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Qatar condemns Colombia's opening of embassy in occupied Jerusalem

Qatar has condemned and denounced Colombia's opening of an embassy to Israel in the occupied Jerusalem, describing the move as a violation of international law and relevant international resolutions, particularly UN Security Council Resolution 478 (1980). In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) affirms Qatar's rejection of any measures aimed at altering Jerusalem's historical and legal status quo. It called on the international community to fulfill its responsibilities and take action to counter any attempts to impose a new reality in the occupied city, preserve its historical and legal status quo, and safeguard the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people. **(QNA)**

Gulf U-17 Cup Qatar kicks off today

Hosts Qatar will launch their Gulf U-17 Cup Qatar 2026 campaign against tournament debutants China today, aiming to make a winning start on home soil as the 10-team competition kicks off in Doha. **(QNA)**

COMMUNITY
See Page 5



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani holds talks with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev and Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.



Amir attends CICA summit in Baku

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani participated in the 7th Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) at the Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku yesterday at the invitation of Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev.

The summit brought together a number of heads of state and government, heads of delegations, and representatives of various regional and international organisations.

It was also attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani; HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi; members of the official delegation accompanying HH the Amir; members of the participating delegations; and senior officials and guests of the summit.

On the sidelines of the summit, His Highness the Amir met



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani at the CICA summit.

with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them in various fields, in addition to several issues and devel-

opments of mutual interest.

The two sides also exchanged views regarding key topics on the summit agenda, particularly those related to promoting security and stability at the regional and international levels.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani attended the meeting alongside HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan, Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khu-

laifi, and members of the official delegation accompanying HH the Amir. On the Azeri side, several members of the official delegation accompanying the Azerbaijan president attended the meeting. **To Page 12**

Interior minister meets Jordanian counterpart

HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met yesterday with Jordanian Minister of Interior Mazen al-Faraya during his visit to Amman. The meeting discussed bilateral co-operation and explored ways to strengthen and develop it, particularly in the security field, in addition to discussing several matters of mutual interest. **(QNA)**





تميم بن حمد
@TamimBinHamad

'CICA outcome would contribute to continent's security, prosperity'

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani praised the convening of the 7th Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Baku, Azerbaijan. His Highness expressed hope that its outcomes would contribute to the continent's security and the prosperity of its peoples. In a post on his official X account, HH the Amir lauded the convening of the 7th CICA Summit in Baku and looked forward to its outcomes that support the security of the continent and the prosperity of its peoples. His Highness added that the shared interests and challenges of Asian nations necessitate greater co-ordination and co-operation as well as efforts to transform the continent's vast potential and opportunities into developmental gains that benefit its peoples. **(QNA)**

MoI urges residency violators with no legal cases to seek assistance voluntarily

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The Search and Follow-Up Department at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) has urged expatriates who have violated residency requirements and want to return home to seek help instead of avoiding the authorities. Major Saud Hamad Alburaidi, head of the Detention Section, Search and Follow-Up Department at MoI, said at a webinar yesterday: "Individuals who have overstayed their permitted period of residence but have no other pending cases or legal proceedings can approach the department to request assistance with their departure. Individuals may approach the department voluntarily and explain their circumstances."

"Their circumstances will be reviewed by the Follow-Up Section, which will determine the necessary procedures. Where additional legal measures are required, the case will be processed in accordance with the applicable regulations before departure can be completed," he explained.

Maj Alburaidi detailed the services his department offers and the penalties for offenders. The Search and Follow-Up Department operates under the General Directorate of Passports. It follows up on violations involving entry permits, residency requirements, sponsorship regulations, and the conditions governing expatriates' stay in Qatar. "People engaging in illegal visa trading will have to undergo a jail term of up to three years and a fine of up to QR50,000. If the offence is repeated, the fine can go



Major Saud Hamad Alburaidi.

up to QR100,000," noted Maj Alburaidi, "If any person enters or exits the country through any other point other than the approved ones, he or she will have to face a jail term of three years and a fine of

QR50,000. Similarly, if an employer fails to process and renew the visa of an employee within 90 days from the expiry date, it attracts a fine of QR10,000," he continued.

The official stated: "The department takes legal action against individuals and companies that violate the provisions of the law. Such violations may include overstaying entry visas, failing to renew residency permits within the prescribed period, working or staying in violation of visa conditions and cases involving absconding or leaving work."

Depending on the circumstances, Maj Alburaidi said the department may refer cases to the prosecution for appropriate legal action. The department also follows up on prosecution decisions on preventive detention and release, implements applica-

ble decisions, and collects fines imposed on individuals and companies under the law.

"Additional responsibilities include investigating suspected visa-trading offences, conducting inspections of commercial establishments and offices, and carrying out legally authorised operations to locate and apprehend violators and other wanted persons," he underlined. Maj Alburaidi emphasised that each case's circumstances differ and must be examined individually. Legal measures are determined according to the nature of the violation and the applicable procedures.

A key message of the webinar was that the department's detention centre is not intended to serve as a place of punishment. He said: "It functions as a temporary ad-

ministrative facility for individuals whose departure from Qatar is being arranged following applicable legal decisions or procedures. Detainees are provided with round-the-clock healthcare, balanced meals and access to the relevant services and rights associated with their embassy or consular representation."

According to the official, expatriates who need help resolving residency-related issues can

access the available services through the Ministry of Interior's official website and its unified service centres, where relevant department services are provided. Those whose cases remain unresolved through these channels may approach the Search and Follow-Up Department's headquarters on Salwa Road for further guidance.



Minister meets Republic of Korea's ambassador



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met yesterday with Republic of Korea's ambassador to Qatar Hong Jeepio. During the meeting, the co-operative relations between the two countries were reviewed, in addition to topics of common interest. - QNA

Qatar, Sweden hold 5th round of political consultations



The fifth round of political consultations between the foreign ministries of Qatar and Sweden was held in Stockholm yesterday. HE the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi headed the Qatari side, while the director-general for Global Affairs at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs Mikael Lindvall headed the Swedish side. During the consultations, both sides discussed ways to foster co-operative relations between the two countries. The consultations were attended by Qatar's ambassador to Sweden Nadia bint Ahmed al-Sheebi along with the accompanying delegation. - QNA

Speaker joins GCC meeting ahead of talks with European Parliament president

HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim participated yesterday in the co-ordination meeting of speakers of legislative councils in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states.

The meeting discussed co-ordinating Gulf positions and perspectives on the topics on the agenda of the meeting with European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, scheduled to be held today at the European Parliament headquarters in Brussels.

Meanwhile, the GCC-European Parliamentary Committee held a meeting yesterday in Brussels, during which it reviewed the topics on the agenda of the meeting between the speakers of GCC legislative councils and Metsola.

The Shura Council was represented at the committee meeting by Mohammed bin Mahdi al-Ahbabi, Yousef bin Ali al-Khater, and Abdullah bin Nasser bin Turki al-Subaie.

HE the Shura Council Secretary-General Nayef bin Mohammed al-Mahmoud also participated in the meeting. - QNA

Qatar committed to supporting victims of disasters and crises

Qatar has reaffirmed its commitment to leveraging its resources and expertise to support countries and communities affected by disasters and crises.

Through the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and national humanitarian institutions, Qatar has established air bridges that include the International Search and Rescue Group of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), medical personnel and field hospitals, in addition to providing medical supplies such as medicines, food baskets, and shelter materials, as well as advanced equipment to assist those affected in disaster-stricken areas.

This was stated in a declaration delivered by Second Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations Abdulaziz Fadala al-Sulaiti during a meeting of the Sixth Committee of the UN General Assembly, its 81st session, regarding agenda item 88, titled "United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters", held at the UN's headquarters in New York.

Al-Sulaiti noted that Qatar places special importance on the protection of individuals during disasters, a matter of growing concern given the increasing frequency and severity of such events.

He pointed out that all countries across the globe are vulnerable to devastating natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes, which result in human and material losses that can sometimes be difficult for any single nation to confront alone.

This, the diplomat continued, necessitates strengthening international co-operation to protect lives and uphold human dignity, in embodiment of the principles and purposes of the UN Charter.

He said that Qatar has developed a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for addressing emergencies and disasters, managed by specialised national entities.

These, al-Sulaiti said, include the Supreme Committee for Crisis Management, the Civil Defence Council, the Doha Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre, the Standing Committee for Rescue and Relief Operations and Humanitarian Aids for Areas Afflicted by Catastrophes in Brotherly and Friendly Countries, and the Regulatory Authority for Charitable Activities.

He noted that Qatar supports the adoption of an international convention on the protection of persons in disaster situations, in accordance with the provisions of international law.

This is particularly significant given that there is no explicit rule in public international law obligating states to provide humanitarian assistance in the event of disasters; such a convention would provide a legal basis for taking necessary measures and establish a new mechanism for international co-operation in responding to disasters.

Al-Sulaiti emphasised that the agreement must strike a balance between ensuring the right of individuals to receive humanitarian assistance and respecting the sovereignty of states and the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs. - QNA

Interior minister meets Syrian counterpart



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani met yesterday with Syria's Minister of Interior Anas Khattab, during the latter's visit to the country. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation, relations between the two countries, ways to enhance and develop them, particularly in the security fields. - QNA

Amir condolences with Kuwait's Sheikh Meshal

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of condolences yesterday to Kuwait's Amir Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah on the passing of Sheikhha Badriya Fahad al-Malik al-Sabah.

HH the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent similar cables of condolences to Sheikh Meshal on the passing of Sheikhha Badriya. - QNA

Qatar eyes efforts to ramp up sustainable food production

Qatar is stepping up efforts to strengthen food security through sustainable farming practices and agricultural innovation, with domestic production meeting 99% of the country's needs for fresh poultry and dairy products, according to the Ministry of Municipality.

In a statement issued ahead of World Food Day today, the ministry outlined initiatives to improve local food production, conserve natural resources and reduce environmental impacts, in line with the objectives of Qatar's National Food Security Strategy 2030.

Self-sufficiency indicators for 2025 showed that domestic production also covered 67% of demand for fresh fish and 47% for basic vegetables.

The ministry said that Qatar is developing more efficient and sustainable food production systems, including the establishment of 96 hectares of cooled greenhouses, with a target of increasing productivity by 30%.

Other initiatives include improving fish farming technologies, introducing modern smart irrigation systems, expanding the use of alternative energy and strengthening plant and animal biosecurity.

Qatar is also working to make its food supply chains more resilient through digital management of strategic reserves, early-warning systems for supply chain disruptions, investment in green food production and refrigerated supply networks.

A national programme to reduce food loss and waste, alongside digital platforms for licensing and project monitoring, forms part of the wider effort to improve the efficiency of the food sector.

Qatar, Canada discuss co-operation



HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah met Canada's ambassador to Qatar Karim Morcos yesterday to discuss bilateral co-operation. The meeting reviewed relations between the two countries and explored areas of mutual interest. - QNA

The ministry also highlighted research into bio-based farming techniques conducted by its Agricultural Research Department, which tested the use of mycorrhizal fungi to improve crop growth.

The trials showed a 10% increase in plant growth and crop productivity compared with conventional farming, alongside improvements in soil properties and reduced reliance on chemical inputs.

The ministry said that combining biological farming methods with modern approaches,

including protected, hydroponic and vertical farming, could improve the efficient use of water and other resources while reducing waste.

Such techniques could also help local farms adapt to Qatar's desert climate and changing environmental conditions, supporting a more resilient and sustainable agricultural sector.

The ministry stressed that food security depends not only on increasing production but also on adopting responsible farming practices that protect natural resources and meet the needs of present and future generations. - QNA

Ministry of Transport wins first place in innovation category of Dubai Award for Sustainable Transport

The Ministry of Transport (MoT) has won first place in the Innovation category of the Dubai Award for Sustainable Transport (DAST) for its project Qatar Activity-Based Transport Model (QABM).

The DAST award recognised the QABM's excellence as an innovative national tool supporting strategic transportation planning and evidence-based, data-driven decision making.

The award was received by HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport Mohammed Abdullah al-Maadeed, at a ceremony held yesterday under the patronage of the Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Chairman of the Executive Council of Dubai, Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum.

"This achievement also recognises the ministry's efforts to develop an advanced national transportation modelling system," said Assistant Undersecretary for Land Transport Affairs Eng. Abdullah Saif al-Sulaiti.

"The QABM simulates people's daily activities and travel patterns, analyses transportation demand, assesses network performance, and tests the potential impacts of future projects and policies before



implementation," he said. "This supports more efficient planning and investment across Qatar's transportation system."

Winning first place, he added, reflects the ministry's "Land Transport Affairs' commitment to advancing innovation in transportation and using evidence and data to support decision-making based on systematic analysis and demonstrates the MoT's commitment to developing advanced planning tools that enhance the efficiency of the transportation system and strengthen the integration of strategic and operational planning".

Al-Sulaiti noted that this direction supports the objectives of the 3rd Qatar National Development Strategy, particularly its ambitions for leadership in digital government and the development of Government Excellence and the advancement of the model will not stop at this stage; it will serve as a foundation for automating the use of big and real-time data and for the continuous updating and improvement of the model through artificial intelligence (AI) and digital-twin technologies.

The model enables the assessment of a wide range of transportation scenarios and policies, including public transportation network development, parking management, Park & Ride services, transportation demand management, and the integration of land-use and transportation planning.

The Dubai Award for Sustainable Transport is a premier regional initiative that recognises and honours outstanding contributions that advance sustainable mobility and green infrastructure. - QNA

Qatar participates in meeting of GCC attorneys-general



Qatar, represented by the Public Prosecution, participated in the 18th meeting of the Attorneys-General of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) member states, held in Bahrain. Qatar's delegation was led by First Attorney-General and director of the Judicial Inspection Department at the Public Prosecution, Abdullah Mohammed al-Maliki.

The meeting addressed several agenda items, most notably the guidelines for the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the operations of the GCC public prosecution offices, and the establishment of a mechanism for forming joint investigation teams.

At the conclusion of the meeting, several members of the GCC public prosecution offices were honoured with the "Hamed Al-Othman Award". Among those recognised was Public Prosecutor Turki Rashid al-Mohannadi, who is also director of the Institute of Criminal Studies at the Public Prosecution of Qatar. - QNA

MoJ Undersecretary meets head of ICRC delegation in Qatar



HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Chairman of the National Committee for International Humanitarian Law, and Chairman of the Permanent Arab Committee on International Humanitarian Law, Saeed bin Abdullah al-Suwaidi met yesterday with Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation in the State of Qatar, Charles-Richard Sabga. Both sides discussed ways to strengthen co-operation between the National Committee for International Humanitarian Law and the ICRC in areas of mutual interest. They also discussed prospects for future partnership between the Permanent Arab Committee on International Humanitarian Law and the ICRC. HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice expressed his appreciation for the support provided by the ICRC to the Permanent Arab Committee on International Humanitarian Law during the stages of its establishment, emphasising the importance of continued cooperation to support the Committee's work and achieve its intended objectives. For his part, Charles-Richard Sabga welcomed the appointment of HE Saeed bin Abdullah al-Suwaidi as the first Chairman of the Permanent Arab Committee on International Humanitarian Law. He further commended Qatar's legal expertise and the role it is expected to play in supporting the work of the Permanent Arab Committee on International Humanitarian Law. **(QNA)**

QNA Director-General meets Chinese ambassador



HE the Director-General of Qatar News Agency (QNA) Ahmed bin Saeed al-Rumaihi met yesterday with ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the State of Qatar Cao Xiaolin. The meeting discussed ways to enhance joint co-operation between the two countries in the field of media. **(QNA)**

Qatar could become a permanent home for global sporting events

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Qatar could turn its 2022 FIFA World Cup legacy into a year-round global sporting hub, letting countries host major international championships using the country's existing infrastructure instead of investing billions in new facilities.

