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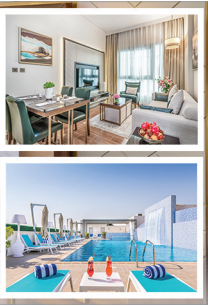
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SATURDAY Vol. XXXIV No. 12650

May 20, 2023

Shawwal 30, 1444 AH

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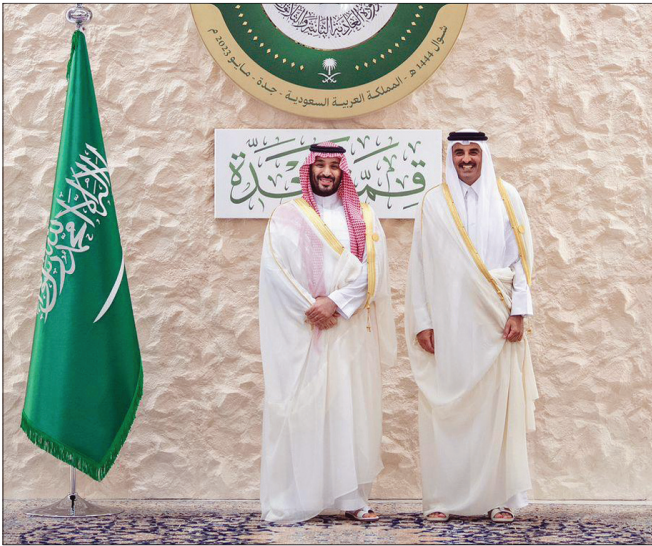
# Amir participates in 32nd Arab Summit in Jeddah

**QNA**  
Jeddah

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani participated yesterday, along with Arab leaders and heads of delegations, in the opening session of the 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council summit at King Abdullah International Conference Centre in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky also participated.

The summit was also attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, members of the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir, and a number of members of the official delegations, representatives of international and regional organisations, and guests of the summit.

His Highness the Amir later left Jeddah, after heading the Qatar's delegation at the summit.



The Amir sent a message to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohamed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, expressing his deep thanks and appreciation for the hospitality that he and the accompanying delega-

tion received during the summit, hoping that its results would contribute to strengthening joint Arab action for the benefit of the Arab peoples, praying to God to grant the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and his Crown Prince continued health and wellness, and the

Kingdom more progress and prosperity.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir and the accompanying delegation were welcomed upon arrival at Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport by Deputy Governor of Makkah Al-Mukarramah region Prince Badr bin Sultan bin

Abdulaziz al-Saud, Qatar's ambassador to Saudi Arabia Bandar bin Mohamed al-Attiyah, Saudi ambassador to Qatar Prince Mansour bin Khalid bin Farhan al-Saud, members of the Qatari embassy, and a number of Saudi civil and military officials. (QNA) **Page 2**



Abbas urges world to hold Israel accountable for its crimes

QNA

Jeddah



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas speaking at the Arab summit.

He was speaking at 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level. He said that the

Israeli occupation's governments have been challenging the international community through its illegal settlement policies and fascist laws. The Palestinian president expressed his confidence that the Arab summit will succeed in facing the regional and global challenges facing the Arab nation, stressing the readiness of the State of Palestine to work with it, under the leadership of Saudi Arabia, for the success of Arab, regional and international efforts, within the framework of partnership and co-operation, and to find solutions to the region's crises.

Arab League chief calls for working together to defend interests

QNA

Jeddah



Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Abo al-Ghait.

community was facing incredibly dangerous times, with the increased competition between major powers

at the expense of smaller countries. He said that this requires Arab countries to remain steadfast in defending their interests and work together to face that. He said that the developments in Sudan adds to the many conflicts in the Arab world, noting that it was civilians who were paying the price for the military conflict. He said that it was time for such confrontations to end, and for the Sudanese parties to commit to dialogue to protect the people and save Sudan's unity and national institutions.

## QRDI Portal competitive edge for Qatar

**By Joseph Varghese**  
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Research, Development and Innovation (QRDI) Portal is the first of its kind in the region, and provides the country a competitive edge, an official said.

"QRDI Portal is a very unique one and the first of its kind in the region that aims to support RDI actors in Qatar to connect and collaborate," said Haytham A Ali, senior information system manager, QRDI Council.

Addressing the Qatar Spain Innovation Programme launch event recently, Ali explained that the QRDI Portal provides Qatar a competitive advantage as many countries in the region do not have a similar platform.

"It is a national platform that provides a quick and easy means to navigate the resources, capabilities and



Haytham A Ali addressing the event. **PICTURE:** Tajudheen

infrastructure present in Qatar's innovation and research ecosystem.

"We have over 2,840 projects in the portal. There are many entities in Qatar who are working on these projects. These entities have over 250 research facilities and these institutions provide over 266 services. They have produced over 11,800 outputs in the form of publications, patents,

books among others," explained Ali.

According to the official, the QRDI Portal offers a unique opportunity for researchers and innovators to browse thousands of assets and leverage shared resources. Leading institutions in Qatar can reach a wider audience, by showcasing their world-class infrastructure and collaborating with emerging talent, government, private businesses and more.

Ali said that the geographic size of the country also is a great enabler of the research and innovation in the country. "Since the country is very small, people can reach the institutions at any location quite fast. Moreover, with the state of the art transportation services and infrastructure, it is easy to navigate through any part of the country very fast. All these help the research ecosystem in the country," he pointed out. **To Page 4**

# Arab leaders stress the centrality of Palestinian cause

## ● Call for strengthening joint Arab action

**QNA**  
Jeddah

Arab leaders have emphasised the centrality of the Palestinian cause, expressing their strong condemnation of the practices and violations that target the Palestinians and undermine efforts to establish their independent state on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

During their 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level (Jeddah Summit), the leaders underlined the importance of strengthening joint Arab action, solidarity and co-operation, protecting the sovereignty of states and the cohesion of their institutions, and making further advancement of Arab action to keep pace with the challenges of the new era, in a way that serves the goals and aspirations for a better future for the Arab peoples and generations to come.

This came in the "Jeddah Declaration" at the conclusion of the summit yesterday. The following is its text:

At the generous invitation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, the Arab leaders held the 32nd regular session of the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level (Jeddah Summit) on May 19, 2023, under the chairmanship of Prince Mohamed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Emphasising the importance of strengthening joint Arab action based on common foundations, values, interests and one destiny, and the necessity of unifying ranks, solidarity and co-operation in maintaining security and stability, protecting the sovereignty of our countries and the cohesion of their institutions, preserving their achievements, striving for further progress

concerning Arab action, and taking advantage of the human and natural assets that our region enjoys addressing the challenges of the new era in a way that serves the goals and aspirations of a promising future for our peoples and future generations.

Emanating from our keenness to secure conditions, utilise opportunities, strengthen and dedicate partnerships and consolidate understandings among our countries based on common interests, and increase co-operation to achieve sustainable development goals and implement the ambitious development visions of our countries through a comprehensive renaissance in all fields to keep pace with global developments and create a future that meets the hopes and aspirations of our peoples and achieves the common interest and benefit of our countries, inspired by the past experiences of our countries and aware of the amount of challenges surrounding Arab security and the events that some of our countries went through, as well as the importance of preserving our culture and values, and our firm determination that the citizens of our countries be the target of development and a solid pillar of stability and progress, and security the key to stability, we:

1- We reaffirm the centrality of the Palestinian issue to our countries as one of the key factors of stability in the region. We condemn in the strongest terms the practices and violations targeting Palestinians in their lives, property and existence. We stress the importance of intensifying efforts to achieve a comprehensive and just settlement to the Palestinian issue and find real grounds for achieving peace based on the two-state solution in accordance with international references, mainly the Arab Peace Initiative, relevant international resolutions and the principles of international

law, to ensure the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state on Palestinian territory on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. We also call upon the international community to fulfil its responsibilities to end the occupation and stop repeated attacks and violations that impede political solutions and undermine international peace efforts, reiterating the need to continue efforts to protect the occupied city of Jerusalem and its holy sites in the face of the occupation's condemned endeavours to change its demography, identity and historical and legal status quo. We support the historical Hashemite custodianship to protect Islamic and Christian holy sites and the Jordan-run Jerusalem and Aqsa Mosque Affairs Department affiliated with the Jordanian Ministry of Awqaf, which is the sole body authorised to administrate the affairs of Al Haram Al Sharif, as well as supporting the role of Al-Quds Committee and Bayt Mal Al-Quds Agency in defending the holy city and the resilience of its people.

2- We are following up with interest on the developments and events taking place in our brotherly Republic of Sudan, expressing our deep concern at the ramifications of the crisis for the security, safety and stability of our countries and peoples. We reaffirm the need to ensure de-escalation, resort to dialogue and unity, alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese people, preserve national state institutions, prevent their deterioration and avoid any external interference in Sudan's affairs that would fuel conflict and threaten regional peace and security. The meetings of Jeddah, which commenced on May 6, 2023, among Sudanese groups, is an important step that can be built upon to end this crisis and restore security and stability in Sudan and protect the capabilities of its people. **To Page 2**



Amir attends Arab League Council summit in Jeddah



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani headed Qatar’s delegation to the 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level, held yesterday in Jeddah. His Highness the Amir and the accompanying delegation were welcomed upon arrival at King Abdulaziz International Airport by Deputy Governor of Makkah Al-Mukarramah region Prince Badr bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, ambassador of Qatar to Saudi Arabia Bandar bin Mohamed al-Attiyah, Saudi ambassador to Qatar Prince Mansour bin Khalid bin Farhan al-Saud, members of the Qatar embassy in Saudi Arabia, and a number of Saudi civil and military officials. (QNA)

Saudi crown prince urges steps to protect Arab rights, interests

QNA  
Jeddah

Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia Mohamed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud affirmed the move to achieve the interests of the Arab peoples and preserve their rights, and not allow the region to turn into fields of conflict, pointing out that the Arab world possesses civilisational and cultural elements, as well as human and natural resources for it to be an important player with a comprehensive renaissance.

He was speaking at the 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level. He chaired the 32nd summit on behalf of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. The crown prince



Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohamed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud.

said that the Palestinian cause is at Saudi Arabia's top priorities and is the central issue of Arabs and Muslims.

He added that the kingdom spares no effort in supporting the brotherly Palestinian people to recover their land, restore their

legitimate rights, and establish an independent and sovereign Palestinian state on the Palestinian lands, within the borders of 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, and other agreed

upon international references, in a way that achieves the aspirations of the brotherly Palestinian people. On Sudan, he expressed hope that dialogue will prevail to maintain the unity of Sudan and the security of its people. He welcomed the signing of the Jeddah Declaration by the parties of the conflict, which saw them commit to protecting civilians and facilitate humanitarian work.

He concluded his speech by confirming the kingdom's position in support of everything that contributes to reducing the intensity of the crisis in Ukraine, the non-deterioration of the humanitarian situation, readiness to continue mediation efforts between Russia and Ukraine, and support for all international efforts aimed at resolving the crisis politically, in a way that contributes to achieving security and peace.

Tunisian president warns of emerging new world system

Tunisian President Kais Saied stressed the need to establish a new world system based on social justice, equality, eradication of poverty, and preservation of stability and civil peace, of which the Arab region would be an integral part. This came during his speech at the 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level in Jeddah.

He said that the Arab world refuses to be a victim to an emerging world system that the Arab world doesn't participate in setting up. He stressed that this new system should not take place at the expense of the Arab world. (QNA)



Tunisian President Kais Saied

Zelensky seeks Arab support for peace initiative with Russia

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced a peace initiative to Russia, and called on Arab countries to work with Kyiv on the initiative directly without mediators. He was speaking at the 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level as a guest of honour.

He said that the participants at the summit will receive the 10-point peace plan, and asked them to work with Ukraine on it directly, stressing that his country will not succumb to Russia's greed. Zelensky announced that Kyiv is working to end the naval



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

blockade imposed by Russia on Saudi mediation for the release of Ukrainian prisoners in Russia.

Algerian PM says facing global challenges requires Arab unity

Algerian Prime Minister Aymen Benabderrahmane said that the world is facing challenges that require unification of the Arab world. He called on the international community, especially the UN Security Council, to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people and to enable them to regain their legitimate rights, foremost of which is the establishment of their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative. This came during his speech at the 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level.

He pointed out that Algeria harnessed its diplomacy to mobilise support for the Palestinian cause, and was keen to reunite the Palestinian ranks, calling on the international community to assume its responsibilities towards the Palestinian people and put an end to the Israeli settlement policy. He said that Algeria hosted the 31st summit during a very complicated time regionally and internationally, especially with the breakout of the Ukrainian crisis that posed new challenges to the world when it comes to food and energy security. He renewed the call to mobilise Arab financing capacities, especially the Arab Monetary Fund and the existing Arab funds, to assist member states that are in dire need of this assistance to enable them to overcome these difficult circumstances. (QNA)

‘Absence of just solution to Palestinian ordeal cause of tensions in the region’

Oman's Deputy Prime Minister for Relations and International Cooperation Affairs, Asa'ad bin Tariq al-Said, the Personal representative of Sultan of Oman, said that the failure of the international community in finding a just and equitable settlement for the suffering of the Palestinian people is the source of the tensions that afflict the region and the world from time to time.

In his speech at the 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level, al-Said stressed the need to apply the standards of international laws and resolutions of international legitimacy on the Palestinian issue, stressing that the Palestinian people have the right to establish their independent state on the boards of June 4, 1967 in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions.

He highlighted that the Arab countries are able to step to broader horizons of prosperity and development, and advance their position among nations, considering that preserving the League of Arab States would enhance cooperation, integration, and exchange of benefits between Arab countries and the countries of the world.

Refugees crisis greater than Lebanon's capacity: Mikati

Lebanese Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said that the return of the Syrians refugees to their lands can only be achieved with concerted Arab efforts and support from the international community, pointing out that the refugees crisis is greater than Lebanon's ability to bear.

In his speech at the 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level in Jeddah, Mikati said that the Lebanese crisis has become more complicated with the vacancy of the presi-



Lebanese Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati.

dency of the republic, referring also to the issue of the Syrians refugees, and that the protracted duration of the crisis, the faltering of its treat-

ment, and the large increase in the number of the refugees, made the crisis greater than Lebanon's capacity, both in terms of its infrastructure and the and the social and political effects.

Mikati also touched on the current crises in the Arab world, (Palestine, Yemen and Sudan), focusing on the situation in Lebanon, which he said is experiencing multiple crises that have weighed heavily on the Lebanese people who suffer from lack of the basic moral and material necessities of life.

Sudan's envoy voices confidence in Arab solidarity with his country

The Special Envoy of the Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council in Sudan, ambassador Dafallah al-Haj Ali, affirmed his confidence in the Arab countries' standing with Sudan to contain the current crisis and support it in the next phase of reconstruction, appreciating the humanitarian truce initiative by Saudi Arabia and the United States to end the fighting in Sudan.

In his speech at the 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level yesterday, he said that Sudan rejoices in the signs of peace that are taking shape in the Arab region, with the return of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which confirms Saudi Arabia's keenness and endeavour to achieve stability and security in the region, adding "You know that Sudan is located in a large region that includes 10 countries. It serves as the safety valve and mediator for this region. You can imagine what the repercussions will be for the entire region if this is undermined." He reaffirmed his country's firm position on the Palestinian cause, which is considered the top Arab issue, expressing his country's strong condemnation of the recent Israeli violations in the Palestinian territories.

