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Qantas Airways CEO to depart early

Australia's Qantas Airways said its long-serving CEO would bring forward his retirement amid a publicity firestorm over an accusation of illegal ticket sales, signalling what the flagship carrier hopes is the end of a tumultuous period. Alan Joyce, the company's boss for 15 years, had been scheduled to retire in November but said in a statement yesterday that he was leaving two months early due to "the focus on Qantas and events of the past" in the last few weeks, without elaborating. **Page 7**

French schools refuse girls in Muslim robes

French schools sent dozens of girls home for refusing to remove their abayas — an overgarment from the shoulders to the feet worn by Muslim women — on the first day of the school year, a government minister said yesterday. Defying a ban on the Muslim robe, nearly 300 girls showed up on Monday morning wearing an abaya, Gabriel Attal told the BFM broadcaster. Most agreed to change out of the robe, but 67 refused and were sent home, he said. **Page 11**

6bn tonnes of sand extracted from oceans each year: UN

Some 6bn tonnes of sand and other sediment is extracted from the world's seas and oceans every year, the UN said yesterday, warning of the devastating toll on biodiversity and coastal communities. Launching the first ever global data platform on sediment extraction in marine environments, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), warned that the scale of dredging was growing, with dire consequences.

US warns N Korea if it gives arms to Russia

The White House warned yesterday that North Korea would "pay a price" if it supplies Russia with weaponry for its war in Ukraine, with Kim Jong-un and Vladimir Putin expected to hold talks on the issue. **Page 7**

PM reiterates Qatar's support for Somalia

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met, at the Amiri Diwan yesterday, with Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between the two countries, in addition to discussing the latest developments in Somalia. HE Sheikh Mohamed reiterated Qatar's permanent support for Somalia as well as its support for state institutions and all efforts

aimed at achieving security and stability and ensuring the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the country. For his part, the Somali prime minister expressed his thanks to Qatar for its continued support for his country in different fields. The meeting was attended by a number of ministers and senior officials. On the Somali side, it was attended by a number of members of the official delegation. (QNA) **Page 2**



QT launches falcon's eye view of Qatar



As the falcon effortlessly glides across the skies, viewers are transported through the breathtaking landscapes of Qatar.

Qatar Tourism (QT) has released, "Qatar: Through the Eyes of a Falcon," an innovative production that presents a thrilling perspective of Qatar's beautiful terrains, as seen from the viewpoint of the national bird, the falcon. A first-of-its-kind in Qatar, viewers will see sweeping views of Qatar's diverse landscapes as they

embark on a captivating visual journey with this time-honoured bird. "We chose the falcon's point of view to provide a profound and authentic perspective for viewers to explore Qatar," said QT COO Berthold Trenkel in a press statement. "A symbol of endurance and valour, the falcon takes

us on an unparalleled adventure through the country's beautiful natural, historic and modern structures that form Qatar's unique hospitality offering," he added. As the falcon effortlessly glides across the skies, viewers are transported through the breathtaking landscapes of Qatar. From the enchanting dunes of the Arabian

desert to the gleaming skyscrapers of Doha, viewers will witness the harmonious blend of tradition and modernity that can only be found in this year's Arab Tourism Capital. Falcons have been owned and bred in the desert for over 5,000 years. Today, the solitary bird is celebrated as the national bird of Qatar and is an important

part of the country's heritage. Known for its astonishing flight capabilities, the falcon can reach altitudes of up to 3,000ft (about 914m) and cover vast distances exceeding 300km in a single day. Its exceptional vantage point over Qatar can be watched on QT's Visit Qatar's YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/@visitqatar).

S'hail 2023 begins at Katara



Amidst an impressive turnout of visitors, the seventh edition of the Katara International Hunting and Falconry Exhibition, S'hail 2023, kicked off at Katara - the Cultural Village yesterday (Tuesday). The event that concludes on Saturday, has the participation of 190 major companies from 17 countries. The exhibitors are specialists in hunting firearms, falconry equipment, camping supplies, and off-road vehicles tailored for land and hunting expeditions. **Page 3**

HIA introduces digital passenger assistance kiosks

Hamad International Airport (HIA), in partnership with Atos and Royal Schiphol Group has introduced passenger digital assistance kiosks to "enable seamless journeys" for travellers. The kiosks will provide easy access to information, assist in navigation and help passengers through live video calls to customer service agents, a statement said. Commenting on the new passenger experience, Suhail Kadri, senior vice-president (Technology and Innovation) at HIA, said: "The new Passenger Digital Assistance Kiosks are part of our overarching digital strategy to transform passenger experiences. We are committed to investing in the latest technology and innovative solutions; to create the most seamless airport experience for all passengers travelling from and to Hamad International Airport, we



HIA, in partnership with Atos and Royal Schiphol Group, has introduced passenger digital assistance kiosks to "enable seamless journeys" for travellers are working with industry innovation leaders such as Atos and Royal Schiphol Group." Marc Veelenturf, CEO (Middle East and Turkey) at Atos, said: "Together with our strategic partner Schiphol, we are proud to

have successfully delivered this solution at Hamad International Airport to improve the digital passenger experience, and to manage passenger flow more effectively especially during the airport's critical peak periods." The kiosks are multilingual with some 20 language options, with the airport map for wayfinding. They provide information related to flights, airport services, retail and F&B outlets and passenger events at the airport. HIA said it will continue to add new and strong partnerships to its portfolio with the aim to introduce innovative solutions and advanced technologies, as part of its commitment to being the industry leader, setting the benchmark for the airport industry and expanding beyond traditional solutions, to deliver an exceptionally memorable passenger experience for all travellers.

Shura Council takes part in 50th PAM Bureau meeting

The Shura Council took part in the 50th meeting of the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) in Amman, Jordan. The meeting was attended by Shura Council member Abdullah bin Nasser bin Turki al-Subaie, who is the Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean and member of the PAM's Bureau. The meeting reviewed the latest developments in a number of Middle Eastern countries, and discussed a report on child trafficking. Qatar, represented by the Shura Council, holds permanent membership in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, an international organisation that enjoys observer status in the UN General Assembly. **(QNA)**

PM, Somali counterpart discuss co-operation relations



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met, at the Amiri Diwan yesterday, with Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between the two countries, in addition to discussing the latest developments in Somalia. The meeting was attended by a number of ministers and senior officials. On the Somali side, it was attended by a number of members of the official delegation. **(QNA)**



Diwaniyat Al-Sabt opens third season

In co-operation between Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), Diwaniyat Al-Sabt, and Al Hazm, the Galleria Hall at Al Hazm hosted the opening of the third season of Diwaniyat Al-Sabt at a grand event in the presence of a number of Qatari women.

The annual event serves as a platform for Qatari women to meet and interact, offering constructive and fruitful cultural and social programmes, a statement said yesterday.

During the gathering, the official announcement of the launch of the 'Nass Al-Nisai Team,' the first women's volunteer work team in Qatar, was made. The initiative aims to empower women in Qatar – citizens and residents – by training them on volunteer work mechanisms and developing their ability to interact and provide support in society. The initiative also seeks to enhance social participation, raise awareness of the needs of society, and actively contribute to its development.

The opening of 'Diwaniyat Al-Sabt' was hosted by Dr Maryam al-



Dr Maryam al-Owayesh addressing the event.

Owayesh from Kuwait, who gave a lecture entitled "They Want His Countenance." She spoke about the importance of good company and delved into the concept of the noble verse "And keep yourself patient [by being] with those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His countenance." from Surat Al-Kahf and explained the context in which it came.

Commenting on the event, Al Maha Yousef al-Sheikh, founder of 'Diwaniyat Al-Sabt,' said: "Diwaniyat Al-Sabt has achieved great success over the past three years among young women in Qatar. We received more than 800 membership applications immediately after announcing the new season. We are excited to complete the success on this path and actively involve women in the various fields



A view of the participants at the event.

of volunteering in Qatar. Our priority now is to help every girl and woman achieve her own initiatives and aspirations and to develop the skills that qualify her for that."

Mohamed al-Emadi, CEO of Al Emadi Enterprises and Al Hazm, said: "We are pleased to host this event in its third edition in Al Hazm, and we offer our full support to all awareness, educational,

and charitable initiatives that aim to strengthen our Qatari society.

"The Diwaniyat Al-Sabt has proven to be a valuable platform in our community to connect, learn and grow. We believe in the power of volunteering and its role in strengthening our community. We look forward to this initiative having a positive impact on our path towards a better future."

Mooza al-Kuwari, head of the Volunteering Department at QRCS, said: "We at the Qatar Red Crescent are proud of such voluntary community initiatives, which are an integral part of the volunteering and local development sector's strategy and its mission based on developing volunteer work and consolidating it in the Qatari society in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030."

"The launch of the "Nass Al-Nisai Team" represents an important turning point in supporting and empowering women in Qatar. We believe in the importance of volunteering and contributing to the improvement of our society, and we look forward to this women's initiative being a positive driving force in achieving this."

The Diwaniyat Al-Sabt, a weekly event organised in co-operation with the QRCS, and aims to enhance communication and interaction between women in the Qatari society. It provides a unique platform for exchanging ideas and promoting cultural guidance and social development.

QIC Group to support S'hail 2023

Qatar Insurance Group is the 'Official Insurance Sponsor' of the 7th edition of S'hail 2023 - Katara International Hunting & Falcons Exhibition. Commenting on the sponsorship, Salem al-Mannai, CEO of QIC Group, said: "As the leading insurer in Qatar, we have a long standing commitment to acting as a trusted and ethical partner with the Qatari community and to playing a vital role in the sustainability of Qatar's social fabric.

"We have ensured that the core values of our business and operating principles align with our objectives for CSR. Contribution to and participation in S'hail demonstrates our relentless efforts in highlighting the culture and traditions of the Nation. "It also



underpins our keenness towards maintaining and reviving the legacy of Falconry for our future generation. S'hail has established

a special standing as a unique exhibition in the world of falconry and we are delighted to be able to continue to sponsor it."

MoECC's services go on display at S'hail exhibition

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has launched a special pavilion at the Katara International Hunting & Falcons Exhibition (S'hail). The event takes place from Sept 5-9. The pavilion introduces the visitors to the ministry's services, especially those related to the natural reserves and wildlife sector, and raises their awareness

of the laws regulating hunting operations. It also shows various e-services, and the phases of Houbara bustard breeding. Director of MoECC's Public Relations and Communication Department Mohamed Ahmed al-Dhahi said that this year's pavilion, which is completely distinctive in design and size from previous years, reflects the ministry's

important role in preserving the local environment and wildlife in Qatar. Al-Dhahi highlighted the ministry's efforts to enrich biodiversity and overcome the challenges to Houbara bustard breeding. He also highlighted e-services related to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). **(QNA)**

New Umm Ghuwailina Health Centre being planned

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has launched a tender for pre-contract consultancy services for the design of the new 12,000sq m Umm Ghuwailina Health Centre, local Arabic daily Arrayah reported.

According to the e-tender posted on Ashghal website, the proposed facility will include clinics, vital examination rooms, consultation rooms, a pharmacy, a laboratory, doctors' offices, a prayer room, staff offices, meeting rooms, a cafeteria, and other service facilities alongside visitor parking. Ashghal has stressed that the building design should incor-

porate Qatari heritage elements, adhere to the highest global fire safety standards, focus on green and sustainable building practices and take into consideration the ability to accommodate future technologies in the field of medical equipment.

Ashghal has called upon bidders to apply the highest standards of quality and safety in line with the Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS), aiming to achieve a 3-star environmental quality rating by conserving energy, protecting the environment, utilising solar energy for water heating within the building, promoting

natural lighting through panoramic ceiling openings, conserving electrical energy used for lighting, maximising sanitation through sunlight exposure, and implementing water usage reduction systems both inside and outside the building, along with providing green spaces for plants and trees in the surrounding outer area of the building. In addition, Ashghal has stressed that it is very important that the design of the building take into consideration the needs of people with disability, making it easily accessible for them and provide them with the adequate services.

Teachers' Day event today

Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), under the aegis of the Indian embassy, is celebrating Teachers' Day today (Wednesday) from 6pm, a statement said. Teachers' Day is observed in India on September 5 to commemorate the birth anniversary of Dr S Radhakrishnan, the second President of India. Today's event at Ashoka Hall will see teachers from various Indian schools participate in cultural performances as part of ICC's 'Wednesday Fiesta'. Principals and nominated teachers from Indian schools will also be honoured. ICC has encouraged teachers, students and parents to attend the function in large numbers.



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Dignitaries and visitors on the opening day of S'hail 2023. The five-day event that concludes on Saturday, has the participation of 190 major companies from 17 countries.