Modhi al-Hajri, an expert and consultant in therapeutic and community nutrition, believes Qatar's proven hosting capabilities and extensive sports infrastructure offer an opportunity to pioneer a more sustainable model for international sporting events. "When Qatar hosted the 2022 FIFA World Cup, it was not merely hosting a sporting tournament; it was welcoming the entire world," she said.

The tournament demonstrated that Qatar, despite its relatively small geographical size, could successfully manage an event of enormous international significance. It showcased the country's capabilities in hospitality, security, healthcare, transportation, sanitation and crowd management.

For al-Hajri, however, the World Cup's legacy extends beyond successfully staging a single tournament. It offers an opportunity to develop a sustainable international model that maximises existing infrastructure while creating new economic and sporting opportunities.

"Qatar has proven that it can host the world. The next step is to



Modhi al-Hajri

maximise the use of what has already been built and transform that success into a sustainable global model," she said.

Al-Hajri proposes that Qatar position itself as a global destination for major sporting championships, allowing countries that secure the rights to host international competitions to explore partnerships to stage their events in Qatar.

Under this concept, participating countries would retain their identity and association with their tournaments, bringing their teams, fans and cultural traditions. At the same time, Qatar would provide the facilities and supporting services needed to stage the competitions.

These would include stadiums, training facilities, accommodation, transportation, security, healthcare, logistics, tourism and entertainment services.

Such an arrangement could reduce the financial and logistical pressures of building extensive infrastructure for major sporting

events, particularly when facilities risk being underused after a tournament concludes.

"Instead of every country having to build stadiums, hotels, roads and supporting facilities for a single event, why not make use of an established infrastructure capable of hosting competitions throughout the year?" she asked.

Qatar's World Cup experience showed the importance of an integrated ecosystem that extends well beyond sporting venues. Transport networks, hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, health-care facilities, security services and leisure attractions all contributed to the experience of athletes, officials and visitors.

Al-Hajri noted that the country's multicultural environment is another advantage. International visitors can enjoy diverse culinary offerings while experiencing Qatari culture, heritage and hospitality.

She believes this combination of infrastructure, accessibility and cultural diversity could help Qatar attract a wider range of international sporting events.

The proposal would not be limited to football. It could extend to athletics, swimming, tennis, basketball, volleyball, and other disciplines, creating a calendar of international competitions and establishing a year-round sporting destination.

Beyond sport, the initiative could generate economic benefits across several sectors, including aviation, hospitality, food and beverage, retail, tourism and transport. Regular international tournaments could also create

opportunities for local businesses and strengthen the private sector's role in the sports economy.

Al-Hajri also sees the proposal as an opportunity to promote sustainability in the global sports industry.

Major sporting events often require substantial investment in venues and supporting infrastructure, raising questions about how to use these facilities effectively after competitions end. A model based on sharing and maximising existing infrastructure could help address this challenge while improving the efficiency of international events.

Rather than focusing exclusively on constructing new facilities, countries could explore partnerships that make better use of established sporting destinations.

Qatar has invested heavily in sports infrastructure and shown it can organise a tournament on the scale of the FIFA World Cup. Building on that experience, Al-Hajri believes the country could explore a broader role in the international sporting landscape.

Her vision is for Qatar to become more than an occasional host of major competitions. It could become a destination for international sporting events year-round, bringing together athletes, fans and cultures from across the world.

For al-Hajri, the challenge now is to turn Qatar's World Cup legacy into lasting value for the country and the international sporting community through a model built on collaboration, sustainability and the efficient use of existing resources.



Pact signed to boost GCC-Thai relations

QNA
Bangkok

Secretary-General of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), Jasem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Sihasak Phuangketkeow signed yesterday a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the GCC General Secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

The MoU aims to bolster relations of friendship and co-operation between both sides and develop frameworks for dialogue and joint co-ordination, thereby contributing to elevating GCC-Thai relations towards broader horizons of partnership and co-operation across various fields of mutual interest.

The GCC Secretary-General emphasised that the signing of the MoU represents an important step towards enhancing relations between the GCC and Thailand. He

affirmed that it reflects a shared desire to establish an institutional partnership founded on dialogue, mutual understanding, knowledge exchange, and exploring new avenues for co-operation, serving common interests and fulfilling the aspirations of both sides.

The Secretary-General explained that the MoU encompasses consultation and co-ordination on political and economic issues of mutual concern, fostering cultural co-operation and people-to-people ties, alongside the potential to expand areas of co-operation in the future and formulate a joint action plan to translate understandings into practical initiatives and programmes that advance bilateral relations.

Albudaiwi underscored the importance of building upon this milestone to bolster the GCC-Thai partnership and intensify communication and co-ordination across various levels, thereby supporting mutual interests and contributing to reinforcing stability, prosperity, and sustainable development for both sides.

Qatar to participate in 4th Al Diwan Arabic Book Fair

QNA
Berlin

The State of Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Culture is participating in the fourth edition of Al Diwan Arabic Book Fair, set to be held in Berlin on Oct 16-18 with the participation of over 110 publishers form the Arab World and Germany.

The fair presents a diverse range of Arabic publications alongside a multifaceted cultural programme, creating spaces for encounter and dialogue among authors, translators, publishers, researchers, and readers from the Arab world and Germany.

The fair's programme features an array of discussions, seminars, and literary gatherings.

The programme addresses a wide variety of topics, including translation between Arabic and German and its future prospects; the role of book fairs in cultural exchange; the Arabic novel within the Gulf region; and the function of cultural institutions as bridges for dialogue and mutual understanding between societies.

It also explores digital literature and contemporary publishing, while including sessions that highlight Qatari cultural and maritime heritage, as well as Arabic poetry.

A key highlight is a discussion



with Saudi novelist Abdo Khal, winner of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (the Arabic Booker), who will reflect on his literary career and the position of the Saudi novel within the broader Arab cultural landscape.

Furthermore, the fair will conclude the "Treasures of Knowledge: A Dialogue with Arabic Manuscripts" series, organised in collaboration with the Berlin State Library, with a special event dedicated to the world of Arabic manuscripts and the creativity, knowledge, and stories they contain.

Another notable feature of the programme is the presentation ceremony for the Al Riwaq Prize for Science and Culture. Organised by "Al Diwan" (The Arab Cultural House) in partnership with the Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB), the prize celebrates outstanding scholarly and cultural contributions.

The award reflects Al Diwan's commitment to supporting knowledge, research, and culture, while highlighting intellectual and scholarly contributions that enrich the Arab cultural landscape.

GCC-EU Summit rescheduled

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), announced that the GCC-EU Summit, originally scheduled to be held in Riyadh on October 24, 2026, has been rescheduled to a later date to be mutually agreed upon between the GCC and European sides. GCC Secretary-General, Jasem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi, said in a statement yesterday that, in light of the Houthi group's continued attempts to target the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its civilian objects, threatening the security and safety of innocent civilians, and given the extended suspension of flight operations at King Khalid International Airport, and out of keenness to ensure the safety of participating delegations, "the GCC General

Secretariat announces the rescheduling of the GCC-EU Summit – originally scheduled to be held in Riyadh on October 24, 2026 – to a later date to be mutually agreed upon between the GCC and European sides. Al-Budaiwi underscored the determination of both the GCC and the European Union (EU) to work towards establishing the appropriate conditions for convening the summit, in a manner that serves their long-term objectives of advancing and building upon the trajectory of co-operation across numerous fields between the member states of both organisations, thereby achieving growth and prosperity for their countries and peoples. **(QNA)**

Qatar participates in meetings of WHO Regional Committee for Eastern Mediterranean

The State of Qatar participated in the 73rd session of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, which concluded yesterday in Cairo, Egypt. The session was held under the theme: "Together for a Healthier Future: Action, Access, and Equity." Assistant Minister of Public Health for Healthcare Affairs Dr. Ghanem Ali al-Mannai headed Qatar's delegation. The meetings addressed a range of significant health topics and issues, as well as health priorities and strategies for the Eastern

Mediterranean Region. The Qatari delegation also took part in several side events, most notably a high-level meeting of executive stakeholders involved in the "Polio Eradication Challenge" initiative, and an event focused on the Regional Alliance for Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) in the Eastern Mediterranean. The latter was titled: "Advancing Adult Immunisation for Healthy Ageing and NCD Prevention in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: Leveraging the Leadership of Gulf States to Accelerate Action in the Region." **(QNA)**

MCIT launches 2026 Digital Inclusion Survey

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) has launched the 2026 Digital Inclusion Survey for citizens and residents as part of its national efforts to assess the level of digital inclusion in the State of Qatar and support the development of the second edition of the Qatar Digital Inclusion Index Report, following the inaugural report released in 2024.

The survey aims to gather the views and experiences of citizens and residents regarding their access to and use of digital services and technologies.

The findings will contribute to building an updated national picture of digital inclusion in Qatar and identifying opportunities to further enhance the accessibility, quality, and inclusiveness of digital services.

MCIT reaffirms its commitment to protecting participants' privacy. All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and analysed anonymously. The information collected will be used solely to support efforts to enhance digital services and advance digital inclusion in the State of Qatar, as well as to in-

form the Qatar Digital Inclusion Index Report 2026, which is expected to be published later this year.

The survey will be promoted through MCIT's official communication channels, SMS invitations, and approved awareness campaigns co-ordinated with relevant government entities.

To complement the survey findings, MCIT will also conduct targeted face-to-face interviews with selected community groups and stakeholders to gather qualitative insights that reflect the experiences and needs of different segments of society.

Together, these contributions will support the development of a comprehensive report informed by both public experiences and stakeholder perspectives.

The findings will help guide future policies and initiatives aimed at strengthening digital inclusion and ensuring that digital services continue to meet the evolving needs of society.

MCIT extends its appreciation to all citizens and residents who participate in the Digital Inclusion Survey. Their contribution plays an important role in supporting national efforts to advance digital inclusion and enhance the digital experience for everyone in Qatar.

Hope Qatar takes inclusion drive into schools with Sadeeqi initiative

By Shaima Sherif
Staff Reporter

Hope Qatar is taking its Sadeeqi inclusion initiative into schools and colleges nationwide, using creativity and competition to help young people see disability through friendship, empathy, and everyday inclusion.

The initiative forms part of Hope Qatar Centre for Persons with Disabilities' 20th anniversary celebrations, with students with and without disabilities invited to take part.

Rizwanah Adeebh, a neuropsychiatrist who manages partnerships at Hope Qatar, told *Gulf Times* that the initiative aims to make inclusion part of everyday life, not something limited to specialist centres or organised activities.

"We want a society where everybody is equal," she said. "We want this to be a daily thing. We want this to be a part of society."

Hope Qatar is reaching out to schools and higher education institutions across the country, with the championship targeting 138 schools and 40 colleges. Participants will compete in categories including painting, public speaking, creative writing, poster design, performing arts, photography, documentary, singing, dance, drama or mime, video shorts and animation.

Adeebh said the themes are being designed to encourage students to think about practical situations rather than approach disability only as a theoretical subject.

Students may be asked to consider how they would include a friend with special needs at a birthday party, during playtime or on an outing. Older participants may explore subjects such as how to respond when an autistic child experiences sensory overwhelm.

"The topics will be a little bit more thought-provoking," she said, explaining that students will need to think, learn and under-

stand before expressing their ideas creatively.

The championship will take place in stages. Hope Qatar is sending guidelines to participating institutions, after which schools and colleges will hold preliminary competitions and submit their strongest entries. A grand finale is planned to bring the selected work before a wider audience.

Adeebh stressed that the competition is for everybody, not only students with disabilities.

"Our goal is to create awareness, so it's for everybody to take part," she said.

That focus reflects Sadeeqi's wider purpose: an initiative built around friendship between people with and without disabilities.

Adeebh said the idea originated from Hope Qatar founder Dr Rajiv Thomas, whose own experience as the parent of a son with Down syndrome shaped his understanding of the social exclusion families can encounter.

Children with disabilities, she



Rizwanah Adeebh

explained, may sometimes be left out of birthday parties, community activities or everyday social experiences.

"The vision was that a special needs child also should be a normal part of society," Adeebh said. "They have the right to be everywhere. They have the right to be included in any community event."

Sadeeqi therefore seeks to build friendships beyond the Hope Qatar community and help children with disabilities connect with peers in schools, colleges and the wider society.

QF's Teaching and Learning Forum promotes innovation

Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Pre-University Education (PUE), through the Education Development Institute (EDI), organised the Teaching and Learning Forum 2026 under the theme "Teaching with Purpose: Rooted in Culture and Values, Shaping the Future".

Led by EDI, the forum brought together educators to advance professional learning and development, encourage the exchange of expertise and innovative teaching practices, and highlight educators' role in enhancing learning experiences and preparing future generations. The forum also featured an inspiring keynote speaker who shared valuable insights on purposeful teaching and its role in shaping the future of education.

The forum brought together 1,974 educators and featured 28 specialised workshops, with experts and education practitioners from QF and schools across Qatar taking part. The workshops covered a range of topics, including innovative teaching approaches, integrating technology into education, assessment methods, and student engagement. They also showcased successful practices and experiences to improve education quality and learning outcomes.

Held as part of the PUE Forum 2026, the event provided a platform for professional networking and knowledge sharing, al-



lowing participants to discuss educational challenges and explore innovative solutions. It also highlighted the importance of embedding culture and values in teaching practices and fostering lifelong learning as a foundation for professional growth.

Sara Rashid al-Kuwari, director of the Education Development Institute (EDI) at QF, emphasised the importance of investing in educators and creating opportunities for them to exchange knowledge and experiences, enabling them to make a positive and lasting impact on learners.

"The Teaching and Learning Forum 2026 was more than just

a professional event. It reflected the passion of educators who came together with a shared commitment to making a meaningful difference in learners' lives," said al-Kuwari.

"Through 28 workshops and an inspiring keynote address, we witnessed the strength of QF's PUE community, its spirit of collaboration, and its commitment to sharing knowledge and experiences, reaffirming that investing in teachers is the best investment we can make in the future."