Mauritania president stresses need for united Arab initiative

Mauritania President Mohamed Ould Cheikh Ghazouani has stressed the importance of joint Arab efforts to boost Arab presence internationally. In his speech at the 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level yesterday, Ghazouani said the profound geostrategic changes looming amid the crises currently sweeping the world call for unifying efforts and overcoming differences. These changes should also serve as a reminder of the importance of increasing joint Arab action to boost the collective Arab ability to withstand challenges and achieve development and stability, the Mauritanian president added. He also highlighted the need to enhance economic exchange among Arab countries in preparation for establishing a common Arab market that paves the way for sustainable and comprehensive development. He pointed out that the current situation in Palestine and the fateful conflicts and challenges in the Arab world confirm the need to develop joint action, expressing his country's condemnation of the Israeli aggressions in Palestine.

Kuwaiti leader calls for more Arab efforts for better future

Kuwaiti Crown Prince Sheikh Mishaal al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah called for exerting more efforts and co-ordinating positions to ensure a secure and stable future in all parts of the Arab world, pointing out that the Arab countries have great responsibilities and challenges.

He explained that there is optimism about the signs of breakthroughs taking place in the region, but optimism is mixed with concern about the continuation of some challenges facing the Arab world.

"We are optimistic regarding the detente that happened in the region, namely the joint statement by Saudi Arabia and Iran ... affirming that such understandings will impact positively on the region's stability, prosperity and peoples' aspirations," he said in his speech at 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level.

Iraqi PM underlines importance of concerted Arab endeavour

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shiaa al-Sudani stressed the importance of joint Arab action to contain differences, calling on the Arab League to develop its approaches towards building an economic bloc. Addressing the 32nd regular session of the Arab League Council at the summit level, held in Jeddah, al-Sudani said that many countries have been able to build successful economic blocs and they do not have common elements among their members, unlike Arab countries which share language and culture. In this respect, al-Sudani pointed that his country will be hosting several conferences to lay the foundation stone for such co-operation, such as the (Baghdad 2023) conference for economic integration and regional stability. On the situation in Sudan and other Arab countries, he said that it is a must to spare Sudan from slipping into dissension and internal strife.

Arab leaders stress centrality of Palestinian cause, call for strengthening Arab action

From Page 1

3- We support for all efforts that could guarantee security and stability in the Republic of Yemen and fulfil the aspirations of the brotherly Yemeni people. We also advocate for the UN and regional efforts seeking to come up with a comprehensive political solution to the Yemeni crisis based on the three terms of reference: the GCC initiative and its implementation mechanism, the Yemeni National Dialogue outcomes, and the UN Security Council Resolution 2216. We reiterate support for the efforts of the Presidential Leadership Council in Yemen to achieve security, stability and peace in the country in a way that ensures an end to the Yemeni crisis.

4- We express our solidarity with Lebanon and urge all Lebanese parties to dialogue in order to elect a President of the Republic who fulfils the aspirations of the Lebanese people, the regular work of the constitutional institu-

tions, and the adoption of the required reforms to get Lebanon out of its crisis.

5- We call for stopping foreign interference in the domestic affairs of Arab countries and categorically reject all support for the formation of armed groups and militias outside the scope of state institutions. We stress that internal armed conflicts will not result in the victory of any one party, but will rather exacerbate the suffering of the peoples, destroy their achievements and impede their progress.

6- We stress that sustainable development, security, stability and peace are inherent rights for all Arab citizens. These will only be achieved through concerted efforts and through firmly fighting crime and corruption at all levels. We also stress the need to mobilise potentials and capabilities in order to create a future that is based on creativity and innovation and that keeps abreast of various developments in a way that serves and enhances security, stability and the well-being of our people.

7- We believe that visions and plans based on investing in resources and opportunities and addressing challenges can localise development and activate available capabilities. Such visions and plans should utilise technology in order to achieve a comprehensive Arab industrial and agricultural renaissance to which our countries should contribute through integrated potentials. We should boost our solidarity and enhance our interdependence and unity in order to achieve the ambitions and aspirations of our Arab peoples.

8- We express our commitment to and pride in our values and culture based on dialogue, tolerance, openness and non-interference in other countries' affairs under any pretext. Meanwhile, we emphasise our respect for the values and cultures of others and the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states. At the same time, we believe that cultural diversity contributes to better understanding and coexistence. We categorically re-

ject using the dominance of some cultures as a pretext for interfering in the domestic affairs of our countries.

9- We seek to exert more efforts to preserve our culture and inherent Arab identity among our sons and daughters and to strengthen their pride in our well-established values, customs and traditions. We pledge to make every effort to highlight our cultural and intellectual heritage and spread our well-established culture to make it a bridge for communication with other cultures.

10- We appreciate the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's keenness, during the year it held the presidency of the 32nd Arab League summit, on a number of initiatives that are bound to contribute to advancing the joint Arab work in the cultural, economic, social and environmental fields, including:

\*The initiative of teaching the Arabic language to non-native speakers, which targets the children of the second and third generations of Arab immigrants, in a way that contributes to

enhancing civilisational communication between Arab countries and the world, and highlights and preserves the well-established Arab civilisation and culture.

•The Culture and Green Future Initiative aims to raise the level of commitment of the cultural sector in the Arab countries towards the goals of sustainable development and to develop cultural policies related to sustainability, in addition to contributing to supporting environmentally friendly cultural practices and supporting the creative economy in the Arab countries.

•The initiative of sustaining the supply chains of essential food commodities for the Arab countries relies mainly on a set of activities and the provision of investment opportunities with economic and financial feasibility that contribute to meeting the needs of Arab countries for food commodities.

•The initiative of research and excellence in the water desalination in-

dustry and its solutions stimulates scientific and applied research and innovation in the desalinated water production industry and water solutions for interested and needy countries. It focuses on spreading and sharing knowledge and experiences, contributing to improving the economics of this industry in order to reduce costs, raise the efficiency of operations and improve its environmental sustainability, in addition to the issuance of specifications, standardisations and institutional restructuring for the water sectors to make them a strategic industry for the Arab countries.

•The initiative to establish a think-tank for research and studies in sustainability and economic development would embrace new directions and ideas and highlight the importance of sustainable development initiatives in the Arab region to enhance joint and multilateral interest in research co-operation and the conclusion of strategic partnerships" (QNA)

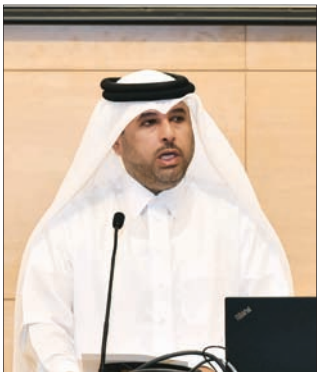


# QU celebrates Honours Programme graduation

Qatar University (QU) celebrated the graduation of the Honours Programme during a ceremony for the Class of 2022. The Honours Programme, at QU's Deanship of General Studies, is designed for highly motivated and academically inquisitive students who are looking for an enriching college experience.

In a speech, dean of General Studies Dr Ibrahim al-Kaabi said: "It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the graduation ceremony of the Class of 2022 for the Honours Programme, and I would like to congratulate you on this success. It is a programme that enhances the university's strategy for excellence in education. Therefore, the Deanship of General Studies has launched a developmental plan for the programme to achieve the vision of the university and Qatar National Vision 2030."

He added: "The plan includes the new pillars of Qatar University's excellence in education, which



Dr Ibrahim al-Kaabi



Dr Yousri Marzouki

focuses on learner-centric education that is experiential, research informed, digitally enriched and entrepreneurial, and enhances student competencies to acquire the qualities of graduates from Qatar University, such as creativity, lifelong learning, awareness of local and international issues, as well as social responsibility, leadership and entrepreneurial thinking."

Hence, the current vision of the Honours Programme "is based on providing the optimal model to achieve excellence at Qatar University in terms of outstanding and diverse educational content, in addition to innovative initiatives that prepare students to become future leaders capable of keeping pace with global changes around us", a press statement noted.

Dr Yousri Marzouki, director of the Honours Programme, said in his speech: "I would like to commend this batch, which contributed to the mobilisation of the first committee, which we started implementing two years ago with the full support of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs Office as well as the Deanship of General Studies."

The programme in its new version aims to provide talented and ambitious students with a rich, multidisciplinary academic experience."

The Honours Programme aspires to be prominent with its quality academic programmes and motivational initiatives, through which students are prepared to become future leaders.

The Honours Programme at QU aims to provide talented and ambitious students with a rich and multidisciplinary academic experience, primarily based on self-learning.

## Turkish election last round voting at embassy in Doha

Voting for the second and last round of Turkish presidential election will take place for three days from today (Saturday) at the Turkish embassy in Doha, from 8am-10pm. A notification from the embassy yesterday explained that voters are obliged to present a valid Turkish identification document (ID Card, passport, driver's licence, etc) issued by Turkish authorities, that has a national identity number clearly visible on it. The Turkish embassy is located at Zone 66, Street 905, Building 149, Diplomatic Area, Doha, the notification added.

## AlKhater meets with Turkish official



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met with Republic of Türkiye's Permanent Representative to the ICAO Suat Hayri Aka. During the meeting, they reviewed ways to enhance co-operation between Qatar and Türkiye in the field of air and maritime navigation, and exchange support within the scope of relevant international organisations. The meeting was attended by Director of the International Organisations Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ali Khalfan al-Mansouri, and ambassador of Türkiye to Qatar Dr Mustafa Goksu.

# 'Successfully delivering Qatar 2022 was a great achievement'

Urban planner Allison Taylor has overseen a multitude of roles during her nine-year stint supporting Qatar's preparations for the FIFA World Cup. As the Land & Planning manager for the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC), Allison was involved in pre-tournament planning, construction and event operations. Originally from the Bay Area of California, US, 40-year-old Allison spoke to the SC about her Qatar 2022 journey as part of the SC's 'Amazing: Delivered' series.

## Allison Taylor highlights her journey as part of SC's Amazing: Delivered series

### Why did you join the Qatar 2022 project?

It was an exciting, mega project that had global reach and working on it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I had been working in Qatar for a couple of years before taking the role and this offered a chance to really contribute to the development of the country. Who wouldn't say yes to a project like this?

### What were you responsible for during Qatar 2022?

During the World Cup, I was in the Main Operations Centre, representing the non-official sites team. Effectively, the Main Operations Centre was a collection of representatives from several different projects, including stakeholders like Kahramaa and Ashghal, and featured a number of other command centres. We dealt with different issues that would arise during the tournament and worked towards making sure everything went



Allison Taylor with others at a tournament site.

smoothly. For example, in the weeks before the tournament, our project teams needed access to the sites, so their overlay installation teams could do their final set-up. I would mitigate these issues by contacting the relevant parties to ensure access

to the sites was granted.

### What are some of your proudest achievements from the project?

My proudest achievement is that we delivered this amazing project successfully. Having been



Allison Taylor

### How do you feel, now that the tournament is over, and what has it meant to you to be involved?

In terms of the project itself, I feel so proud to have been involved. I met so many wonderful people and had so many great experiences. I feel very privileged to have been part of this project since almost the start. To see all these stadiums become reality, seeing everything operational and people having a great time, it feels wonderful.

### What is your favourite memory from the tournament and why?

One of the great memories for me was to have my immediate family, including my father, come over from the United States. For some of them, it was a long journey from California, as they had never been to the Middle East or Qatar before. To see them navigating the stadiums and the metro, they were amazed by how nice and clean the country is and how friendly the people were.

### What are your key lessons learned from the tournament?

A key lesson on this project was co-ordination and teamwork - I can't say that enough. There were situations that we've gone through where things were done in silos and not in a co-ordinated fashion. I always recommend to communicate with everyone as a team. Also, be kind to each other. Even in our most stressful times, keep the kindness and keep the respect.

### What advice would you give to someone working on an event of this scale in the future?

Really appreciate the scale of the event because you can get caught in the daily grind of the work you have to do, which is very important. I've found that when the tournament was actually happening, you need to really have an appreciation of how big it is and how many people it affects. You also need to enjoy the event, as it goes by very quickly.

# Qatar Creates unveils new exhibition in Venice

QNA  
Venice

On the eve of International Museum Day, Qatar Creates has unveiled the new documentary exhibition Building a Creative Nation, the first presentation outside the country about Qatar's next generation of cultural institutions. On view at ACP Palazzo Franchetti during the 18th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, the exhibition will be open until November 26, 2023.

The exhibition, designed by 2 x 4, highlights the development of Qatar's cultural sector over the past 18 years, and demonstrates Qatar Museums' commitment to promoting cultural understanding and exchange through its establishment of a world-class portfolio of museums, galleries, and public art, which serve not only to preserve cultural heritage but also as platforms for education, research, and entertainment for the public.

Building a Creative Nation underscores Qatar's steadfast commitment to expanding the country's cultural landscape over the last 18 years and showcases plans for five more cultural institutions in collaboration with internationally renowned architectural firms, including Art Mill Museum by Elemental led by Alejandro Aravena, Lusail Museum by Herzog & de Meuron, Qatar Auto Museum by Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), Qatar Preparatory School by Philippe



Starek, and Dadu, Children's Museum of Qatar by UNStudio.

An insightful talk titled 'The Evolving Role of Museums and Architecture in Fostering Cultural Engagement' took place to accompany the exhibition on 17 May.

The esteemed panel of speakers included Alejandro Aravena, architect and executive director of Elemental, Ben van Berkel, architect and founder of UNStudio, and Sheikhha Reem al-Thani, Acting Deputy CEO of Exhibitions for

Qatar Museums, who shared their expertise and perspectives. The talk focused on the transformation of museums from mere structures housing collections to active players in fostering local talent, promoting cultural heritage, and engaging with communities.

The group also discussed topics such as how museums' changing roles in social and

cultural life influence design, and the significant role architecture plays in shaping the cultural identity of a city or country.

The talk was followed by a private event held on the same evening, hosted by Khalid bin Yousuf al-Sada, Qatar's ambassador to Italy, who welcomed international guests, architects, museum directors and Qatar Museums representatives, for a preview of the next generation of Qatar's cultural institutions.

Sheikha Reem al-Thani remarked on the exhibition, saying: "We are incredibly proud to share our vision for the next generation of cultural institutions with the world. This unique exhibition showcases our commitment to cultural evolution, combining innovation with respect for our past."

The unveiling of the exhibition coincides with International Museum Day, an annual celebration held on 18 May which raises awareness about the part museums play in the development of society.

The day, which is marked by cultural institutions around the world, intends to highlight the ways in which museums contribute to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, as well as their role in education, research, and entertainment, values which align with Qatar Museums forward-looking cultural objectives, outlined in the Qatar National Vision 2030.



From the awards ceremony.

## Early Childhood Centre celebrates graduation

Qatar University's (QU) Early Childhood Centre (ECC) has celebrated the graduation of its pre-school graduates for the 2022-2023 school year under the slogan 'We played, discovered and learned.'

A total of 36 children graduated this year in the presence of Sheikhha Dr Hessa bint Hamad al-Thani, dean of QU's College of Education, ECC director Maryam al-Falasi and a number of faculty, staff, parents and representatives from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

Prior to the graduation ceremony, ECC children presented seven theatrical performances related to this year's slogan.