CRA takes part in S'hail 2023



In line with the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) efforts and its continuous endeavour to raise awareness of the applicable regulatory framework in Qatar, CRA is participating in the 7th edition of 'S'hail - Katara International Hunting and Falcons Exhibition,' organised by Katara - Cultural Village until September 9. The event began yesterday. CRA's participation is aimed to familiarise falconers and hunting lovers with its procedures related to hunting radio devices licensing and other wireless devices used for hunting purposes, within the limits of its responsibility, which includes regulating and managing all matters related to the use of radio spectrum in Qatar. Also, CRA seeks to raise awareness among the public regarding owning and using wireless devices and the procedures that must be followed for such types of devices before purchasing or importing them into the country. In line with CRA's efforts to support the national digital transformation plans pursued to support the

provision of e-government services, CRA introduces the exhibition's visitors to the e-Spectrum Services Portal, which allows them to submit applications, pay fees, and manage their accounts online. Through its booth, CRA provides several services to the public including, but not limited to, providing technical advice regarding the use of wireless devices and their compliance with the specifications approved in Qatar, as well as the possibility of issuing licenses for new devices approved by CRA, and renewing or cancelling expired licences in accordance with the procedures followed in this regard. Radio hunting devices are subject to the provisions of Telecommunications Law No 34 of 2006, which some of its provisions were amended by Law No 17 of 2017. Also, they are licensed by CRA in accordance with approved standards and specifications and within frequency bands specified in Qatar's National Frequency Allocation Plan.

S'hail 2023 draws huge turnout on opening day

Amidst an impressive turnout of visitors, the seventh edition of the Katara International Hunting and Falconry Exhibition, S'hail 2023, kicked off at Katara - Cultural Village yesterday.

The five-day event that concludes on Saturday, has the participation of 190 major companies from 17 countries. The exhibitors are specialists in hunting firearms, falconry equipment, camping supplies, and off-road vehicles tailored for land and hunting expeditions.

The event also has the participation of ministries, government agencies, and official entities, a statement said. Katara general manager and S'hail 2023 Organising Committee chairman Prof Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti, emphasised the growing significance of the major annual event, cherished by both exhibitors and visitors, including falconers and hunting enthusiasts, as well as those who are interested in hunting supplies, falcons and land trips.



The latest weapons for hunting, falcon supplies and camping tools, as well as the latest SUVs, trip equipment and kashtat equipment, in addition to displays of huge collections of the best and rarest types of high-quality falcons, saw a heavy demand for purchases from the public and visitors of the exhibition.

Pavilions dedicated to rifles and pistols have been receiving a number of falconers, hunters, and

enthusiasts, proving the growing appeal of both traditional falconry and cutting-edge hunting equipment in Qatar and the wider region.

A wide range of air guns, shotguns, and pistols are among the key attractions, primarily used for hunting pursuits. Josons, has carved a niche as the Middle East agent for Beretta, a renowned firearms manufacturer with a long-standing reputation for quality and performance.

Nazih Abi Semaan, manager of Josons, highlighted Beretta's enduring popularity among hunters and falconers in the region. "Beretta is a very old company with an excellent reputation, outstanding quality, and exceptional performance. It never fails to get the job done, making it a beloved choice among hunters. Its durability, combined with its aesthetics, ensures it lasts a very long time."

Semaan also highlighted Josons' extensive involvement in various exhibitions and events, including

S'hail 2023, as a testament to the continuous growth of the hunting and falconry community.

Joseph Semaan, a sales representative at Josons, shed light on the evolving landscape of falconry and hunting. He pointed out the innovations in firearm technology, particularly in rifle barrels, which have significantly improved shooting experiences compared to a decade ago.

He remarked: "Over the last 10 years, there has been a substantial transformation in how people shoot, and how equipment such as rifles used for hunting continues to improve. These advancements have enhanced the overall hunting experience."

Joseph also underlined the growing demand for hunting in the region and in different countries. When asked about the appeal of firearms, he noted: "We sell air guns and shotguns for hunting, as well as air guns for recreational shooting."

Falconry, along with other hunting activities, is on the rise. The population is growing, and people are increasingly drawn to the sport and the enjoyment it brings."



Falconry tradition thrives amidst changing times

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The old tradition of falconry remains an enduring symbol of Qatar's rich cultural heritage, especially in a world that seems to be evolving at an ever-increasing pace, falconer Farhan al-Sayed said.

"Falconry is a very old-fashioned thing, and lots of things remained traditional; they don't change," said al-Sayed, who also serves as the president of the Qatar-Indonesia Business Council. Speaking to *Gulf Times* on the sidelines of the opening of the seventh edition of Katara International Falcon and Hunting Exhibition, S'hail 2023, he shed light on the continued vigour of this age-old practice, stressing the fusion of tradition and modernity within Qatar's falconry community.

"S'hail 2023," organised by Katara - Cultural Village, began yesterday and will run until September 9. "Like in fashion, you have different kinds of falcon hoods, you can see different styles coming in, even in the gloves that we use. We wear gloves on the left hand, but if you compare with the Europeans, they might wear them on the right hand," al-Sayed said.

He pointed out that these gloves - crafted from leather - are not just for show as their thickness and strength protect falconers from the sharp and powerful claws of the birds. For newcomers to falconry, he said these gloves are essential to prevent injuries. According to al-Sayed, Qatar's tradition of falconry begins at a young age as Qatari children are introduced to this unique artistic endeavour from their earliest



Farhan al-Sayed with a falcon at the seventh edition of Katara International Falcon and Hunting Exhibition. PICTURE: Joey Aguilar

years. He recommends that young falconers start with the smallest species of falcon, known as the kestrel, to foster their passion for the ancient sport.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, he said that enthusiasm for falconry and hunting remains high in Qatar. He added that the falconry season usually begins with an exhibition, a time when the weather becomes more favourable for related activities.

Al-Sayed noted that Qatar holds a special distinction in the world of falconry, boasting the highest density of falconers globally. This prevalence, he stressed, underscores the importance of maintaining this tradition, a heritage deeply rooted in Qatari culture. He attributed this continuity to the vision of Qatar's leadership, saying: "I would give the credit to His Highness the Father Amir, who inspired this tradition during his term as the Amir of Qatar."

"You can see the falcon souq at Souq Waqif and the state-of-the-art falcon hospital, which ensures the well-being of falcons from

various corners of the world, including the UK, Spain, and Europe," al-Sayed said.

He reiterated that the growing popularity of falconry and hunting is a testament to the enduring traditions established by His Highness the Father Amir and continued under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

Owning a falcon in Qatar, particularly from childhood, is a matter of prestige and a symbol of the nation's deep cultural roots, he said. Falconry, an ancient tradition dating back thousands of years, has long been seen as a partnership between falcon and human, al-Sayed said.

"In the past, falcons were used for survival. The falcon's survival ensured the master's survival, and when combined with a team of camels and saluki breed dogs, they formed a formidable hunting force capable of hunting various game, including deer. The falcon would slow down the prey, and the saluki would bring it down," he added.



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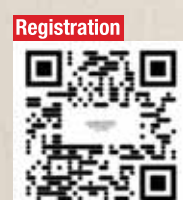
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Somali PM meets AlKhater



Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre met yesterday with HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater at his residence in Doha. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and Qatar's support for development projects in Somalia. (QNA)

Meetings with European official



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met yesterday with the visiting Director General for the Middle East and North Africa of the European Union's External Action Service Helene Le Gal. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between Qatar and the EU and ways to support and develop them, especially in energy and climate change, besides discussing developments in Ukraine and Afghanistan. (QNA)



The Director of the Arab Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nayef bin Abdullah al-Emadi met yesterday with the visiting Managing Director for Middle East and North Africa at the European External Action Service Helene Le Gal. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between Qatar and the EU and ways to enhance and develop them. (QNA)

Al-Hammadi receives credentials of UNHCR representative



HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi received the credentials of Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to Qatar Ahmed Mohsen Lutfi. HE Dr al-Hammadi wished Lutfi success in his duties. (QNA)

HMC trauma system receives international reaccreditation

Hamad Medical Corporation's (HMC) Trauma System has been reaccredited by Accreditation Canada International (ACI) and awarded the Trauma Distinction Award of Excellence.

HMC's Trauma Surgery Section provides the full spectrum of care for more than 3,000 victims of moderate to severe trauma in Qatar annually.

The three-year accreditation endorses the quality and safety of the care provided by the entire system and follows the Trauma System's initial accreditation by ACI in 2015, when HMC became the first trauma organisation in the world to earn this recognition. In Qatar, and the wider Gulf region, trauma is the leading cause of death and injury in the young adult population, and therefore, it was vitally important to ensure that the care we provide to patients with traumatic injuries is of the very highest international standards, a statement said.

Dr Hassan al-Thani, head of Trauma and Vascular Services at HMC said that major trauma is any injury that has the potential to cause prolonged disability or death. "HMC's Trauma System provides comprehensive care for trauma patients including pre-hospital care, emergency care in the Trauma Centre, and advanced rehabilitation services. We have worked hard to ensure we meet the very highest international standards and this accreditation is



HE the Minister of Public Health Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari holds the citation along with other HMC officials.

an important external endorsement of our achievements," said, Dr Hassan.

"In 2022, for the fourth consecutive year, the HMC Trauma Programme has demonstrated a mortality rate lower than North American counterparts participating in the American College of Surgeons Trauma Quality Improvement Program (TQIP) Benchmark Report; concurrent clinical trials reflect these same findings."

Dr Sandro Rizoli, medical director of Trauma at Hamad General Hospital said the Hamad Trauma Surgery Section

provides the full spectrum of care for more than 3,000 victims of moderate to severe trauma in Qatar annually.

"The Trauma System's role is providing life-saving treatment, through the Ambulance Service and Trauma Center, as well as the work done by the rehabilitation teams to maximise these patients' recovery, which is of great importance to Qatar's population. HMC's Trauma System is equally committed to injury prevention by improving safety in Qatar with the ultimate aim of reducing the number of people suffering traumatic injuries."

New leadership named for HMC and MoPH

A new lineup of leadership appointments across Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and the Ministry of Public Health were announced by HE the Minister of Public Health and HMC managing director Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari, with effect from yesterday.

Ali Abdulla al-Khater is the adviser to the Minister of Health for communication, Office of the Minister of Public Health, in addition to continuing in his role as Chair of the Supreme Committee for Healthcare Communications.

The following are the appointments at HMC: Dr Abdelaziz Ahmad Darwish, deputy chief for medical staff affairs, Workforce Planning and Performance; Dr Ahmed Ali al-Mohamed, deputy chief, Medical Services; Dr Hanadi Khamis al-Hamad, deputy chief, Long-Term Care, Rehabilitation, and Geriatrics Care; Dr Badriya Suliman al-Ali, chief regulatory, accreditation and compliance officer; Mohamed al-Buraiidi al-Marri, chief finance officer; Hassan Mohamed al-Hail, chief communications officer.



Dr Abdelaziz al-Darwish



Dr Ahmed Ali al-Mohamed.



Dr Badriya Suliman al-Ali



Dr Hanadi al-Hamad



Ali al-Khater



Hassan al-Hail

In addition to the above, there are several other new leadership appointments at department/service level. The new leaders each bring a wealth of experience and

expertise to their new role and will drive the continued improvements of HMC as it strives to deliver the highest quality care to patients, a statement added.



Qatar committed to protecting migrants during conflicts

The Qatari-Jordanian legal symposium on migrant protection kicked off yesterday at Qatar University. It is organised by the two countries' National Committee for International Humanitarian Law, in co-operation with Qatar University and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mission in Qatar, in the presence of HE the Minister of Justice Masoud bin Mohamed al-Amri, Qatar University President Dr Omar Mohamed al-Ansari, and a number of senior officials and experts in international humanitarian law.

During his attendance at the opening of the symposium, HE al-Amri reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to protecting migrants at times of armed conflict, in addition to its keenness on resolving disputes through peaceful and diplomatic means, emphasising the need for all parties to adhere to the principles and provisions of international humanitarian law.

HE the Minister of Justice noted Qatar-Jordan partnership and co-ordination in upholding international humanitarian law, resolving disputes peacefully, and providing the means to support and protect

refugees in conflict areas. Additionally, he commended the deep partnership with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and ICRC in providing support to refugees in conflict areas.

HE al-Amri expressed his confidence that the symposium will produce important recommendations that would strengthen national efforts, as well as regional and global partnerships aimed at enhancing the role of international humanitarian law in protecting migrants during armed conflicts.

At the opening, Justice Ministry Undersecretary and chairman of the National Committee For International Humanitarian Law Sultan bin Abdullah al-Suwaidi welcomed participants and stressed the ever-growing need for safety and security in a world where international humanitarian law is being violated, causing people to flee their homes in search of safety.

Al-Suwaidi discussed the political, economic, and social dimensions of migration, and noted that the symposium's goal is the optimal application of international humanitarian law and reducing migration in all its forms.

For his part, Chairman of the Jordanian National Committee for International Humanitarian Law retired Lt-Gen Mamoun al-Khasawneh praised Qatar's support to migrants during armed conflicts, and commended the partnership between the two committees, spreading the culture of international humanitarian law regionally and globally.

He stressed the symposium's significance in addressing the phenomenon in question; a source of global concern. Al-Khasawneh touched on the world's largest refugee movement, that of Syrian refugees to Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkiye, followed by the Ukrainian refugee crisis, a case which demonstrated an imbalance in global support provision to refugees.