Marwa Bkairat, associate director of Academic Development at EDI, highlighted how the forum created opportunities for educa-

tors to learn from one another, strengthen professional connections, and foster a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

"Participating in the Teaching and Learning Forum 2026 was truly inspiring. It brought QF's PUE community together to learn from one another and exchange ideas and experiences," said Bkairat.

"The enthusiasm and collaboration we witnessed demonstrated the strength of educators when we connect, share, and grow together. By investing in our teachers and creating opportunities for shared learning, we are not only enhancing.

Police, Sports for All federations announce Elite Race details

The Qatar Police Sports Federation and the Qatar Sports for All Federation (QSAF), under the Ministry of Sports and Youth, have announced details of the Elite Race, scheduled for October 22 in Zekreet.

Speaking at a press conference at the Police Institute, Assistant General Supervisor of the race Major Mohammed Saleh al-Haul said preparations and organising committees were ready for the event, which aims to promote community sports, discipline and perseverance, and encourage healthy, active lifestyles.

He urged participants to follow organisers' instructions and rely on official sources for race sched-



ules, gathering points and routes to ensure safety.

Participants will gather at 4:30am, with registration checks beginning at 5am. The race will start at 5:30am, with both the start and finish at the Race Village.

Executive Director of the Qatar Sports for All Federation Abdullah al-Dosari said the event reflected effective institutional co-opera-

tion to promote physical activity and improve quality of life.

He added that sporting events also build confidence and discipline, highlighting the media's role in raising awareness.

Captain Sultan Mutlaq al-Dosari, representing the Qatar Police Sports Federation, stressed that safety was a shared responsibility, urging participants to fol-

low designated routes and schedules and report emergencies or injuries immediately.

Head of the race's technical committee First Lieutenant Khalid Mohammed al-Amri outlined its five stages, open to security and military personnel, including officers and enlisted members, as well as civilians: a 1,500m swim, a 10km run, a 40km off-road cycling stage, five shooting rounds and a final 10km run.

Participation requires meeting health and fitness criteria and completing official registration.

Results will be determined by each competitor's total time, with penalties, including disqualification, for violations of the rules. (QNA)

Radisson Blu general manager wins recognition at Hospitality Qatar 2026



Radisson Blu Hotel, Doha announced that its general manager, Emre Kocamustafaogullari, has been recognised as one of the General Managers of the Year at the 11th edition of Hospitality Qatar 2026, held in partnership with Qatar Tourism.

Since joining Radisson Blu Hotel, Doha in 2019, Kocamustafaogullari has overseen one of Qatar's largest hospitality operations, comprising 567 guestrooms, 15 restaurants and bars, 16 meeting and event venues, extensive catering services, and a workforce of more than 600 employees.

Under his leadership, the hotel has achieved record business performance while consistently delivering exceptional guest experiences. In 2025 alone, the property recorded nearly one million guest touchpoints across its accommodation, dining, meetings, events, catering, and leisure facilities.

The recognition further strengthens Kocamustafaogullari's standing as one of the region's leading hospitality executives. His recent achievements include being shortlisted for GM of the Year: Qatar at the 2026 Hotelier GM Awards, receiving the General Manager of the Year - City Hotel title at

the 2025 Ambassadors of Excellence Awards, and being named to the Hotelier Middle East GM Power List in both 2024 and 2025.

During his tenure, Radisson Blu Hotel, Doha was also recognised among the Top 3 Hotels of the Year 2024 across the Middle East, Africa, and SEAP region, reflecting the hotel's continued focus on operational excellence, commercial success, and guest satisfaction.

"This recognition is a reflection of the dedication, passion, and teamwork demonstrated by our entire team every day," said Kocamustafaogullari. "I am honoured to accept it on their behalf, and we remain committed to delivering exceptional hospitality experiences while contributing to the continued growth and success of Qatar's tourism and hospitality sector."

As one of the country's most established hospitality destinations, Radisson Blu Hotel, Doha continues to play a significant role in shaping Doha's hospitality landscape through its diverse accommodation, dining, events, and leisure offerings. This latest recognition underscores the hotel's ongoing commitment to service excellence, innovation, and industry leadership.

Ooredoo Qatar launches Qatar's first 5G+ network

Ooredoo Qatar has announced the launch of Qatar's first 5G+ mobile network. This latest evolution of its connectivity infrastructure lays the foundation for enhanced digital experiences for consumers and smarter, more responsive operations for businesses.

The 5G+ network builds on the capabilities of 5G standalone, the network Ooredoo Qatar was the first to deploy, and 5G Advanced to support increasingly demanding digital applications, with faster speeds, greater network capacity, and lower latency.

These improvements enable more devices to connect and exchange information efficiently, while shorter response times support applications such as real-time equipment monitoring and automated processes.

Chief Executive Officer of Ooredoo Qatar Sheikh Ali bin Jabor bin Mohammad al-Thani said: "The launch of the 5G+ network reflects Ooredoo Qatar's continued investment in

Qatar's digital future, which depends on infrastructure that is ready for what comes next. With the 5G+ network, we are enhancing everyday digital experiences for our consumers, enabling innovation, and strengthening the competitiveness of businesses across the country. From launching the world's first 5G network in 2018 to deploying Qatar's first 5G Standalone core network, we have consistently advanced connectivity. This launch marks the next step in that journey, supporting the next generation of digital services across Qatar."

The launch reinforces Ooredoo Qatar's commitment to Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Digital Agenda 2030, supporting the country's digital transformation and strengthening its position as a leading regional digital hub. (QNA)



PHCC celebrates International Day of Older Persons

Under the slogan "Your Wisdom Gives Us Strength; Your Expertise Guides Us as We Shape the Future Together", the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) celebrated the International Day of Older Persons, observed annually on October 1, by organising a series of awareness activities and events across all its health centres. The celebrations included home healthcare services for patients, their families, and caregivers during daily home visits, as well as the distribution of symbolic gifts.

The celebrations featured a range of educational and awareness-raising activities aimed at improving public understanding of age-related conditions and prevention, highlighting the healthcare needs of older persons, and promoting awareness of their rights and the importance of receiving safe, comprehen-

sive healthcare. The events also introduced the entities that provide services to this population and emphasised the importance of partnership and co-ordination among the various stakeholders supporting their care.

PHCC affirmed that organising these activities across all its health centres reflects its commitment to expanding outreach and engaging older persons and their families nationwide. PHCC currently provides home healthcare services through 25 health centres across Qatar. They are available to eligible Qatari patients and citizens of the Gulf Co-operation Council countries aged 50 and above, in accordance with the service's approved eligibility criteria.

Home healthcare services provide integrated care through a multidisciplinary team. These services include medical assessments and follow-up, treatment plan development, medication



reviews, and necessary medical tests, as well as nursing services such as monitoring vital signs, wound care, blood sample collection, and administering vaccinations and prescribed medications. The section also provides physiotherapy and clinical nutrition services based on each patient's health needs.

PISQ conducts ceremony to recognise student leaders

Pakistan International School Qatar (PISQ) organised its Oath-Taking and Investiture Ceremony 2026 on October 8 at Arbab Hall, bringing together student leaders from the KG, Primary, Girls, Boys, and Cambridge Wings to formally recognise their leadership roles and responsibilities for the academic year ahead.

The ceremony marked an important occasion in the school calendar, celebrating student leadership, discipline, accountability and service to the school community.

A total of 319 members of the Students' Council participated in the ceremony, reaffirming their commitment to uphold PISQ's values and traditions.

The programme commenced with the recitation from the Holy Qur'an by M Ashman of Grade 7, followed by the national anthems of Pakistan and Qatar.

The hosts, Wania Ahmed and Maryum Ali of the Girls Wing, conducted the proceedings with confidence and decorum.

The audience was introduced to the structure and responsibilities of the Students' Council and the school's House



System, highlighting the importance of teamwork, healthy competition and student participation.

The investiture proceedings were conducted wing by wing, with 44 office bearers formally invested with their sashes.

The KG and Primary Wings presented their House Captains, while the Girls, Boys and Cambridge Wings recognised their respective House Captains, Heads, Deputies and Senior Prefects.

The oath-taking segment symbolised the newly appointed leaders' commitment

to discharge their duties with integrity, dedication and responsibility.

A highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of the House Championship Trophies for the academic session 2025-2026.

Kirthar House was declared the Champion House, while House K2 secured the Runner-Up Trophy.

The achievement recognised the students' collective effort, participation, and commitment throughout the academic session.



phy, live streaming, and hall arrangements.

The programme concluded with the address of principal Muhammad Afzal, who emphasised the importance of leadership, discipline, commitment, and service in shaping responsible and confident students.

The ceremony reminded everyone that student leadership extends beyond titles and sashes, requiring exemplary conduct, co-operation, and a willingness to serve others.

Through this annual tradition, PISQ continues to give students opportunities to develop leadership skills, strengthen their sense of responsibility, and contribute positively to school life.

The Oath Taking and Investiture Ceremony 2026 reaffirmed the school's commitment to developing principled, confident and responsible young leaders who can make a meaningful contribution to their community and society.



DPS-Modern Indian School's 5th WWDC ignites a battle of wits, words and ideas

Ideas clashed, voices resonated, and young minds took centre stage as DPS-Modern Indian School successfully hosted the 5th edition of its flagship event "War of Words Debating Championship" (WWDC) 2026 from October 8-10.

Conducted in the QatarDebate format, the championship brought together 60 teams and 180 debaters from schools across Qatar for three days of incisive arguments, spirited exchanges and intellectual contest.

Chief guest Mr Muhammad Abdur Rehman, debate instructor at QatarDebate, graced the opening ceremony, offering valuable insights and encouragement.

Principal Soma Bhattacharjee highlighted debate's role in nurturing articulate, thoughtful and responsible global citizens.

Asna Nafees, group academic adviser at DPS Group of Schools, also added distinction to the occasion.

Over three days, participants explored challenging motions, tested arguments and engaged with diverse perspectives, strengthening their critical thinking, research and public-speaking skills.

Chief guest M I Farid, former president of the Executive Committee of DPS-Modern Indian School, graced the closing cere-



mony and emphasised how debating and public speaking build confidence and help students discover their potential.

Principal Bhattacharjee commended the participants' dedication and teamwork, while Nafees encouraged them to question prevailing narratives and form informed opinions on international issues.

Team Rocket of Philippine International School, comprising Sophia Rae D Jamatoc, Kate Chelsie M Calibo and Caitlin Hope G Carmelo, emerged as the All-Round Champions.

Team DPS Lalita of DPS-Modern Indian School, comprising Saara Bharadwaj, Shikha Rajesh and Sampriya Sanjay, secured the Runner-up title.

Caitlin Hope G Carmelo won Best Speaker in the Final Round, while the Top 10 Best Speakers were also recognised.

Organised by Debate Club students and faculty co-ordinators, WWDC 2026 reaffirmed its role as a platform to sharpen young minds, strengthen communication, and foster meaningful dialogue.



Heroic homecoming for national champions as MES pride soars



MES Indian School accorded a grand and red-carpet welcome to its triumphant badminton contingent upon their return from the CBSE National Badminton Championship 2026, celebrating their outstanding achievement of National Gold in the Individual event and Bronze in the Team event. Anushree Shine of Class XI Girls' Individual Event, clinching the coveted Gold Medal and

emerging as the National Champion. Adding to the glory, the U-17 Girls' Team, comprising Anushree Shine and Syed Rabiya Zafar, both Class XI students, secured a Bronze Medal in the Team Event.

The victorious players, accompanied by MES Governing Board director Badaruddeen Gulam Mohiyuddeen, principal Dr Hameeda Kadar, senior vice-principal Shihabudeen Pulath, principal (MESIS) Pramila Kannan,

other key school functionaries, and proud parents, took a ceremonial parade through all sections of the school, where students greeted them with applause, enthusiastic cheers, and an overwhelming display of pride and jubilation.

The resounding welcome was a fitting tribute to their exceptional sporting talent, perseverance and commitment, bringing immense honour and glory to the school.

QATAR/REGION/ARAB WORLD



National Planning Council highlights strategic foresight in preparing Qatar’s future leaders

The National Planning Council (NPC) concluded its participation in the Strategic Foresight Forum on Global Youth Competencies and Lifelong Learning, held from October 12-14 and organised by the Ministry of Sports and Youth in co-operation with the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Through its Strategic Foresight Corner, NPC offered a compact, interactive experience that let visitors apply foresight thinking in a practical, accessible way. The experience guided visitors on a journey from identifying emerging shifts and future trends, through exploring challenges and their potential implications, to defining the key capabilities and competencies young people and

leaders will need in the future.

NPC’s corner also featured an interactive experience entitled “What Will Leadership Require to Thrive in Qatar’s Future?” Drawing on diverse future scenarios and challenges, the experience invited visitors to anticipate potential shifts, identify the capabilities and competencies needed to navigate them, and contribute to an interactive future-skills map reflecting their perspectives on the competencies young people and leaders will need in the future.

During the forum’s opening session, entitled “Youth and Future Leadership: From Anticipating Shifts to Creating Opportunities,” Maha al-Maadeed, Strategic Foresight Researcher at NPC’s Centre for Future Foresight and National

Visions, presented Qatar’s experience in embedding strategic foresight as an institutional function within the national planning system. The session explored the key shifts shaping young people’s futures and how strategic foresight can turn them into opportunities and avenues for action. Al-Maadeed highlighted strategic foresight’s role in supporting long-term planning and preparing young leaders aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy. She also emphasised the importance of incorporating young people and their aspirations into national scenario-building and empowering them to interpret future trends and navigate accelerating change.

The forum aims to strengthen

young people’s strategic foresight capabilities and hone their skills in interpreting future shifts, building scenarios, and making informed decisions. It also provided a platform for exchanging expertise and perspectives on the future of youth, lifelong learning, and the competencies needed to keep pace with global change.

NPC’s participation in the forum underscores the importance of strategic foresight in supporting decision-making, enhancing young people’s readiness for the future, and developing the competencies needed to navigate diverse and changing environments. It also highlights Qatar’s experience integrating strategic foresight into the national planning system and preparing the next generation of leaders.

‘Attacks in Saudi Arabia prompt finance firms to let staff work from home’

Reuters
London

Global finance firms including JPMorgan and Deutsche Bank are allowing Saudi Arabia-based staff to work from home after a series of Houthi strikes heightened security concerns in the kingdom, three people familiar with the matter told Reuters.

US investment firm Franklin Templeton has temporarily closed its Riyadh office and asked all staff based there to work from home until further notice, one of the people said. No end date has been set for the new working arrangements.

The Saudi government did not immediately respond to a request for comment yesterday.

Wall Street bank Citi said earlier this week that it was allowing employees to work from home. “The safety of our employees and the families of our employees have always been our top priority,” CFO Gonzalo Luchetti told reporters after an earnings call on Tuesday.