## Civil Service & Government Development Bureau marks the graduation of 7th batch of leadership programme

The Civil Service and Government Development Bureau celebrated on Thursday the graduation of the 7th batch of the programme to develop the skills and capabilities of those holding leadership and supervisory positions in government agencies.

The programme saw a total of 140 participants.

In a speech, Civil Service and Government

Development Bureau president Abdulaziz bin Nasser al-Khalifa extended thanks and gratitude to all government agencies doing their best to achieve Qatar National Vision 2030, and their continuous work in implementing the tasks and roles assigned to them.

He also praised the improvements and updates made to ensure the achievement of national goals of human development and the

advancement of various sectors in the country, especially the preparation of a generation of distinguished and qualified national cadres and leaders to deal with various work conditions and challenges with flexibility and intelligence.

Al-Khalifa thanked the Excellence Centre for Training and Consulting at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, for its co-operation with the Civil Service and Government

Development Bureau's Institute of Public Administration, in making this programme a success.

He stressed the necessity of perseverance and striving for development, highlighting the importance of continuing to learn, refining various skills and innovating at work, while emphasising the role and competence of the Bureau in the necessary assistance and support for all. – QNA



Snapshots from the celebration.



## QRDI Portal gives Qatar a competitive edge, says official

From Page 1

The QRDI Portal marks an important step in the creation of an open platform that pools resources and sparks synergies.

It directly fulfils the vision outlined by the Qatar Second National Development Strategy to create a “shared research database and develop co-ordination mechanisms to optimise synergies and the use of resources across Qatar’s research entities”.

In alignment with this vision, the QRDI Council placed “RDI Information Systems” as one of seven RDI transformation elements in its national RDI strategy, QRDI 2030, and embarked on a mission to launch the QRDI Portal.

The official also noted that the QRDI Portal acts as an online network through which anyone can find partners, resources and tools to innovate.

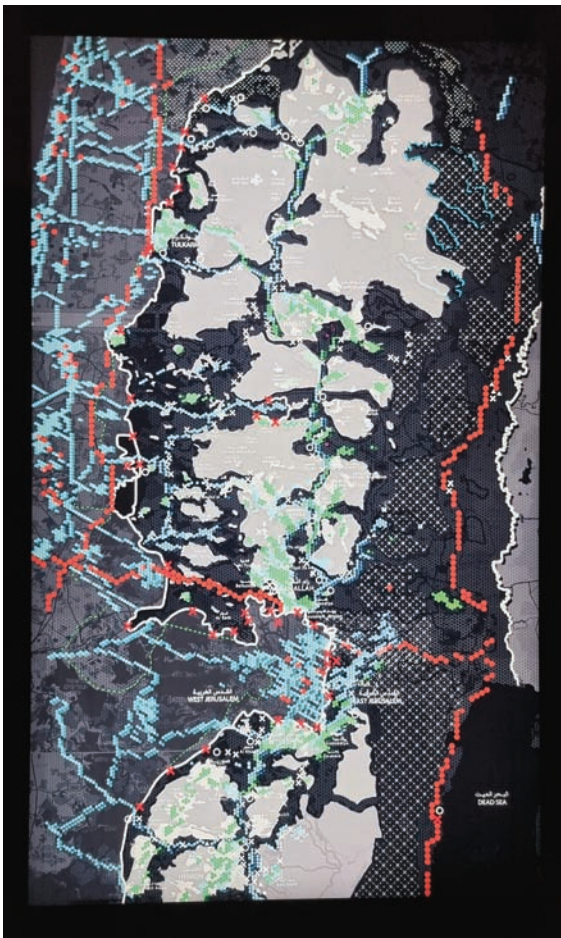
Scientists can pioneer groundbreaking studies, engineers can pilot and test technologies, and designers can cut, carve and model their latest fabrications.

The extensive and growing catalogue of equipment, facilities and services available on the QRDI Portal lends itself to countless applications.

The QRDI Council was established in 2018 to drive RDI efforts on a national level in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Second National Development Strategy (2018-2022).

The QRDI Council has developed a 10-year strategy, QRDI 2030, which seeks to create a locally empowered, globally connected RDI ecosystem, mobilising leadership across government, academia and industry, to transform the social and economic future of Qatar.

# A unique shift in Qatar’s burgeoning art scene



There's a vicious war in the area of frequencies (2023) by Jumanah Abbas.

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

Qatar’s burgeoning art scene is taking a unique turn, thanks to the growing appreciation of art by citizens and those who call the country home, an international arts manager has said.

“I think it (Qatar) is setting itself apart, thanks to the locals and people of Qatar who are appreciating art in a different way than we’ve seen,” Garo Bardakjaian, in charge of international relations for renowned Belgian-Lebanese artist, sculptor, and painter Jean Boghossian, said as he lauded Qatar’s vibrant art scene. “Over this ... the GCC as a whole has changed its approach and point of view towards art.”

He noted that people like Boghossian and a number of participating Middle Eastern artists in the “Eruption” exhibition at Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD) have showcased their works with pride, serving as ambassadors of the region to the world as well.

According to Bardakjaian, the warm reception extended to these artists underlines the welcoming atmosphere for Middle Eastern artists returning to their homeland.

“It is always a welcoming and heartwarming scene when we see us being welcomed back to the

Middle East,” he said, noting that the globally-renowned artist is a Belgian-Lebanese of Armenian descent.

Other exhibiting artists at the “Eruption” exhibition at the MDD include Amal al-Aathem, Anachar Basbous, Anastasia Nysten, Clara Carvajal, Houmam al-Sayed, Jumanah Abbas, Mahmoud Obaidi, Maryam al-Homaid, Morrison Pierce, Nadim Karam, Nicolas Pannayotou, Nourbanu Hijazi, Peter Zimmermann, Said Baalbaki, Tamara Haddad, Yasmina Nysten, and Zheng Lu.

The exhibition was organised by Anima Gallery and Msheireb Properties, and brought together the works of local, regional and international artists at Msheireb.

The show will run until June 10 at Sikkat Alwadi.

Bardakjaian said that Boghossian, who became known for his experimentation with fire as his medium of choice, is exhibiting his work *Ready, Aim, Fire*, which “depicts the tension and beauty of a canon blast with billowing smoke, reminding us of the fragility and power of anticipation.”

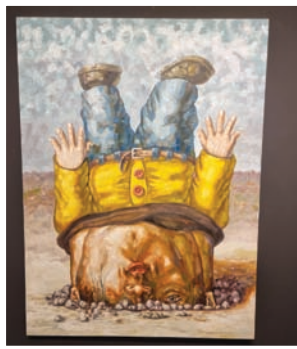
He explained that the painting itself shows signs of damage (by fire), which is part of the artist’s process.

The Belgian-Lebanese artist, Bardakjaian noted, comes from a family of jewellers, and at a very young age was exposed to fire as a



Media Shout (2017) by Nadim Karam.

Garo Bardakjaian showcases Jean Boghossian’s work, titled *Ready, Aim, Fire*, at the exhibition. **PICTURES:** Joey Aguilar



No matter how they throw us, we fall standing ... but on our heads (2023), an artwork by Houmam al-Sayed, and a visitor taking a picture of an artwork by Peter Zimmermann.



## Bharat Utsav 2023 celebrates 50th anniversary of Qatar-India ties



The Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), under the aegis of the Indian embassy in Doha, held a cultural event – “Bharat Utsav 2023” – yesterday at Al Mayassa Theatre in the Qatar National Convention Centre, as part of the celebrations in the 50th anniversary of Qatar-India diplomatic relations.

Several prominent Qatari dignitaries, Indian embassy officials and community leaders took part in the programme.

PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam







# MES teams excel in CBSE chess tourney



**M**ES Indian School teams excelled in the CBSE Qatar Cluster Chess Tournament 2023-24, held recently in four categories. The Girls' under-17 team with Vandana Sajji Kumar (XI-J), Khadija Ahmed (X-P), Irene E Paul (X-M) and Noureen Abdulla (IX-M) bagged the gold medal, the under-11 and under-19 girls' teams won bronze medals, while the boys' team emerged second runner-up in under-11, 17 and 19, clinching bronze medals, thus garnering an aggregate of 24 medals (four gold and 20 bronze) in the tournament. With this win, the Girls' under-17 chess team of MES has qualified for the nationals in India later this year.

Mohamed Navas M I, Gigi P, Abraham and Mariam Sameer, teachers from the Department of Physical Education trained the students. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar congratulated the winners.

# Birla Public School's Al Hilal campus receives top Qatar accreditation

**B**irla Public School's Primary II campus in Al Hilal has been awarded the Qatar National School Accreditation (QNSA) for a period of three years from January 2023 to January 2026.

The QNSA Accreditation is a comprehensive evaluation of a school's performance across various parameters such as teaching quality, student outcomes, infrastructure, governance, and community engagement.

The accreditation process involves a rigorous evaluation by a team of experts who assess the school's performance against the QNSA standards.

BPS chairman Gope Shahani congratulated the dedicated team, under the leadership of Primary II headmistress Anu Thomas.

Harish Sanduja, academic director - principal, described the QNSA Accreditation as a recog-



nition of the collective efforts towards creating a progressive school.

"This accreditation reaffirms our commitment to academic excellence and holistic educa-

tion, and we will continue to strive towards providing our students with the best possible learning experience."

Edna Fernandez, vice-principal, thanked the parent commu-

nity who worked hand in hand with the school as partners. She also appreciated the dedicated team of Primary 2 for their relentless efforts in striving towards perfection.

## MES observes Mother's Day



MES Indian School observed Mother's Day with students paying tribute to the mothers. Special assemblies and various competitions were organised in all the sections. At a special programme in the Conference Hall, students performed skit, role play, group songs and speeches paying glowing tributes to the roles played by mothers in the lives of everyone. In her speech, the chief guest, principal Dr Hameeda Kadar, emphasised the need to ensure that mothers feel acknowledged and appreciated for their sacrifices. She also lauded the efforts of the students and urged them to be always grateful for the sacrifices made by mothers. In the Kindergarten section, the hall was decorated in the theme - "Mother - My Best Buddy". Mothers participated in various fun-filled activities, competitions, and rendered songs. The tiny tots danced and sang in tribute to their mothers.



## DPS-MIS signs pact with Cisco

**D**PS-Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS) signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Cisco Networking Academy for Cisco Netacad Courses for the students of Grades VI-XII.

These certifications aligned courses are among the most in-demand in networking, cy-

bersecurity, and programming. All the computer teachers of the school are certified by Cisco Networking Academy.

The MoU was signed by the school's director Sreedharan Kunhiramath with Cisco Qatar country chief Hasan Khan. School president Hassan Chougule, members of the executive committee, and

principal Asna Nafees were present. Mustafa Badawi, Cisco Networking Academy Lead Qatar, explained about the plethora of self-paced courses available through which students will have access to world-class resources, training, and certifications.

They are free of any charge at the school, a statement added.

# Filipino expats get ready to mark Independence Day

## Plan announced for Philippine I-Day celebration in Qatar

**T**he Philippine Independence Day 2023 (PID23) Executive Committee (ExeCom) has unveiled the roadmap for the Southeast Asian nation's upcoming Independence Day celebration in Qatar.

In a press conference, the PID23 ExeCom announced that the theme of this year's celebration is 'Kalayaan, Kinabukasan, Kasaysayan' (Freedom, Future, History).

The press conference also announced the staging of the various 'Fiesta Filipinas', which are among the programmes and activities lined up for the event. The celebrations aim to showcase and promote the Philippines' cultural heritage, traditions, and achievements while encouraging the inclusivity of every Filipino in the host country.

Jyerex Abrasado, chair of PID23 ExeCom and current finance director of the Philippine Business Council - Qatar (PBCQ), emphasised the event's significance in promoting Fili-



The Philippine Independence Day 2023 Executive Committee and other members at the press conference.

pino heroism, freedom, and the nation's heritage.

"We aim to make PID23 an event that will give all participants honour and pride for the heroism of our forefathers, which led to every Filipino's freedom and our country's nationhood," Abrasado said.

Architect Marvin Tejada, co-chair of PID23, stressed the need for collaborative efforts to ensure the successful delivery of the event.

He also highlighted the importance of promoting inclusivity by extending the invitation to each member of the Filipino community in Qatar.

"There is significant value in promoting a broader engagement from Filipino residents in Qatar across all job sectors to ensure that everyone feels a sense of ownership and participation in the event. This marks a notable difference from last year's celebration," Tejada noted.

Isaias Z Marcelo, the chair of the PID23 Programme Committee, presented the PID23 Roadmap, saying the one-day celebration would include a range of activities, such as 'Al-musalang Bayan', community parade, cultural and traditional performances, bazaar, regional exhibits, Filipino traditional

games, 'Battle of the Bands', vocal solo contest, and the 'Ginoo at Mutya ng Kalayaan 2023'.

According to the PID23 ExeCom panel, negotiations with a potential sponsor are underway to bring a guest celebrity who will be performing at the celebration.

The panel added that the Philippine Independence Day celebration in Qatar "promises to be a spectacular event that will showcase the best of Philippine culture and offer an opportunity to build greater unity and understanding among the Filipino community residing in Qatar."

## DPS-MIS holds blood donation drive

As a part of its community welfare drive, DPS-Modern Indian School, in collaboration with Hamad Medical Corporation, hosted its sixth Blood Donation Drive. A total of 57 units of blood were donated. "We will continue to associate ourselves with such initiatives," said principal Asna Nafees.



# Ceremonial investiture held for BPS student leaders

**T**he investiture ceremony for Birla Public School (BPS)'s student leaders for the academic year 2023-24 was conducted in the presence of officials and parents.

Chairman Gope Shahani, director C V Rappai, management representative Chindhu Antony, academic director - principal Harish Sanduja, head of non-academics Vinod Kumar and other officials attended.

Sanduja led the swearing-in ceremony of the elected members; and appointed Falah Mohamed and Mahika Rao as head boy and head girl, Dhairya Kamalkumar Nariani and Sai Naishika Bollikonda as vice-

head boy and vice head girl, and administered the oath. Shahani, Rappai and Chindhu Antony invested them with their office.

Sanduja then administered the oath to the student leaders of the prefectorial board, sports captain, house masters and mistresses, house captains and vice-captains, assistant prefects, and student council members. The head boy and head girl addressed the elected prefectorial board members.

The toppers who bagged the first two positions of the three streams of Grade XI were also honoured with the Aditya Birla Memorial Award and Sarla Birla Memorial Award: Mahika Rao

and Aarish Arvind from Science Stream, Sadhika Sajitkumar and Mohamed Yasin Rafeeqe from Commerce stream and Subhana Salim, Bhoomi Chouhan and Diya Dileep from Humanities stream. The award consisted of certificates and a cash prize of QR3,000 each, for outstanding academic performance in the academic year 2022-23.

Rappai congratulated, inspired and blessed the budding leaders. The school choir entertained the gathering. The event was compered by Stanley M Eapen, Remya Vinod and Soniya Subhash Chander. Student Council speakers Jai Adithya Ramesh and Tarika Gorle proposed a vote of thanks.







