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His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani will make a state visit to Guyana and an official visit to El Salvador today, in response to invitations from the two countries' presidents.

During the visits, His Highness the Amir will discuss with the presidents and senior officials of both countries ways to enhance bilateral relations and co-operation in various fields. Also, they will exchange views on various regional and international issues of common interest.

Several agreements and memorandums of understanding in various areas of co-operation will also be signed during the visits.

His Highness the Amir will be accompanied by an official delegation. **(QNA)**

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Al-Khulaifi meets Australian envoy



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met yesterday with Australian ambassador to Qatar Shane Flanagan. The meeting discussed the co-operation relations between the two countries and the latest regional and international developments. HE Dr al-Khulaifi wished the ambassador success in performing his duties. (QNA)

Italian PM ends Doha visit



Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni left Doha yesterday after an official visit to the country. Meloni and the accompanying delegation were seen-off at Hamad International Airport by HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Abdullah al-Thani, Qatar's ambassador to Italy Khalid bin Youssef al-Sada and Italian ambassador in Doha Paolo Toschi. (QNA)

Qataris make up 55% of Ashghal engineers: official

Around 55% of the engineers working in the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) are Qataris, employed in various specialties, Human Resources Department director Rashid al-Hajri told local Arabic daily *Arrayah*.

"Over the past four years, we have achieved a 160% Qatarisation rate in terms of engineers' recruitment at Ashghal, compared to a rate of 120% in the previous four years," he explained. "We used to have 120 Qatari engineers, and now we have approximately 650 Qatari male and female engineers in various specialties. These Qatari engineers are the backbone of the successful im-

plementation of Ashghal's projects over the past few years, earning the admiration of everyone.

"Our main approach is based on Qatar National Vision 2030, considering human development as the primary cornerstone. So, recruiting, developing, and empowering Qatari human resources professionally are our top priorities."

He stressed that building a highly efficient national workforce in Ashghal is an achievement in itself and provides a strong foundation for achieving the desired goals with efficiency, speed, precision and excellence.

Ashghal follows a strategy

aimed at delivering modern projects in line with global standards and adopting best practices in infrastructure development and management. They also follow a robust strategic outsourcing model, in addition to partnerships with preferred local and international companies, with the goal of positioning Qatar among the most developed and growing countries in the world.

"With ambitious aspirations for the future, Ashghal is committed to developing a massive infrastructure that supports the social and economic growth of the country," al-Hajri added.

Expo 2023 Doha forges partnership with QM

The Expo 2023 Doha organising committee yesterday signed a collaboration and partnership agreement with Qatar Museums (QM), a statement said. HE the Minister of Municipality and Expo 2023 Doha Committee Chairman Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, Expo 2023 Doha secretary-general Mohamed al-Khouri and QM acting CEO Mohamed Saad al-Rumaihi were present.

The partnership underscores QM's commitment to fostering cultural dialogue, with Expo 2023 Doha being expected to attract over 3mn visitors and more than 80 participating countries.

QM will host a series of artistic and cultural events and performances that are in line with the global event's themes and objectives, namely the preservation of the environment, it was explained.

QM will also help foster sustainability by highlighting the importance of sustainable activities in the daily lives. The partnership will solidify QM's reputation as a cultural destination for art enthusiasts, history aficionados, and environmental enthusiasts from around the world.

"Through this partnership with Qatar Museums, Expo 2023 Doha aims to solidify Qatar's position as a global tourist destination. Qatar Museums will support the interna-



HE Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie is flanked by Mohamed Saad al-Rumaihi and Mohamed al-Khouri at the signing ceremony yesterday.

tional event in a multitude of ways, notably by supporting ecological development initiatives," said al-Khouri. "The collaboration between Expo 2023 Doha and Qatar Museums marks a pivotal moment in cultural exchange that will create an unprecedented cultural and ecological experience. "This exhibition is a testament to the power of co-operation in curating narratives that resonate across cultures and generation," he added.