The moves are in response to escalating Houthi strikes on Saudi Arabia over the past week, includ-

ing an attack on the headquarters of oil giant Saudi Aramco on Tuesday and an earlier strike on King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh on Saturday.

Both JPMorgan and Deutsche Bank offered staff home working from Sunday, the day after the airport attack, although both offices remain open for business for those who want to use them, two of the people said, with one adding that the flexibility to work from home had been introduced partly to help parents out since the kingdom moved to online schooling this week.

Yemen’s Houthis vowed more attacks on airports and oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, describing their attacks as retaliation against Saudi strikes on Yemen in a widening of the conflict ignited by the US-Israeli war against Iran.

The strikes in Saudi Arabia have disrupted the Gulf’s busy conference season, which typically runs from September to December to coincide with cooler weather.

Saudi Arabia plans to shift its flagship Future Investment Initiative conference later this month to a hybrid event, giving executives the option to tune in remotely, Reuters has reported.

Houthis launch deadly attack on presidential palace in Aden

The Houthis launched a deadly missile attack yesterday on the presidential palace in the Yemeni government’s interim capital of Aden. Government military sources in Yemen said at least four people were killed and 10 wounded in yesterday’s strikes on Aden’s Al-Maashiq palace, which also serves as the government’s headquarters in the divided country’s south.

Yemeni information minister Muammar al-Eryani said the prime minister and cabinet ministers were safe, adding the attack had been carried out with five missiles. A government minister said on condition of anonymity that Prime Minister Shaya al-Zindani had been present at the time, but “was not harmed in any way.” (AFP)

Sudan air strike kills 5 children: rights group

AFP
Khartoum

An air strike killed five children in a paramilitary-controlled town in Sudan’s North Kordofan state yesterday, a rights group said, blaming the attack on the army.

The strike came as Sudan’s de facto leader, army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, said he had told US President Donald Trump he remained committed to peace efforts despite months of stalled progress.

Fighting has intensified in the strategic Kordofan region linking eastern and western Sudan, where the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have been battling for territory more than three years into a war that has killed tens of thousands and displaced millions.

The Emergency Lawyers, which monitors abuses in Sudan’s conflict, said an army Antonov aircraft struck a house in the village of Abu Zaeima, killing five children from the same family and injuring their mother.

The military did not immediately comment on the allegation.

The Kordofan region has also been targeted by drone strikes, with both sides increasingly using the weapons to launch far-reaching attacks without sacrificing their fighters.

In North Kordofan’s capital El Obeid, repeated drone strikes on civilian sites have deepened a humanitarian crisis and taken a heavy toll on children, the Norwegian Refugee Council said yesterday.

Shashwat Saraf, NRC’s country director in Sudan, said children were being forced to make “impossible choices” to continue their education.

“Each attack leaves families wondering what will be hit next,” Saraf said.

International attempts to bring both sides to the table for peace talks have made little headway, but army chief Burhan said on X yesterday that he had sent a message to Trump “reaffirming Sudan’s commitment to US peace efforts”.

In his post yesterday, Burhan said his government was “ready to work in good faith with all parties for a just, lasting peace that safeguards our sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, & our people’s dignity”.

Saudi Arabia accuses Iran of encouraging Houthis

AFP
Riyadh

Saudi Arabia yesterday accused Iran of encouraging Yemen’s Houthis in the dramatic escalation of their fight with the kingdom, adding that the Islamic republic continued to arm and train the group.

In a virtual briefing with reporters including AFP journalists, Saudi Arabia’s deputy minister for public diplomacy at the foreign ministry said Riyadh was still in touch with Iran, but that Tehran did not appear ready to make concessions.

Saudi Arabia, the world’s top crude oil exporter, has come under sustained attack by the Houthis in recent days, shifting the focus of the Middle East war that erupted with US-Israeli strikes on Iran in February.

It has launched retaliatory strikes on Houthi strongholds in Yemen – one of the world’s poorest countries – but the Iran-backed militants remain undeterred.

“Iran continues to arm, train and support the Houthi militia in violation of UN security council resolutions,” said Dr Rayed Krimly, the deputy minister.

“We think that the escalation



This screen grab taken from CCTV footage played on a screen during a press conference by the Saudi-led coalition in Riyadh on Thursday shows what the coalition says was a Houthi attack on Abha International Airport on October 7. (AFP)

by the Houthis at this latest stage of the conflict is encouraged by Iran,” he added.

The official said the kingdom continued “to have direct communications with Iran”, but added: “Overall, it doesn’t seem yet that the Iranians are able to provide the necessary concessions for a solution.”

In 2023, regional rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia reached a deal mediated by China to thaw a long-standing freeze in ties, but the latest violence might threaten to upend the entente.

The Saudi official went on to ac-

cuse the Houthis of refusing to meet in Oman in recent weeks as fighting ramped up between the two sides.

“At the beginning of this escalation, we asked them to meet in Muscat, Oman and they refused,” he added.

“This was the last communication which happened a few weeks ago.”

On Saturday, a strike hit Riyadh’s international airport, killing 13 people and wounding around 300 others, in the deadliest attack on Saudi Arabia in a decade.

The Saudi-led coalition fight-

ing the Houthis yesterday said the group had attacked Riyadh’s airport 20 times in October.

During a presentation in Riyadh covering the strikes, coalition spokesman Turki al-Malki said “the Houthis must immediately cease all terrorist operations targeting civilians and civilian facilities, including airports, ports, oil facilities, and infrastructure”.

Yemen’s civil war reignited in July after a years-long UN-brokered truce collapsed, months into a wider Middle East war that has rocked the region and roiled energy supplies and markets.

The situation took a sharp turn for the worse in September, when the Houthis launched a lightning offensive that saw them capture swathes of new territory in Yemen, including along the Red Sea coast where a waterway crucial to global energy flows is located.

Since their offensive began, the Houthis have also repeatedly targeted Saudi Arabia, which backs the internationally recognised government whose forces they are battling on the ground.

The attacks on Saudi Arabia have tested the country’s infrastructure and resilience, the energy minister acknowledged earlier this week.

Jbessa gas export pipeline targeted in northeastern Syria, fire erupts: SANA

The Jbessa gas export pipeline in northeastern Syria was targeted in the al-Arabidi area, causing a fire, state news agency SANA reported yesterday citing the director of the Syrian Petroleum Company’s media office.

The company said in a statement that the 16-inch pipeline exploded at 5:15 p.m. in an area about 60km from the city of Shaddadi. It did

not specify the cause of the explosion. Technical teams isolated the damaged section by closing valves at the Jbessa gas plant and the Deir Ezzor gas station in the Al-Bughailiya area, while firefighting and safety crews headed to the site to secure the area, the company said. The extent of the damage and whether gas supplies had been disrupted were not

immediately clear. The explosion followed a separate incident yesterday morning in which the Baniyas-Homs oil product’s pipeline was damaged near the village of Hudeida in the western Homs countryside in what the company described as sabotage aimed at stealing fuel. That incident caused a gasoline leak, the company said. (Reuters)

Palestinians fear violent olive harvest ahead of Israeli elections

AFP
Burqa, Palestinian Territories

With a black eye and a bandage covering his face, Palestinian farmer Abdellatif Bazzari looks out at his rows of olive trees that are half harvested before the season has even started.

Bazzari, who was injured in a raid on the fields by Israeli settlers that killed his cousin, is afraid to return to harvest the other half without some sort of army protection, fearing a new attack.

Like many olive farmers in the plains nestled between the occupied West Bank’s sinuous limestone hills, Bazzari decided to harvest as early as possible this year, hoping both to save his crops and avoid beatings.

With Israel heading to elections on October 27, some farmers believe the violence will escalate as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, locked in a tight race, seeks to shore up his right-wing base.

“I think the prime minister of Israel is worried about the results of elections and he doesn’t want to take any action against the settlers

as he hopes to receive their votes,” Bazzari told AFP.

“If he loses, things will get better,” he hoped.

Olive trees are as important economically to Palestinians as they are a symbol of their attachment to the land, accounting for an estimated 15 percent of the West Bank’s agricultural GDP.

On October 7, a group of about 15 to 20 settlers raided the field where Bazzari and his family were picking olives by hand, beating them, before the army intervened and shot dead Bazzari’s cousin Ali Bazzari, he said.

“My cousin bled to death right under this olive tree, irrigating the soil of Palestine with his blood,” Bazzari said, pointing to a tree in the field.

Bazzari said the Israeli army, which had been dispatched to the site of the raid, an isolated field near the West Bank village of Burqa, kept the ambulance from reaching his cousin after he was shot.

The Israeli military said troops and border police forces were dispatched after reports of “rock hurling toward an Israeli civilian, who was injured”, referring to a settler.



An Israeli military bulldozer uproots olive trees in a grove in the Palestinian village of Kafr Malik near Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on Wednesday. (AFP)

During the confrontation between dozens of Palestinians and Israeli settlers, “a commander operating in the area identified a terrorist running toward him while carrying a suspicious object and neutralised him”, it added.

Israeli leaders also highlight violence against Israelis, including the shooting death of a settler by a Palestinian last month.

Bazzari, like other West Bank Palestinians whom AFP spoke to, said danger areas for the olive harvest have grown in recent years as set-

tlements multiplied and expanded.

“They don’t want us to plant, to farm anything. They said, just stay in your village, cities, and don’t go out,” he said.

The olive harvest season, which lasts over a month, is a time for Palestinians to gather in fields, with family, friends and workers helping out for a process mostly done by hand.

Bazzari said settlers had stolen agricultural tools during their raid on his land, including ladders used to reach tree tops, rakes used



A Palestinian scoops a handful of olives at an olive tree field during the harvest season, in the village of Beit Awwa, west of Hebron City in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday. (AFP)

to pick a whole branch’s worth of olives at once, and tarps used to catch and gather the fallen olives.

More than 500,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, in settlements and outposts illegal under international law.

Netanyahu, who governs with the far-right, has ramped up approval of settlements. Settler attacks against Palestinians including beatings, vandalism and arson averaged six a day in the first half of the year, according to the United Nations.

Last week settlers beat up an AFP photographer who took pictures of the harvest, fracturing his ribs and stealing his camera.

Mahmoud Fatafta of the Palestinian Authority’s agriculture ministry said his teams had recorded 300 incidents involving settlers and olives so far this autumn, even before the official start of the harvest on October 15.

Israeli rights group Yesh Din has reported 100 thefts, including settlers taking sacks of harvested olives during raids, or harvesting them directly from Palestinian lands.

In a report, Yesh Din said 25 percent of all incidents occurred in the presence of the Israeli military.

It called the violence “not random, but part of an Israeli policy with a clear objective: to prevent the olive harvest in the West Bank, economically harm Palestinians, and drive them off their land”.

Fatafta added that Israel’s electoral calendar brought added impunity to settlers whom Palestinians already complained were unrestrained.

“Israeli parties want to show that they are tough on Palestinians, that they own the West Bank,” he told AFP.

Trump scraps plan to livestream execution after broad backlash

AFP
Washington

The firing squad execution of a convicted military base shooter will not be livestreamed, US President Donald Trump announced yesterday, cancelling a contentious plan by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

The move to livestream Nidal Hasan's execution was widely opposed at home and abroad, prompting outrage from both US Democratic and Republican politicians, the Catholic Church and the UN.

The cancellation is a blow to Hegseth, who is already under fire over the stalemated Iran war and its fallout, which are weighing on Trump's Republican Party ahead of November midterm elections.

Hasan "will die, as scheduled, by firing squad, but this event will not be streamed," Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform.

The US president indicated he did not personally oppose the streaming plan, saying it "might have been a strong deterrent for the World to witness how America deals with Terrorists and SCUM like Hasan."

But "many very good and well meaning people would rather

not watch him die," Trump said, adding that the execution could still be viewed in person by immediate family of the victims if they wanted to do so.

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said Hegseth and Trump had spoken before the announcement.

"The secretary supports the president's decision, and they are completely aligned," Parnell said in a statement.

Hasan's execution — scheduled for December 3 at Fort Hood, Texas, where he gunned down 13 people in 2009 — is set to be the first by a US military firing squad since 1945.

Last week, Hegseth said that "we'll make sure that people are able to watch it, that it's public," later confirming that the plan was to livestream the execution.

"People need to understand that...there's serious consequence for these types of things," he said.

Backlash to the plan quickly grew following Hegseth's announcement.

The UN said streaming the execution would amount to "torture," while the president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops said it was a "barbaric promotion of a culture of death," and both Australia and Britain's prime ministers described it as "abhorrent."

Oil-rich Alberta tests Canada's unity with secession vote

AFP
Toronto

Alberta voters decide next week if they want the oil-rich province to begin the process of separating from Canada, a pivotal test for the country as it confronts a hostile US.

Polling indicates less than a quarter of Alberta's roughly five million people want independence, but in an interview with AFP on Tuesday, a separatist leader insisted those numbers were off.

"I wouldn't be surprised if we actually win this referendum," said Mitch Sylvestre, who heads the Alberta Prosperity Project, the most prominent separatist organisation.

"I would be very surprised if we got less than 40%," he said.

Monday's vote is a personal challenge for Prime Minister Mark Carney, who grew up in Alberta and returned there this week to campaign for national unity.

US-Canada hostility triggered by President Donald Trump has defined Carney's tenure.

Alberta's oil industry is central to his plans for solidifying Canada's economy and reducing US reliance.

Carney has backed a new pipeline and other projects to increase crude production, marking a clear break from his predecessor, Justin Trudeau, who was broadly reviled



Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney with volunteers at Bridgeland Riverside Community Association Park in Calgary, yesterday. (Reuters)

in Alberta over allegations that he stifled oil industry growth in favour of environmental policies.

In a video address on Monday, Canadian Thanksgiving, filmed at his Edmonton high school, Carney highlighted the pipeline as a chance "to create lasting opportunity and prosperity... in this province and across the country."

"We can't achieve any of this if we are divided," he said.

Oil's prominence in a debate about Canadian unity has highlighted the unusual nature of Alberta's independence push.

Alberta separatists voice familiar conservative frustrations, from concerns about immigration levels to generalised fears about fraying individual liberty, but their grievances often hinge on oil industry management.

That makes Alberta's independence movement "mostly an outlier," said Syracuse University professor Ryan Griffiths, an expert on global separatist groups.

Secessionist movements regularly have "economic motivations," but typically those are married to a linguistic or nationalist component, Griffiths said.

"There's no magic line" dictating what defines a nation, he told AFP, but noted Alberta's case for nationhood appears harder to make than that of other groups, like Catalans, Scots and French-speaking Canadians in Quebec.

Commenting on Alberta's frustration with Ottawa, Premier Danielle Smith also focused on Trudeau's alleged hostility to the oil industry.

"When you have a federal gov-

Maduro denies US torture charges as 'false accusations'

AFP
New York

Ousted Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores pleaded not guilty yesterday to new torture charges brought against the pair held in US custody since their extraordinary capture in January.