## QIIC releases pictorial memoir of World Cup



Qatar Indian Islahi Centre (QIIC), established in 1980, released Legacy, a pictorial memoir of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Representing the winner Argentina, ambassador Guillermo Nicolas, unwrapped a replica of the magazine at a ceremony in Doha. In his address, the envoy spoke about football as a game uniting nations and lauded Indians for their love for the sport and also for their support for the Argentine team. Abdulla Yusuf al-Mulla, director of 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum released the web version of the book which showcases in 160 pages the golden moments of the tournament. Legacy executive editor Fyzal Karattiyattil welcomed the gathering. Chairman Hussain Mohamed U presided. Chief editor Raees Ahammed gave a briefing about the magazine. Presidents of Indian Sports Centre,

Indian Cultural Centre, and Indian Community Benevolent Forum - E P Abdulrahman, A P Manikantan and Shanavas Bava lauded the QIIC initiative. The guests were presented with QIIC mementos by president Akbar Qasim, general secretary Muneer Salafi, vice-presidents G P Kunhalikutty Ismail Viliyapally, Zubair Wakra, secretaries Salam Cheekunnu, Misbah and engineer Sherif, and Mohamed Ali Ottappalam. The guests were received by QIIC advisory board member Ahmed Pathirippatta, executive member Abdulla Hussain, vice-president Jassim Kunnoth and secretary Mahroof Mattool. The programme began with the recitation of the Holy Qur'an by Fahmy Ahmed, and concluded with a vote of thanks by convener Mohamed Layis. The programme was anchored by Abdullah Hussain U.

## QU felicitates short story contest winners



The Qatar University (QU) Student Writer's Club recently held an awards ceremony to recognise the winners of a short story competition, as part of a 13-week course on creative writing presented by the English Language Programme at the US embassy in Qatar.

The event was graced by Megan Cassell, press attache

at the US embassy, and Hanadi Damra, English Language and Education Outreach coordinator. The winners, Shahd Elamin, Fatima Ali and Mariam Sweify, were invited on stage to read excerpts from their stories.

The ceremony included a short speech about the club's activities by Mohamed Hosam al-Nahas, the club adviser and

English lecturer at QU's Foundation Programme. He called for students to submit written contributions to mark the first issue of the Student Writer's Club bi-annual student magazine, 'Quill and Ink'.

Previously, the club hosted American poet John Herlihy. Renowned short story writer George Saunders will join the next session.

## MES bags prizes in MoI quiz contest



Students of MES Indian School bagged several prizes in the fire safety and preventive measures quiz contest conducted as part of a fire prevention webinar held recently by the Public Relations Department of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the General Directorate of Civil Defence. The winners are Mahit (6-A), Aadhil (9-A), Amal Rashid (7-K), Ain Vaibhav (5-H), Maheen Malik (5-N), Tahania Mohamed (12-I), Mokshgna Hariharan (7-K), Rayan Moideen Kutty (9-J), Danell (7-B), Sidra Nazeemah (8-R), Krishnenth Venugopalan (11-D) and Abhinav Nair (7-D).

# Inter-school quiz and science exhibition held



Anecx, the Qatar chapter of the Alumni Associations of the NSS College of Engineering conducted an inter-school quiz competition and science exhibition at Birla Public School as part of the celebration of its silver jubilee year under the title Anvin-Silvesta '23.

More than 200 students from various Indian schools in Qatar participated in the quiz. The team of Ankush Ghosh, Mekka Mohamed Ali and Aryan Sujith of DPS-Modern Indian School won

the first place; the team of Mohamed Bassam, Mohamed Fahad, and Mohamed Bilal of MES Indian School got the second place and the team of Parvathi, Sharanya and Mohamed Yasser of Shantiniketan Indian School got the third place. Thomas and Shajil Khader were the quiz masters.

An astronomy class was conducted by Ajith Everest, a proficient skywatcher, who covered topics such as astrophotography and the outer space. At the same venue, competitions

on the project, still model and working model were also held by selected student groups of schools on various socially relevant topics. In the project competition, Birla Public School Shantiniketan bagged the first position, while in still model, Shantiniketan bagged the first position and MES bagged the second position. In the working model competition, Ideal Indian School was first and Shantiniketan second.

# Doha College hosts COBIS Music Festival

Doha College recently hosted the COBIS Music Festival 2023, in partnership with the Council of British International Schools (COBIS).

The three-day festival attracted over 120 students aged nine to 17 from nine schools across three continents. Additionally, the composition section of the event saw 27 participating schools join online.

The competition was adjudicated by internationally renowned, multifaceted music professionals Rob Johnston and Paul Barker. Johnston also conducted a workshop for all the participants, while composer Barker listened to over 70 pieces submitted across the four composition categories.

The event's highlight was the exceptional performance of pianist Rancheng Xu from the British School of Bahrain. At the age of just 10, he captivated the audience with a breathtakingly virtuosic rendition of a Frederic Chopin piece, earning the prestigious title of the overall winner.

Park Lane International School from the Czech Republic emerged as another standout, triumphing in no fewer than three categories, namely Vocal Lower School Classical, Vocal Lower School Contemporary and the newly launched Battle of the Bands, and earning a special commendation as well.

Hosts Doha College won the Instrumental Ensemble category, had two runners-up in the Lower and Upper School instrumental categories, two commendations as well as one of the Rising Star awards.

Steph Gomaa, director of music at Doha College, expressed her profound gratitude to COBIS for fostering camaraderie and cultural exchange through



this event, and also to the Westin Hotel Doha for their support in accommodating the overseas participants and supporting them in many other ways.

The winners: Lower School Instrumental - Rancheng Xu (British School of Bahrain), Upper School Instrumental - Moritz Reininghaus (British School in the Netherlands), Lower School Vocal Classi-

cal - Simon Mares (Park Lane International School, Czechia), Lower School Vocal Contemporary - Emilija Bagdasarjan (Park Lane International School, Czechia), Upper School Vocal Classical - Adebola Oyelami (Children's International School, Nigeria), Upper School Vocal Contemporary - Aiyla Iqbal (British International School of Riyadh).

Instrumental Ensemble of the Year - Doha College (Qatar), Choir of the Year - St Saviour's School Ikoyi (Nigeria), Battle of the Bands - Park Lane International School (Czechia), Young Composer of the Year - Sarah al-Haji, Dubai English Speaking College (UAE), COBIS Young Musician of the Year 2023-Rancheng Xu (British School of Bahrain).

# Ghazals collection launched

Under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture, Bazm-Urdu-Qatar (BUQ) organised a launch ceremony of Doha-based poetess Samreen Nadeem Samar's collection of ghazals, 'Khusboo-e-Khayal' and a poetry symposium at Bait Al-Sulaiti auditorium.

The event was attended by a large number of poetry and art enthusiasts. BUQ president Mohamed Rafiq Shad Akolvi presided. Noted poet and writer Dr Aftab Muztar, who came from Pakistan, was the chief guest. The author and BUQ's patron Abdul Rahman Nadeem were the guests of honour. BUQ general secretary Iftekhar Raghbi and chairman Dr Faisal Hanif, represented the literary organisation on the stage.

The programme started with a Holy Qur'an recitation by Mohamed Rafiq Shad Akolvi. BUQ patron and the event's chief organiser Dr Khalil Ullah Shibli, conducted the book-launching segment. Anwar Ali Rana, Fayaz Bukhari Kamal, Iftekhar Raghbi,



Dr Hanif, Dr Aftab Muztar, and Akolvi spoke about Samreen's poems. Dr Shibli conducted an interview with Samreen, who subsequently rendered a few ghazals from the book.

BUQ and Pakistan Cultural Forum Qatar (PCFQ) presented shields to guests Dr Muztar, Ministry of Culture's Cultural Affairs Section head Maryam al-Ali, cultural affairs specialist Nezha Slaoui, Pakistan embassy first secretary Amna Javed, community welfare attache Waheed-ullah Wazir, and Samreen.

Dr Hanif, also president of Ghazrgah-e-Khayal Forum,

conducted the poetry symposium (mushaira). Besides Mohamed Rafiq Shad Akolvi, Dr Aftab Muztar and Samreen Nadeem Samar, Ateeq Anzar, Aslam Sani, Iftekhar Raghbi, Muzaffar Nayab, Dr Wasi Bastavi, Jamshed Ansari, Fayaz Bukhari Kamal, Anwar Ali Rana, Inam Azmi, Shahzeb Shahab, Shabbir Ali and Mohamed Talal Fazil presented their poems.

The poets and other participants were presented with certificates of recognition. This segment was conducted by Riyaz Bakali, a prominent Pakistani businessman and community

representative, along with Dr Shibli.

Finally, the PCFQ curated a music session, composed and led by Tanweer Awan with ghazals of Samreen and Dr Muztar rendered by local singers.

The BUQ and PCFQ acknowledged the continued support of culture adviser Jamal Faye al-Saeed and the Department of Culture and Arts director Maryam Yassin al-Hammadi, in facilitating literary, arts, and cultural events in Qatar, by awarding them the shields of appreciation. Maryam al-Ali received their mementos.

## Vafi hosts first art talk series



The Visual Arts Forum India (Vafi) held their first Art Talks series recently. Environmental artist Swapna Namboothiri shared her journey, as well as her experience and expertise. Vafi president Patric Rozario had invited Giftographics to attend the event and present their creations. The Art Talks series is designed to provide a platform for artists to share their journeys, insights and experiences with other members of the visual arts community. More information on Vafi is available from <https://www.facebook.com/vafiqatar>, [https://instagram.com/visual\\_arts\\_forum\\_india](https://instagram.com/visual_arts_forum_india)

## Toastmasters Division E holds annual conference

Toastmasters from Division E, District 116 conducted their annual conference under the theme 'Embracing Excellence'.

Division director Lakshmi Sarada presided with an opening address. The event featured a Malayalam International

Speech contest and a banner parade. Noted Qatari entrepreneur Ghanim al-Sulaiti gave a keynote speech on topic 'The Future is Vegan.' The winners of the contest were: International Speech (Malayalam) - Shaiju Damani, Humorous Speech - Prasanth Kumar Nair, Interna-

tional Speech (English) - Asha Shiju, Evaluation - Tariro Matibiri, Table Topics - Anupama Kasibhatla. They will represent Division E at the District Toastmasters Annual Conference on May 26-27. The chief judges were Asokan Kandy, Philip Cherian and Venkat K.

Region 11 adviser Sunderasan Rajeswar, District 116 director Rajesh VC, programme quality director Ravi Shankar J, club growth director Sabeena M K, Sonny Varghese and Manzoor Moideen were among the leaders present. Rajini Naren proposed a vote of thanks.





# Air strikes hammer Khartoum as army chief drops RSF rival from Sudan council

■Air attacks, ground fighting in Khartoum, Bahri  
■Humanitarian crisis worsens with 843,000 people displaced  
■Mass looting plagues trapped residents  
■Fighting hits South Darfur capital Nyala, 27 dead

Reuters  
Khartoum

Sudan's capital Khartoum and sister city Bahri came under renewed air attack yesterday as the war between the army and paramilitary forces entered its fifth week, deepening a humanitarian crisis for trapped and displaced civilians.

Mass looting by armed men and civilians alike is making life an even greater misery for Khartoum residents pinned down by fierce fighting between the regular military and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), witnesses said.

The conflict has displaced an estimated 843,000 people within Sudan and put around 250,000 to flight into neighbouring countries, the UN refugee agency said yesterday.

Army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan took the long-anticipated step yesterday of removing RSF chief Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as Hemedti, from his post as his deputy on the ruling Sovereign Council.

The two had run the council since 2019 when they overthrew President Omar al-Bashir amid mass protests against his rule, before staging a coup in 2021 as a deadline neared to hand power to civilians for a transition towards free elections.

There has been no breakthrough in Saudi and US-sponsored ceasefire talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah. At an Arab League meeting there yesterday, a statement by Sudan's envoy accused the RSF of looting and abuse, and of violating a succession of ceasefires.

"We trust that you will stand by the Sudanese army and will accompany us in the next step of reconstruction," envoy Dafallah al-Haj added.



Smoke rises above buildings in Khartoum, yesterday. **Below:** Security forces loyal to the Sudanese army chief stand along a street in war-torn Khartoum, yesterday.



The RSF has accused the army of starting the conflict and violating ceasefires. It says that those who have committed crimes are wearing stolen RSF uniforms. Fighting broke out on April 15 after disputes over plans for the RSF to be integrated into the army and over the future chain of command under an internationally backed deal to shift Sudan towards democracy after decades of conflict-ridden autocracy.

Burhan installed Malik Agar, leader of a rebel group who joined the council in 2020 after signing a peace agreement with the government, as his new

deputy, according to a second decree.

Later that day, Burhan promoted other military officers who served on the council, including appointing General Shams El-Din Kabbashi as deputy commander of the armed forces. Generals Yasser al-Atta and Ibrahim Jabir were each appointed assistants to the commander.

Air strikes yesterday targeted districts in eastern Khartoum and witnesses reported hearing anti-aircraft weapons used by the RSF. Bahri and Sharg el-Nil across the Nile river from Khartoum were subjected to air

strikes overnight and yesterday morning.

"On the road I saw about 30 military trucks destroyed by (air) strikes. There were bodies everywhere, some of them army and some RSF. Some had started decomposing. It was really horrible," said Ahmed, a young man making his way through Bahri.

The RSF is embedded in residential districts of much of Khartoum and adjoining Bahri and Omdurman, drawing almost continual air strikes by the regular armed forces.

Witnesses said the army had also started placing barriers on some roads in southern Khartoum to keep the RSF away from an important military base there.

Fighting also flared in the city of Nyala, capital of the South Darfur region in the southwest, for a second day after weeks of relative calm.

Heavy gunfire and artillery detonations went on all day in Nyala. A local market caught fire and it was difficult for those injured to get to hospitals, local activists said. The Darfur Bar Association, a human rights group, said that 27 people had been killed and dozens injured so far.

They called on the RSF, whose movements it blamed for the flare-up, to re-commit to a locally brokered truce. Militia attacks and subsequent clashes in the West Darfur city of Geneina have claimed the lives of hundreds. With the fighting has come a collapse in law and order, with rampant looting, blamed by the army and RSF on each other, hitting Sudanese homes, factories, gold markets, banks, vehicles and churches. A rapid dwindling of stocks of food, cash and other essentials has driven much of the pillaging.

"Nobody protects us. No police. No state. The criminals are attacking our houses and taking everything we own," said Sarah Abdelazim, 35, a government employee in Khartoum.

Some 705 people have been killed and at least 5,287 injured, according to the World Health Organisation.

## More than 100 dead in Nigeria clashes, thousands displaced

AFP  
Jos, Nigeria

More than 100 people in central Nigeria have died in several days of intercommunal violence that have destroyed hundreds of homes and caused thousands to flee, local officials said yesterday.

The clashes between cattle herders and farming communities in Plateau State are the worst in years in a region that has long struggled with ethnic and religious tensions and reprisal attacks.

The death toll from attacks by gunmen on farming villages in and around the district of Mangu since the start of the week has passed 100, after earlier reports said 85 people were killed, a local official said.

Plateau state security forces had said on Thursday that calm had been restored, but local sources said several villages were still struggling with violence and residents were fleeing.

"The number of people killed has exceeded 100 people from those attacks," Mangu district chairman Daput Minister Daniel said.

"Up till now there were reports of attacks and burning of houses in many places within the local government area."

A lawmaker representing Mangu and neighbouring Bokkos in the House of Representatives also said around 100 people had been killed and more than a dozen communities ravaged by attacks.

Lawmaker Solomon Maren said yesterday that the situation was now calm, but access to some communities was still complicated.