For her part, the head of the ICRC Mission, Cherine Pollini, praised Qatar and Jordan for their support of migrants and refugees. Additionally, she noted the huge migration movements in light of armed conflicts and economic instability, and she shed light on ICRC's protection programmes provided to migrants. (QNA)

Nepal president receives credentials of Qatari ambassador



Nepalese President Ram Chandra Poudel received credentials of Mishaal bin Mohamed Ali al-Ansari as Qatar's ambassador to Nepal. The ambassador conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the president, and his wishes of health and happiness to him and to the government and people of Nepal continued progress and prosperity. For his part, the president entrusted the ambassador to convey his greetings to the Amir, wishing His Highness health and happiness, and Qatar continued development and prosperity. (QNA)

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Stars of Science alumni.

Stars of Science alumni leave a lasting impact

Since the launch of *Stars of Science*, an initiative of Qatar Foundation in 2009, more than 160 participants from across the Arab world have taken part in the show.

And the alumni of the innovation TV show – now in its 15th season – have not only achieved great things individually, but also become a source of inspiration for millions of people, with some of them even leading crucial national programmes.

One of the show's success stories has been found in the Sabah al-Ahmad Centre for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) Innovation department in Kuwait, part of the governmental Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science, managed for several years by a *Stars of Science* alumnus, Sadeq Qasem.

"On a governmental level, my work at the SACGC, in 2012, initiated an invention development department under my leadership," says the Kuwaiti winner of Season 2 of *Stars of Science*.

"Using the Stars of Science methodology, we aimed to trans-

form Kuwaiti patents into tangible assets. Within four years, we managed to evolve 55-60 patents into market-ready products."

Another prominent alumnus is Qatari entrepreneur, Khalid Aboujassoum, who in Season 4 became the show's first Qatari winner. Aboujassoum is the founder and CEO of Else Labs Inc, which manufactures a smart cooking robot called Oliver – the innovation that won Aboujassoum first place in *Stars of Science*. He is also the co-founder and chairman of Ibtechar, which provides practical innovation solutions and is the largest development and innovation enablement company in Qatar.

Another Qatari entrepreneur, Mohamed al-Jefairi, founded an incubation hub – Creativity Makers Centre – and is dedicated to supporting budding Qatari innovators; the centre is where Eiman al-Hamad, a *Stars of Science* alumna and finalist, volunteered. Al-Jefairi even went on to set up the world's first Islamic decentralised digital bank, Sidra Bank.

Mohamed Orsod's Nubb tech,

a training and innovation centre in Sudan, and Nizar Chelly's Robot Lab and Tadreez VR for safety training in Tunisia have also made significant contributions to their respective nations.

Meanwhile, Noraldin al-Deri, a Jordanian innovator who took second place in *Stars of Science* Season 14, opened the first early intervention centre in Jordan to be powered by artificial intelligence (AI).

Over the past 15 years, *Stars of Science* has provided hundreds of participants with the platform to showcase their ideas and inventions, and also provided essential funding and mentorship to transform these concepts into reality.

Many past participants have gone on to develop groundbreaking innovations that address real-world challenges, from medical devices and renewable energy solutions to AI applications. And the show's mentorship and guidance has enabled its alumni to raise funds through crowdfunding platforms and receive research grants, leading to the commercialisation of their inventions.

MGD announces 100% value on diamond exchange

Customers can now get the full value of diamonds during jewellery exchange to gold or diamond jewellery, announced Malabar Gold & Diamonds (MGD), one of the world's leading jewellery retailers, in a statement yesterday.

"Over the years, there has been an increasing preference for diamond jewellery as a gift, especially amongst Gen Z and Millennial customers. However, the one thing that was always a concern regarding diamond jewellery was its value as an investment compared to gold jewellery. Providing 100% value for diamond jewellery, upon exchange, is our way of negating these concerns to make diamond jewellery the perfect gift as well as a reliable investment that holds value," explained Shamlal Ahamed, managing director – international operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.



"Giving new meaning to the phrase, 'A Diamond is Forever', this policy change was crafted to protect the value of the diamond jewellery among the new era of jewellery lovers. Ever since our inception in 1993, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always been at the forefront of

introducing customer-centric and transparent policies aimed at protecting customer interests and this new policy on diamonds further testifies this," commented Abdul Salam K P, vice-chairman, Malabar Group.

The new policy comes in addition to the unique and customer centric policies named 'Malabar Promises' offering initiatives such as transparent price tag indicating gold weight, stone weight, net weight and stone charges of the respective jewellery, tested and certified diamonds ensuring 28-point quality check of global standards, guaranteed buyback, 100% value on gold exchange, 100% 916 hallmarked jewellery, assured lifetime maintenance, ethical and responsible sourcing, fair price policy & fair labour practices, a statement added.

Centara West Bay is 'Family Friendly Hotel of 2023'



Centara West Bay is recognised as the Family Friendly Hotel of The Year 2023 in Qatar by the Travel and Hospitality Awards, a statement said yesterday.

The Travel & Hospitality Awards recognise outstanding companies and organisations that consistently deliver exceptional experiences to travellers worldwide, it was explained.

"At Centara West Bay, we believe that a family-friendly atmosphere can make a world of difference in a traveller's journey. We take immense pride in offering distinguished luxurious accommodations, embracing the warmth of Thai hospitality, and delivering top-notch 5-star services to our valued guests," said general manager Sean Spinks.

"Thank you to our guests and the team, this accolade underscores our commitment to creating memorable moments for families and travellers alike. We are deeply grateful for this recognition by the Travel and Hospitality Awards, and we pledge to continue raising the bar in the hospitality industry to ensure that every guest experiences the utmost comfort, luxury, and hospitality," he added.

Centrally located in Doha's vibrant financial & business district, with easy access to the finest shopping, cultural sights and tourist attractions, Centara West Bay is a short walk from the metro, Corniche, City Center and North West Bay Beach, accessible directly from the hotel via the treelined boulevard.

Centara West Bay is also near key locations such as Katara, West Bay Lagoon, The Pearl and Bidda Park. The hotel's fully furnished apartments are highlighted by large spaces, modern decor, stunning views, and an array of international dining specialities from award-winning restaurants.

"The affordable luxury apartments boast spacious bedrooms, living and dining rooms, with well-equipped kitchens make the hotel ideal for every individual, family and traveller on extended stays in Qatar," the statement added.

Media and Communication Dept director at Ministry of Foreign Affairs meets German officials

Director of the Media and Communication Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ibrahim bin Sultan al-Hashmi met separately yesterday with Spokesperson for the Federal Foreign Office of Germany in the Middle East and North Africa Dr Dennis Kumetat, Head of the Culture and Communications Department at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany Ralf Beste, and Head of Middle East Division at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany Gregory Bledjian.

During the meetings, they discussed bilateral relations as well as enhancing co-operation and expertise exchange in the media field. During the meetings, the German officials renewed their gratitude to Qatar for its role in the evacuation processes in Afghanistan and its humanitarian role in the Gaza Strip. (QNA)



The missing piece of the puzzle: Hydrogen will complement sustainable mobility in the Middle East

Dr. Hamid Haqparwar, Managing Director, BMW Group Middle East

The world is at a crossroads. At the precipice of a climate-affected future, it is imperative to determine the way forward with responsible and sustainable choices. The Paris Agreement was a significant milestone in the fight against climate change, yet only one aspect of the collective action required to address this global challenge.



A crucial part of the narrative in creating a climate viable world lies in creating emission-free mobility, and the journey might be closer than we think. As the world shifts towards alternative energy sources, hydrogen-powered cars hold immense promise for transforming our mobility landscape and creating a sustainable future, and our region is poised to become a prominent driver in this transformative change.

When it comes to emission-free mobility, hydrogen is a key missing piece in the puzzle. As a clean and efficient energy carrier, hydrogen can be produced using renewable sources, such as wind and solar power, ensuring a sustainable production cycle and a reduction of emissions. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has recognised the significant potential of hydrogen as an energy source for the future, particularly in the context of global activities geared toward the energy transition.



We can forge ahead by embracing the infinite possibilities of hydrogen. As the lightest chemical element in the universe, hydrogen has the unique ability to help us overcome our dependency on finite natural resources, paving the way for a more sustainable future. In order to release energy, hydrogen is combined in the fuel cell with oxygen and turned into water vapor with the help of a catalyst. Fuel-cell electric vehicle technology thus has the potential to play a significant role in decarbonising the mobility sector.

From the sands of Middle East, a green revolution is set to rise. In the region, we are uniquely and strategically positioned to lead the global green hydrogen market, replete as we are with abundant renewable resources, geographical convenience and major ongoing infrastructure investments. With more than 50 green hydrogen projects in the region, as stated

by a MEED report in November 2022, places the region at the forefront of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, putting regional and global climate goals in forward drive. Even as the region is taking proactive steps to diversify its energy portfolio and embrace sustainable solutions, forward-thinking automotive companies are leading the charge towards a hydrogen revolution.

Conscious of our role in society, we have been pioneering emission-free technologies for over four decades at the BMW Group, treading a clear path to become climate neutral by 2050. As a strong advocate of circular economy principles, part of which comprise resource efficiency and waste reduction, we're seeking to reinforce our commitment to sustainability through the cutting-edge BMW iX5 Hydrogen, which offers outstanding long-distance capabilities, rapid refuelling times and zero tailpipe emissions –

truly revolutionising our approach to mobility. This aligns perfectly with the Middle East's commitment to improving air quality and mitigating the impact of transportation on the urban environment.

Hydrogen, when used as an energy carrier, presents other remarkable advantages. It can be stored and transported efficiently, making it a flexible, reliable energy solution and creating a virtuous cycle of sustainable energy production and consumption.

As we embark on a new era of mobility, we must adapt and evolve. By lining up fuel-cell-powered electric vehicles (FCEVs) alongside battery electric vehicles (BEVs) for the future, BMW Group is helping bridge the gap between conventional and sustainable transportation options. To make feasible the adoption of hydrogen as a viable and sustainable fuel option for passenger vehicles, we are currently

evaluating the possibility of mass production of hydrogen-powered vehicles in the second half of this decade.

As we look down the road, the future of mobility in the MENA region appears bright, aligning with its renewable energy potential and with hydrogen fuel cell technology poised to play a pivotal role in achieving a cleaner, greener and more sustainable world.

By focusing on the potential of hydrogen as a sustainable energy source, companies like BMW Group are not only paving the way for transportation options but also promoting a holistic approach to conservation. Driving this vision of an environmentally responsible future will ensure that our roads are filled with vehicles that not only exemplify advanced technology but also contribute to a healthier planet for generations to come.



Palestinian shot dead in West Bank

AFP
Tulkarem

Israeli forces shot dead a Palestinian in a raid on a West Bank refugee camp, the Palestinian health ministry said yesterday, as violence in the occupied territory shows no letup.

The ministry said 21-year-old Ayed Samih Khaled was "shot by live occupation (Israeli) bullets fired to the head" in the Nur Shams camp near the northern town of Tulkarem.

The Islamic Jihad group identified him as a member of its armed wing, the Al-Quds Brigade.

The Israeli military said "an exchange of fire with a number of suspects took place" during the raid. A camp resident, who requested anonymity for security reasons, said clashes erupted soon after the incursion started at around midnight (2100 GMT Monday).

"The army had come with bulldozers to destroy some roads inside the camp," the resident said.

The military said Israeli forces targeted a building which "contained several ready-to-use ex-



A woman reacts as people mourn the death of Ayed Samih Khaled, a Palestinian who was killed in an Israeli raid, during his funeral in Nur Shams camp, near Tulkarem in the occupied West Bank, yesterday.

plosive devices" and a bomb went off during the raid. Following the withdrawal of Israeli forces, an AFP photographer saw Palestinians gathering beside piles of rubble and gaping holes in a building.

The West Bank has been occupied by Israel since the Six-Day War of 1967 and its forces regularly carry out incursions into areas which are nominally under Pal-

estinian control. The latest deadly raid brings to 226 the number of Palestinians killed so far this year in violence linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The recent surge in bloodshed has also seen 32 Israelis, a Ukrainian and an Italian killed over the same period, according to an AFP tally based on official sources on both sides.

Suspension of Gaza exports risks 'catastrophe'

AFP
Gaza City

Palestinian businesses warned yesterday that an Israeli decision to suspend exports from the Gaza Strip put the Palestinian territory at risk of a "humanitarian catastrophe".

Israel's army chief on Monday ordered, with the government's approval, a halt to commercial deliveries from Gaza to Israel after an alleged attempt to smuggle explosives.

The Gaza Strip has been under a crippling Israeli blockade since the Hamas seized power in the Palestinian territory in 2007.

Gaza Chamber of Commerce president Ayed Abu Ramadan said the Israeli decision was "a new escalation in the policy of the economic blockade" on the coastal enclave.

Home to around 2.3mn Palestinians, Gaza is plagued by poverty and unemployment - conditions Ramadan warned would only worsen with the "unjust" move.