They appeared at a New York court after prosecutors alleged they conspired to commit acts including waterboardings, physical abuse and beatings against victims, including American citizens, in Venezuelan detention.

Maduro, who has previously called himself a "prisoner of war," slammed the latest charges as "false accusations" during a 35-minute hearing.

Asked by the judge how he pleaded to the indictment against him, the 63-year-old responded, "I reject this document in its entirety."

Flores, who wore the same brown prison jumpsuit as Maduro, said: "I am completely innocent, I am not guilty."

According to prosecutors, the couple used torture to "intimidate, harass, and neutralise their opponents, including through kidnappings."

ernment that is actively trying to kill your principal industry, that has a real impact on people," she told the CBC last week.

Smith says she is voting against independence and has praised Carney's openness to the oil industry.

She says she called the non-binding referendum to settle a question dividing the province.

If a majority supports leaving Canada, Smith said she'll begin the legally binding process of leaving Canada. If a majority votes to stay, she won't approve another referendum, she told the CBC.

The alleged influence of Trump allies in Alberta has attracted intense scrutiny in Canada.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has called Alberta a "natural partner" for the US, and Alberta Prosperity Project leaders held several meetings at the State Department.

Earlier this month, Canada's Globe and Mail newspaper detailed contacts between Sylvestre, his team and Republican Party operatives.

Sylvestre told AFP that, for him, US interests "don't play any role" in Alberta "until we win and become government," at which point he would work to ensure free-flowing trade.

"There's no animosity towards America here," he said. "I can't see why we wouldn't want to continue trading with the biggest economy in the world."

Brazil's Congress approves shorter work week

AFP
Brasilia

Brazil's Senate approved a shorter work week on Wednesday, a pledge President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is counting on to close the gap with his rival ahead of next week's election runoff.

The measure, which the government has been pushing for months, provides for two paid days off a week instead of the current one and reduces the maximum work week from 44 to 40 hours.

The bill targets working-class Brazilians, who have historically formed leftist Lula's electoral base. Millions of Brazilians currently work six days a week, a schedule known as "6x1."

The reduction will be phased in over the next 14 months.

The vote completes the legislative process for the measure, which had already been approved by the Chamber of Deputies.

The constitutional reform passed the Senate with 75 votes in favour and just one against.

"I'm certain this is the biggest gain for Brazilian workers since the 1988 Constitution," said Omar Aziz, the senator overseeing the bill.



Lawmakers celebrate after voting in favour of a constitutional amendment to reduce Brazil's work week from six days to five days, during a session of the Brazilian Federal Senate, in Brasilia. (Reuters)

After the vote, a group of senators chanted in support of Lula.

Passage of the measure was one of the demands at recent mass demonstrations in support of Lula's re-election bid against the son of far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro.

Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, who had called the proposal "opportunistic," ultimately voted in favour.

"I'm travelling around Brazil. Most Brazilian workers want an end to the 6x1 schedule, so I'm

going to vote to end it," he said on Tuesday.

Brazil's conservative bloc had advocated for an alternative proposal that would allow employees to negotiate their weekly working hours directly with their employers.

Lula hailed the victory as a "breakthrough" that "will never be undone".

"It is a movement that began in the streets and stems from the long-standing aspirations of the working class," said the president,

Somalia sets May presidential election

AFP
Mogadishu

Somalia announced yesterday that parliamentary and presidential elections would be held next year in the deeply fragmented country that faces a long-running insurgency.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's second term ended earlier this year but his government declared a "transition period" in May, despite an agreement with the opposition on holding elections.

Mohamud has been attempting to move Somalia towards democratic elections, replacing a system based around clan elders, although his attempts have been opposed by regional leaders, who view it as a power grab.

The Election Commission said in a statement that parliamentary polls would be held on April 15, followed by a presidential vote scheduled for May 15.

In the capital Mogadishu, residents expressed mixed views.

"Announcing an election schedule through a process driven by one side, and rejected by the opposition, is effectively declaring a new conflict," said one, Omar Said.

Mohamud assumed power in 2022 but has argued he was given an extra year in the presidency when an amended constitution was passed by parliament earlier this year that set the framework for



Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud casts his ballot during local council elections in Mogadishu. (AFP/File Photo)

elections and extended the vote.

But opposition parties boycotted that vote and have rejected the changes, including the powerful states of Jubaland and Puntland.

"There's no political agreement to hold those elections," analyst Samira Gaid told AFP.

She said that the government was essentially made up of Mogadishu and "two or three allied member states", and expressed concern it would lead to more "conflict and more confrontation within the remaining federal member states".

"All the processes that the government is starting are leading to further fragmentation," she said.

University student Fadumo Ali worried that a disputed federal

election "could undermine governance and national unity".

She urged the president to sit down with the opposition, "and agree on the federal election to prevent further turmoil".

Former president Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo said on X the unilateral election decision was a "dangerous threat to Somalia's statehood and future" and urged an agreement with all factions.

Another former president and opposition leading light, 2009-2012 leader Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, said he had taken the constitutional reform programme adopted in March to the Somali courts and warned that a "contested (electoral) process could lead to parallel elections" and even "civil conflict".

Belgian police search homes of relatives of Congo's Tshisekedi

Belgian police raided the homes of several relatives and associates of Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi on Wednesday as part of an investigation into money laundering linked to mining revenues, two lawyers who filed the complaint said.

The searches add to pressure on Tshisekedi, who faces security challenges in eastern Congo with an armed rebellion now led by his predecessor, Joseph Kabila, a deadly Ebola outbreak and growing opposition criticism over his alleged plans to seek a third term.

The government has also sought to attract investment into Congo's mining sector, which holds some of the world's largest reserves of copper, cobalt and other strategic minerals but has long been dogged by corruption allegations.

Belgian lawyer Bernard Maingain and France-based Congolese attorney Herve Diakiese, who represent a group of NGOs from the southern Katanga province, known as DESC/RDC, said the raids were carried out as part of an investigation opened after the NGOs filed a complaint in Brussels. (Reuters)



China-N Korea bridge opens

AFP
Dandong, China

North Korean trucks festooned with flags and flowers trundled towards China yesterday as a new bridge between the countries opened, allowing the isolated nation to ramp up trade with its huge neighbour.

Nuclear-armed North Korea is largely cut off from the world, and China – and lately also Russia – provides vital economic, diplomatic and political backing, though relations have not always been smooth.

Hundreds of locals in the Chinese border town of Dandong – who have been waiting for over a decade for this moment – gathered to watch the four-lane, 3,026-metre (9,927-foot) New Yalu River Bridge open.

As the first lorries crossed over from North Korea, the crowds lining the waterfront and streets snapped selfies and waved Chinese flags.

“Now that it’s finally open, everyone is really happy. We’ve been waiting 12 years,” a Dandong resident, who came to watch the opening with her daughter and grandson, told AFP.

When the bridge was completed in 2014, some residents bought apartments in the then-newly built district, hoping to see their investment grow with the influx of trade.

But hope turned to despair and impatience as delays dragged on due to a lack of connecting roads and customs facilities on the North Korean side. And then the border closed during the Covid pandemic.

“So many new buildings were built, but nobody comes to live in them,” the mother said.

“When they bought the apartments, the exterior was brand new. Now, after waiting all these years, the exterior has already become old,” her daughter added.

The road bridge over the Yalu River lies downstream from the ageing, single-lane Sino-Friendship Bridge.

“Previously the (Sino-Friendship) bridge had to alternate between traffic moving in each direction, creating only limited windows for crossings,” Rowan Beard of Young Pioneer Tours agency, which specialises in travel to North Korea, told AFP.

Lim Eul-chul, a North Korea ex-



People gather near the new cross-border bridge linking China and North Korea in Dandong, Liaoning Province, yesterday. (AFP)

pert at Kyungnam University, said “the new crossing will make such shipments much easier and more efficient”, and called it a “ground-breaking development” that will triple or quadruple cargo traffic.

Many in Dandong have built their business and livelihoods around its proximity to North Korea, and hope the new bridge will breathe life into their town.

At a souvenir shop nearby the Sino-Friendship Bridge, tourists

browsed model tanks, fake missiles and stacks of North Korean cigarettes rumoured to be Kim Jong-un’s brand of choice.

One souvenir store manager told AFP that she hoped tourism would resume between the two countries, which dried up after North Korea sealed its borders during the pandemic.

“Later on, if they open up things like tourism, if North Korea completely opens up, there’ll be more



A truck bearing a North Korean flag crosses the new cross-border bridge linking China and North Korea in Dandong, yesterday. (AFP)

business and big opportunities in the future,” she said.

North Korea has not yet resumed issuing tourism visas to Chinese citizens, who once made up the bulk of its overseas visitors.

The opening of the new bridge comes a little more than a month after North Korea and Russia opened their first road bridge, with Pyongyang lauding it as a sign of closer ties.

Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Pyongyang has become a key Kremlin ally, sending troops to support Moscow’s war effort in return for economic benefits and military technology.

A day prior to the Yalu bridge

opening, North Korea also test-fired two types of cruise missile from a submarine, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

The two Koreas – technically still at war 73 years after a truce – have engaged in a tit-for-tat series of missile tests this month, with both sides test-firing hypersonic weapons.

Yu Shuyan, a Dandong resident who visited North Korea before the border was sealed, said the bridge could provide benefits both ways.

“The living standard in North Korea is quite tough,” she told AFP. “I hope it can rise to the level we have here.”

Japan denies spying after Russia arrests journalist

AFP
Tokyo

Japan denied yesterday conducting spy activity in Russia, following Moscow’s arrest of a Japanese journalist on suspicion of espionage.

Russia has arrested several citizens of what it calls “unfriendly” countries in recent years, accusing them of working for Western intelligence services.

“There is no such fact,” Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told reporters when asked about the Russian allegations, adding that “the protection of Japanese nationals is extremely important right now, and we intend to focus our efforts on that”.

Moscow’s foreign ministry identified the reporter Tuesday as Yuki Imai from the *Hokkaido Shimbun* newspaper, with a spokeswoman saying he was accused of “conducting espionage activities on Russian territory”.

Tokyo responded by summoning Russian ambassador Nikolay Nozdev to lodge a protest over the arrest, with the foreign ministry urging “fair and impartial treatment”.

After the meeting, Nozdev released a statement saying he noted “the unacceptability of a situation where Japanese special services attract ‘collaboration’ with private persons, including Japanese journalists accredited in Russia, for the

collection of classified information.”

“It was emphasised that Russian competent authorities have repeatedly thwarted similar attempts before,” the statement noted.

Takaichi said details of the accusations remained unclear.

“Each country’s domestic laws are different, so we do not yet know the details of what they call an allegation,” she said.

Moscow’s FSB security service earlier said a Japanese national was arrested on the Far East island of Sakhalin – near a disputed cluster of islands – but did not name the individual.

It said the person had worked for Japanese intelligence to collect information about Russia’s defences.

Moscow and Tokyo have been locked in a territorial dispute for decades over the status of a string of islands in the Pacific Ocean, off the northeast coast of Japan and to the southwest of Russia’s Sakhalin region.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said on Wednesday that Japan had not been able to contact the individual and did not know about the arrest until the official announcement from Moscow.

The *Hokkaido Shimbun* said in a statement that it was aware of the Russian announcement but was “still confirming the details”.

“Ensuring the safety of the journalist is our top priority, and we are responding accordingly,” the newspaper said.

AFP
Seoul

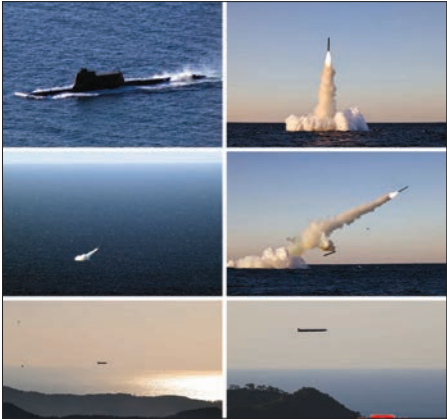
Pyongyang test-fired two types of cruise missile from a submarine, its state news agency said yesterday, after weeks of friction with Seoul over a landmine explosion along their border.

The missiles were fired into the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan, on Wednesday without “any adverse impact on the security of neighbouring countries”, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

The latest test “aimed to examine the current mobilised posture of the underwater combat systems” and served as a navy training exercise, KCNA said.

The launches showed the “high reliability, trustworthiness and ability of the war deterrents of the DPRK,” the agency reported, referring to North Korea by the abbreviation of the country’s official name.

North Korea has carried out several missile launches from submarines in recent years, although its sea-based launch capabilities remain unclear. Cruise missiles tend to be jet-propelled and fly at a lower altitude than more sophisticated ballistic missiles, making



A combination picture shows two types of submarine-launched strategic cruise missiles being tested on Wednesday. (Reuters)

ing them harder to detect and intercept.

Proven submarine-launched ballistic missile capability would take North Korea’s arsenal to a new level, allowing deployment far beyond the Korean peninsula and a second-strike capability in the event of an attack.

Photos released by KCNA showed one missile blasting vertically out of the sea, trailed by a thick plume of smoke. Another photo ap-

peared to show a projectile erupting from the water at a 45-degree angle.

Other images showed a missile flying horizontally over the sea, as well as a submarine travelling on the water’s surface.

The North’s ability to launch missiles from submarines at two different angles carries “tactical significance”, Hong Min of the Korea Institute for National Unification told AFP, as the two launch methods serve different purposes.

“Vertical launches allow missiles to climb steeply before descending towards their targets, potentially extending their range,” he said.

“Angled launches, on the other hand, allow missiles to fly at lower altitudes from the outset, making them harder for missile defence systems to detect and intercept.”

North Korea has carried out multiple ballistic missile tests in October, most recently on Monday.

The two Koreas have engaged in a tit-for-tat series of missile tests this month, with both sides test-firing hypersonic weapons.

South Korea test-fired its first homegrown hypersonic glide vehicle last week, days after Pyongyang said it had launched an AI-assisted intermediate-range hypersonic missile.

Seoul and Pyongyang remain technically at war as the Korean conflict ended in 1953 with a truce rather than a peace treaty.

EU, Vietnam to sign free trade deal on Sunday: officials

Reuters
Hanoi

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and Vietnam are set to sign a free trade deal on Sunday, officials said this week, after long-stalled talks were relaunched last year amid global tensions over US tariffs.

Vietnam and the EFTA bloc, which includes Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, concluded negotiations in July after years of talks that were first launched in 2012.

In September, Vietnam said it detained three activists on suspicion of terrorism, including a Norwegian national. That has not affected the previously planned signing but prompted Norway to say it will raise the matter with Vietnamese officials. Human

rights groups said the people had been abducted in Cambodia.

The deal will be signed in Hanoi on Sunday in the presence of Swiss Economy Minister Guy Parmelin, a spokesperson for his ministry said on Wednesday. Parmelin, who also holds Switzerland’s rotating presidency, is currently on a visit to Asia.