Plateau State government has so far not given any death toll, only saying the violence "left many dead."

The state government convened an emergency meeting over the attacks and pledged security forces on the ground would stem further violence, a statement said yesterday.

"We are working to rede-

ploy more men," said state police spokesman Alfred Alabo. "We are also trying to know about the death toll, and properties destroyed."

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) said more than 3,000 people had been displaced and hundreds of houses destroyed.

Police said five people had been arrested.

Violence across Nigeria has been on the rise in the last few weeks after a brief calm period during the February presidential and March state elections.

Last month, gunmen suspected to be herders killed 33 people in an attack on a farming village in northwestern Kaduna state, where intercommunal herder-farmer violence is also common.

Nigeria's security forces in the northwest are also battling heavily armed bandit militias, as well as a 14-year-old insurgency in the northeast and separatist tensions in the southeast.

### Syrians in exile express concern over normalisation

As Syrian President Bashar al-Assad addressed Arab leaders in Saudi Arabia yesterday, a group of Syrian refugees was in Germany learning to use international law to prosecute war criminals — which they hoped to apply to him someday, Reuters reported from Berlin.

"Every Syrian who suffered from this regime could represent a lawsuit and we will file these lawsuits. Even if the whole world stands with him, we will bring him to justice," said Houaida Muhi Aldeen, a 49-year-old Syrian living in France and a former political detainee in Syrian prisons. Muhi Aldeen and other workshop attendants are among millions of Syrians displaced by the 12-year war. They found Assad's reintegration into the Arab League after more than a decade of isolation frustrating, but not surprising.

"This is the goal of this (normalization) step, to sow despair and frustration among Syrians," said Anwar al-Bunni, a lawyer helping prosecute Syrians suspected of war crimes in Germany. Al-Bunni said the poor human rights and democracy records of many leaders made Assad's return par for the course, and that support for rebels ultimately played into Assad's hands by radicalising opposition groups that in turn suppressed democratic activism within their own ranks. The 12-year-long war killed over 350,000 Syrians and forced more than 14mn to flee their homes, of which almost a

million sought refuge in Europe. Normalisation with Assad would make it more difficult for Syrian refugees to return, said Muhi Aldeen. Her husband disappeared at the hands of the government in 2014, she said.

"I would say two words, which we took as an oath: We would die rather than being ruled by al-Assad and we won't return as long as al-Assad is there," Muhi Aldeen said. For Akil Hosain, 39, a Syrian journalist in France, the Arab League is a symbol of the pre-Arab Spring era, therefore Assad's readmittance comes as no surprise. "Our surprise was that this step came in a very bold way, on the verge of audacious, if we could say," Hosain said.

But a warming Arab leadership to the Syrian president does not concern many Syrians in Europe of a similar rapprochement from the West as there are legal obstacles, lawyer al-Bunni said. "For Europe... charging al-Assad and 60 people of his retinue for committing crimes against humanity... is a legal obstacle, not just political, against rehabilitating criminals," he added. Last year under the principle of universal jurisdiction that allows for the crimes to be addressed legally in some third-party states, a German court jailed after a trial a Syrian ex-intelligence officer for life for crimes against humanity, handing down the first conviction for state-backed torture committed during Syria's civil war.

### UNREST 40 killed in new wave of attacks in Burkina Faso

Around 40 people have been killed in a fresh wave of attacks in Burkina Faso, in areas where militant attacks are rife, sources said yesterday, AFP reported from Ouagadougou. In the most recent violence, around 20 people were killed in a series of raids on villages in Burkina Faso's north, security sources and local residents said. Armed men attacked three villages on Thursday in the country's northern Yatenga province. "Yesterday at around 5:00am (local and GMT), armed groups attacked the villages of Pelle, Zanna and Nongfaire", a local resident said, giving a toll of 25 people killed. There were "many others wounded", the resident said. Another said "assailants, who came on motor-bikes, were chased by volunteers (civilian auxiliaries of the army) and soldiers". The attack was confirmed by a security source, who put the death toll at "around 20", adding that search operations were underway to find the assailants.

## Iran says 'reserves' right to act on Afghan water dispute

AFP  
Tehran

Iran said yesterday it "reserves" the right to take action as a dispute with Afghanistan escalates over an upstream river dam that restricts the flow of water into the country.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran reserves its rights to take necessary measures and emphasises the full responsibility of Afghanistan in this regard," the foreign ministry said in a statement, without specifying the measures.

But it also accused Af-

ghan authorities of not meeting their obligations in providing Iran with its "water rights" from the Helmand River as enshrined in a 1973 agreement.

"In practise, the rulers of Afghanistan have not honoured the commitments under the treaty and have not offered the necessary co-operation in supplying Iran's legal water rights," the ministry said. The Helmand River flows from the mountains of the central Afghan province of the same name for more than 1,000 kilometres into Lake Hamoun, which straddles the Afghanistan-Iran border.

# Gaza beekeeper tends hives by restive border

AFP  
Jabalia

In a field close to the Gaza Strip's restive frontier, apiarist Miassar Khoudair checks that her queen bee has survived five days of deadly cross-border fire between Palestinian fighters and the Israeli army.

"The bees die from the gases, the rockets and dust as a result of the war," said the 29-year-old, dressed in a protective white bee suit.

Ahead of World Bee Day today — which aims to raise the profile of these vital pollinators — Khoudair has returned to her colony just a few hundred metres from the border.

In the latest escalation in hos-

tilities between Israel and Gaza's fighter groups, Khoudair was unable to access the hives amid outgoing Palestinian rocket fire and incoming Israeli airstrikes, with three or four of the apiaries destroyed.

The fighting, which began after Israeli strikes killed top fighters from the Islamic Jihad group whom Israel says were responsible for attacks against its citizens, saw 33 people killed in Gaza and two in Israel, including a labourer from the Palestinian enclave, medics said.

Beyond the grass and trees surrounding Khoudair's hives, a flag of Islamic Jihad, whose fighters launched volleys of rockets toward Israel during the conflict, flies in an adjacent field.

Despite the dangers, the fron-

tier's farmland offers some of the only areas in Gaza's densely-populated urban environment suitable for beekeeping.

"We always put them in border areas, because there are lots of trees and wild plants, and there aren't many buildings or overcrowding," she said.

The territory is home to some 2.3mn people, who have endured an Israeli-led blockade since the Hamas took power in the territory in 2007.

Cross-border trade was halted until a ceasefire on Saturday took hold and the fighting also damaged an estimated 600 dunams of crops. The value of losses to beehives, poultry farms and livestock reached \$225,000, according to the Hamas-run government's media office.

The conflict halted daily life and prevented Khoudair from selling honey at her store in a usually buzzing mall in downtown Gaza City.

Khoudair studied herbal medicine and as well as selling traditional eating honey, she also sells honey-based infusions to treat everything from problems of concentration to fertility issues.

"If the honey's of high quality, it's very treatable. There are some mixtures added to the honey, and here it treats child-bearing," she said, without elaborating.

Khoudair started her business a few months ago after studying honey and herbal medicine in Saudi Arabia, she said.

"While I was in Saudi, I found they have the idea of honey, their

love for honey, their interest in honey, as a remedy and a supplement on the table to my lunch," she said. With 45% unemployment in Gaza, according to the International Monetary Fund, Khoudair's bees provide her with a job.

"It's a very beneficial project, and I rely on myself as a woman," she said.

Standing beside her colony after inspecting her hives — resulting in a few stings to her hands — Khoudair urged people beyond Gaza's borders to "care about the bees' produce".

"Honey was mentioned in the Qur'an, we take it therapeutically, not just in a nutritional way, and it's healthy and strengthened with vitamins," she said, above the drone of her bees.



Palestinian beekeeper Miassar Khoudair (right), 29, and her work partner, use a bee smoker as they check beehives at the apiary, east of the Jabalia camp in the northern Gaza Strip.



ACCIDENT  
**Capsized Chinese fishing vessel located**

The Indian navy yesterday said it has located a Chinese fishing vessel that capsized in the Indian Ocean earlier this week with 39 crew members onboard. The distant-water fishing vessel “Lupeng Yuanyu 028”, owned by Penglai Jinglu Fishery Co Ltd based in Shandong province, capsized early on Tuesday. “Indian Navy’s P8I aircraft undertook extensive search in the area and located the capsized fishing vessel on May 18,” a statement said. It said the position of the capsized boat was relayed to the Chinese navy, adding that “subsequently, P8I also sighted the fishing vessel’s life-raft and guided fishing vessel Lu Peng Yuan Yu 017 towards it”.

ANGER  
**North Korea criticises US, South Korea military drills**

North Korea accused the US and South Korea of ramping up “nuclear blackmail” with joint military drills, pledging to take corresponding action against what it called “warmongers’ madness,” state media KCNA said yesterday. US and South Korean forces have been staging an intensified series of annual springtime exercises since March, including air and sea drills involving a US aircraft carrier and heavy bombers. North Korea has reacted angrily to the exercises, calling them a rehearsal for invasion. “Their plot to crush us militarily is another clear indication that the enemy warmongers’ madness has reached a point where it cannot be overlooked,” KCNA said.

TRAGEDY  
**Everest toll reaches nine with two more deaths**

Two more climbers have died on Mount Everest, expedition organisers said yesterday, bringing the number of deaths on the world’s highest peak this climbing season to nine. On average, around five climbers die on the 29,032-foot mountain every spring. But this year the toll has reached nearly double that little more than half way through the season. A Malaysian and a Chinese climber were confirmed as the latest fatalities. Nepal has issued 478 permits for Everest to foreign climbers this season, which runs until early June. Since most will need a guide, more than 900 people in total will try to summit.

DISASTER  
**800,000 affected by cyclone in Myanmar: UN**

At least 800,000 people in Myanmar need emergency food aid and other assistance after Cyclone Mocha slammed into the country earlier this week, the UN said. Mocha brought lashing rain and winds of up to 195km per hour to Myanmar and neighbouring Bangladesh on Sunday, with Myanmar’s junta saying 145 people had been killed and media reports suggesting the number was far higher. The UN’s World Food Programme described “a trail of devastation” across Myanmar’s Rakhine State. The cyclone left “houses flattened, roads cut off by uprooted trees, hospitals and schools destroyed, and telecommunications and power lines severely disrupted,” the WFP said.

OPINION  
**Upcoming Cambodia election a ‘sham’**

Prominent Cambodian opposition figure Sam Rainsy denounced the upcoming general election as a “fake and sham” after the country’s the sole opposition party was disqualified from the race this week. The Candlelight Party was disqualified by the election commission on Monday over what the poll body said was failure to submit proper registration documents, a move critics have said threatens to undermine democracy and political freedoms in the southeast Asian country. July’s poll will be a “fake and sham election for the simple reason that there will be no opposition,” said Rainsy, the self-exiled former opposition leader, adding Cambodia was “in effect a one-party system”.

# ‘Mini kangaroos’ hop back in south Australia

AFP  
Sydney

The brush-tailed bettong – a rare, very cute marsupial resembling a rabbit-sized kangaroo – is bouncing back on the South Australian mainland, more than 100 years after disappearing from the region. Bettongs, which leap with their hindlegs much like a full-sized kangaroo, populated over 60% of Australia before falling victim to cats, foxes and land-clearing after European settlement more than two centuries ago.

Now they are making a comeback in south Australia’s Yorke Peninsula, after wildlife scientists released 120 of the animals over a two-year period to see if they could survive outside of predator-proof enclosures or islands.



**Bettongs are making a comeback in south Australia’s Yorke Peninsula, after wildlife scientists released 120 of the animals**

New monitoring shows they are thriving, researchers said yesterday. Scientists said they had trapped 85 brush-tailed bettongs, finding that 40% of them were new animals born in the peninsula and 42 of the 45 females had young in their pouches.

“It’s fantastic to see so many new animals in the population,” said Derek Sandow, ecologist for the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board.

The furry creatures – their numbers down from tens of millions pre-colonisation to an estimated 12,000-18,000 now – have clung to existence on Australian islands, in protected enclosures, and in a few pockets of western Australia.

Their comeback in south Australia was helped by an intensive cat and fox control programme, Sandow said, as well as a “leaky”

fence to reduce – without entirely excluding – the predators from the southern part of the peninsula.

The little animals play a big role in Australia’s environment, he said.

“They’re a little, ankle-sized kangaroo, a mini kangaroo on steroids if you like. They’ve got really powerful hind legs, they carry their young in their pouch, like a kangaroo does, but they’re only a kilo-and-a-half,” Sandow explained. “So they’re only small, but they’ll shoot around in the bush, they’ll create their little nests underneath in dense vegetation,” he said.

“They dig a lot. A little bettong can move tonnes of soil per year. So they dig in the ground, they create little micro habitats for water infiltration for seeds to establish. And so they’re just really important in the ecosystem.”

Since their numbers were decimated by cats and foxes, no other creature had been able to replicate their role in making the Australian landscape habitable for other wildlife, he said.

Under attack, female brush-tailed bettongs have an unusual but effective defence mechanism, Sandow said.

“To get away, they’ll kind of zigzag off through the bush at high speed. They’re really fast for their size,” the scientist said.

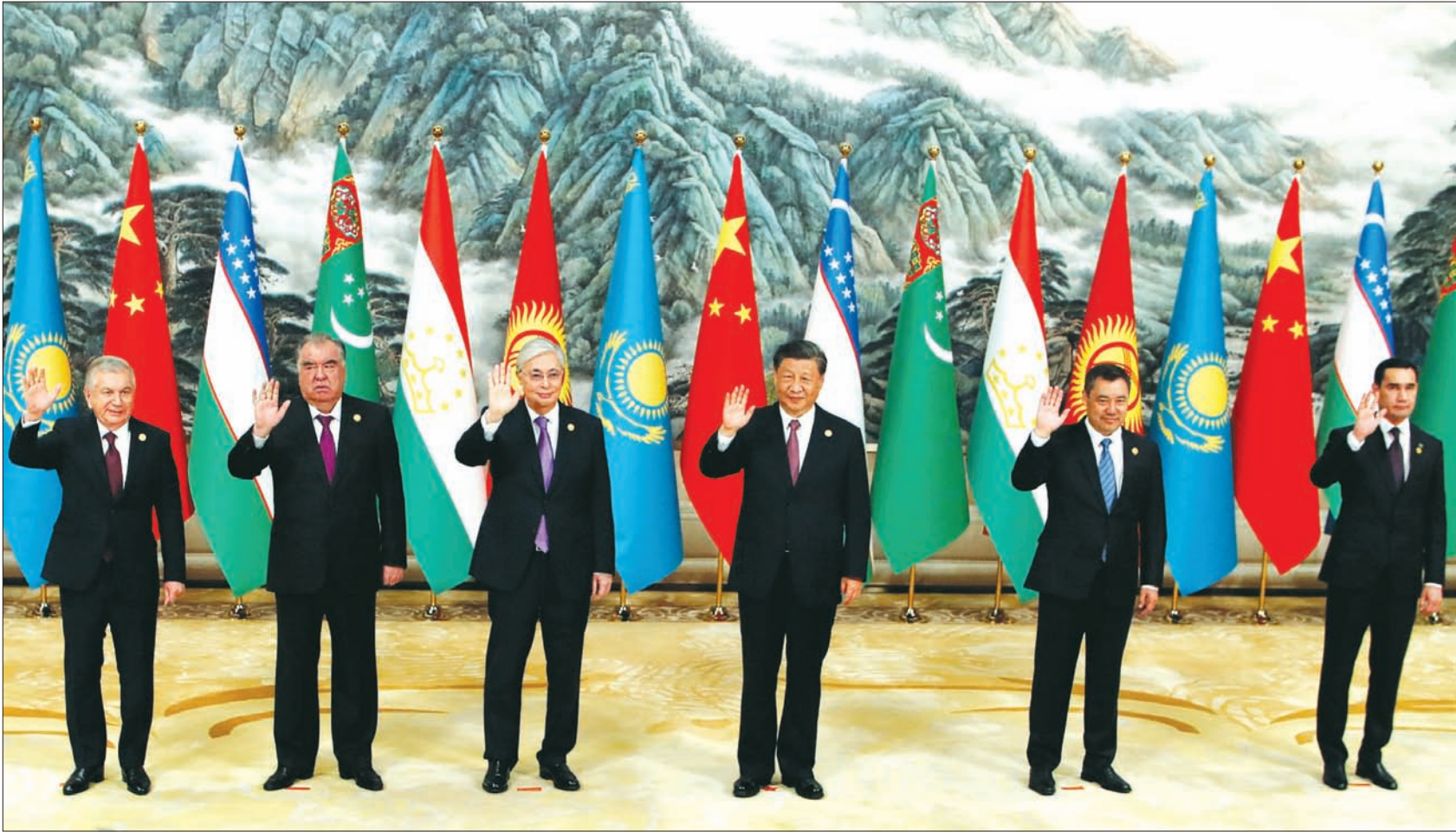
But females had an extra defence mechanism – throwing out their young from their pouches in the hope of escaping while the predator targets their offspring.