He denounced the "collective punishments" that

risk causing "a real humanitarian catastrophe".

Osama Nofal, of the Gaza economic ministry, put the value of Gaza exports to Israel and the occupied West Bank at around \$134mn a year, with the bulk being fruit and vegetables, fish, clothing and furniture.

Palestinian Federation of Industries spokesman Waddah Bseiso said the Israeli decision could force "hundreds of factories to close" and thousands of layoffs. Army chief of staff Herzi Halevi, with approval from Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, ordered the halting of "commercial deliveries from Gaza to Israel, allowing security adjustments to be made at the crossing". "Deliveries will resume in accordance with subsequent situation assessments," the Israeli army and defence ministry said in a joint statement.

The Kerem Shalom crossing is the only point of entry for goods between the Gaza Strip and Israel.

The Israeli suspension comes with tensions raging in the occupied West Bank.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has claimed the lives of at least 226 Palestinians so far this year. Israel says that its land, air, and sea blockade of Gaza is necessary to protect it from rocket and other attacks from Hamas.



Ghanaian orphans thank Qatari sponsors

Within the framework of the Rofaqa Initiative, Qatar Charity (QC) organised a new Umrah trip for 20 of its sponsored orphans in Ghana.

The eight-day trip comprised religious, cultural, and educational programmes, a statement said.

Yousef al-Khulaifi, supervisor of the Rofaqa Initiative for Child and Orphan Care Around the World said: "This trip is an extension of previous trips that were organised for orphans in several countries this year, specifically for the orphans of Somalia, Pakistan and Tunisia, and we consider this part of our continuing efforts in Qatar Char-

ity." Engineer Hassan Odeh, director of QC's office in Ghana, who participated with the orphans in this Umrah, said: "The trip was special on all levels and had important faith and educational dimensions."

Odeh added: "The trip had a significant impact in deepening the understanding of Islamic culture and Islamic history among the participating orphans after linking all visits to important stations in the Prophet's biography."

The orphans who performed Umrah expressed their great happiness with the opportunity provided to them by QC and expressed their thanks to their sponsors in Qatar.

QU joins global drive to champion environmental sustainability

Qatar University (QU) has joined the network of 135 universities spanning 50 countries committed to fostering a positive impact on the environment.

The global initiative was launched in December 2022 by the United Nations Environment Programme in partnership with the University of Oxford. This falls under the United Nations' ecosystem restoration programme and aims to galvanise higher education institutions worldwide towards a greener future.

QU has demonstrated proactive engagement in the national climate change action plan. The institution has already implemented several initiatives and programmes aimed at fostering a more nature-positive environment on its campus.

One of the standout initiatives is the "Zero Waste" plan, which strives to reduce waste on campus by adopting the principles of the circular economy.

This initiative includes the recycling of paper, plastic materials, single-use items, and food waste, making it a comprehensive strategy to minimise environmental impact.

QU has embraced renewable energy policies and conservation measures to reduce its carbon



footprint. Designating natural habitats within the campus provides a sanctuary for local wildlife, contributing to the preservation of biodiversity. The "Together for a Greener Future" campaign has garnered widespread support, emphasising the importance of collective efforts in creating a sustainable tomorrow.

A particularly noteworthy endeavour is the "Living Lab Doha."

This groundbreaking project seeks to expand effective food production on campus while simultaneously conserving water and energy resources. It serves as a beacon of innovation in sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation, reinforcing QU's commitment to a greener future.

QU organises online summer school on desalination technologies

The Unesco Chair on Desalination and Water Treatment in the Centre for Advanced Materials at Qatar University (QU) organised recently a two-day online summer school on "Desalination Technologies."

The event, in collaboration with Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), India, addressed global water challenges, with a specific emphasis on the importance of water treatment and its alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6 for clean water and sanitation.

The event, which provided a platform for discussing emerging and cost-effective solutions that can contribute to a more sustainable future, saw 100 students selected from over 600 who registered. Donia Abdelwa-

hed, a representative from the Unesco Doha office for the GCC and Yemen voiced Unesco's unwavering support for such initiatives. There were lectures by renowned experts in the field of desalination technologies and virtual lab tours and training for the various desalination techniques, providing participants with a visual experience of the different technologies employed in the desalination processes.

Distinguished professors and experts shared their knowledge, experiences, and insights, engaged participants in stimulating discussions in the field of desalination and water treatment, and presented innovative ideas. Prof Syed Javid Zaidi, the Unesco chair, emphasised that the summer school would significantly enhance the students' scientific pursuits. The

experts shared their knowledge and experience in the fields of desalination, among others.

The guest speakers included Prof Faisal Irshad Khan from Texas A&M University, US; Dr Ali Altaee from the University of Technology, Australia; Prof Nadeem Khalil from AMU, India; Dr Georgios Kollipoulos from Laval University, Canada; Dr Mohamed Hassan from QU; and Prof Syed Javid Zaidi from QU.

The speakers highlighted the various aspects of desalination technologies, including desalination fundamentals and the basics of desalination techniques, security and safety measures in desalination plants, wastewater treatment, various water treatment projects, membrane-based desalination, and emerging pressure-restricted osmosis.

Qatar participates in Africa Climate Summit



Qatar participated in the Africa Climate Summit (ACS23) in Nairobi, Kenya. HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Sheikh Dr Faleh bin Nasser bin Ahmed bin Ali al-Thani chaired Qatar's delegation to the three-day summit, with the participation of Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Climate Change and Sustainability ambassador Badr bin Omar al-Dafa. (QNA)

Qatar attends meeting of GCC Security Media Committee

Qatar participated in the 13th meeting of the GCC Security Media Committee, which concluded yesterday at the headquarters of the GCC Secretariat-General in Riyadh. Assistant Director of Public Relations and Communications Department at the Ministry of Interior Colonel Dr Jabr Hammoud al-Nuaimi represented Qatar at the meeting. The meeting discussed several topics, including the recommendations of the 5th meeting of the technical team for awareness work in security media, which includes intensifying awareness campaigns in all security fields in the GCC states. A contract for the production of security awareness campaign programmes was also signed between the GCC General Secretariat and the GCC Joint Programme Production Institution. (QNA)



Kahramaa initiative to showcase works of speech, hearing impaired

The Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation (Kahramaa) has announced the "WeHearYourCreativity" initiative for speech and hearing impaired.

An exhibition of the works of the speech and hearing impaired will be held on September 24-25. According to a statement shared by Kahramaa on its official X account, the exhibition offers a platform for showcasing their exceptional projects and housework.

"This is a unique opportunity for this remarkable group to demonstrate their skills and innovation in the business world," the statement said. Applicants who are interested in displaying



up to 10 pieces of the housework, projects or business, can reach out at communication@km.qa. Application deadline is September 14.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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Qantas CEO to exit early as airline looks to rebuild reputation

Reuters
Sydney

Australia's Qantas Airways said its long-serving CEO would bring forward his retirement amid a publicity firestorm over an accusation of illegal ticket sales, signalling what the flag carrier hopes is the end of a tumultuous period.

Alan Joyce, the company's boss for 15 years, had been scheduled to retire in November but said in a statement yesterday that he was leaving two months early due to "the focus on Qantas and events of the past" in the last few weeks, without elaborating. Five days earlier, Australia's consumer watchdog sued Qantas alleging it sold tickets to some 8,000 flights in mid-2022 after they were cancelled, violating the country's consumer law. Qantas had issued two apologies, blaming tough industry conditions at the time.

The airline said Joyce's exit would help it "accelerate its renewal", giving the sense of a company bowing to public and political pressure after years of weathering it.

Over a decade and a half Joyce faced regular criticism for cutting jobs, including a 2011 decision to ground the entire Qantas fleet over an industrial dispute.

Even before the fares-for-no-flights scandal, Qantas was



Alan Joyce

facing negative headlines over reports it campaigned successfully to have Australia's federal government stop rival Qatar Airways from running additional flights to Australia. The airline also faced scrutiny over a decision to let nearly A\$500mn (US\$323mn) of pandemic-era flight credits expire by the end of the year, which it reversed shortly after the regulator filed its lawsuit. Joyce, who last month announced a record annual profit after three years of pandemic-driven losses, had long been popular with investors.

But the airline's share price had fallen 13% since the start of August amid questions over whether it had maximised profits at the expense of its longer-term reputation with customers. The shares were

down slightly yesterday, in line with the broader market.

"Alan Joyce's Qantas legacy is ... a brand now synonymous with low pay, insecure work, illegal sackings and consumer rip offs," said Labor Senator Tony Sheldon, the former head of the Transport Workers Union, in a statement.

"The board has backed Joyce's behaviour at every step and must be held equally accountable," he added. Qantas declined a request to interview its chairman, Richard Goyder. Speaking to the Australian Financial Review, Goyder said it was "a time for humility, and I think you'll see plenty of that as well".

Joyce's early retirement will see his replacement Vanessa Hudson become the first woman to lead the century-old airline from today.

North Korea will 'pay a price' for arms to Russia, warns US

Reuters
Washington/Moscow

Arms negotiations between Russia and North Korea are actively advancing, a US official said yesterday and warned leader Kim Jong-un that his country would pay a price for supplying Russia with weapons to use in Ukraine.

Providing weapons to Russia "is not going to reflect well on North Korea and they will pay a price for this in the international community," US national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters at the White House.

The Kremlin said earlier yesterday it had "nothing to say" about statements by US officials that Kim planned to travel to Russia this month to meet President Vladimir Putin and discuss weapons supplies to Moscow.

Kim expects discussions about weapons to continue, Sullivan said, including at leader level and "perhaps even in person".

"We have continued to squeeze Russia's defence industrial base," Sullivan said, and Moscow is now "looking to whatever source they can find" for goods like ammunition.

"We will continue to call on North Korea to abide by its pub-

lic commitments not to supply weapons to Russia that will end up killing Ukrainians," Sullivan said.

On Monday, US National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said Kim and Putin could be planning to meet, and the *New York Times* cited unnamed US and allied officials as saying Kim plans to travel to Russia as soon as next week to meet Putin.

Asked if he could confirm the talks, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "No, I can't. There's nothing to say."

As Russia's isolation over its war in Ukraine has grown, it has seen increasing value in North Korea, according to political analysts. For North Korea's part, relations with Russia have not always been as warm as they were at the height of the Soviet Union, but now the country is reaping clear benefits from Moscow's need for friends.

A North Korean defence ministry official in November said Pyongyang has "never had 'arms dealings' with Russia" and has "no plan to do so in the future."

Moscow and Pyongyang have promised to boost defence co-operation.

Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, who visited

Pyongyang in July to attend weapons displays that included North Korea's banned ballistic missiles, said on Monday the two countries are discussing the possibility of joint military exercises.

"Just as you can tell a person by their friends, you can tell a country by the company it keeps," said Keir Giles, Senior Consulting Fellow with Chatham House's Russia & Eurasia Programme. "In Russia's case, that company now consists largely of fellow rogue states."

The trip would be Kim's first visit abroad in more than four years and the first since the coronavirus pandemic.

While he made more trips abroad than his father as leader, Kim's travel is often shrouded in secrecy and heavy security. Unlike his father who was said to be averse to flying, Kim has flown his personal Russian-made jet for some of his trips but US officials told the *New York Times* that he may take an armoured train across the land border North Korea shares with Russia.

Kim is likely to want to emphasise a sense of Russian backing, and may seek deals on arms sales, aid, and sending labourers to Russia, said Andrei Lankov, a North Korea expert at Seoul's Kookmin University.

Biden to wear mask after first lady tests 'mild' Covid positive

AFP
Washington

US President Joe Biden tested negative for Covid again yesterday but will wear a mask out of precaution after First Lady Jill Biden contracted a mild case of the disease, the White House said.

The president, 80, also tested negative during a check-up on Monday and is "not experiencing any symptoms," Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told report-



US President Joe Biden looks on prior to presenting the Medal of Honour to former US Army Captain Larry Taylor, in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC, yesterday. (AFP)

ers. However, because he was with his wife on Monday "he will be masking while indoors and around people" in alignment with government health guidance, she said. "The president will remove his mask when sufficiently distanced from others indoors and while outside as well."

Jean-Pierre wouldn't give further details on Biden's masking plans for the G20 summit in New Delhi later this week or for alternative arrangements in case he

tests positive for Covid ahead of or during the foreign trip.

"The president certainly is going to test on a regular cadence," she said.

Jill Biden, 72, is experiencing "only mild symptoms," her office said, and will remain at the couple's private home in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. She last tested positive for Covid a year ago.

The United States has been experiencing a rise in Covid cases and hospitalisations in recent weeks.

52mn air bag inflators should be recalled over rupture threat, says US

Reuters
Washington

US auto safety regulators said yesterday that 52mn air bag inflators produced by auto suppliers ARC Automotive and Delphi Automotive need to be recalled because they may rupture and send dangerous metal fragments flying.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) first demanded a voluntary recall in May, but ARC rejected it. The agency issued an initial decision yesterday and set a public meeting for October 5 in a rare move to compel a recall.