QM's al-Rumaihi said: "Expo

2023 Doha will have a significant positive impact on the local and international cultural landscape. As a leading cultural institution in Qatar, our vision goes hand-in-hand with that of Expo 2023 Doha, for we seek to foster sustainable development and ensure all museums in Qatar are low-emission, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Qatar Museums vision to achieve more sustainable and modern cultural development where humans co-exist in harmony with nature."



Qatar Charity launches Tamkeen second edition

Qatar Charity (QC) launched the second edition of the Tamkeen programme under the slogan "Tomorrow's success we create today," which provides support to owners of ideas and small projects, a statement said yesterday.

The initiative is in co-operation with the Ministry of Social Development and Family, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Qatar Development Bank, Namaa to enable social entrepreneurs and youth, Qatar University the Development Center Global Consulting and Confoso Technical Solutions. Abd al-Rahman al-Hajiri, director of Programmes and Community Development at

Qatar Charity, said: "Qatar Charity places at the top of its priorities its community programmes to build people, hone their potential, enable them to develop their abilities, improve the living conditions of families with limited income, enhance the financial and social stability of deserving families, and move them from care to development."

The partners participating in the opening ceremony praised the programme and QC's keenness to involve government and private agencies in economic empowerment projects in support of the Qatari community and to achieve the Qatar National Vision 2030, regarding the economic devel-

opment pillar, which focuses on developing a diversified and competitive national economy capable of meeting the needs of citizens and residents in Qatar.

The Tamkeen programme in its first edition (2020) achieved good results, as participants benefited from the training workshops to advance their projects.

QC and the partners also followed up on the winning projects and their work procedures through a promotional campaign aimed at introducing the community to them and supporting them to stimulate young people to engage in similar projects in entrepreneurship, the statement added.

Registration opens for Ooredoo Doha Marathon set for Feb 16

Ooredoo yesterday announced that registration is now open for runners wishing to take part in the Ooredoo Doha Marathon 2024. The event, scheduled for February 16, will bring together more than 15,000 participants competing over multiple distances.

The full marathon (42.2km) will be staged alongside a half marathon (21.1km), 10km and 5km race – all open to adult participants.

There will also be a 5km mini marathon event for juniors (aged 13-17) and a 1km race for children under 13. Ooredoo has partnered with UK-based sports agency GW Active to ensure it meets stringent international standards.

This year, the Ooredoo Doha Marathon holds Gold status on the international marathon schedule, meaning runners can qualify



Sabah Rabbiah al-Kuwari

for international marathon events such as the Boston Marathon. Competitors are invited to register online as soon as possible. The entry process on the official website is easy to follow and by signing up four or more runners in one

session, entrants can secure a 25% discount on registration fees.

Runners will receive a goodie bag containing a bespoke race T-shirt as well as their bib number and timing chip.

Race packs can be collected from designated locations (to be communicated via the website and participant e-mail) between February 13 and 15, from 3pm to 11pm.

Pack collection facilities will not be available on race day.

Sabah Rabbiah al-Kuwari – Director PR, Sponsorship and CSR at Ooredoo – said: "The Ooredoo Doha Marathon is not just a race; it's a celebration of determination, passion and the human spirit."

To find out more and register, runners can go to the Ooredoo Doha Marathon website (OOREDOO DOHA MARATHON | Ooredoo Doha Marathon 2024).

Fire Station's exhibition sheds light on future trends

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The Fire Station's latest exhibition, titled 'The Present: The Future of the Past,' offers a glimpse into the evolving world of art as it highlights the fusion of traditional artistic methodologies with cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR).

Curated by Saida al-Khulaifi, the exhibition showcases creations from the Artist in Residence of 2021-2022 (AIR 6) and 2022-2023 (AIR 7). The event aims to

explore the inner workings of artists' studios, providing visitors with a unique opportunity to understand the unique approaches and techniques employed by the latest batch of resident artists.

Al-Khulaifi underlined the importance of encouraging artists to explore the potential of their creations, citing examples from the exhibition, including a cultural installation incorporating AR elements. She noted that one of the artists integrated AI technology seamlessly into his work.