“It sounds like horrible parenting, but it’s really successful,” Sandow said.

They breed quickly, he said, and females often have embryos ready to advance into the pouch when their young leave naturally or die.

“They can basically have their baby ready to go in their back pocket, and then replace it,” he said. “And then, within a matter of weeks, they can kind of be back at that same stage.”

Scientists believe the brush-tailed bettong and other species can thrive if fox and cat populations can be controlled, even if they are not eradicated, Sandow said. “We are really hoping that the brush-tailed bettong is just one of the first of many species that we can bring back and help restore the bush.”



Chinese President Xi Jinping, Kazakhstan’s President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Kyrgyzstan’s President Sadyr Japarov, Tajikistan’s President Emomali Rahmon, Turkmenistan’s President Serdar Berdimukhamedov and Uzbekistan’s President Shavkat Mirziyoyev wave as they pose for pictures at a group photo session during the China-Central Asia Summit in Xian, Shaanxi province, China, yesterday.

# Xi unveils development plan for Central Asia

Reuters  
Xian, China

Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday unveiled a grand plan for Central Asia’s development, from building infrastructure to boosting trade, taking on a new leadership role in a region that has traditionally been a Russian sphere of influence.

China is ready to co-ordinate development strategies with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and promote the modernisation of all, Xi said in an address to a China-Central Asia Summit in northwest China.

“This summit has added new

impetus to the development and revitalisation of the six countries, and injected strong positive energy into regional peace and stability,” Xi said later at a press conference with his Central Asian counterparts.

“We will jointly foster a new paradigm of deeply complementary and high-level win-win co-operation.”

With its engagement, China has put itself at the forefront of the race for political influence and energy assets in the resource-rich region, with Russia distracted by its war in Ukraine and the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan diminishing the US presence in the region.

The five former Soviet republics, with a network of trade corridors, offer China alternative

routes to transport fuel, food and other commodities in the event of disruptions elsewhere.

The pledges of support and co-operation at the two-day summit will present a contrast to a “negative” image of China invoked at a summit of Group of Seven leaders in Japan.

China’s support for Central Asia also appear to be a counterweight to US accusations of its coercive diplomacy.

Xi said China and the Central Asian countries should deepen trust and offer “clear and strong support” on core interests such as sovereignty, independence, national dignity and long-term development. He did not mention Ukraine, which like the Central Asian nations, was part of the Soviet Union.

“China is ready to help Central Asian countries improve their law enforcement, security, and defence capability construction,” he said.

China would also upgrade bilateral investment agreements and increase cross-border freight volume with the region, Xi said. It will encourage Chinese-funded businesses in Central Asia to create more jobs, build warehouses, and launch a special train service aimed at promoting tourism, he added.

“To bolster our co-operation and Central Asian development, China will provide Central Asian countries with a total of 26bn yuan (\$3.8bn) of financing support and grants,” Xi said.

Two-way trade between China and Central Asia hit a

record \$70bn last year, with Kazakhstan leading with \$31bn, as China seeks deeper links in its quest for greater food and energy security.

Xi said the building of Line D of the China-Central Asia natural gas pipeline should be accelerated.

He also called on China and Central Asia to increase their oil and gas trade, develop energy co-operation across industrial chains, and boost co-operation on new energy and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

In the longer term, China supports construction of a cross-Caspian Sea international transport corridor, and would strengthen the construction of transport hubs of China-Europe freight train services, Xi said.

# Bangladesh apparel firms look to airlift exports

Reuters  
Dhaka

Apparel makers in Bangladesh are considering rare bulk exports by air to Europe and the US, as they race to meet deadlines and avoid cancellations after a cyclone delayed shipments, caused power cuts and disrupted production.

The crunch could disrupt summer clothes supplies for retailers such as Walmart, Gap Inc, H&M, VF Corp, Zara and American Eagle Outfitters, some of Bangladesh’s largest export customers.

Cyclone Mocha, one of the strongest storms to hit the region in years, made landfall in neighbouring Myanmar over the weekend, but left a trail of destruction that also has delayed businesses’ return to normal in Bangladesh.

Apparel shipments account for more than 80% of the country’s

exports and are especially crucial now after its dollar reserves plunged nearly a third in the 12 months to end-April, hitting a seven-year low.

“We have to airlift goods now as we’re missing the shipping deadline,” said Mohamed Hatem, executive president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA). “We don’t want to suffer losses or lose customers.”

Bangladesh, the world’s second-largest garment exporter, has already been hit by weakening global demand, with exports falling in both March and April.

Buyers generally bear the cost of shipping. However, when goods are airlifted, all transportation-related costs are borne by the manufacturers, hurting their already thinning margins, Hatem said.

Apparel makers, who directly and indirectly employ millions of Bangladeshis, export ready-made clothes to regions including Europe, North America,

Japan and Australia. Air freight typically costs \$8-10 per kg, according to industry players.

A large European buyer has asked one garment manufacturer to reduce delivered prices by 5% to account for the delay, an e-mail reviewed by Reuters showed. Another garment owner who supplies H&M said some of his shipments had been delayed.

Power cuts in the last two months, first due to a scorching heatwave, and then the cyclone, have put more stress on apparel companies. Many factories are now running on power generators fuelled by expensive diesel.

“If this goes on, it’ll be difficult to survive,” said Mohamed Nasir, owner of a garment factory in the Gazipur industrial hub, north of Dhaka.

Fazlee Shamim Ehsan, vice-president at the industry body BKMEA, said if goods cannot be delivered on time buyers either seek heavy discounts or threaten to cancel orders.

## Philippine navy drill



Philippine navy ship BRP Antonio Luna (FF-151) launches bullfighter chaff decoys during a navy’s capability demonstration, witnessed by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr (not pictured) aboard the Philippine navy ship BRP Davao del Sur, a Tarlac-class landing platform dock, off Zambales, facing the South China Sea yesterday.

# Grandmother tasered by police in critical condition

AFP  
Sydney

Australian police yesterday said that a “frail” 95-year-old grandmother is barely conscious days after being tasered by an officer as she slowly approached on her walking frame while holding a steak knife.

Claire Nolan, a “much-loved lady”, was in a critical condition following the confrontation at her nursing home on Wednesday, New South Wales state police assistant commissioner Peter Cotter said.

“We are very concerned about what occurred the other day. And that’s why we have the investigation,” Cotter told media in Sydney, alluding to a previously announced probe.

“At the time she was tasered, she was approaching police but it’s fair to say at a slow pace. She had a walking frame but she had a knife.”

Officers were sent to Yallambee Lodge in southern New South Wales after being alerted by nursing

home staff that a woman was “armed with a knife”, police said in a statement.

Paramedics and police had urged Nolan to drop the serrated steak knife in a conversation lasting “a number of minutes” before she moved toward them, prompting one officer to fire his taser at her, Cotter said.

She then fell backwards and struck her head on the ground, according to police.

“The injury that she suffered as a result of hitting her head on the floor has rendered her bedridden at the moment,” Cotter said.

“She still remains in hospital. She remains in and out of consciousness. Her family are with her.” The duty status of the police officer who fired the taser is “under review”, police said.

It took days for police to confirm they had tasered the aged-care resident, whom local media described as a great-grandmother with dementia.

Ambulance paramedics treated the woman and took her to Cooma District Hospital, police said.



PLANS  
**Tesla keen to set up India production base: govt**

Tesla is “serious” about its plans to establish a manufacturing base in India, the country’s deputy minister for technology said yesterday, a day after meeting senior executives of the electric vehicle maker. The Elon Musk led US automaker held talks with Indian officials this week on various topics including incentives for car and battery manufacturing, the media reported on Thursday, as Tesla looks anew at entering the Indian market. “They are very seriously looking at India as a production and innovation base,” Rajeev Chandrasekhar said in the first public comment by an Indian government official on the talks.

MILESTONE  
**India defence production exceeds \$12bn for first time**

India’s defence production rose more than 12% last fiscal year and crossed the Rs1tn (\$12bn) threshold for the first time, the government said yesterday, as the country tries to reduce its reliance on imports from countries such as Russia. The value of India’s local defence production jumped to Rs1.07tn in the year that ended on March 31 and was expected to rise further once data from some private defence companies came in, the ministry of defence said in a statement. “The government is continuously working with defence industries and their associations to remove the challenges faced by them and promote defence production in the country,” the ministry said.

SCANDAL  
**Tesco chairman quits over misconduct claims**

UK supermarket giant Tesco said its chairman John Allan would step down next month following newspaper allegations over his conduct towards women. “We are well advanced in our search for a new chair and will make an announcement in due course,” interim chair Byron Grote said. The *Guardian* newspaper reported that Allan “faces claims of inappropriate and unprofessional behaviour from four women”. It said that Allan, 74, allegedly inappropriately touched a senior Tesco staff member at last year’s AGM. The *Guardian* said one allegation that Allan admitted to was a comment about a CBI - Britain’s main business lobby group - staffer’s appearance.

PEOPLE  
**Founder of iSpooof fraud site jailed for 13 years**

The British mastermind behind a website used in a global fraud operation to steal tens of millions of pounds from thousands of victims was jailed yesterday for more than 13 years. Tejay Fletcher, 35, the founder and leading administrator of the iSpooof.cc site, was among scores arrested last November following an 18-month worldwide probe led by London’s Metropolitan police. Investigators from Europol, the FBI and other law enforcement agencies nabbed suspects in Australia, France, Ireland and the Netherlands, and shuttered servers in the Netherlands and Ukraine utilised by an international criminal network. Victims around the world lost at least £100mn (\$125mn)

RICH LIST  
**UK prime minister’s wealth declines**

The wealth of British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty has fallen over the last year, putting them in 275th place in the Sunday Times Rich List, after the value of their stake in Indian IT giant Infosys dropped. The pair were ranked in 222nd position last year. Shares in Infosys, which was founded by Murty’s father, have fallen by about 20% in the last 12 months. Sunak is the richest ever occupant of 10 Downing Street, and his fortune has opened him up to regular attacks from opposition politicians who say he is out of touch with ordinary people at a time of a cost-of-living crisis making many Britons poorer.

# Modi seeks to enhance New Delhi role in Indo-Pacific

AFP  
New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi heads to Papua New Guinea and Australia tomorrow as New Delhi seeks to counter mounting Chinese influence in both the Indian and Pacific oceans. Western nations regularly refer to the wider region as the Indo-Pacific, but New Delhi has been left far behind by Beijing’s efforts in recent years to woo the small island states that dot the vast expanses of water with trade and aid. Several Pacific island states have switched their diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in recent decades, and before the coronavirus pandemic enjoyed economic boosts from Chinese tourists.

At the same time, as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing has negotiated infrastructure deals with countries around the Indian Ocean including Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Bangladesh, and Djibouti, sometimes accompanied by military agreements. New Delhi sees the area as its backyard, and Beijing’s activities have alarmed Indian officials. In Port Moresby, Modi will co-host the Summit of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Co-operation with PNG Prime Minister James Marape, before going on to Australia, a fellow member of the Quad – an alliance set up as a bulwark against China’s growing assertiveness under President Xi Jinping. “China has taken over South China Sea,” said navy veteran and former Indian navy spokesperson D K Sharma, describing the strategically vital waterway as a “global common” that had to be treated and respected as such. “Today or tomorrow, the enemy is the same. Either you prepare now or react later,” he said. “India’s visit to the islands is one of the last opportunities we have. “One cannot deny the fact the power we are all mustering strength against is too superior

to be handled by any single one of us. Best way is to collaborate and have like minded-defence procedures.” Xi visited PNG in 2018, and Beijing struck a controversial security deal with Solomon Islands last year that sent shockwaves across the region when a leaked draft included measures that would allow Chinese naval deployments to the Pacific nation, less than 2,000kms from Australia. Modi will travel to Australia for meetings with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and business leaders, just two months after the Australian visited India. India overtook China as the world’s most populous nation in April, according to UN estimates, and the Asian giants are the world’s second- and fifth-biggest economies. But their relations are fraught with tensions over territory and trade – 20 Indian troops died in clashes with Chinese soldiers in 2020 on their disputed Himalayan frontier. Since then, worried about China’s build-up on the other side, Modi’s government has pumped billions of dollars into connectivity projects on its side of the border to boost civilian presence, and establish new paramilitary battalions. It is also seeking to develop closer ties with Western countries including Quad members the US, Japan, and Australia, which are themselves wooing it as an alternative to China. Modi will travel to PNG from Japan, where he is expected to participate in a Quad meeting taking place alongside a G7 summit. But his government has something of a diplomatic tight-rope to walk between India’s increased security co-operation with Western countries and its reliance on Russia for defence and oil imports. As well as being part of the Quad, India is a member of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, which includes both Russia and China, and currently holds its rotating presidency.



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives for the G7 Leaders' Summit at Hiroshima airport in Mihara, Hiroshima prefecture, yesterday.