Norway’s foreign ministry and two officials in Hanoi confirmed the imminent signing.

In July, the EFTA said the accord would cover rules of origin, investment, intellectual property rights and competition, trade remedies and government procurement. Officials in Hanoi had earlier said the deal would have been signed in October, with the precise date determined by the leaders’ agendas.

Vietnam’s foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Norway’s foreign ministry said State Secretary Astrid Bergmal, who will attend the signing ceremony, “will raise the case of the detained Norwegian citizen with the Vietnamese authorities during her visit”.

The ministry was treating this case “as a high priority,” it said, adding: “This matter is raising public concern in Norway. We hope that this case may be resolved without unnecessary delay.”

In late September, Vietnamese authorities said Norwegian citizen Nguyen Duc Thuan was detained on terrorism charges together with Australian citizen Ho Pham Hiep Huy and Vietnamese national Thai Cong Truong Son.

The ministry of public security said the three men had been arrested on September 18 while trying to illegally cross from Cambodia into Vietnam.

It said the men are members of Viet Tan, a US-based pro-democracy group that Vietnam’s Communist government has designated as a terrorist organisation.

Viet Tan said the men had been abducted in Cambodia. Cambodia’s Ministry of Interior said Cambodian authorities did not arrest the activists and had no records of them departing from the country.

On Wednesday, the US-based, non-governmental group Human Rights Watch called for the immediate release of the three activists “who went missing in Cambodia.”

Earlier in October, dozens of international human rights organisations condemned “the abduction” in Cambodia of the three activists and their detention in Vietnam.



A man walks past a screen displaying a news broadcast in Tokyo on Wednesday, reporting on the arrest of Japanese reporter Yuki Imai, from the *Hokkaido Shimbun* newspaper, after he was taken into custody by Russia on suspicion of espionage on the far east island of Sakhalin. (AFP)

Haze turns Indonesia skies orange, shuts schools in East Timor

AFP
Palangkaraya, Indonesia

Thick haze turned the skies in Indonesia’s Palangkaraya apocalyptic shades of yellow and orange on Thursday, reducing visibility to a few dozen metres as wildfires cause a regional air pollution crisis.

Kuala Lumpur topped monitoring site IQAir’s ranking of the most polluted major global cities by Thursday, followed closely by Singapore, and with Indonesia’s Medan and capital Jakarta just behind.

Fires burning for months in Indonesia have sent smoke across the region, and on Thursday East Timor began a three-day school closure prompted by the haze.

But those most affected are residents at the epicentre, including in Kalimantan’s Palangkaraya where skies turned deep orange on Wednesday night and remained a grimy yellow yesterday.

“These past few days, the smoke has been thick, and since I work

outdoors, I’m forced to breathe it in even though I wear a mask,” said motorbike taxi driver Heri, who like many Indonesians uses a single name.

“My eyes have started to sting because of the dust from the burned debris flying around in the smoke,” he told AFP.

“I still have to work and have been struggling in the haze for four months now, if I don’t work, I won’t earn any money. Everyone is forced to fight against this dense smoke.”

In East Timor, people were out in the capital Dili under a yellow-tinged sky, but most were wearing masks, as the government advised a day earlier in announcing the school closures.

Residents welcomed the decision, although they said the pollution had been even worse earlier in the week.

“Recently, the pollution in Dili has been very severe,” 30-year-old midwife Sonya da Costa Soares told AFP.

“We can’t see the sun, the pollution is heavy,” she added.

Though her child is still too young for school, she said the de-

cision to keep students home was “very important so that children are not put in danger.”

Indonesia experiences wildfires regularly during its dry season, but this year the blazes have been especially severe because a strong El Nino has brought drought.

The fires have burned through hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest and plantations in Sumatra, Borneo and Papua, and caused air pollution to surge locally, as well as in Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and East Timor.

Felicidade Alves dos Santos Martins, whose daughter Febrianti was home from middle school, said the pollution had been even worse earlier in the week.

“It felt like smoke from fires was covering all of Dili and the mountains,” she said. “This pollution is very dangerous, it can make us sick.”

Save the Children urged regional governments to “take urgent, ambitious action” to tackle the crisis, calling it the result of “policy choices and a failure to act.”

“Children cannot be expected to



An aerial view shows thick smoke and haze from forest and land fires in the region in Palangkaraya, Central Kalimantan, yesterday. (AFP)

carry the burden of a crisis they did not create,” said Arshad Malik, the charity’s Asia regional director.

Indonesia has deployed tens of thousands of firefighters to tackle the blazes, but has struggled to bring the flames under control.

Yesterday, it was set to try dropping dry ice over parts of South

Sumatra to “break up the smoke,” according to chief security minister Dudung Abdurachman.

“God willing, if it succeeds we will continue in other key regions,” he said announcing the plan on Wednesday.

Research has found much of the haze comes from fires burning in

Respiratory cases rise to over 280,000 in haze-hit regions

Indonesia recorded over 280,000 respiratory problems in haze-affected regions, a health ministry official said Wednesday, as the country struggles to control fires causing toxic smoke to drift to neighbouring countries. “Cumulatively, there were 283,270 (respiratory cases),” health ministry official Then Suyanti told a news conference, referring to cases logged between August 18 and October 13. (AFP)

peatlands. These blazes are difficult to extinguish because they burn underground when the normally water-logged ecosystems are dried out for cultivation.

Importance of time in the life of a Muslim

Everything, when lost, can be regained, except time. If it is lost, there is no hope to regain it. That is why time is the most precious thing that can ever be possessed in this life.

Islam is a religion that acknowledges the importance of time and appreciates its seriousness. Allah Almighty says (what means): {Indeed, in the alternation of the night and the day and [in] what Allah has created in the heavens and the earth are signs for a people who fear Allah.} [Qur'an 10:6] Islam distributed its great acts of worship over the parts of the day and the seasons of the year to form an accurate, precise system that organises the Islamic life and measures it with minutes, from the rise of dawn till sunset. Allah Almighty says (what means): {So exalted Is Allah when you reach the evening and when you reach the morning. And to Him is [due all] praise throughout the heavens and the earth. And [exalted Is He] at night and when you are at noon.} [Qur'an 30:17-18]

Man's lifespan is his huge capital about which he will be asked on the Day of Judgment. He will be asked about how he spent it and how he dealt with it. It was narrated in Jami' At-Tirmithi that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alahi wa sallam, said: "The feet of a slave will not move on the Day of Judgment until he has been questioned about four things: his life – how he spent it; his youth – how he consumed it; his wealth – from where he earned it and how he spent it; and his knowledge – how he acted upon it."

Time has characteristics that are specific to it. They include the following:

- * Its quick passage: Time passes like the clouds. No matter how long man lives in this life, his life is short, as death is the end of every living creature. When Nooh (i.e. Noah), may Allah exalt his mention, was asked: "O the longest living prophet, how did you find this world?" He said: "It is like a house that has two doors. I entered from one of them and got out through the other." This is what the Qur'an expressed, by mentioning one's



regarding of his lifespan as short, upon death and on the Day of Judgment. Allah Almighty says (what means): {It will be, on the Day they see it, as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.} [Qur'an 79: 46]

* Whatever goes by thereof does not return and cannot be compensated for: every day, hour, or moment that passes cannot be regained and thus cannot be compensated for. This meaning was expressed by Al-Hasan al-Basri, may

Allah's mercy be upon him, when he said: "Every day calls, saying: 'O son of Adam, I am a new creation and I am a witness on your deeds, so take provisions from me for if I pass, I do not return until the Day of Judgment.'"

* It is the most precious thing that man can ever own: the preciousness of time is attributed to the fact that it is the container of all deeds. In fact, it is the real capital of man, whether the individual or the society. Time is not only gold as the common proverb goes, but it is more pre-

cious than gold, pearls, and coral. Time is life. Indeed, man's life is nothing but the time that he is given from the day of his birth till the day of his death. Al-Hasan al-Basri said: "O son of Adam, indeed you are nothing but some days...whenever a day perishes a part of you perishes." That is why we should be keen on benefiting from time. 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azeez said: "Night and day consume you, so consume them." Al-Hasan al-Basri said: "I saw a lot of people who were keener on their times than you are on your money." 'Umar

ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, used to hit his feet with his whip when night came and say to himself: "What did you do today?"

From among the blessings in which many people are heedless and ungrateful about, and ignorant of its value, is the blessing of leisure. It is narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alahi wa sallam, said: "There are two blessings in which many people incur loss: health and free time." [Al-Bukhari]

That is why the predecessors used to dislike for a man to be free and not preoccupied by the matter of his religion or the matter of his worldly life. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I dislike that a man is free and not preoccupied by the matter of his religion or the matter of his worldly life."

There is no doubt that man loves life and loves to live long, and rather forever, if he can. Long life is considered one of the blessings of Allah Almighty, if one uses it in supporting the truth and doing righteous deeds. At-Tirmithi narrated that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alahi wa sallam, was asked: "Which among the people is best?" He said: "The one who lives a long life and does righteous deeds."

The truth is that the real life of man is not the years that he spends from the day of his birth till the day of his death. Rather, his real age is determined according to the good deeds recorded for him by Allah Almighty. 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ood, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I never regretted something like I regretted a day whose sun has set in which my life decreased and my good deeds did not increase."

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>



Bribery leads to corruption, destruction and loss of trust

If bribery spreads throughout a society, it will undoubtedly be corrupt and doomed to destruction. Man undertook the Trust that was offered to the heavens and the earth but they refused to bear it. Hence, it is obligatory on man to observe this Trust in the most perfect way that is required of him in order to win the pleasure of Allah The Almighty and reform society.

However, if the Trust is lost, it results in the corruption of the society and it becomes disordered and disunited. To preserve this trust, Allah The Almighty forbids His slaves from doing anything that could lead to its loss or decrease. Hence, Allah The Almighty has prohibited bribery, which is spending money so as to reach something that is unlawful, either through giving the briber what he is not entitled to have or exempting him from what is obligatory on him. Allah The Almighty Says (what means):

{And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly or send it [in bribery] to the rulers in order that [they might aid] you [to] consume a portion of the wealth of the people in sin, while you know [it is unlawful]} [Qur'an 2:188]

It mentioned again in the context of dispraising the Jews. Allah Says (what means): {Devourers of [what is] unlawful} [Qur'an 5:42]

There is no doubt that bribery is unlawful as Ibn Mas'ood, may Allah be pleased with him, said in his commentary on the aforementioned verse.

Some scholars consider bribery to be a grave major sin, especially if paid to affect the judgment of a person in a position of trust. This is supported by a Hadith on the authority of 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: "The Messenger of Allah, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), cursed both the briber and the bribed person." [At-Tirmithi] This Hadith indicates that bribery is a grave major sin because it is known that only grave sins and evildoings deserve to be cursed.

Aspects of bribery

Nowadays, bribery prevails in many sectors of numerous societies, to the extent that there is almost no area of life that is free from bribery, especially in third world countries. There is bribery in judgment such that the judge takes the side of the undeserving or prevents someone from having his right, gives precedence to the one who does not deserve to be preferred and vice versa, or is partial in his judgment to a relative or someone of high status -- due to an unlawful bribe that he received. There is also bribery in implementing judgment. There is bribery in appointing people when someone pays a bribe to those who are in authority to appoint someone while there are others who are more deserving of the job than him.

Leaving aside the fact that this is unlawful and the consumption of what is unlawful, it is also betrayal of the Trust because the better and the more

efficient person should be appointed to the job. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {The best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy.} [Qur'an 28:26] Moreover, there is bribery in the field of education, construction and many other fields that are too numerous to mention here.

Effects and harms of bribery

Bribery is a crime that has grave effects and serious consequences on the individual and the society. We shall summarise some of them as follows:

1- Entrusting a mission to those who are not qualified to do it: When one pays a bribe to have a job that he is not qualified for, this leads to shortcomings in his work output and production and leads to the wasting of resources.

2- Destruction of principles and good morals: The spread of bribery in a society means the destruction of the morals of the members of this society, loss of confidence between them and the spread of bad morals like negligence, indifference, losing a sense of allegiance and belonging and the onset of frustration.

3- Wasting property and endangering souls: If one imagines that bribery prevails in a society until it reaches the sector of health and the production of medicine, what would be the condition of people's health when they use bad medicines that were licensed through bribery? Imagine that one walks across a bridge that has grave defects that endangers people's lives and properties and that the contractor who built it obtained permission to finish the work and construction through bribery.

How many casualties and financial losses would stem from the fall of that bridge? One should draw an analogy to this case in all fields. Hence, bribery leads to the wasting of money and endangering of souls.

The difference between bribes and gifts

There is no doubt that there is a resemblance between a bribe and a gift but the main difference between them lies in the intention and motive behind each of them, for the one who presents a gift seeks to win the love of others and their acquaintance and to show kindness to them.

Is a gift presented to a ruler considered a bribe?

Many scholars are of the opinion that the ruler's acceptance of gifts is a type of bribe. In a Hadith on the authority of Abu Humayd As-Sa'idi, may Allah be pleased with him, he said:

The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, employed a man from the tribe of Al-Azd named Ibn Al-Lutbiyyah to be a Zakah [obligatory charity] collector. When he returned he said [to the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam]: "This is for you and this was presented to me as a gift." The Messenger of Allah, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, then rose to the pulpit and praised Allah The Almighty and extolled Him. Then

he, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "I employ a man to do a job and he comes and says this is for you and this was presented to me as a gift? Why did he not remain in the house of his father, or the house of his mother, and see whether gifts would be given to him or not? By Allah, if any one of you took anything unlawfully, he will come with it on the Day of Resurrection, carrying it on [his back]. I will not recognise any of you on the Day of Resurrection with a grunting camel, or a bellowing cow, or a bleating ewe." Then he, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, raised his hands till we could see the whiteness of his armpits. Then he said twice, "O Allah! Have I conveyed [Your Commands]?" [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

An-Nawawi, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "This Hadith clarifies that the gifts received by governors are unlawful to receive and an unfaithful act because it is a breach of their trust. The Messenger of Allah, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, clarified in the same Hadith why those who are in a position of trust are not permitted to accept gifts, unlike those who are not in the same position for in their case a gift is recommended. All that the governor receives under the name of gifts should be returned to the one who gave it. If it is not possible, it should be paid to the Muslims' Treasury."

Ibn Battal, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "The gifts of the governors should be put in the Muslim Treasury. The governor cannot own it unless the Imam requests it for him."

What is the ruling on the one compelled to pay a bribe?

What should one do if it is decided that the gifts that are presented to officials are a type of bribe, but the whole society is controlled by bribery and the governing regime is so corrupt that he cannot have his right without paying a bribe?

Scholars decided that in this case only, the bribed person is the one who bears the guilt, whereas the one who gives the bribe is free from liability. This is so if he does this to have his right or to ward off some harm that may afflict him, his religion or his property.