If successful in forcing a recall, the callback would be one of the largest on record.

The inflators that NHTSA is seeking to have recalled have been used in vehicles from 2000 through early 2018 produced by 12 automakers, including General Motors, Ford Motor, Stellantis, Tesla, Toyota Motor, Hyundai, Kia, Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Volkswagen.

"Air bag inflators that rupture when commanded to deploy are plainly defective, as they both fail to protect vehicle occupants as they should, and, themselves, pose an unreasonable risk of serious injury or death," NHTSA said yesterday.

ARC in May rejected NHTSA's tentative conclusion that a defect existed. ARC did not immediately respond to a request for comment yesterday.

NHTSA said that ARC in January 2018 completed installation of devices on inflator manufacturing lines used to detect excesses of a hardened byproduct of welding known weld slag, or other debris.

The agency said it is unaware of issues in ARC inflators produced since installation of the devices. ARC said previously weld slag had not been confirmed as the root cause in the ruptures.

NHTSA said it "believes that the evidence does identify a likely cause" and added that ARC's argument on not finding a root cause "is not a reason for delaying a recall."

The agency said it is aware of seven confirmed inflator ruptures in the United States in the vehicles it seeks to have recalled, including seven injuries and one death.

Initially, NHTSA said 67mn air bag inflators were unsafe, but yesterday it adjusted that estimate to account for "over-inclusive responses reported to the agency by certain manufacturers over the course of the investigation."

Lula legalises more Indigenous reservations in Amazon

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva yesterday officially recognised two Indigenous territories, granting them legal protection as reservations to defend against invasions by illegal loggers, gold miners and cattle ranchers.

The announcement came on the day Brazil celebrates its Amazon region, home to the world's largest tropical rainforest, the preservation of which is seen as essential to soaking up carbon emissions responsible for global warming. Environmentalists say Indigenous groups are the best guardians of the rainforest and deforestation data shows that the forests on their reservations are the best conserved.

Lula, who pledged to legalise the greatest number of reservations possible, has so far signed decrees recognising eight Indigenous territories since taking office in January. It is a race against time as Brazil's Congress is pushing through legislation that would restrict the recognition of Indigenous land claims, a move backed by the country's powerful farm lobby. The Supreme Court, however, is expected to rule that the cut-off date for claiming ancestral lands that were not lived on in 1988 is unconstitutional for denying recognised Indigenous rights. The reservations legalised by Lula yesterday are the Acapuri de Cima and the Rio Gregorio Indigenous territories in the states of Amazonas and Acre, respectively.

Chopard at the 2023 Edition of the Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève

Four exceptional timepieces in competition

Chopard is gearing up for the upcoming Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève with no fewer than four exceptional timepieces in the competition. Known for their exquisite craftsmanship and timeless designs, Chopard's watches are undoubtedly a force to be reckoned with.

First up is the Alpine Eagle Cadence 8HF (Sports Category) boasting precision, style and sporty-chic. Featuring a Pitch Black dial with subtle orange accents, this titanium masterpiece houses one of Chopard's most advanced movements, equipped with a high-frequency escapement that reaches its cruising altitude at 57,600 vibrations per hour (8 Hz).



Next in line is the L.U.C 1860 (Iconic Category), a unique, sophisticated watch and tribute to the emblematic L.U.C heritage. Inspired by a vintage Chopard design, this timepiece features a guilloché dial in salmon-coloured solid gold, a case in Lucent Steel™ - Chopard's exclusive steel composed of at least 80% recycled material - as well as a finely crafted chronometer-certified movement, making it a true collector's item.



For those seeking a touch of daring, the Pure Happiness jewellery watch (Jewellery Category) is a must-see. Exuding femininity and refinement, this eye-catching Haute Joaillerie creation gracefully combines heart shapes with Chopard's iconic dancing diamonds.



The final timepiece in this impressive line-up, the IMPERIALE Jumping Hour (Ladies' Complication Category) is a horological masterpiece that pushes the boundaries of watchmaking. With an Urushi lacquer dial graced with a central rotating flower subtly indicating the minutes, the watch is powered by Chopard's innovative jumping-hour calibre - itself entirely decorated with hand-painted engravings.



Among the many editions in which Chopard has received distinctions, in 2017 the Manufacture was awarded the ultimate "best in competition" Aiguille d'Or for its L.U.C Full Strike.

The 23rd Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève awards ceremony will take place at the Théâtre du Léman in Geneva on Thursday, November 9th.



China's Fukushima-linked seafood ban is unacceptable, Japan tells WTO

Reuters
Tokyo

Japan has told the World Trade Organisation (WTO) that China's ban on Japanese seafood after the release of treated water from the Fukushima nuclear plant was "totally unacceptable", the Japanese foreign ministry said late on Monday.

In a counterargument to China's Aug 31 notification to WTO on its measures to suspend Japanese aquatic imports, which started last month, Japan said it would explain its positions in relevant WTO committees and urged China to immediately repeal the action.

Some Japanese officials have signalled the country may file a WTO complaint, which the US ambassador to Japan said last

week the United States would support.

Japan will explain the safety of the released water at diplomatic forums, including the Asean Summit in Indonesia and G20 Summit in India this month, chief cabinet secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters yesterday.

"Nothing is decided about a Japan-China leaders' meeting," added Matsuno, Tokyo's top gov-

ernment spokesperson. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and China's Premier Li Qiang will attend the Asean and G20 summits, while Chinese President Xi Jinping is skipping both conferences.

In a separate statement on Monday, Tokyo's foreign ministry said Japan has also asked China to hold discussions over the import ban based on the provisions of the Regional Comprehensive Economic

Partnership (RCEP) trade pact.

Although marine products make up less than 1% of Japan's global trade, which is dominated by cars, Japan exported about \$600mn worth of aquatic products to China in 2022, making it the biggest market for Japanese exports, followed by Hong Kong.

Data yesterday showed China-bound exports of aquatic products fell for the first time in 2 1/2 years

in July, dropping 23% year-on-year to 7.7 billion yen (\$52.44mn).

Goods bound for China have faced stricter inspections since Japan announced its plan to release the treated Fukushima water, slowing down shipments.

To ease the pain of losing that seafood demand, Japan will spend more than 100bn yen (\$682mn) to support the domestic fisheries industry.

Conflict-riven Myanmar cedes upcoming Asean chair to Philippines

Reuters
Jakarta

Myanmar has ceded its turn to chair the Southeast Asian regional bloc, an official confirmed yesterday, after the group agreed that an existing but widely criticised peace plan will continue to guide its response to the bloody conflict there.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has faced criticism for its failure to get Myanmar's ruling military to make progress on a five-point peace consensus agreed to shortly after it seized power in a 2021 coup.

Despite scepticism over its effectiveness, Asean agreed yesterday that the peace plan would continue to guide its approach to Myanmar's political crisis, according to an official document seen by Reuters.

The document also showed that the bloc "urged the Myanmar Armed Forces in particular and all related parties concerned in Myanmar to de-escalate violence and stop targeted attacks on civilians." Myanmar, which has been gripped by violence and political and economic chaos since the coup, was slated to chair the 10-member regional grouping in 2026.

But regional leaders agreed that the Philippines would assume the role in 2026 instead.

"The Philippines will take over the Asean chairmanship for 2026," Asean secretary-general Kao Kim Hourn told Reuters after the first day of the group's annual summit in Jakarta, adding that the switch was first proposed by Myanmar.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said leaders had also agreed to an informal "troika" approach to Asean's special envoy on Myanmar, which would see the



(From left) Philippine's President Ferdinand Marcos, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Thailand's Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sarun Charoensuwan, Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, Indonesia's President Joko Widodo, Laos' Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone, Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Manet, Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and East Timor's Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao pose for a family photo during the Asean Summit in Jakarta, yesterday.

chair supported by the former and future chairs for continuity.

"A troika was formed to ensure the continuity in terms of handling the issue because everyone understands this situation cannot change in one year," Retno told reporters. Myanmar's military-appointed ministry of foreign affairs rejected the leaders' decision on the peace plan "as the reviews are not objective and decisions are biased and one-sided." The ministry said Myanmar was not represented at the summit, and though it was consulted on the decision, "the views and voices of Myanmar are not taken into account." While the bloc prioritises unity and non-interference in sovereign affairs, differences have emerged as In-

donesia has sought to engage all stakeholders in the conflict while Thailand has tried to re-engage with the ostracised junta leaders.

Opening the summit yesterday, Indonesian President Joko Widodo warned against countries in the bloc getting dragged into big-power rivalry. "Asean has agreed to not be a proxy to any powers. Don't turn our ship into an arena for rivalry that is destructive," he said.

The sharpening rivalry between China and the US loomed over the meeting. Some Asean members have focused on developing close diplomatic, business and military ties with Beijing while others are more wary. The summit comes days after China released a

"10-dash line" map, illustrating its claim to an extensive portion of the South China Sea that will likely add urgency to negotiations on a long-delayed code of conduct in the strategic waterway.

Asean member states Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines, which have overlapping claims in the South China Sea, have rejected China's map.

Asean leaders later this week will hold an East Asia summit, a wider forum that includes China, India, Japan, Russia and the US. Adding to unease about Asean's relevance, US President Joe Biden is not attending the talks. Vice-President Kamala Harris will attend instead. Chinese Premier Li Qiang will also attend.

Kremlin says 'nothing to say' on possible visit by North Korea's Kim

Reuters
Moscow

The Kremlin said yesterday it had "nothing to say" about claims by US officials that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un planned to travel to Russia this month to meet President Vladimir Putin and discuss supplying Moscow with weapons for Ukraine.

US National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said on Monday that arms negotiations between Russia and the North Korea are actively advancing.

"We have information that Kim Jong-un expects these discussions to continue, to include leader-level diplomatic engagement in Russia," she said in a statement.

Her comments came after the New York Times cited unnamed US and allied officials who said Kim plans to travel to Russia as soon as next week to meet Putin.

Asked if he could confirm the talks, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "No, I can't. There's nothing to say."

As Russia's isolation over its war in Ukraine has grown, analysts say it has seen increasing value in North Korea. For North Korea's part, relations with Russia have not always been as warm as they were during at the height of the Soviet Union, but now the country is reaping clear benefits from Moscow's need for friends.

Moscow and Pyongyang have denied previous US allegations that North Korea had provided Russia with arms, but the two countries are promising to boost defence co-operation.

Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, who visited Pyongyang in July to attend

weapons displays that included North Korea's banned ballistic missiles, said on Monday the two countries are discussing the possibility of joint military exercises.

"Just as you can tell a person by their friends, you can tell a country by the company it keeps," said Keith Giles, Senior Consulting Fellow with Chatham House's Russia & Eurasia Programme.

"In Russia's case, that company now consists largely of fellow rogue states." The trip would be Kim's first visit abroad in more than four years and the first since the coronavirus pandemic. While he made more trips abroad than his father as leader, Kim's travel is often shrouded in secrecy and heavy security. Unlike his father who was said to be averse to flying, Kim has flown his personal Russian-made jet for some of his trips but US officials told the Times that he may take an armoured train across the land border North Korea shares with Russia.

Kim is likely to want to emphasise a sense of Russian backing, and may seek deals on arms sales, aid, and sending labourers to Russia, said Andrei Lankov, a North Korea expert at Seoul's Kookmin University.

The US recently imposed sanctions on three entities it accused of being tied to arms deals between North Korea and Russia.

North Korea has conducted six nuclear tests since 2006 and had been testing various missiles over recent years.

Russia has joined China in opposing new sanctions on North Korea, blocking a US-led push and publicly splitting the UN Security Council (UNSC) for the first time since it started punishing Pyongyang in 2006.

Two held after smashing hole in Great Wall of China

AFP
Beijing

Two people have been detained after using an excavator to dig a hole in the Great Wall of China, state broadcaster CCTV said.

Police in Shanxi province followed tracks made by machinery used to dig a shortcut through a segment of the wall - remains of the immense structure built by China's emperors to deter foreign invaders.

The suspects admitted under questioning that they had used a digger to create a shortcut in the wall in a bid to reduce local travel

time, state media reported.

Construction of the Great Wall, which is split into sections that in total stretch for thousands of kilometres, first began in the third century BC and continued for centuries.

The section of the Great Wall affected, situated about a six-hour drive west of central Beijing, dates back to China's Ming Dynasty of the 14th through 17th centuries.

State broadcaster CCTV reported Monday that the suspects had caused "irreversible damage" to the Ming-era wall, which was described as a "relatively intact" section of significant research value.

Thailand's king swears in new PM and cabinet

Reuters
Bangkok

Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn swore in Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin and cabinet ministers in a coalition government made up of 11 parties yesterday.

Srettha, whose Pheu Thai party leads the coalition, and 33 cabinet ministers pledged their loyalty to the monarchy during the ceremony at the Dusit Palace in Bangkok. The government will deliver its policy statement to parliament on Monday.

Srettha, a 61-year-old US-educated billionaire and former

president of luxury property developer Sansiri, said that his administration will focus on addressing people's needs.