"I think one of the main things we try to do here (Fire Station's AIR programme) is that if an artist has an artwork that has the po-

The integration of AI and immersive experiences is becoming increasingly popular, and the Fire Station aims to nurture and develop this trend

tential, we try to ask them to experiment with that. "We have one cultural installation that has an AR augmented reality element, his work is a hybrid between AI and it is also his art so he would generate these images and then he will paint them again," she said.

The exhibition will remain on view until December 16 at the Fire Station's Garage Gallery, Gallery 3, and Gallery 4. It showcases in-

teractive artworks equipped with sensors, allowing visitors to engage with the pieces – described as an innovative approach to art engagement, which demonstrates the evolving landscape of artistic expression.

About the direction of interactive, immersive, and AI art in Qatar, al-Khulaifi expressed optimism about the future, saying that they are taking slow but care-

ful steps towards embracing these forms of art. The integration of AI and immersive experiences, she noted, is becoming increasingly popular, and the Fire Station aims to nurture and develop this trend.

"And also like in the other art galleries (of the Fire Station), we have a couple of immersive experiences that I think it's (AI art) coming and it's something that we really like to cultivate and develop as well... so we make sure that if we receive applications of that kind we know that the world is going this way and we want to also showcase local talents that can actually work with that," al-Khulaifi pointed out.



Saida al-Khulaifi at the Fire Station's latest exhibition. **PICTURE:** Tahjudheen

Saleh Mohammed Al-Marri, General Supervisor of Qatar Charity's office in Jordan:

Qatar Charity's field offices demonstrate Qatar's brighter humanitarian image

Mr. Saleh Mohammed Al-Marri has been actively engaged in Qatar Charity's work and humanitarian activities in Jordan since its inception. He played a significant role in establishing its office there in 2021. By supervising the office, he continues to closely monitor the implementation of its relief and development projects and strengthens partnerships with relevant bodies.

In the following interview, we will learn about the importance of field offices and the significant achievements of Qatar Charity's office in Jordan, as well as gain insights from Mr. Saleh's experience in humanitarian work.



When did Qatar Charity begin its activities in Jordan?

Qatar Charity has been involved in humanitarian interventions in Jordan for many years prior to its official presence through its currently licensed office. The scope of its humanitarian work expanded in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, especially in the aftermath of the Syrian crisis and its catastrophic consequences. The crisis led Syrians to seek refuge in neighboring countries, including Jordan, which bore a significant share of the refugee burden. The number of the refugees in Jordan exceeded 1.5 million, and there is no doubt that this figure had a clear impact on the humanitarian situation and placed significant pressure on a small country with limited resources. This also exacerbated the problems, particularly in the fields of healthcare, education, and livelihoods.

Due to these circumstances, Qatar Charity began to increase the scale of its humanitarian and social interventions in response to the humanitarian call. Additionally, it started considering the existence of an institutional framework for these interventions.

In 2016, a representation of Qatar Charity was established in Jordan, in cooperation with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization. Through this representation, Qatar Charity has implemented numerous humanitarian programs and projects in the fields of food security, healthcare, and orphan, family, and student sponsorship, in

addition to implementing economic empowerment programs and other projects. The total volume of interventions during that period amounted to more than 50 million Qatari Riyals.

In 2021, Qatar Charity's office was established in Jordan under an official license. Here, it is important to mention the role of the Embassy of the State of Qatar and express gratitude to it for supporting the programs and activities of Qatar Charity in Jordan and for facilitating the establishment of the office.

When did you take over the supervision of Qatar Charity's office in Jordan?

Because of my close knowledge of Jordan, I have closely followed Qatar Charity's work in Jordan from the beginnings. Thanks to Allah, we have contributed to and supported Qatar Charity's programs and activities, in addition to building various partnerships to achieve its charitable and humanitarian goals until the office was established and up to the present day.

What are Qatar Charity's main areas of work and what projects are implemented in Jordan?

Qatar Charity operates in various sectors in Jordan and implements numerous programs of humanitarian priority for refugees and disadvantaged Jordanian families. It is important to note that the challenges of refuge in Jordan are not limited to Syrian refugees alone; there are also Palestinian refugees and refugees from other nationalities, including Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Libya, and others.