# Peace on border vital for better China ties: India

Reuters  
New Delhi

Peace and tranquillity on the border with China is essential for normal ties with the country, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday. Ties between the nuclear-armed Asian giants have deteriorated since mid-2020, when Chinese and Indian troops clashed on their disputed Himalayan frontier and 24 people were killed. India-China relations can only develop based on mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests, Modi said in an inter-

view to Japanese news agency Nikkei Asia, ahead of the G7 summit in Hiroshima, which he is scheduled to attend. Earlier China said it is opposed to a G20 tourism meeting next week in Kashmir in India and will not attend. India, which holds the chair of G20 this year, has organised a series of meetings across the country in the run-up to the summit in New Delhi in September. “China is firmly opposed to holding any kind of G20 meetings in disputed territory, and will not attend such meetings,” Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said. In 2019, India split the state of

Jammu and Kashmir to create the two federal territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. A large chunk of Ladakh is under Chinese control. Ties between New Delhi and Beijing have been strained since a military clash in Ladakh in 2020 in which 24 soldiers were killed. Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, will host a meeting of the tourism working group for G20 members on May 22-24. Kashmir is claimed in full but ruled in part by India and China-ally Pakistan, which has also opposed India’s decision to hold a G20 meeting in Kashmir. India has countered the objec-

tion saying it is free to hold meetings on its own territory. Meanwhile, Modi will meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Hiroshima, broadcaster CNN-News 18 reported yesterday, their first meeting since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. News of the meeting came hours after Modi left New Delhi for Hiroshima, where he will be the most Russia-friendly of global leaders assembled for a summit that is expected to put fresh pressure on Moscow and tighten sanctions against it. Indian foreign ministry offi-

cials could not be immediately be reached to confirm the report or details of the meeting. India has been invited to the G7 summit as a guest country and Zelensky is due to attend the summit tomorrow. His presence and his calls for greater support in the war with Russia is expected to add urgency to deliberations as leaders of the world’s wealthiest democracies look to crack down on Russia’s circumvention of sanctions. They are expected to announce new sanctions against Moscow and closer collaboration in countering China’s growing international influence.

# The Smiths bassist Rourke dies at 59 after cancer battle

AFP  
London

The Smiths bassist Andy Rourke, whose pounding rhythms underscored some of the most influential albums in British music history, has died at the age of 59, bandmate Johnny Marr announced yesterday. Rourke died “after a lengthy illness with pancreatic cancer”, the Smiths lead guitarist and co-founder said. “Andy will always be remembered as a kind and beautiful soul by everyone who knew him, and as a supremely gifted musician by people who love music,” Marr wrote on Instagram. Along with drummer Mike Joyce, Rourke provided a whip-tight rhythm section underlying Marr’s pioneering chords and co-founder Morrissey’s mordant lyrics, as the Smiths became one of Britain’s best-loved bands

in the 1980s. “He will never die as long as his music is heard,” the singer posted on his website Morrissey Central. “He didn’t ever know his own power, and nothing that he played had been played by someone else,” Morrissey added. “He was also very, very funny and very happy, and post-Smiths, he kept a steady identity – never any manufactured moves. “I suppose, at the end of it all, we hope to feel that we were valued. Andy need not worry about that.” Joyce tweeted: “Not only the most talented bass player I’ve ever had the privilege to play with but the sweetest, funniest lad I’ve ever met. “Andy left the building, but his musical legacy is perpetual. I miss you so much already. Forever in my heart mate.” Battling heroin addiction and financial difficulties, Rourke joined Joyce in suing Marr and Morrissey for a greater share of royalties after the Smiths split up

acrimoniously in 1987. The bassist settled out of court, and his friendship with Marr survived the bitter hearings, during which the judge described Morrissey as “devious, truculent and unreliable”. Morrissey, who has increasingly flirted with far-right politics in recent years, was virulent about his former band-mates before adopting a more conciliatory tone in his 2013 book “Autobiography”. Rourke’s bass lines on songs such as “This Charming Man”, “The Headmaster Ritual” and “The Queen Is Dead” defined a new era of craftsmanship that was acclaimed by contemporaries. “A total one-off – a rare bassist whose sound you could recognise straight away,” Suede bassist Mat Osman said. On “Barbarism Begins At Home”, Rourke reverted to the funk bass of an early band he had formed with Marr – although the song was less liked by Marr and Morrissey.

## India to withdraw Rs2,000 notes



A man holds a Rs2,000 note at a bank in Mumbai, India. India will start withdrawing the notes from circulation, its central bank said yesterday, adding that evidence showed the denomination was not being commonly used for transactions. The notes will remain legal tender, but people will be asked to deposit and exchange them for smaller denominations between May 23 and September 30, the Reserve Bank of India said.

## Sebi probe into Adani group ‘has hit a wall’

India’s markets watchdog has “drawn a blank” in investigations into suspected violations in overseas investments in the Adani group and its ongoing pursuit of the case could be a “journey without a destination”, a court-appointed panel said. Shares of companies of the coal-to-airports conglomerate, controlled by billionaire Gautam Adani, were up between 1.2-7% in late trade yesterday in a largely flat wider market. The group’s listed companies lost more than \$100bn in market value earlier this year after US-based Hindenburg Research raised several governance concerns. The group has denied wrongdoing, though the controversy sparked a political fight between the ruling party and the opposition that wanted a parliamentary investigation. Following this, the Supreme Court asked markets regulator the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to probe some of the allegations made and submit its findings to a

six-member panel formed in March, which included a retired judge and veteran bankers. “The foundation of Sebi’s suspicion that led to investigations into the overseas entities’ ownership is that they have ‘opaque’ structures,” said the panel in a report dated May 6. “The ultimate chain of the ownership above the 13 overseas entities is not clear.” Despite involving various Indian and overseas agencies in the investigation across multiple countries, “Sebi has drawn a blank”, the report said, adding that trying to prove who had invested in foreign portfolio investors who then pumped money into Adani could be an arduous task. “It is evident that such an exercise could be a voluminous one but potentially a journey without a destination,” the panel said. “... it would be a humongous task to figure out who the ultimate beneficial owner is.” Adani and Sebi did not immediately respond to requests for comment.



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# Investment banking faultlines trigger European job shake-up

A dearth of deals, banking sector ructions and most recently the aftershocks of the demise of Credit Suisse have rapidly redrawn the European financial services industry jobs map this year.

One example is banks in the region opportunistically targeting high-flyers affected by the impending takeover of Switzerland's second largest bank by its domestic rival UBS, headhunters say.

And on the other side of the equation, recruitment firms report receiving more resumes from finance staff concerned about being ousted by such new hires.

"Europe is lifting hiring freezes and in some cases finding that exceptional talent, once untouchable, is now recruitable," Jeanne Branthover, New York-based Managing Partner and Head of Financial Services Practice at DHR Global, said.

"This is causing firms in Europe to re-evaluate their own people to determine if they measure up to the new standard of remarkable

**"Europe is lifting hiring freezes and in some cases finding that exceptional talent, once untouchable, is now recruitable"**

talent that has suddenly become available," she said.

Applications for financial services roles globally rose by 67% in the first quarter of 2023 against the same period last year, according to eFinancialCareers.

Recent high-profile moves include veteran Credit Suisse dealmaker William Mansfield, head of M&A in EMEA, who is joining Deutsche Bank, while his ex-colleague Cathal Deasy, took a role as co-head of investment banking at Barclays.

Such moves come as an extended lull in activity, including in initial public offerings (IPOs) and mergers, is dimming the outlook for revenue this year. Meanwhile, thousands of the UBS and Credit Suisse workforce await clarity over their futures. Media reports suggest UBS could axe up to 30% of roles across its enlarged operations. UBS declined to comment.

Samantha Pusey, head of bids and marketing at recruitment consultancy The Curve Group, said firms were carrying out skills gap analyses, identifying personnel needed to chase growth and pinpointing where current staff fall short relative to others now potentially up for grabs.

"What we're seeing is people at the Senior Director and Vice-President level who probably weren't open to new opportunities are now entering and flooding the market," Pusey said.

Smaller financial firms are also expected to benefit from the rise in jobseekers, with some priced out of the hiring market in recent years by competitors with bigger pockets, said Darren Burns, Operations Director at Morgan McKinley.

"Over the last two years, substantial hiring needs against a skills shortage across the finance sector saw large firms paying over the odds for talented individuals, resulting in offers for salaries 20-30% higher than before," he said.

"Those smaller or less prestigious firms are now in a position to compete and will scoop up strong talent."

The jobs shake-out is expected to put pressure on salary and bonus growth over the medium term but for now, ambitious banks will likely pay up for big-name hires, cutting back-office or non-client facing roles to find the cash, the sources said.

Data on Tuesday showed business and finance sector workers saw the largest average growth in regular pay across Britain in the first quarter of the year, enjoying 8.8% compared with an average 7% for other private sector workers.

Bonus pools at the likes of Barclays and HSBC shrank in 2022 as a plunge in dealmaking activity slashed advisory fees but BNPP opted to hike its payouts by 14%, increasing the number of staff earning more than 1mn euros in 2022 by 26% to 369.

Britain has already said it will scrap a cap on bank bonuses under plans to attract global financial sector talent.

While they scout for top talent, several banks are also trimming their numbers in some business areas to curb costs. - Reuters

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# Poorest nations endure worst impacts of climate change

By Laurie Goering  
London

In nations from Somalia to Pakistan, the world's poorest and most fragile communities are facing the harshest impacts of climate change — a reality that is driving worsening poverty, potential for conflict and resentment against major polluters.

But finding innovative ways to get finance directly to those communities, to build resilience that is based on local knowledge and desires, could save cash and lives, and protect a global humanitarian system increasingly overwhelmed by surging need.

Right now, "there's a real sense of compounding crisis", with poorer nations battling a combination of climate shocks, heavy debt and economic woes, said David Miliband, president of the International Rescue Committee, a global humanitarian aid and development organisation.

"Countries are really feeling they're on the precipice," Miliband, a former British foreign secretary, said at a British Academy panel this month on the humanitarian impacts of climate change.

But rethinking the mission of global development banks, ensuring development, climate resilience and humanitarian efforts work in a joined-up way, and letting local people have a real voice in what needs changing — and the cash to change it — can help, experts said.

"There are solutions and innovations to be found that can be quite low-cost and can build up from what people are doing already," said Melissa Leach, director of the Institute of Development Studies at Britain's University of Sussex.

"If we actually look to communities, households, people — including those living in fragile and conflict-affected states — they've actually been living with uncertainties for a very, very long time," she said.

That gives them "a depth of knowledge about living in a resilient way, responding and adapting to uncertainty".

The number of people in need of humanitarian aid globally has tripled in the last half-decade, to 340mn, Miliband said. About 90% of those live in just 20 countries, often those facing significant climate shocks or embroiled in some of the 54 civil conflicts around the world, he said.

But soaring demand for help is overwhelming humanitarian aid systems, with organisations such as the UN World Food Programme (WFP) increasingly struggling to raise the growing amounts of money needed, leaving more people hungry.

The combined weight of climate shocks, heavy debt, rising poverty and hunger, and other pressures, such



Men walk through floodwater in Beledweyne, central Somalia, last week.

as the economic impacts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Covid-19 pandemic, mean once short-term humanitarian demands are turning into longer ones, experts said.

"This is creating huge challenges for the global humanitarian system," which is set up to provide short-term help, Leach said.

Filling the growing gaps will require a rethink of how help is provided, with a new climate change "loss and damage" fund established at COP27 one part of the picture, analysts said.

But finding ways to ensure need doesn't continue to skyrocket — such as investing now in things like social protection systems, which help buffer a range of shocks — is also key, they said.

"How can we reconcile the immediate need to act on the humanitarian crisis and at the same time shift now towards a more sustainable and resilient system that will see us through the next 200 years or more?" asked Edward Davey, co-director of the World Resources Institute in Britain.

He pointed to efforts within the WFP to trial "anticipatory action" programmes, which give those in the path of a predicted climate shock cash in advance to try to protect their assets, avoiding later heavy spending on aid.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation has estimated that every dollar it has spent on anticipatory action has produced \$7 in benefits, and avoided losses for families.

But cash for such trials is drying up as more immediate aid demands soar, draining coffers.

"The prevention agenda, the resilience agenda, is going to be left behind. There's no budget space to experiment," Gernot Laganda, WFP's climate and disaster risk reduction chief, warned at COP27 last year.

Among the keys to countering rising fragility is revamping the spending of big multilateral institutions, such as the World Bank, in an effort to drive more money toward cutting climate change and building resilience to its impacts, especially in poorer countries.

The so-called "Bridgetown Agenda" to reform the banks, championed by Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley and French President Emmanuel Macron, also aims to ease the crippling debt burden on many poorer nations, freeing fiscal space for climate action.

The bank reform agenda is "absolutely crucial" to getting more money to climate resilience and adaptation projects, said Vijay Rangarajan, who leads the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) work on energy, climate and the environment.

He said that climate change, development and humanitarian spending by governments is increasingly interrelated but that the pots of money for each often remain separate, hampering efforts to join up the work.

Another challenge in trying to get money where it is needed in vulnerable

countries is finding ways to deliver when the national government is weak, absent entirely or compromised and part of the problem, the analysts said.

In such situations, working through powerful local authorities, such as well-established and respected religious bodies, traditional leaders or civil society groups, can be one potential solution, Leach said.

"I think there's often been a political reluctance as well as a practical reluctance for humanitarian actors to deal at that level, partly because of the assumption that one should always work with government," she said.

But Miliband noted that a "people first" rather than "government first" strategy for moving assistance was now what was needed.

What may be most crucial, the experts said, is recognising that growing global instability driven by climate and other shocks is only likely to worsen, which makes finding ways to build resilience in the most vulnerable nations and communities urgent.

All countries — but particularly the most fragile — need to pare for the "absolute certainty of climate shocks coming," said Rangarajan, who works on the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan, among other regions, for the FCDO.

The reality for poor communities is "the more you build up their resilience, the more they're resilient to not only climate change," he added. - Thomson Reuters Foundation

# The climate elephants in the room

By Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg  
New Haven

Now that the falsehoods and obfuscation of climate denialism have finally been silenced, addressing climate change has become the world's top priority. But time is running out, and the International Monetary Fund warns that any further delays on implementing policies to mitigate global warming will only add to the economic cost of the transition to a low-emissions economy. Worse, we still lack a concrete, pragmatic strategy for tackling the problem. Although economists have made a robust case for why carbon taxes are the best solution, this option has proven politically infeasible, at least in those countries that account for some of the highest emissions (namely, the US).

Commentators have also stressed that climate change is a shared problem involving important cross-border externalities that must be addressed through a multilateral approach to global co-ordination. But, as with carbon taxes, this argument has fallen on deaf ears. And, given the current geopolitical climate and the increasing fragmentation of the global economy, there is little hope that the message will get through anytime soon.

Having committed to assisting developing economies as they confront climate change, the World Bank finds itself limited by the country-based model underlying its financing operations. It is earnestly weighing its options and considering how it could co-ordinate climate-related financing across borders. But while such efforts are well meaning and consistent with the spirit of multilateralism, they inevitably will delay concrete action. World Bank financing would have



to be completely restructured, and co-ordinating action across multiple countries that have limited financial resources and often conflicting interests seems an impossible task. For example, while some developing economies are rich in fossil fuels, others are starved for energy sources.

Given these limitations, pragmatism dictates focusing on the biggest polluters. Global carbon dioxide emissions are concentrated among only a handful of countries and regions. China, the US, the European Union, Japan, and Russia collectively account for 63% of the total, and none of these top polluters is a low-income country anymore. China, the poorest of the group, represents around 30% of all emissions, making it by far the world's largest current polluter in absolute terms. But its government is taking steps to accelerate the transition to green energy — a winning strategy, given the country's

abundance of rare earth metals.

India, the third-largest emitter, currently accounts for about 7% of global CO2 emissions, and its size and growth trajectory imply that it could easily surpass China as the leading polluter, barring stronger climate policies. In fact, when it comes to helping developing countries decarbonise, considerable progress could be made simply by targeting India alone. The big advantage of this strategy is that it would avoid the paralysis associated with attempts to adopt a multilateral approach in an increasingly fragmented world.