"This government is a people's government... we are all here as representatives of the people," he said in a televised address after being sworn-in. "There are many problems so we will work tirelessly every day... we will address the demands of the people."

Srettha, who is also the country's finance minister, said he will hold a cabinet meeting today and travel to northeastern provinces of Khon Kaen, Udon Thani and Nongkhai on Friday to meet communities and find out more about their problems.

Singapore rapper given six weeks' jail over racial comments

AFP
Singapore

A Singapore rapper who has accused authorities of racism was handed a six-week jail term yesterday over his social media posts including a video criticising an actor in brownface and comments alleging unequal treatment of the city's races.

Subhas Nair, an outspoken musician of Indian descent, was found guilty of attempting to promote ill will between different ethnic and religious groups.

Singapore's government has long sought to promote racial harmony among its diverse population of 5.6mn, but some

still complain that the ethnic Chinese majority enjoy greater privileges.

Nair was found guilty of four counts of attempting to promote ill will among racial and religious groups earlier this year.

One of the charges related to a 2019 rap video that criticised an advert featuring a local Chinese actor who darkened his skin to portray an Indian. During his trial, Nair testified that the video was intended to end such instances of "brownface" in Singapore.

"Subhas has filed an appeal against both his guilty verdict, as well as his sentence," said his lawyer Suang Wijaya.

Nair has been granted bail pending appeal, he added.

Storms from Typhoon Haikui drench China's Fujian province

Reuters
Beijing

Thousands of people were evacuated from their homes and vehicles were swept away in floods as storms from now weakened Typhoon Haikui made landfall in China's southeastern Fujian province early yesterday after battering Taiwan for the past two days.

About 114,400 people were moved from risky areas as the typhoon rolled in with a maximum

wind speed of 20 metres (66 feet) per second.

Several areas in Fujian recorded more than 300mm of rainfall in just over 24 hours. In Fuzhou city, two firefighters were missing after a fire truck carrying nine rescue workers was swept away by floodwaters during a mission, state media reported.

Furniture were seen bobbing up and down in the floodwaters. Vehicles were swept away in the currents and some cars stranded in waterlogged areas were completely submerged, social media posts

showed. Schools in Fuzhou city as well as in Xiamen, Quanzhou and Putian were also shut.

Many flights were cancelled at two airports in Fuzhou and Quanzhou, tourist spots and parks were shut, and ports, coastal and river transportation was suspended, state media reported.

The typhoon lost strength and became a tropical storm after its landfall around 5am (2100 GMT Monday), the national forecaster reported. It was last reported to be moving over southern Guangdong province, and forecasters expect

it to continue to weaken. Haikui slammed into the province just after Typhoon Saola barreled into southern Guangdong province over the weekend, killing at least one person and leaving a trail of destruction and flooding in many areas of nearby Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Macau.

Last month, northern and northeastern China saw heavy flooding caused by Typhoons Doksuri and Khanun which brought the capital Beijing its heaviest recorded rainfall in 140 years.



A view shows flooding on the street, following heavy rainfall in Yongtai, Fujian Province, China, in this screen grab from a video released yesterday.

Cabinet meeting in UK



British Home Secretary Suella Braverman, Foreign Secretary James Cleverly and Education Secretary Gillian Keegan are seen at Downing Street on the day of a cabinet meeting, in London, yesterday.

UK eases effective ban on onshore wind in England

AFP
London

The UK government eased a de facto ban on onshore wind in England yesterday, after growing pressure from environmental campaigners and some ruling Conservative lawmakers.

The changes will make it easier for willing communities to get wind turbines erected in their area, ending highly restrictive planning rules which meant a single local opponent could scupper proposed onshore wind projects.

Local government authorities were also required to draw up detailed plans showing all the areas suitable for onshore wind development before new wind farms could go ahead.

Those rules, introduced by former prime minister David Cameron in 2015 amid fears of a backlash from typically Tory voting rural communities, resulted in an effective ban on new wind farms and smaller sites.

Under the new regulations, communities can apply to their authority to have onshore wind turbines built which are not part of the so-called development plans. Elected councillors will still take the final decision, but



A general view of the Frodsham on shore wind farm in Frodsham.

must now take into account the view of communities as a whole and not just a small minority in opposition. Meanwhile, the government said it will explore "improved rewards and benefits to be offered to communities backing onshore wind farms", which includes potential energy bill discounts.

"To increase our energy security and develop a cleaner, greener economy, we are introducing new measures to allow local communities to back onshore wind power

projects," Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, said in a parliamentary statement.

"This will only apply in areas where developments have community support, but these changes will help build on Britain's enormous success as a global leader in offshore wind, helping us on our journey to net zero," he added.

Britain has become a global leader in offshore wind energy in recent years but increasingly



A row of electricity pylons is seen near the Frodsham on shore wind farm in Frodsham, Britain.

lagged behind in onshore capacity, which is cheaper and quicker to build.

The planning rules update follows sustained calls by renewable energy advocates and a growing revolt by Tory MPs, including former COP26 president Alok Sharma.

The government also held a months-long public consultation earlier this year on the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework which saw over 26,000 responses.

However, some campaigners criticised yesterday's moves as insufficient.

"These feeble tweaks are just more hot air from the government that'll result in very little wind," Greenpeace UK's policy director, Doug Parr, said. "Developers will continue to face uncertainty over planning process and be beholden to quixotic decisions by local councils," he added. "Who will put their money into developing projects under those circumstances?"

Britain reviews checks on 'politically exposed' customers of banks

Reuters
London

Britain's financial watchdog said yesterday it has launched a formal review into how banks conduct mandatory extra checks on "politically exposed" customers and their families for money laundering risks.

The review of existing guidance on politically exposed persons, or PEPs, is part of a wider look at "debanking", which recently became a political issue after former Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage said his account at private bank Coutts, part of NatWest, had been closed due to his political views.

The Financial Conduct Authority said that, while it cannot change the law which requires PEP checks, its review would consider whether banks were being heavy-handed in applying the rules and how they decided to close accounts of PEPs, their family members or close associates. The review will report by the end of June 2024.

The watchdog said it would take prompt action if any significant deficiencies were identified in the arrangements of any firm assessed. "We have already persuaded some firms to improve their approach and we will use this review to identify if we need to provide further guidance to firms," Sarah Pritchard, the FCA's executive director for markets, said in a statement.

Britain's financial services minister Andrew Griffith has already asked the FCA to consider creating a less burdensome domestic PEP regime to reflect the lower category of risk from those that have no international role.

The PEP rules were drafted by the international Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on money laundering and are applied in over 200 jurisdictions. The FCA issued guidance in 2017 on how they should be applied.

The review is separate from an urgent data-gathering exercise into the scale of debanking called for by British finance minister Jeremy Hunt, who suggested that any lenders involved in widespread and unjustified debanking should be fined. Initial findings from that review are due later this month.

First supplies of weight-loss drug Wegovy reach Britain

Reuters
London

Britain's National Health Service and two online sellers told Reuters they had received their first supplies of keenly anticipated Wegovy in Britain yesterday, a day after Novo Nordisk launched the weight-loss drug in its fifth market.

High market expectations and booming demand for Wegovy, shown to help patients reduce weight by around 15% when used alongside exercise and lifestyle changes, have boosted Novo's share price and helped make the Danish drugmaker Europe's most valuable listed company.

A NHS spokesperson confirmed to Reuters that the self-injection drug is now available through the NHS weight management scheme, where it will be prescribed for free.

Spokespeople for Simple Online Pharmacy and Juniper, a venture capital-backed online clinic

focused on weight management, both told Reuters that they had received Wegovy stock from a wholesaler, but declined to say much they had.

With many countries facing mounting healthcare problems due to rising obesity levels, Novo has been unable to produce enough to meet demand for Wegovy, which is now available in the United States, Norway, Denmark, Germany and Britain.

A spokesperson declined to comment on the volume of Wegovy that Novo would deliver to Britain, but reiterated the Danish company's statement on Monday that its launch would be "limited and controlled" due to supply constraints.

Novo said when announcing the launch in Britain that Wegovy will be available on the National Health Service's (NHS) weight management scheme and on the private market. The Novo spokesperson said deliveries of Wegovy to a UK wholesaler had begun, but de-

clined to comment on Simple Online Pharmacy's statement that it had already received the drug.

Novo delivers its medicines to the wholesaler, which is then in control of onward distribution, the spokesperson said, declining to name the wholesaler involved.

The sole UK wholesaler for Wegovy is Alliance Healthcare UK, a spokesperson for Juniper told Reuters on Monday.

Alliance Healthcare UK on Tuesday afternoon confirmed to Reuters that it is a wholesaler distributor of Wegovy in the country. "Alliance Healthcare strives to distribute available stock to allow all customers to access Wegovy," the company said in an e-mailed statement in response to questions.

Some doctors and medical experts warned on Monday that people in Britain who can afford to pay out of their own pocket may get easier access to Wegovy than those seeking treatment in the country's state-run health service.



Simple Online Pharmacy weight care providers unpack Wegovy stock, at the Simple Online Pharmacy Headquarters, in Glasgow, Britain.

India astir over rumoured plans to change country's name



A security personnel stands guard in front of 'Bharat Mandapam', the main venue of the G20 Summit in New Delhi, India.

AFP
New Delhi

India was buzzing with speculation yesterday over rumoured plans to scrap official usage of the country's English name, after a state-issued invite sent to world leaders referred to it as "Bharat".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has worked to remove lingering symbols of British rule from India's urban landscape, political institutions and history books, but its next move could be the biggest such action yet.

Modi himself typically refers to

India as "Bharat", a word dating back to ancient Hindu scriptures written in Sanskrit, and one of two official names for the country under its constitution.

Members of his Hindu-nationalist ruling party have previously campaigned against using the country's better-known moniker, India, which has its roots in Western antiquity and was imposed during the British conquest.

This weekend India hosts the G20 summit of world leaders, capped with a state dinner that invitation cards said would be hosted by the "President of Bharat". The government has called a special session of parlia-

ment for later in the month while remaining tight-lipped about its legislative agenda.

But broadcaster News18 said unnamed government sources had told it that BJP lawmakers would put forward a special resolution to give precedence to the name "Bharat".

Rumours of the plan were enough to spark a mix of opposition lawmakers and enthusiastic support from other quarters.

"I hope the government will not be so foolish as to completely dispen-

se with 'India,' Shashi Tharoor of the opposition Congress party said on X, formerly known as Twitter. "We should continue

to use both words rather than relinquish our claim to a name redolent of history, a name that is recognised around the world."

Former Test cricketer Virender Sehwag said he welcomed the prospect of a name change and urged India's cricket board to begin using "Bharat" on team uniforms.

"India is a name given by the British (and) it has been long overdue to get our original name 'Bharat' back," he wrote. For decades, Indian governments of various stripes have sought to excise traces of the British colonial era by renaming roads and even entire cities.



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GULF TIMES

India rice exports curbs hit poor consumers hard

Just as an estimated 3bn-plus people worldwide rely on rice as a staple food, so India – the world’s top shipper – contributes to about 40% of global exports of the commodity.

Last month, India announced a ban on exporting non-basmati white rice in a bid to calm rising prices at home and ensure food security.

The country then followed with more restrictions on exports, including a 20% duty on exports of parboiled rice.

In about six weeks, India has rattled the rice market.

Rice is vital to the diets of billions and contributes as much as 60% of the total calorie intake for people in parts of Southeast Asia and Africa.

Rice prices in Asia jumped back near the highest level in almost 15 years last week after India slapped more curbs on parboiled and basmati over the previous weekend.

They were the last remaining varieties free from export restrictions, bringing to a head a recent campaign of tightening that started with a July 20 ban on the shipment of some grains.

“Spikes in rice prices always hurt poor consumers the most,” said Peter Timmer, Professor Emeritus at Harvard University, who’s studied food security for decades. “The most pressing concern right now is whether Thailand and Vietnam follow India and put significant controls on their rice exports. If that happens, we will see world rice prices zoom past \$1,000.”

The benchmark price is currently at \$646 a tonne and weather could shake up the market even further.

Rice prices in Asia jumped back near the highest level in almost 15 years last week after India slapped more curbs on parboiled and basmati rice varieties

The onset of El Nino this year threatens to parch many key growing regions across Asia, with Thailand already warning of drought conditions in early 2024.

The crop in China, the world’s biggest producer and importer, appears to have escaped poor weather so far, but India’s major growing areas need more rain.

Understandably, India’s exports curbs boil down to politics.

The government is facing an election early next year and high food prices can make voters very unforgiving at the polls.

However, India’s restrictions are reverberating across other countries.

The Philippines was forced last week to place a cap on rice prices across the country due to an “alarming” increase in retail costs and reports of hoarding by traders. The nation is the world’s second-biggest importer of the grain.

Other worried nations are opting for the diplomatic route.

Guinea has sent its trade minister to India, while Singapore, Mauritius and Bhutan have requested that New Delhi exempt them from curbs on the grounds of food security – a provision the South Asian nation added when banning one variety.