Therefore, if scholars issue a Fatwa (religious ruling) about the permissibility of paying a bribe in case of compulsion and state that the person who pays the bribe would not be held guilty, does this not indicate that a bribe is like stealing? Rather, it is worse because it ruins the consciousness of those in authority and drives them to wrong others for the sake of the briber. At this point, the regime will become corrupt and will be like a toy in the hands of criminals and unjust people who follow their fancies and possess money that they can pay to those who possess authority and public positions.

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>

Bribery both unlawful and a major grave sin

In Islam, bribery represents anything that is offered in order to obtain the invalidation of what is correct or an endorsement of a wrong action. Not only is this unlawful, it is a major grave sin, as Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly or send it [in bribery] to the rulers in order that [they might aid] you [to] consume a portion of the wealth of the people in sin, while you know [it is unlawful].} [Qur'an 2:188]. Ath-Thahabi, may Allah have mercy upon him, commented that, "or send it [in bribery] to the rulers", means: do not buy them off with this wealth or induce them to confer to you the rights of others, while knowing of its impermissibility.

Those who accept bribes are, undoubtedly, consuming an ill-gotten gain, and are extremely dispraised and defamed by Allah The Almighty, who Says (what means): {And you see many of them hastening into sin and aggression and the devouring of [what is] unlawful. How wretched is what they have been doing.} [Qur'an 5:62]

When bribery becomes rampant in societies, it leads to a loss of rights and prevalence of injustice and corruption. That is why, as 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr, may Allah be pleased with him, narrates, the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, "cursed the one who offers bribes and the one who accepts them." [At-Tirmithi and Abu Dawood, Albani classified at as Sahih]

On another occasion, a person who the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, appointed to collect Zakah (obligatory alms tax) came, and said, "This is for you and this was given to me as a present." So, to clarify the punishment of a person who takes bribes, he, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, ascended the pulpit and said, "What about a collector whom I give an assignment but [he later] says: 'This is for you and this has been given to me as a gift'? Why did he not remain in the house of his father

or mother, and observe whether gifts would have still been presented to him or not? I swear by Him in Whose Hand the life of Muhammad is, any one of you will not take anything from [such kinds of gifts] but will then bring it on the Day of Judgment, carrying on his neck [its like, whether it is] a grunting camel, a mooing camel or a bleating ewe." Therefore, whoever indulges in bribery will bear a great load of sin on his or her neck and will be questioned about it on the Day of Resurrection.

It should be known that the prohibition of receiving bribery is categorical. As for one who offers it, there are some details involved. Obviously, it is unlawful for a person to pay someone off in order to withhold someone's right or wrong him or her. However, if a person is compelled to offer up any incentive as a last resort, in order to obtain a right of his or hers, or to ward off injustice, then that act becomes permitted.

Even if they seem similar, the crucial difference between a bribe and a present, is the intention. Bribery is usually given to block other's rights or to obtain something that a person does not deserve. On the other hand, the intention behind giving a present is to gain affability, acquaintances and benevolence.

Finally, among the main harms and corruptions caused by bribery are the following:

- 1- It angers Allah The Almighty and subjects those involved to His torment and curse.
- 2- It corrupts the society, from the top level, all the way down, including the rulers and their subjects.
- 3- It undermines the rights of the weak and the wronged people.
- 4- It exposes the one who bribes to punishment on the Day of Judgment, when his or her hands will be tied together and he or she will be thrown into Hell.

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>





Rising vaccine hesitancy and worst US measles outbreak in decades

After eradicating measles transmission within the country in 2000, the United States is now battling its biggest resurgence of the virus since 1991, fueled by rising vaccine hesitancy. More than 6,300 infections and at least eight fatalities have been reported by state and local officials since Robert F Kennedy Jr, a longtime anti-vaccine activist, took the nation's top health job in early 2025.

US Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr has changed how the federal government recognises deaths from measles in the midst of the worst US outbreak of the highly infectious virus in more than three decades, prompting backlash from disease experts and political opponents.

For over a century, US state and local health officials have been required to report cases of death in people with a measles diagnosis to the federal government. These reports are separate from death certificates issued by hospital staff or coroners that can list measles as a cause of death or as a

contributing factor. Disease experts have generally considered the death of any person infected with measles to be related to the virus, which can directly impair organs or exacerbate underlying health problems. Kennedy has said the US will no longer automatically include state reports to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of people who died with measles in the national published tally of measles deaths.

Instead, the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics will first confirm that measles was identified as an underlying cause of death on a person's death certificate – a process that can take weeks, according to health experts. The CDC has also said it was re-evaluating how measles deaths are defined, without explaining the need for such a review.

Kennedy, who spent years sowing doubt about the measles vaccine – by far the best way to prevent infection and spread of the disease – has cast doubt

on whether measles can be fatal and promoted the theory that the virus is less dangerous than the vaccines used against it, contrary to decades of scientific evidence showing the benefits of the shots.

He sparred publicly with Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, a Democrat, over the state's report of measles-related deaths before changing how such fatalities are counted. The CDC has so far accepted only two out of five measles-related deaths reported by US states so far this year.

Many infectious diseases kill indirectly. Measles, for example, can trigger complications such as croup, pneumonia and brain swelling that ultimately prove fatal. In some cases, deadly neurological complications don't appear until years after the infection.

The virus can also induce immune system suppression that makes patients vulnerable to fatal secondary bacterial and viral infections.

Local public health officials generally focus on

the underlying cause because it reflects the disease responsible for setting the fatal process in motion. When a person with chronic lung disease, cancer, or another condition that makes them especially vulnerable to severe complications dies after a measles infection, the central question is usually whether the death would likely have occurred if the person had not contracted the virus. Investigators must determine whether measles caused the fatal deterioration, merely contributed to it, or was unrelated.

During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, a similar debate took place over whether patients with preexisting chronic diseases were dying from Covid – that is, the SARS-CoV-2 virus caused the death – or with Covid, meaning they happened to have Covid but their cancer or other health condition is what killed them. Public health experts argue that excluding deaths simply because a patient had other medical problems would underestimate the disease's impact. – Reuters

Uphill battle for Maduro



A motorcade believed to be carrying ousted Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores depart the Daniel Patrick Moynihan United States Courthouse where ousted Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores faced a new indictment accusing them of torturing political opponents and US citizens to retain their grip on power, in New York City. (Reuters)

REYNOLDS
GULFTIMES
16-10-2026

This Chinese export boom really has legs — and wings

By Daphne Zhang, Ella Cao and Lewis Jackson
Reuters

In an office reeking of cigarettes, Dang Yangyang slouches on a black leather sofa in exhaustion. The general manager at Wintop Food has spent recent days chaperoning clients from Ghana, Iraq, Jordan, Russia and Senegal. They all want the same thing: Chinese chicken.

Wintop processes 60mn chickens annually, selling breasts, nuggets, meatballs and dumplings to more than 20 countries. Exports accounted for half of its profits last year and are underwriting 33 acres of expansion.

“International clients used to distrust the quality,” Dang, 44, told Reuters during a tour of his facilities in August. “But when the meat is \$1,000 cheaper per tonne than Brazilian and Thai competitors, they have to either buy from China or lose out.”

The company is part of a wave of Chinese protein producers overcoming the country's patchy food-safety record and leveraging additional capacity to seize space on global supermarket shelves. Changing diets at home and Beijing's emphasis on food security have pushed companies to invest in technology and expansion. Now, they produce more than China can consume and are unloading excess production abroad.

The surge in cheap Chinese protein is drawing scrutiny from Western producers and regulators, signaling fresh trade friction. The pattern echoes Beijing's strategy in steel, solar panels and electric vehicles – flooding markets with low-priced products that undercut global rivals.

In July, the European Commission launched an anti-dumping probe into Pekin duck imports after local producers alleged Chinese subsidies created unfair competition. Last month, the commission imposed anti-dumping duties of between 41%

- **Surplus production, weak domestic demand push China's food makers to expand abroad**
- **China doubles EU processed-poultry market share to 10% since 2022, Gira data show**
- **Surge in Chinese protein exports draws scrutiny from foreign regulators, producers**



Yili infant formula products are displayed on a shelf at the dairy company's headquarters in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China. (Reuters)

and 67% on Chinese pea protein. Chicken has so far avoided the same action, though European authorities are monitoring the market, a commission spokesperson told Reuters.

Agriculture and food are among the few categories where China still runs a trade deficit. At just over \$100bn last year, the gap is massive but shrinking. China, already the world's largest source of seafood exports, last year became a net exporter of chicken. Overall, China exported \$2.6bn worth of chicken products last year, almost double 2020 levels, customs data show. Dairy exports

are on track to hit \$600mn this year, doubling in three years.

For global consumers, the trend means cheaper protein. For foreign producers from Europe to Thailand and Brazil, it means new competitors.

China's shift from buyer to emerging exporter is having a “disruptive” effect on the global meat market, said Michael Boddington, a Beijing-based agribusiness consultant. In Asia, he said, shipments traditionally flowed in from Europe and the Americas. Now, there's a cheaper alternative – and producers globally are scrambling to

compete. China's agriculture and commerce ministries didn't respond to Reuters questions about the country's burgeoning protein exports.

MOVING OVERSEAS

For the large producers who increasingly predominate, the way out is exports. “Every Chinese livestock company is planning to expand overseas. If you want to grow, you must go abroad,” said Zhang Yuan, head of baby formula marketing at dairy giant Yili, which plans to start selling formula in Southeast Asia as soon as next year.

It's a symbolic step for Asia's largest dairy company, which had milk products pulled in a 2008 government crackdown after melamine contamination sickened thousands of babies. The scandal turned consumers away from domestic milk for more than a decade. But Yili baby milk powder is now the top-selling brand in China.

Yili's competitor, Feihe, launched its AceKid infant formula in Indonesia in April to compete with Nestlé and Mead Johnson, after bringing the product to the Philippines a year earlier. Feihe didn't respond to requests for comment. Poultry producers are treading a similar path. At Wintop, in Shandong province, manager Dang has increased the number of chickens in each shed from 20,000 to 120,000 in a decade. The birds weigh 2.5kg on average – compared with 2.2kg for broilers from Brazil, according to S&P Global. They are slaughtered in under 42 days instead of 45, catching up to the 35-day US standard.

The local Tengzhou government is subsidising the wage bill for Wintop's more than 2,000 workers, the company told Reuters without offering specifics. Tengzhou authorities didn't respond to a request for comment. Rival processors such as Sumner are relying on higher-value processed products such as marinated chicken and ready meals to drive growth. Its overseas sales rose 42% to \$135mn last year.

Sumner told Reuters it is expanding the global presence of its breeds by working with countries including Uzbekistan to develop local capacity. The company developed China's first domestically bred white-feather broiler and has begun selling it in Africa and Central Asia.

TOUGH COMPETITOR

As Chinese producers go abroad, they are grabbing market share from established players. Chinese milk powder now competes with products from New Zealand and Europe in

countries including Nigeria and Bangladesh, and is displacing Indian and Iranian producers in the Middle East, according to Yifan Li, dairy analyst at commodity broker StoneX.

China has doubled its share of the European Union processed-poultry market to 10% since 2022, and tripled its share in the UK to more than 14%, according to data from Gira, a food consultancy. That growth is challenging producers such as Germany. China's share of the Japanese market is also edging higher while the leader, Thailand, is slipping.

“It's very worrying,” said Kukrit Arepagorn, manager at the Thai Broiler Processing Exporters Association, an industry body. “Customers increasingly use cheap Chinese chicken prices as a reference point for negotiation.”

Ezequiel Pires, chairman of Lisbon-based international meat trader Branexx, said his company began buying Chinese poultry in March after African customers sought cheaper alternatives to Brazilian imports. Chinese breast meat and leg quarters are 10% to 20% cheaper than Brazilian products, Pires said.

China hasn't fully shaken some of the negative associations arising from persistent food-safety scandals, analysts say. For its exporters, the challenge is to build “lasting confidence in the safety, traceability and consistency of their products,” said Gordon Butland, director at Bangkok-based G&S Agriconsultants.

In the EU, imported food must meet the same health and safety standards as local produce, the European Commission told Reuters. The bloc plans to strengthen EU-origin labeling, starting with poultry products in 2027. Some clients prefer Thai poultry for its consistent taste and quality, said Rupert Claxton, meat and livestock director at Gira. Still, for many customers, China's lower price point is key. “We're exporting to whatever countries we can,” said Wintop's Dang. “If you have a significant price advantage, many customers actively seek you out.”

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Bollywood actor Imran Khan asked to leave India after participating in protest

Reuters
Mumbai

Indian authorities have asked Bollywood actor Imran Khan to leave the country by the end of the month, saying he breached immigration laws after joining a protest against the election commission chief, local media reported yesterday.

Khan, 43, is a US citizen, the *Indian Express* newspaper reported. Under Indian law, foreigners' participation in political protests may be treated as a violation of immigration and visa rules.

Khan was given until October 28 to leave the country, the *Times of India* newspaper said.

The actor participated in a rally in Mumbai on October 10, demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over voter list revisions that critics and oppo-

sition parties say favour Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party. "Apparently I'm going for a drive," the actor wrote on his Instagram on the same day, with a picture of him posing with a victory sign in the back of what looked like a police van

A complaint was filed against him at a police station in Mumbai, saying Khan had breached the law, and the Foreigners Regional Registration Office, a federal government agency responsible for tracking and monitoring foreign nationals in India, sent him a notice to leave based on the complaint, the Indian Express said

Khan did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Reuters

A nephew of actor Aamir Khan, and hailing from an illustrious film family, Imran acted in several hit Bollywood films from 2008 to 2015, before suddenly retiring

UK's Reform party hit by fresh scandal over racist views caught on camera

AFP
London

Britain's hard-right anti-immigration Reform UK party was hit by a fresh scandal yesterday after party councillors and candidates were filmed in an undercover investigation using racist language.

In one excerpt from the 90-minute programme *Undercover: A Year in Reform* by ITV News, black children were referred to as "animals"

In another, a Reform member said his area had become "infested" with Asian families, calling them "absolute parasites"

The broadcast followed Reform UK candidates and councillors during local elections in May and at four by-election campaigns in 2025 and 2026. Reacting to the release of the excerpts, a Reform spokesperson said that "where members, activists and councillors have clearly behaved inappropriately, investigations have commenced.

"In some cases, there have been suspensions and due process must be followed."

It said the party had "improved and prioritised its vetting procedures, but from time to time, a handful of individuals

who do not share our values will initially make it through vetting."

"There is no room for racism in Reform UK"

Labour Party chairwoman Bridget Phillipson called the comments examples of "extreme racism"

"Farage can't shrug these latest revelations off as being a few bad apples," she said of Reform leader Nigel Farage.

Last month Farage's long-term aide, Dan Jukes, and Reform head of policy James Orr stepped down after the party was reported to police over allegations it flouted donation rules following an undercover investigation by Channel 4 News.