This does not mean that we should eschew projects aimed at climate mitigation or adaptation in other countries. But we would not need to wait until everyone is on board before doing anything. Those insisting on a multilateral approach should learn from the experience of the ultimate multilateral institution: the World Trade Organisation. Its requirement

that every single provision in every multilateral agreement gain unanimous support has left it increasingly paralysed, prompting demands for institutional reform.

Of course, India is not low-hanging fruit. It is rich in coal and has little incentive (beyond the health of its citizens) to hasten the transition to green energy. In focusing on India, we would need to employ the carrot, not the stick.

Since the stick generally takes the form of pressure to implement carbon taxation, it is a non-starter. A tax would be ineffective, because it would incite massive domestic opposition (as has been the case in the US). It would also be morally objectionable, because it is unfair to ask a lower-middle-income country to bear the burden of reducing CO2 emissions when rich countries (like the US) have failed to do the same. Moreover, even if China and India are now two of the world's biggest polluters, they bear little responsibility for the past, cumulative emissions that led to the current climate crisis.

That leaves the carrot, which would come in the form of tax incentives or subsidies to support green energy. When paired with other policies, these can ease firms into adapting to higher environmental standards (such as those associated with a cap-and-trade programme). But such policies are expensive, which means that tackling climate change will require richer countries to help finance them. Whether or not India becomes the new China, it is still in our power to ensure that it does not become the new outside polluter. - Project Syndicate

● Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg, a former World Bank Group chief economist and editor-in-chief of the American Economic Review, is Professor of Economics at Yale University.



# Offers of aid as Italy reels from ‘worst flood in a century’

AFP  
Rome

Italy has received offers of international aid for floods, described as its worst for a century, which killed 14 people and left thousands in waterlogged homes or in evacuation centres.

As some areas began the clean-up following downpours earlier this week, others were newly evacuated on Thursday and authorities extended a red weather alert in parts of the Emilia Romagna region, where nearly two dozen rivers have broken their banks.

A mammoth rescue effort is underway after six months’ rain fell in 36 hours, with emergency services and the armed forces searching for people stuck in their homes – and those who lost their lives.

The latest victim found was a man recovered from a house in Faenza, a picturesque city usually surrounded by green pastures and vineyards left largely underwater.

“As Italy reels from the worst flooding there in a century, WHO Europe sends condolences for the lives lost,” tweeted Hans Kluge, World Health Organisation (WHO) regional director for Europe, saying it is “ready to support ... as needed”.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni shared images of the disaster with fellow G7 leaders at their summit in Japan, prompting French President Emmanuel Macron to tweet that France is “ready to provide every useful help”.

Stefano Bonaccini, head of the Emilia Romagna region, called for a national plan to mitigate the impact of natural disasters, saying: “This must never happen again.”

More than 15,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across the region, as farmers survey the damage that Bonaccini has compared to an earthquake.

Over half the evacuees were expected to spend the night in local refuge centres set up in gyms or hotels.

Others received hot meals from mobile kitchens deployed in several cities.

The downpour caused billions of euros’ worth of damage, just a fortnight after the region was hit by another round of floods that left two people dead.

Experts warn such disasters are becoming the norm due to human-induced climate change, which is exacerbating both droughts and storms.

According to the Legambiente environmental association, 6.8mm Italians live in flood risk areas.

## Mexican volcano near capital spews more ash, forcing school closures

Mexican authorities cancelled in-person classes for more than 100,000 students on Thursday in multiple towns clustered around one of the country’s most active volcanoes as its fiery activity intensified in recent days, raising health concerns.

A series of relatively small but powerful eruptions from the snowcapped Popocatepetl volcano prompted Puebla state officials to suspend both public and private school classes at all levels across 22 towns due to falling ash, according to officials.

Classes in the affected towns will temporarily be conducted online.

Falling ash, plus gases spewed by the eruptions, can be harmful when inhaled, and in a worse case scenario could trigger the need for massive evacuations.

Popocatepetl, meaning “Smoking Hill” in the native Aztec language Nahuatl, is one of the world’s most closely monitored volcanoes.

It rises only about 45 miles (72km) southwest of Mexico City, home to about 9mn people, or around 22mn including the metropolitan area.

Popocatepetl is Mexico’s second tallest volcano at 5,550m above sea level. **- Reuters**

# Wildfire risk spurs Alberta park closures

Reuters  
Ottawa

Authorities in Canada’s main oil-producing province of Alberta have closed some parks and campgrounds, and are urging residents to avoid activities that could enrage wildfires to avoid straining firefighting resources over the holiday weekend.

Traditionally, residents spend the Victoria Day weekend outside as families take advantage of the warmer weather to go camping or enjoy other outdoor activities.

The long weekend in May has usually seen an uptick in seasonal wildfires, some of which are accidentally caused by people.

This year, however, record-high temperatures and tinder-dry vegetation brought about an early and intense onset of the wildfire season in western Canada.

Alberta has been hit the hardest, with some 10,000 people forced out of their homes as of Thursday.

Officials have warned that more wildfires could spread in the next few hot and dry days, even as firefighters make progress in tackling widespread blazes that have slowed the outflow of natural gas from Canada into the US, spiking prices.

About 8% of the total gas consumed in or exported from the US comes from Canada.

With abnormally hot and dry weather forecast until at least early next week, Alberta has preventatively closed some provincial parks and campgrounds for the weekend and imposed a fire ban.

“May long weekend is one of the busiest times for human-caused wildfires,” Alberta Wildfire said yesterday. “This weekend, we are asking Albertans to put safety first and support our wildfire response by restricting outdoor recreation activities in the northwest region of the forest protection area.”

About 2,700 firefighters, including personnel from Canadian and US agencies and the Canadian army, were battling about 94 active wildfires yesterday.

The wildfires have put Alberta Premier Danielle Smith’s disaster management skills – as well as her party’s policies – under the microscope ahead of the provincial election on May 29.

# G7 tightens Russia sanctions over Ukraine

Reuters  
Hiroshima

Leaders of the world’s richest democracies acted yesterday to stiffen sanctions against Russia, while a draft communique to be issued after their talks in the Japanese city of Hiroshima stressed the need to reduce reliance on trade with China.

The Group of Seven (G7) leaders, to be joined this weekend by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, pledged to restrict any exports to Russia that could help President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of his neighbour and to stop sanctions-busting.

“Today’s actions will further tighten the vice on Putin’s ability to wage his barbaric invasion and will advance our global efforts to cut off Russian at-

tempts to evade sanctions,” US Treasury Department Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement accompanying a raft of new US measures.

A statement issued by G7 leaders said restrictions would cover exports of industrial machinery, tools and technology useful to Russia’s war effort, while efforts would be pursued to limit Russian revenues from trade in metals and diamonds.

On China, which G7 powers increasingly see as a threat to economic security, they were to agree that its status as the world’s second largest economy necessitated efforts to foster co-operation, an early draft of the final communique seen by Reuters said.

“Our policy approaches are not designed to harm China, we do not seek to thwart China’s economic progress and development,” noted the draft, which is

still subject to change, calling for “stable and constructive” ties with Beijing.

The draft nonetheless urged measures to “reduce excessive dependencies” in critical supply chains and counter “malign practices” in technology transfer and data disclosure.

It reaffirmed the need for peace in the Taiwan Strait and urged China to press Russia to end aggression in Ukraine.

The G7 – the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Canada – will use the three-day meeting to debate strategy on a Ukraine conflict that shows no sign of easing.

The summit venue, Hiroshima, was destroyed by US nuclear bombings 78 years ago that ended World War II.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who represents Hiroshima in Japan’s lower house of parliament, said he chose it for the global gathering to focus

attention on arms control.

Russia’s threats of possible recourse to nuclear weapons, together with the nuclear programmes of North Korea and Iran, have all added to concerns about proliferation.

In the draft, G7 countries – among them nuclear-armed France, Britain and the United States – expressed their “commitment to achieving a world without nuclear weapons” through a “realistic, pragmatic, and responsible approach”.

Having emerged as the world’s wealthiest nations after World War II, the G7 democracies have become increasingly challenged by an ascendant China and unpredictable Russia.

Amid evidence that existing Russian sanctions are being weakened by circumvention, they said the group was “engaging” with countries through

which any restricted G7 goods, services or technology could transit through to Russia.

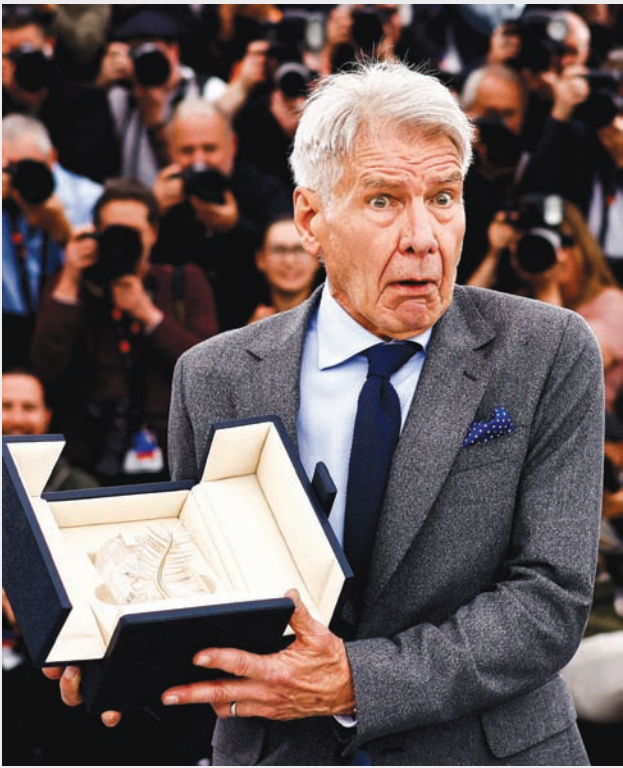
“Essentially, the aim is to provide for clarification in order to make circumvention more difficult,” German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told reporters.

While no countries were named in the G7 statement, a separate European Union statement said it had asked central Asian states to guard against circumvention.

Zelensky is due to arrive late today on a French jet after attending the Arab League summit in Saudi Arabia.

G7 countries promised him further military and financial help.

US President Joe Biden told fellow leaders he backed a joint effort with allies to train Ukrainian pilots on F-16 fighter jets, a senior administration official said.



## Hot and cold

Smoke rises from the Stoddart Creek wildfire near Fort St John, British Columbia, Canada.

Left: Harrison Ford poses with his honorary Palme d’Or Award.



Firefighters transport food and water to people who are still in their homes after heavy rains hit Lugo, in Italy’s Emilia Romagna region.



Security personnel with ballistic shields escort former prime minister Imran Khan as he leaves after appearing yesterday at the High Court in Lahore.

## Harrison Ford reflects on his years as Indiana Jones

Artificial intelligence (AI) may have been used to make Harrison Ford decades younger in parts of his final film as Indiana Jones, but the 80-year-old actor said yesterday that he loves being older and has no plans to slow down.

Ford, whose *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* premiered in Cannes the previous night, has vowed this will be his last outing as the swashbuckling archaeologist after more than four decades in the role.

“I don’t look back and say, ‘I wish I was that guy again,’ because I don’t. I love being older, it was great to be young but ... I could be dead, I’m just older,” he said.

Asked why it was time to let Indy go, Ford gestured towards himself and said with his ever-present dry wit: “Urr, is it not evident?”

He first swung onto screens as the quick-witted and intrepid archaeologist with his trademark fedora and whip in 1981’s *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, followed by three blockbuster sequels.

Ford also got emotional while receiving a surprise honorary Palme d’Or ahead of the premiere of the fifth instalment.

The film opens at the end of World War II with a younger-looking Ford, a feat of AI technology that uses old footage to create a de-aged version of his face.

“I know that is my face, that it is not some Photoshop magic. That’s what I looked like 35 years ago because Lucasfilm has every frame of film that we made together over all these years,” Ford said.

# Former prime minister Khan refuses home search by police, sets his own terms

Reuters/AFP  
Lahore

Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan has refused police permission to search his Lahore home for suspects involved in this month’s attacks on state and army buildings and laid out his own terms for any such operation.

Khan has denied sheltering anyone involved in the violence and said that a search could only be conducted by a panel set up by a high court, with members from both the government and his party – and on the condition that a female officer accompanies them.

“They first said that there were terrorists (inside), but then they said that there were wanted men,” Khan told reporters.

“I asked them, they could come and

see inside if there were wanted men, but they said they wanted to search my home, which I couldn’t allow,” he said. “If they have to search, it will be under a court order, like it said earlier, that there will be persons from both sides with a woman included.”

He said he feared police, unsupervised, could plant weapons.

Amir Mir, information minister of the province of Punjab, of which Lahore is the capital, earlier told Reuters that police would only start a search after agreeing on conditions with Khan.

The standoff is the latest in a tussle between former cricket star Khan, 70, and the powerful military that has deepened political instability in the South Asian nation of 220mn.

Pakistan also faces its worst economic crisis in decades, with critical International Monetary Fund (IMF) funding needed to avert a balance of

payment crisis delayed for months.

Khan’s home is in the Zaman Park neighbourhood of Lahore and was the site of pitched battles in March between his supporters and police who had tried to arrest Khan for not showing up in court.

Khan was eventually arrested on May 9 on graft charges, which he denies, and released on bail that expires this month.

His arrest triggered a wave of violence by supporters who attacked government buildings, public properties and military installations, including its headquarters and the house of a military commander in Lahore.

Mir said that there are no plans to re-arrest Khan.

Lahore police chief Bilal Kamyana said police had arrested 14 suspects involved in the attack on the commander’s house as they tried to escape Zaman Park.

A government statement said the team handed over all the evidence about the suspects to the administration of Zaman Park.

It said a list of 2,200 suspects involved in the violence was also handed over to Khan.

Analysts said a search of Khan’s house could trigger further unrest.

On Thursday, Khan’s aide, Iftikhar Durrani, allowed journalists into some areas of the home to “look for terrorists”.

Mir said they were given very limited access and could not account for the whole property.

Khan said he is worried what police would do if allowed to search his home without a court order.

“We fear that they will do what they did earlier – they stormed my home in my absence and said that they found weapons.”

The former prime minister meanwhile said that he has had “no dialogue” with Pakistan’s military since his campaign of defiance against the nation’s powerful generals boiled over into deadly unrest last week.

The opposition leader’s comments in an interview with AFP underscore the full-scale breakdown of relations between the country’s most popular politician and the army, which directly ruled Pakistan for more than three decades and remains hugely powerful behind the scenes.

“The current army chief clearly has some problems with me,” Khan said inside his Lahore home late on Thursday. “I don’t know what will happen in the future, but right now there’s no dialogue.”

He said the government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is “scared” to face his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

party in general elections due no later than October.

“Our party has been facing a crack-down really for one year,” said Khan, seeming tired but resolved, sitting between the twin draped flags of Pakistan and the PTI. “I was removed from power through this conspiracy by the ex-army chief.”

Military support has historically been a cornerstone of stable governments in Islamabad, although the institution denies involvement in politics.

The growing chasm between Khan and the generals complicates his campaign to return to office and pits his legions of followers against those in control of the world’s sixth-largest army.

Despite the rhetoric, Khan says he is open to negotiations.

“Believe me, there is no issue from my side,” he said. “The fact is, no one wants to fight with your own army.”



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