The restrictions have also provided an opportunity for Thailand. The world’s second-biggest shipper has been on a roadshow in recent weeks, with its trade officials making trips to the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan.

Also, Vietnam is offering some support to the market, saying last month that the nation is likely to exceed its export target for the year, a feat it could achieve without jeopardising its own food security. But India’s rice exports curbs have triggered fears of global food inflation, hurt the livelihoods of some farmers and prompted several rice-dependent countries to seek urgent exemptions from the ban.

The World Meteorological Organisation last month warned that governments must prepare for more extreme weather events and record temperatures, as it declared the onset of the warming phenomenon El Nino.

Economists say India’s ban is just the latest move to disrupt global food supplies, which have suffered from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as well as weather events such as El Nino.

The surge in rice prices to the highest level in almost 15 years is renewing fears that food costs are going to get a lot more expensive for the world’s poorest people.

Building block of peace



Turkiye's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan (right) shaking hands with Greece Foreign minister Giorgos Gerapetritis during a meeting in Ankara. (AFP)

How crypto drives business of Latin America’s drug cartels

Cryptocurrency use growing among drug traffickers **Bitcoin the most common payment in online drug sales** **Many law enforcement agencies lack crypto literacy**

By Anastasia Moloney and Diana Baptista
Bogota/Mexico City

For decades, drug traffickers carried their cash in suitcases to dodge banking controls, and the police. Today, many are also using virtual cryptocurrency wallets installed on their cellphones.

When the US Justice Department announced charges in April against four sons of jailed Mexican drug lord Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman, the indictment said they had used “untraceable cryptocurrency” to launder the profits of their US fentanyl smuggling operation.

Known as the “Chapitos”, the leaders of the Sinaloa cartel are accused of procuring chemicals from China to manufacture fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, in clandestine labs in Mexico for distribution in the United States.

On the same day in April, US authorities also announced the arrest in Guatemala of a wanted money launderer who they say worked for the cartel, accusing him of collecting \$869,000 in drug profits and depositing the cash in cryptocurrency wallets.

The cases highlight how drug cartels and crime gangs in Latin America have taken up virtual currencies to launder money, receive payments and sell drugs on the darknet because law enforcement authorities are finding it harder to detect the deals, researchers and officials say.

“The technology is basically getting better and better which is making it even more difficult for law enforcement to go after these bad actors because this process provides and allows for

anonymity,” said Greta Goodwin, a director in the Homeland Security and Justice team at the US Government Accountability Office (GAO), a congressional watchdog.

Criminals use cryptocurrencies because it is an easy and efficient way to do business, particularly across borders, said Kim Grauer, a data scientist and cryptocurrency researcher.

“Cryptocurrency is really just used because it’s a fast and instantaneous payment,” said Grauer, head of research at Chainalysis, a blockchain analytics firm.

“We are seeing a lot more cases popping up,” she said.

It is a trend organised crime groups in Brazil and Central America are also tapping into, according to a report published in the Georgetown Journal of International Affairs in March.

The MS-13 criminal gang that operates in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala has been using bitcoin as a way for victims to hand over extortion payments and as payment for transporting cocaine to Mexico, the report found.

It said organised crime groups are “discovering growing cracks in the regional anti-money laundering architecture that make the switch to cryptocurrencies increasingly attractive.”

The report’s co-author Douglas Farah said using cryptocurrency for laundering drug money was easier in countries with lax crypto regulation or where bitcoin is classified as a legal tender, such as El Salvador.

“Dollars can come in and out of bitcoin with no traceability ... there’s zero control on bitcoin transactions, but there’s no monitoring, no attempt to do anything about it,” said Farah,

who heads IBI Consultants, a US-based security consulting firm, in reference to El Salvador.

To move money through cryptocurrency platforms, criminals are taking advantage of unregulated exchanges that do not require proof of identification or registration information, said crypto intelligence company CipherTrace.

In Mexico, to stop transactions being detected by authorities – who require registered cryptocurrency trading platforms to report transfers above Mex\$56,000 (\$3,300) – criminals buy and launder small amounts of bitcoin, found a 2021 report by the International Narcotics Control Board.

Criminals operating in Latin America also hire the services of “tumblers” who, in exchange for a commission, mix identifiable crypto with illegal funds to make them harder to trace, according to CipherTrace.

Yet most countries in the region have not updated their anti-money laundering regulations to include cryptocurrencies, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Countries with few or no compliance requirements around money laundering are proving attractive for criminals using cryptocurrency, said Goodwin from the GAO.

“They can use that to evade detection and identification by law enforcement, and we found that to be a major challenge,” she said.

The adoption of cryptocurrency in the narcotics trade also goes hand-in-hand with the rise of drug sales on the darknet – a hidden part of the Internet, according to a 2021 UNODC report.

It said Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced a “sustained growth” in the online trafficking of synthetic drugs and opioids, mostly using bitcoin – the first cryptocurrency to enter the market in 2009.

In May, US authorities said “Operation SpecTor,” which spanned three continents and aimed to disrupt fentanyl and opioid trafficking on the dark web, resulted in the seizure of \$53.4mm in cash and cryptocurrencies.

Drug traffickers have taken advantage of more people being online, and they also advertise drugs on dating sites and apps, such as Grindr and Tinder, the UNODC report says.

Once sellers and buyers connect, communications tend to move to encrypted messaging apps such as Telegram.

It is a trend that increased during the Covid-19 pandemic when online platforms selling drugs grew as people were stuck at home, said Mariana Kiefer, UNODC’s cybercrime regional coordinator for South America.

“Most online activities involved in drug trafficking are through cryptocurrencies. This is appealing to drug traffickers as they can reach more people online. The Internet has no frontiers,” said Kiefer.

Many virtual currency transactions are permanently recorded on public blockchains, which show all transactions between wallets, meaning police and researchers can trace transactions provided they have the right tools, software and expertise.

In a 2021 study, Chainalysis was able to identify cryptocurrency addresses associated with suspected China-based fentanyl precursor sellers. It found the addresses had received more than \$37.8mm worth of cryptocurrency since 2018.

A breakthrough often hinges on whether it is possible to access the right cryptocurrency address that has received a payment allowing researchers to follow the money.

“We are making progress in how we are identifying these cryptocurrency addresses ... once you do, your world blows up with cryptocurrency because you have every single transaction that that address is ever associated with,” said Grauer.

But a key challenge is ensuring US law enforcement and drug agencies are literate in cryptocurrencies so they understand “what they are actually looking at,” to build an investigation from complex databases, she said.

US law enforcement agencies are partnering with other experts to trace cryptocurrency payments as criminals adapt and use new technology to avoid detection, said Goodwin.

“It requires really sophisticated computer software programs, and some of the law enforcement agencies don’t really have the in-house expertise that they would need,” she said. — Thomson Reuters Foundation



Drug cartels and crime gangs in Latin America have taken up virtual currencies to launder money, receive payments and sell drugs on the darknet because law enforcement authorities are finding it harder to detect the deals.

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French schools turn back dozens of girls wearing abaya

AFP
Paris

French schools sent dozens of girls home for refusing to remove their abayas – an over-garment from the shoulders to the feet worn by Muslim women – on the first day of the school year, a government minister said yesterday.

Defying a ban on the Muslim robe, nearly 300 girls showed up Monday morning wearing an abaya, Gabriel Attal told the BFM broadcaster.

Most agreed to change out of the robe, but 67 refused and were sent home, he said.

The government announced last month it was banning the abaya in schools, saying it broke the rules on secularism in education that have already seen Muslim headscarves banned on the grounds they constitute a display of religious affiliation.

The move gladdened the political right but the hard-left argued it represented an affront to civil liberties.

Attal said the girls refused entry

were given a letter addressed to their families saying that “secularism is not a constraint, it is a liberty”.

If they showed up at school again wearing the abaya there would be a “new dialogue”, the minister said.

Late Monday, President Emmanuel Macron defended the controversial measure, saying there was a “minority” in France who “hijack a religion and challenge the republic and secularism”, leading to the “worst consequences”.

An association representing Muslims has filed a motion with the State Council, France’s highest court for complaints against state authorities, for an injunction against the ban on the abaya and the qamis, its equivalent dress for men.

The Action for the Rights of Muslims (ADM) motion was being examined yesterday.

France’s Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM), established to represent Muslims before the government, warned that the banning of the abaya could create “an elevated risk of discrimination” and

said it was considering putting its own complaint before the State Council.

The absence of “a clear definition of this garment creates a vague situation and legal uncertainty”, it said.

It expressed fear over “arbitrary” controls and that the criteria for evaluating young girls’ dress could be based on “the supposed origin, last name or skin colour” rather than what they wore.

A law introduced in March 2004 banned “the wearing of signs or outfits by which students ostensibly show a religious affiliation” in schools.

This includes large Christian crosses, Jewish kippas and Muslim headscarves.

Unlike headscarves, abayas occupied a grey area and had faced no outright ban until now.

Attal said he was in favour of trialling school uniforms or a dress code amid a debate over a ban in state-run schools on abaya.

Uniforms have not been obligatory in French schools since 1968 but have regularly come back on the political agenda, often pushed



A woman wearing an abaya dress walks through the streets of Lille, northern France. The French government’s decision to ban schoolgirls wearing abayas has opened a fresh debate about the country’s secular laws and the treatment of Muslim minorities. (AFP)

by conservative and far-right politicians. Attal, who announced the abaya ban earlier this week, told BFM TV he would provide a timetable in autumn for carrying out a trial run of uniforms with any schools that agree to participate.

“I don’t think that the school uniform is a miracle solution that solves all problems related to harassment, social inequalities or secularism,” he said. But he added: “We must go through experiments, try things out” in order to promote debate, he said.

France has enforced a ban on religious symbols in state schools since 2004 to uphold its strict brand of secularism known as “laïcité”. The topic is a sensitive one, regularly triggering political

tension in the country.

For some, wearing a uniform means equality and erasing differences of social status and wealth. For others it is a debate that is not needed and is distracting from more serious issues such as discipline and harassment.

In January 2023 President Emmanuel Macron’s wife Brigitte told *Le Parisien* newspaper in an interview that a school uniform “erases differences, we save time – it’s time-consuming to choose how to dress in the morning – and money – compared to brands.”

She recalled wearing a uniform for 15 years, a navy blue skirt and sweater as a student, telling the paper she took it well.

“So I am in favour of wearing a

school uniform, but with a simple and not dull outfit.”

The issue has been a dominant theme of French politics after the summer holidays, with the hard-left has accusing the government of trying with the abaya ban to compete with Marine Le Pen’s far-right National Rally and shifting further to the right.

The announcement late last month of the ban was the first major move by Attal, 34, since he was promoted this summer to handle the hugely contentious education portfolio.

Along with Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, 40, he is seen as a rising star who could potentially play an important role after Macron steps down in 2027.

French ‘getaway king’ on trial for brazen copter jailbreak

A convicted burglar who escaped prison in 2018 aboard a hijacked helicopter in a jailbreak that astonished France went on trial in Paris yesterday, facing life in prison over his brazen getaway. Nicknamed the “getaway king”, Redouine Faïd, 51, was serving time for burglary when accomplices hijacked a helicopter and landed it in the courtyard of Reau prison, southeast of Paris, on the morning of July 1, 2018. While one of them held a gun to the pilot’s head, two others stepped out of the helicopter launching smoke grenades.

One of them then kept watch, armed with a Kalashnikov assault rifle, while another – wearing a fake police armband – used a circular power saw to cut open the gate to the prison cell corridor where Faïd and his brother Ibrahim were being held. Witnesses later said that Faïd “very calmly” walked out of his cell to the waiting helicopter, which took off without any shots being fired. The entire operation took 10 minutes. Police later found the helicopter abandoned. He was re-captured three months later, hiding in the home of friend of a relative. Faïd, who broke out of jail once before in 2013, taking wardens hostage and blowing up the prison gate, faces life imprisonment for the repeat offence.

He has a history of robberies involving armoured vehicles and hostage-taking and at the time of the jailbreak was already serving a 25-year sentence for a botched heist in which a policewoman got killed. Eleven suspected accomplices, including members of his family, are on trial alongside Faïd, charged with helping him in the escape and during the subsequent three months it took police to catch him.

Access to the court room was under special protection on Tuesday and mobile phone signals scrambled, officials said. Faïd made no statements to investigators in the run-up to the trial, except to say he was sorry that his accomplices had been caught up in the trial. Reau prison has since installed security lines over the courtyard to prevent any more jailbreaks by air.

Germany matches colonial skull DNA to living descendants

Researchers have identified living relatives in Tanzania of people whose skulls were pillaged and taken to Germany during the colonial era, Berlin’s museum authority said yesterday, a discovery hailed as a “small miracle”.

Berlin’s Museum of Prehistory and Early History has been carrying out research on around 1,100 skulls from what was known as German East Africa since 2017, with the aim of eventually returning the remains to the relevant countries.

Now, for the first time, DNA analysis has provided a clear link with living descendants in Tanzania, the SPK museum authority said in a statement. “The relatives and the government of Tanzania will now be informed as soon as possible,” the statement said.

