the substance by Naldi, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) said.

The positive doping tests came to light on Tuesday, a day after the Italian won his fifth title of the year at the Cincinnati Open. "They (Naldi and Ferrara) have been a huge part for my career," Sinner said in a news conference at the U.S. Open on Friday.

"We made an incredible job, bringing a lot of success and then having a great team behind me.



Jannik Sinner says he's 'not feeling that confident' to continue with his physio Giacomo Naldi and Umberto Ferrara because of the mistakes they made

"Now, because of these mistakes, I'm not feeling that confident to continue with them. I was struggling a lot in the last months. I was waiting for the result. The only thing I need right now is some clean air."

Sinner's case has created a storm considering other players who failed drugs tests usually get suspended during the course of the investigation.

Sinner has repeatedly maintained his innocence and said he was able to keep playing because his team quickly identified the source of the contamination.

"The reason why I could have played was because we knew where the substance was in and how it came into my body," he said. "This is very important, making this process, to letting them know, and they understood it straightaway."

Asked if he had concerns about the damage the controversy might cause to his reputation, Sinner said: "In my mind I knew that I haven't done anything wrong."

"Whoever knows me very well knows that I haven't done and I would never do something what goes against the rules."

"About the reputation, we will see moving forward, no? Because this, I can't really control."

Current and former players have alleged a double standard, questioning why Sinner was not immediately suspended like other players who had tested positive.

Former India opener Dhawan retires

New Delhi, India - Former India opener Shikhar Dhawan announced his retirement from cricket on Saturday, dropping curtains on a career in which he established himself as a prolific top order batter.

The Delhi player made his India debut against Australia in 2010 and his last international match was against Bangladesh in December 2022, both 50-overs matches, a format considered his strong suit.

"It's important to turn the page to move forward in life



Shikhar Dhawan

and that's why I am announcing my retirement from international and domestic cricket," the 38-year-old left hander said in a video posted on his social media accounts.

"I've told myself 'don't feel sad that you won't play for India anymore, but feel happy that you played for the country.'"

The left-hander smashed 24 international hundreds and particularly excelled in multi-team tournaments such as Champions Trophy, Asia Cup and the 2015 World Cup.

Norris takes pole in Zandvoort

Zandvoort, Netherlands - McLaren's Lando Norris took pole position for the Dutch Grand Prix by a hefty margin on Saturday and ended home hero Max Verstappen's 100% qualifying record at the F1 championship leader's home circuit.

Red Bull's Verstappen, yet to be beaten at Zandvoort since the race returned in 2021, will still line up alongside the Briton on the front row. Australian Oscar Piastri qualified in third place for McLaren and George Russell completed the second row.

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COMIC COVER



Sketch fetch

COVER ART SHOWING MARVEL HERO DEADPOOL'S FIRST APPEARANCE COULD SELL FOR RECORD US\$7.5MN

As Deadpool breaks records at the box office with *Deadpool & Wolverine*, cover art depicting the superhero's first ever comic book appearance 33 years ago could sell for a record US\$7.5mn.

Designed by writer and artist Rob Liefeld in 1991, it would become the most valuable comic book cover art ever sold if it fetches its asking price, according to Heritage Auctions, which is handling the sale.

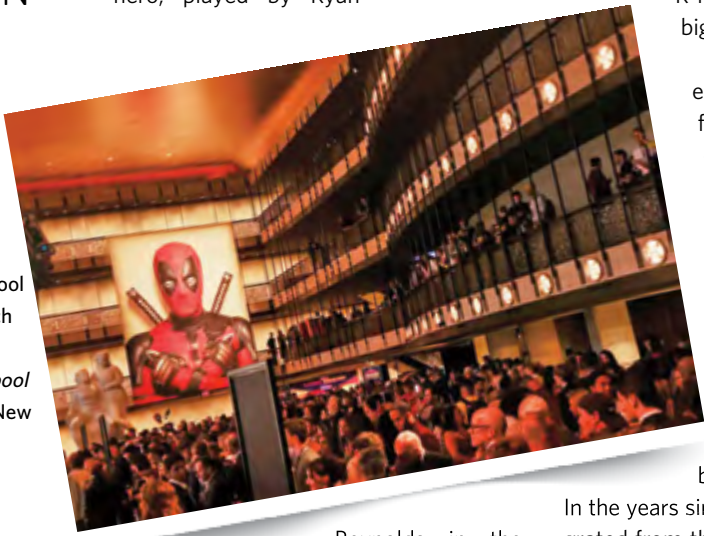
Ever since Deadpool's first appearance, fans have embraced the mercenary supervillain turned witty and unfiltered anti-hero, played by Ryan

New Mutants - the series in which he and scripter Fabian Nicieza introduced Deadpool - it was Marvel's lowest selling mutant title.

But the increasing popularity of Deadpool, alongside other new characters like Cable, transformed it into a more successful series, even outselling X-Men.

And similarly, the recently released *Deadpool & Wolverine* has smashed expectations at the box office, raking in US\$211mn domestically on its first weekend, making it the biggest opening of 2024, the biggest opening ever for an R-rated film, and the sixth biggest opening of all-time.

With Deadpool now firmly established as a lucrative franchise in pop culture, the cover art's owner approached Heritage Auctions saying 'the time is right' to sell it, the auction house said in a statement.



A poster of Deadpool at the David H Koch Theater during the premiere of *Deadpool and Wolverine* in New York City in July

The original cover art for Rob Liefeld's *The New Mutants* #98

Reynolds in the movie adaptations of the comic books.

"Marvel contacted me and said, this is the most fan mail we've had on a new character in 15 years," Liefeld said, according to Reuters. "They were flooded with letters, fan letters, which they sent me. And the box that that mail arrived in ... I thought I was getting a washer and dryer."

When Liefeld began working on *The*

In the years since then, Deadpool has migrated from the comic book to the silver screen, making his debut appearance in the 2009 movie *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, and his first lead appearance in 2016's *Deadpool*.

If the cover art fetches US\$7.5mn, it will surpass the record held by a 1938 comic that features Superman's first appearance and sold for US\$6mn at an auction.

(Courtesy: cnn.com)

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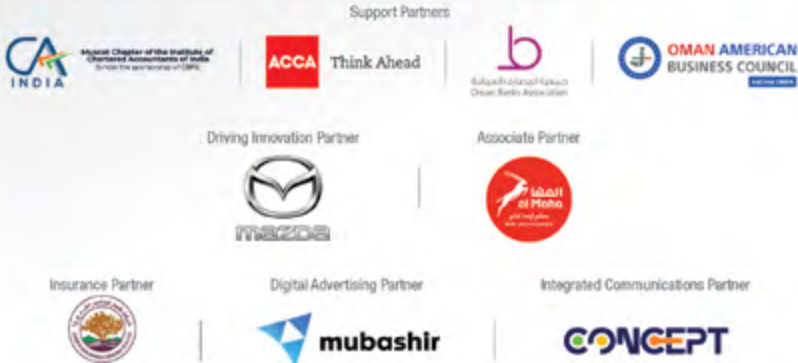
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