Farage has faced months of intense scrutiny over his party's financial arrangements, as well as a separate £5.0-million (\$6.7-million) personal gift to him from Thai-based British businessman, Christopher Harborne.

Last year, Reform soared ahead in opinion polls but YouGov's latest survey this week put the party third behind the ruling Labour Party in first place and the Conservatives in second.

The ITV investigation is due to be broadcast on Sunday.



A view of Millbank Tower, Reform UK's headquarters near the Houses of Parliament, in London. (Reuters)

Mexican nabbed with snakes, lizards at German airport

German customs officials found 90 lizards and venomous snakes hidden in containers and socks in a Mexican traveller's luggage as he arrived at an airport, authorities said yesterday. The 45-year-old was stopped at Cologne airport last month and given a drug test after behaving in a "nervous" manner, the western city's customs office said. The results indicated the man, a firefighter who was not named by authorities, had taken cocaine. Officials searched his suitcase but rather than finding narcotics, discovered around 90 snakes and lizards in plastic containers, shampoo and cream bottles, and socks. "My colleagues at the airport are used to all sorts of travel souvenirs in suitcases, but we've never had 37 venomous snakes and 55 lizards from Mexico before," said customs office spokesman Jens Ahland. (AFP)

7 missing off Romania after latest Black Sea attacks

AFP
Bucharest

Romania reported seven people missing yesterday after two drone attacks on ships in the Black Sea, where several vessels have been hit recently in suspected fallout from the Ukraine war.

The attacks are the latest in a series off the coast of Romania and neighbouring Bulgaria in recent weeks.

Writing on X after a meeting with the leader of Bulgaria and Nato chief Mark Rutte in Brussels to discuss the issue, Romanian President Nicosur Dan said the trend was "unacceptable" and "has to stop"

"The situation in the Black Sea is serious. Commercial ships are being attacked and sunk. Seafarers killed, injured, and missing, very close to the shores of Romania and Bulgaria," he said.

"Lives, global trade, and critical infrastructure are at stake"

34 children, teacher killed in Pakistan school roof collapse

Reuters
Islamabad

At least 34 schoolchildren and a female teacher were killed yesterday when the roof of a school collapsed during morning classes in the northwest-ern Pakistani city of Peshawar, police and rescue officials said.

As panicked parents and relatives thronged the school site to search for their loved ones, rescue workers spent hours pulling children from the rubble of the privately run Al-Khair Education Center.

Most of the victims were under 13 and from low-income households.

At least 45 children suffered injuries, ranging from minor wounds to severe trauma, said Arif Khattak, regional director of the Rescue Department.

Television footage showed rescuers clawing through debris with their bare hands and carrying bloodied children to waiting ambulances as residents crowded the narrow alley where the school stood.

A higher-floor roof collapsed onto classrooms below, crumpling two storeys of the building, a rescue official said.

"The fatalities include 12 girl students and a female teacher," Lady Reading Hospital spokesper-



Rescue workers and residents gather after a school roof collapse in Peshawar, yesterday. (Reuters)

son Mohammad Asim said.

Three children remained in critical condition with head injuries, while most of the injured taken to the hospital had been treated and discharged, he added.

The incident took place at 8.48am local time (0348 GMT) and the rescue operation lasted for four to five hours, Khattak said.

"It was a weak building structure," Peshawar police chief Mian Saeed said. "Its roof was overloaded with construction on a weak structure, which caused the collapse."

Saeed said the school's owner had been arrested and an investigation launched. A total of 110

students were attending lessons in three classrooms when the roof caved in.

Distraught relatives accused the school of ignoring concerns about the building's condition and demanded accountability.

"Make an example of them, a lesson for all, so that no one dares open a school just to make money without providing facilities," said Mohammad Zaman, who lost two nephews in the collapse.

The school was located in a poor, crowded neighbourhood of Peshawar, capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where Pakistan's president imposed a state of emergency on Sunday saying the provincial government

had failed to tackle militancy from neighbouring Afghanistan, an allegation it denied.

Pakistan spends less than 1% of its nearly \$450bn GDP on education, leaving many families dependent on low-cost private schools.

Many of them operate from poorly maintained rented buildings with limited oversight, contributing to recurring safety concerns. In June, at least 14 children died when the roof of a tutoring centre housed in a dilapidated building collapsed in the eastern city of Lahore.

There was no immediate comment from school officials.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed sorrow over the tragedy and offered condolences to the victims' families, his office said.

Jawad Ahmad, whose son and daughter attended the school and survived, said the news left him devastated.

"It felt as if someone had shot me in the chest when I learned that the school building had collapsed," he said.

The province, governed for years by the party of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan, has frequently been at odds with the federal administration. President Asif Ali Zardari imposed a new governor on the province when he declared the state of emergency on Sunday, sharpening the tensions.

Zelensky defies Trump with Russian refinery strikes

AFP
Kyiv

Ukraine will no longer abide by US President Donald Trump's demands not to strike Russian oil refineries, President Volodymyr Zelensky said in remarks published yesterday, as tensions deepened between the two leaders over a US-Russia diesel agreement.

Relations between Kyiv and Washington have soured since last week, when Trump eased sanctions on Russia in exchange for Moscow releasing large amounts of diesel onto global markets.

Zelensky described the deal as a "weak decision", saying it would encourage Russia to prolong its four-and-a-half-year war with Ukraine, while several of Ukraine's European allies criticised the agreement.

Addressing the criticism on Saturday, Trump claimed Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries were to blame for rising diesel prices and said it was "time for Ukraine to get a new president"

"The block (on attacking refineries) is out," Zelensky told the *Financial Times* in an interview published yesterday. "We're done"

Trump had announced on Sunday a surprise "energy ceasefire" between Russia and Ukraine, which Zelensky said he knew nothing about.

And earlier this week, Ukraine reported disruptions to a critical US satellite communications system that its army uses on the battlefield.

"We need HONESTY from our partners about this war," Zelensky wrote on social media yesterday.

In an interview with British journalist Piers Morgan on



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte during their meeting on the sidelines of an EU summit in Brussels. (AFP)

Wednesday, Zelensky agreed that he felt "betrayed" by Trump's diesel-supply deal with Russia's Vladimir Putin.

He also questioned the advice that Trump was receiving, after senior Ukrainian officials in Kyiv openly accused the US of helping Russia.

"It's painful when President Trump chooses one side, not our side," he said.

"I think his advisers are wrong. This is not (the) right side of history"

Since launching a full-scale invasion of its neighbour in 2022, Russia has systematically hit Ukrainian energy infrastructure, leading to energy and heating shortages — while Ukraine has hit back at Russian oil refineries it says fund the war.

More recently, Trump's war in Iran has led to oil shortages and ensuing price spikes, creating major headwinds for his Republican Party ahead of midterm elections early next month.

Meeting Zelensky in Brussels yesterday, Nato chief Mark Rutte

said he discussed the importance of "implementing an energy ceasefire as well as Nato allies' continuous support for Ukraine"

But Zelensky made no mention of a ceasefire in his post on X about the Rutte meeting.

The Kremlin accused Ukraine of derailing US peace efforts by resuming its strikes on refineries, with Russian authorities reporting a drone attack on an oil refinery south of Moscow that caused a fire.

Kyiv "continues to launch strikes against these facilities," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"It is coming into serious conflict with the peace efforts of the US and American negotiators, who are making vigorous efforts to initiate the peace process," he added.

In Kyiv, residents told AFP they sensed a change in Washington's attitude towards Ukraine.

When asked about Trump, 30-year-old Alyona Nikitina told AFP:

"Let them live here for two to three days. All these nighttime attacks, what people here are going

through — blackouts, no electricity. And then maybe he'll see all this differently?"

Russia has intensified its bombardment of Ukraine and its capital in recent months, leading to mounting civilian casualties and disrupting daily life for citizens.

Moscow currently occupies around a fifth of Ukraine, including Crimea, which it annexed in 2014.

Much of the outrage in Ukraine this week has been over restrictions to the Starshield satellite communications system that its military relies upon to detect incoming Russian attacks and to coordinate its frontline response.

Defence officials confirmed that the US had threatened to withdraw intelligence-sharing if Ukraine continued long-range strikes on Russian oil refineries.

Powerful ballistic missiles struck Kyiv and the surrounding region on Tuesday and Wednesday night, before air raid sirens could sound warning people to take cover.

But tech billionaire Elon Musk, who has also called for Zelensky to be replaced as leader, said his SpaceX company was not behind any disruption to the Starshield system.

"Starshield systems are owned and controlled by the US government," he said.

"Any limits on speed or usage are decided by the US military and ultimately POTUS," he added, referring to Trump.

Ukraine uses the Starshield system from Musk's SpaceX for battlefield communications, mid-range strikes on Russian-occupied territory and interceptor drones.

It is separate from the parallel Starlink civilian satellite system, which Ukraine also uses but not for offensive operations.

Spain's electoral board opens proceedings against Sanchez

Reuters
Madrid

Spain's Central Electoral Board (JEC) opened disciplinary proceedings against Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez yesterday over an October 6 press conference after a cabinet meeting to announce new housing legislation, parliament's press office said.

JEC asked for the removal of the statements from institutional channels and required PM to refrain from similar actions during the campaign period.

The case stems from a complaint by the opposition People's Party (PP), which argued Sanchez used government facilities to deliver campaign-style messages.

The proceedings come after Sanchez called a snap election for November 29 after housing decrees failed in parliament.

The scrutiny raises questions over institutional neutrality during the campaign — an issue that can fuel political attacks even when cases end only in administrative sanctions.

Complaints often focus on whether incumbents used public office, resources or official events for campaign messaging after an election was called.

In January 2020, JEC fined Sanchez €500 (\$560) over a TV interview published on the government website.

In October 2023, it fined Sanchez €2,200 over a Brussels press conference during the July 23 campaign; saying he had praised government achievements and criticised opponents.

Carlos Fernández Carriedo, a PP regional government spokesperson, was also fined €2,200 in 2023 by JEC over comments made during a post-cabinet press conference.



Amir takes part in 7th CICA Summit

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani took part in the 7th Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) at the Heydar Aliyev Centre in Baku yesterday, at the invitation of Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. HH the Amir is pictured on the left with Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and seen on the right during a meeting with Aliyev. The summit was also attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi, and members of the official delegation accompanying HH the Amir. - QNA



QM holds event on International White Cane Day

Qatar Museums (QM) celebrated the International White Cane Day yesterday under the theme *A Story of Achievement: Beyond the Limits of Sight*. The event highlighted the experiences and accomplishments of individuals with visual impairments, emphasised the importance of raising public awareness regarding their capabilities, and underscored the need to create more accessible cultural and educational environments to support their active participation in society. The event coincided with the global observance of International White Cane Day, held annually on October 15. The white cane is a vital tool for the independence of those with visual impairments; it serves not only as an aid for mobility but also as a key instrument that enables individuals to access various facilities and services with confidence and safety. During the celebration, National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) director Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Hamad al-Thani honoured several participants in recognition of their efforts and contributions toward raising social awareness about the needs of people with disabilities, particularly those who are blind or visually impaired.

The Qatar Cultural Centre for the Blind, which operates under the Ministry of Culture, also participated in the event. The Centre showcased its programmes and its cultural and awareness-raising role, contributing to a greater understanding of the rights of individuals with visual impairments. It further sought to support their integration and active participation in society, underscoring the Centre's mission to foster social awareness regarding the importance of empowering blind individuals to lead independent and dignified lives. The participation also highlighted the vital role of the white cane as a universal symbol of independence, promoted a culture of respect for the rights of the blind and appreciation for their capabilities, and built bridges of communication with various segments of society through awareness programmes and events that champion the values of inclusion and equality. Qatar Cultural Centre for the Blind chairman Faisal al-Kohji told the Qatar News Agency (QNA) that hosting such events, and the attention given to them by Qatari cultural institutions, stems from their significant role in shedding light on the key



challenges faced by individuals with visual impairments. These initiatives, he said, help address how to interact with this group, while also cultivating broader social awareness regarding how to engage with them, as well as with persons with disabilities in general. Al-Kohji said that the QM's hosting of this event at the NMoQ underscores the practical role such organisations play in enhancing the quality of services provided to individuals with visual impairments. Ensuring the participation of this group in cultural life is a commitment enshrined in both local legislation and international conventions ratified by Qatar. These efforts aim to achieve equality and ensure that people with disabilities, and specifically those with visual impairments, can fully benefit from the services offered by cultural institutions. NMo programme specialist Dr Joumana

Obeid said that the museum is committed to inclusivity, offering comprehensive facilities for all visitors, including those with disabilities, such as visual impairments. She noted that these accommodations begin the moment a visitor arrives at the museum's parking facility and continue until their departure. This includes the organisation of specialised tours, during which visitors can explore the museum's various exhibits with the help of dedicated assistive tools. Obeid further noted that the museum's reception team is fully trained in interacting with and appropriately guiding individuals with disabilities. The goal is to ensure that their visit is as smooth and accessible as possible, supported by specialised, well-suited resources that enable them to navigate the museum and take full advantage of its offerings. - QNA

Amir attends CICA summit in Baku

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His Highness the Amir also met with Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. The meeting discussed co-operation and friendly relations between the two countries and prospects of bolstering them in addition to a host of regional and international issues of common concern. The meeting was attended by members of the official Qatari delegation. From the Uzbek side, the meeting was attended by a lineup of members of official delegation accompanying the Uzbekistan president. Following the summit, HH the Amir and the delegation left Baku. The Qatari delegation was seen off at Heydar Aliyev International Airport by Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev, Qatar's ambassador to Azerbaijan Mohammed bin Hamad al-Hajri, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Qatar Adish Mammadov, and members of the Qatari embassy in Baku. - QNA

'Al-Wasm' season begins today with cooler times

The Qatar Calendar House has announced that the "Al-Wasm" season begins today and will last for 52 days. People across the Arabian Peninsula highly regard this season, as it brings pleasant, moderate daytime weather and cooler nights. During Al-Wasm season, the likelihood of rainfall increases. It is also marked by the arrival of migratory birds and the beginning of desert truffle growth, known locally as "al-faq'a", as climatic conditions become favourable. The name "Al-Wasm" (literally "the mark" or "the sign") refers to the visible impact its rains leave on the land; the precipitation triggers the growth of wild plants and greenery, renewing vegetation across the Arabian Peninsula.



Aisha al-Idrisi



Signing ceremony for short story collection *A Little After Survival*

The Katara Arabic Novel Library at Katara Cultural Village hosted a book-signing ceremony recently for *A Little After Survival*, a short story collection by author Aisha al-Idrisi, published by Katara Publishing House. Pictured above are snapshots from the event attended by intellectuals, writers and cultural enthusiasts, celebrating literary creativity and the human experience. The signing ceremony forms part of Katara's broader cultural efforts to support literary creativity, introduce new publications and strengthen the library's role as a cultural space that brings writers and readers together and contributes to enriching Qatar's literary and cultural scene.