The skulls are part of a collection of around 7,700 that were acquired by the SPK from Berlin’s Charite hospital in 2011, the museum authority said. Many of them were part of a collection assembled by doctor and anthropologist Felix von Luschan during German colonial rule. Others belonged to the skull collection of the hospital’s former anatomical institute.

French ex-spy chief to face trial for influence peddling

France’s former domestic spy chief Bernard Squarcini will face trial in Paris on suspicion of influence peddling, largely for luxury giant LVMH, sources close to the case told AFP yesterday. As well as the charge that he used his connections to benefit private interests, Squarcini will be tried for misuse of public funds and compromising national security secrets, judges decided according to a court document seen by AFP. Ten more people will stand trial, including a former judge, a prefect (senior civil servant) and several former high-ranking police officers and consultants accused of acceding to Squarcini’s demands.

The probe into the ties between Squarcini, now aged 67, and LVMH has been going on for 12 years. A former head of the DCRI – now the DGSJ domestic intelligence agency – he was charged in 2016 and the investigation broadened in 2021.

Lawyers for Squarcini were not immediately available for comment. The judges wrote that “the argument of the defence, in insisting that protecting (LVMH chief) Bernard Arnault’s purely private interests equals protecting (France’s) economic wealth is a clear error of analysis”.

They argue that the DCRI – members of which responded to Squarcini’s requests – “should not have intervened in this context”. His actions had “harmed” the agency and “more broadly, the French state,” the judges added.



SPOTLIGHT: Bernard Squarcini

France must come clean on 1980 mystery plane crash: Italy ex-PM

Reuters
Rome

French President Emmanuel Macron must say whether his country was to blame for an Italian air disaster that killed 81 people more than 40 years ago, former Italian prime minister Giuliano Amato said yesterday.

Italian judges have said in the past that a missile likely downed the DC-9 civilian aircraft near the island of Ustica on June 27, 1980, but have been unable to identify who was responsible for one of the darkest mysteries in Italy’s postwar history.

In a weekend interview with *La Repubblica* newspaper, Amato said he believed that the aircraft, belonging to the now-defunct domestic airline Itavia, was probably shot down accidentally by a French jet during a botched attempt by France, the US and Nato to kill the then-Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi while he was flying over Italy.

“I ask Macron to look into the matter. If he shows that the allegation is unfounded, so much the better. If it is true, he should apologise,” Amato, 85, told a news conference yesterday.

A French diplomatic source told Reuters that France had always cooperated with Italy on Ustica, particularly in the context of judicial investigations, and was “of course ready” to work again with Rome if asked.

Amato, who twice served as prime minister, said he had raised the issue again because at his age: “You start to ask yourself if there is something useful still to be done, some unfinished business that can be resolved.”

He said it would be easier for Macron to respond as he was aged only two at the time of the tragedy and belongs to a different gen-



Former Italian prime minister Giuliano Amato gestures during a press conference about the 1980 downing of a passenger plane near the island of Ustica, in Rome yesterday. (Reuters)

eration from the French political and military elites that may have been to blame.

Amato said he had not spoken to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in recent days. Meloni said at the weekend that Amato should show any new evidence he had to support his theory.

The former premier, a socialist politician who has also held various ministerial posts and led Italy’s Constitutional Court, has conceded he has no new evidence or hard proof.

Former Italian president Francesco Cossiga, who was prime minister when the plane crashed into the sea killing all on board, made similar accusations in 2008. He died two years later.

Woody Allen hails ‘very lucky life’ as he presents 50th film

By Crispian Balmer
Venice

US director Woody Allen presented his 50th film to the Venice Film Festival, telling reporters he had had a “very, very lucky life”, making no reference to the scandals that have dogged his latter years.

“I have had nothing but good fortune and I hope it holds out, although obviously it is early this afternoon,” he told reporters ahead of the premiere of his first French-language film, *Coup de Chance*.

“I had two loving parents, I have good friends, I have a wonderful wife and marriage, two children. In a few months I will be 88 years old. I have never been in a hospital. I have never had anything terrible

happen to me,” he said.

The four-time Oscar-winning director of *Amie Hall* and other comedies has had a turbulent personal life that has seen him increasingly shunned by many celebrities and executives in Hollywood.

He hit the headlines in the 1990s following his affair and marriage to Soon-Yi Previn, the adopted daughter of his former lover, Mia Farrow, as well as sex abuse accusations by their adopted daughter Dylan Farrow. He has always denied the accusations and was never charged.

Allen and Soon-Yi, who have a 35-year age difference, are still married and have two adopted daughters.

In a separate interview to *Variety* on the sidelines of the film festival, Allen said he supported the



US director Woody Allen pose on the red carpet of the movie *Coup de Chance* presented out of competition at the 80th Venice Film Festival yesterday at Venice Lido. (AFP)

#MeToo movement, which has brought intense focus to sexual

misconduct in the entertainment industry. But he added that it

could also become “silly ... When it’s being too extreme”.

The Venice Film Festival was denounced by some critics for giving Allen a prestigious slot for his new movie, and a small group of protesters demonstrated noisily as he arrived on the red carpet ahead of the premiere of his film, chanting “abusers” and scuffling with police.

The red carpet arrivals continued unhindered and the group were soon removed from in front of the Lido cinema, witnesses said. Allen originally intended to cast US actors in the main roles, but said he had always been inspired by European filmmakers so was happy to switch languages, even though he doesn’t speak French.

“It was very simple. If you watch a Japanese film, you can tell

if the acting is good, realistic and natural, or if it is dramatic and silly and too exaggerated. It is the same thing here,” he said.

Like many of his films, *Coup de Chance* draws inspiration from the themes of love, adultery and death. However, Allen said it was not worth dwelling too long on death. “There is nothing you can do about it. It is a bad deal and you are stuck with it,” he said.

Allen has previously suggested *Coup de Chance* might be his final movie. However, on Monday he said he had a good idea for a story based in his native New York and would make it if he could find a backer willing to accept his terms – not to read the script or to know whom he had cast.

“If some foolish person agrees to that, then I will make the film in New York,” he said. – Reuters

Vietnamese National Day celebrated in Doha

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The Vietnamese embassy in Doha marked the 78th anniversary of Vietnam's National Day yesterday (Tuesday) in the presence of ambassador Tran Duc Hung, Qatar's Minister of Justice HE Masoud bin Mohamed al-Amri, Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of Protocol director Ibrahim Fakhro, a number of diplomats and other dignitaries.

ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions and other guests. Ambassador Tran Duc Hung, in his address, stressed the growing excellent and friendly relations between Qatar and Vietnam in different fields with potential for more growth in the near future as the top leadership of the two countries agree on the need to take such relations to further heights for the best of the two peoples.

The Vietnam envoy said: "As a friend and partner of Qatar, Vietnam is pleased to witness comprehensive local and global development of Qatar over the recent years. Qatar is considered an



Vietnamese artists perform on the occasion.

important partner of Vietnam in the Middle East region. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and Qatar in 1993, the friendship and co-operation relations between two countries have been nurtured and developed from time to time. Right after lifting Covid-19 restrictions, the two countries have resumed high-level delegation exchanges. Many delegations of different levels from Ministries, provinces and

businesses from Vietnam and Qatar are going to visit each other in the coming months to foster ties and seek co-operation opportunities.

"The bilateral trade volume between Qatar and Vietnam has reached around \$550mn. Co-operation in the field of energy, labour and investment is becoming a priority in the relationships between the two countries. The Embassy of Vietnam in Qatar is working closely with relevant Ministries and Agencies to

soon relaunch Vietnam - Qatar co-operation mechanisms such as Joint Committee on economic, trade and technical co-operation or sub Joint Committee in labour field.

"This year, 2023, Vietnam and Qatar celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Accordingly, many celebratory activities such as art performance, film exhibition, and others will be held in Qatar to mark this special year."

The ambassador thanked Qatar Airways for sponsoring the National Day celebration and helping the Embassy of Vietnam bring some Vietnamese artists and musicians to perform in Qatar for the occasion.

He also expressed his happiness that up to 2023, Vietnam has trade relations with more than 230 markets, engaged in more than 500 bilateral and multilateral agreements in various fields, including 17 free trade agreements. He stressed that

Vietnam's economy grew 8,02% in 2022, marking its fastest annual pace since 1997.

"I am confident that under the insight guidance of the leaders from both countries, the relations between Vietnam and Qatar will continue to develop positively and effectively in the future, contributing to peace, stability, co-operation and development in the region and the world," concluded the ambassador.



Vietnam ambassador Tran Duc Hung is joined by Minister of Justice HE Masoud bin Mohamed al-Amri in cutting a ceremonial cake yesterday as Director of Protocol Department Ibrahim Fakhro and other dignitaries look on. PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam.



Qatar Rail 'school visits' resume for Metro network

With the start of the new academic year, Qatar Railways company (Qatar Rail) announced the resumption of its school visits programme for the Doha Metro network.

The first educational visit for students came in co-ordination with several schools and was thrilling experience filled with learning and discovery.

The initiative, part of Qatar Rail's corporate social responsibility programme, provides an immersive experience to students and offers an insider's view into the Doha Metro network, its various facilities, network operations and connectivity to key destinations in Doha. Additionally, the programme also highlights the metro's contributions to environment as a sustainable transport mode.

During the first visit hosted by Qatar Rail, students learned about different types of travel cards, Doha Metro train carriages, as well as key safety guidelines in both stations and aboard the trains. They also learned about accompanying services such as metrolink and metroexpress, as well as other facilities like Park and Ride and how these services contribute to provide a seamless travel experience to customers services from and to the metro stations.

During their tour at Msheireb Station, the heart of the Doha



The school visits initiative, which is part of Qatar Rail's corporate social responsibility programme, provides an immersive experience to students and offers an insider's view into the Doha Metro network.

Metro where the three metro lines interchange, students visited the station's control and command room to understand its role in monitoring passenger movement, ensuring smooth operations, and maintaining the safety and security of customers during their journeys. The students also gained insights into providing swift responses during emergency situations.

Qatari engineers from Qatar Rail guided the students offering

them an enlightening glimpse into their roles, the multitude of career avenues, and the exciting array of specialisations within the railway sector. To ignite a spark in these young minds, inspiring them to join this dynamic industry in the future and become a driving force in shaping the future of transportation right here in Qatar.

These visits serve a dual purpose: not only do they enrich students' comprehension of public transportation, but they

also inspire them to embrace the metro as a part of their daily commute. In a world where environmental preservation is paramount, Qatar Rail is taking the lead by fostering this eco-conscious approach among the young generation.

Schools interested in participating in the school visits programme can coordinate by contacting Qatar Rail's Communication and Public Relations Department.

The Supervisory Committee for Beautification of Roads and Public Places has completed most of the main works of the upcoming Furjan Park at Al Wakra, local Arabic daily *Arrayah* reported.

Located at Al-Mishkat Street, the park is set up at a total area of 3,284sq m. It includes various recreational and sports facilities and provides space for the local residents for physical activities. According to the report, the park is expected to be opened this year and the committee is working to increase space along with recreational and sanitation facilities.

Furjan Park at Al-Mishkat Street is one of three parks that the committee planned in Al Wakra. The park includes recreational and sports facilities, pedestrian paths, children's play areas, fitness equipment, and seating to make it an enjoyable destination for all family members. These facilities have been designed and implemented according to the needs of the local residents while taking into account the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities.

Local trees and other plants that suit the Qatar environment occupy 70% of the park and they improve the air quality while bringing down the temperature levels and carbon emission. Also, they add to the aesthetic features of the park while keeping it attractive and greenish.

The committee has announced that 15 Furjan parks are set up across Qatar as part of its efforts to humanise cities and change a car-centric culture to a pedestrian and cyclist-friendly culture. Being constructed by the Public Works Authority (Ashghal), the Furjan parks aim to create recreational spaces and plazas that contrib-

Furjan Park at Al Wakra nearing completion



ute to encouraging families to lead a healthy lifestyle and practice sports from nearby enjoyable destinations just outside their closed doors.

In 2021, the Supervisory Committee, in co-operation with the Ministry of Municipality, launched a strategic plan to build parks that serve tourists and visitors across the country. The strategic plan also includes implementing small green spaces such as Al Furjan Parks that serve residents of specific neighbourhoods while creating green plazas implemented in various locations to

help protect the environment.

The parks are designed to be close to homes, easily reachable by pedestrians or cyclists, which encourage the people of the area to visit them regularly and spend quality time in a healthy and safe environment, which enhances social gathering and communication.

The parks are basically constructed to act as a breather for community members and they increase green area and improving quality of life, and are considered as natural filters to purify the air from carbon

emissions, one important factor in increasing the share of each person per square metre of green space.

The parks include many features that make it an enjoyable destination for all family members, including elderly, youth and children. These features and services vary according to the area of the park, such as pedestrian and cyclist paths, seats, and some parks include kids' play areas, fitness equipment, kiosks, and others. Elderly people and people with special needs are also taken into consideration in the designs.