Hence, there has been a focus on urgent relief programs, particularly those related to relief, healthcare, and treatment programs, in addition to supporting educational programs, shelter projects, and essential family and livelihood needs.

On the other hand, Qatar Charity in Jordan works on empowering underprivileged Jordanian families through income-generating projects, such as livestock and poultry farming, beekeeping, and other initiatives. Additionally, it implements other projects related to handicrafts like sewing, blacksmithing, carpentry,

and agricultural activities to help the families and enable them to lead a dignified life. Furthermore, it provides assistance and sponsorships to orphans, impoverished families, persons with disabilities, and others with special needs.

Qatar Charity has also contributed to supporting the Jordanian government's efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic through a project for medical quarantine and in-kind assistance to families affected by the pandemic, whether in terms of health or livelihood.

It's worth mentioning that Qatar Charity, in previous years, and up to the present day, has been overseeing the operation of the largest health center in the Zaatari Refugee Camp. Additionally, it is currently constructing a health center building in Al-Hamra of Mafraq Governorate, eastern Jordan. It also delivered assistance to provide clean and safe water to more than 250 schools, provided air conditioners to over 100 mosques, provided educational equipment such as laptops and water coolers for schools and students, paid university fees for financially struggling students, and built a mosque in the Naour area. Currently, Qatar Charity is working on constructing another mosque in Karak Governorate, maintaining several mosques and homes, in addition to treating over 500 medical cases in various fields, including eye and heart diseases, kidney dialysis and transplantation, as well as cancer treatment and cochlear implants. Qatar Charity also sponsors approximately 7,000 orphans, families, and students.

What is the field offices' role in enhancing Qatar Charity's humanitarian and development efforts?

There is no doubt that the role of field offices is fundamental in Qatar Charity's interventions. They serve as a security factor and monitoring mechanism to ensure that aid reaches its intended recipients with the required quality and in accordance with the project's standards, objectives, and expectations. This is achieved through direct supervision and the application of the organization's policies.

Furthermore, the presence of the office contributes to assessing priority needs on the ground, measuring impact, monitoring risks, and addressing them through direct interaction with beneficiaries.

The Field offices also enhance the identity of Qatar Charity, and its field presence underscores its commitment to its projects. They further enhance Qatar's image and its interest in charity work.

Why is it important for humanitarian workers to engage at the ground level?

When we talk about sustainable development, it means the desired benefit of humanitarian intervention and how to direct it towards achieving the best impact to solve human problems and poverty.

In my opinion, charity and humanitarian work are unlike other jobs. It requires individuals to have the ability to approach the target groups while preserving their human dignity, and possess skills that can address their needs regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or age.

When it comes to community needs, it is important to realize that they are based on the total members of the community. It is essential to closely identify these needs to ensure that community needs are not steered towards personal needs. Therefore, we can say that being close to the field and understanding the communities is a skill that can be beneficial for those engaged in charitable work, so that charitable work leads to the greatest benefit and towards the broader public.

What are your plans for developing the office's work and projects?

What concerns me the most is how to develop a mechanism to ensure the continuity of humanitarian work in light of global changes and financial crises. Therefore, one of the most important aspects I contemplate regarding future projects and their implementation is to invest in the local environment and find sources that will keep the office's humanitarian role and performance ongoing.

This does not conflict with the idea of developing charitable work as a productive tool. Perhaps, in Islamic history, charitable endowments (Waqf) provide the best example of this aspiration.

Can you tell us about some of the impactful situations you encountered during your fieldwork?

No doubt, many of the cases we face are impactful and have a significant impact on the heart, especially those of orphans and families who have lost their breadwinners. There are also family heads who are unable to support their families due to illness or disability, and you see them feeling lost and broken because they are unable to meet the needs of their families and children. On the other hand, there are something that brings joy to the heart. Some impoverished families managed to improve their living conditions after working hard to make their small income-generating projects, which were provided to them by Qatar Charity, a success.





Arab Youth Anti-Corruption Hackathon kicks off

Organised by the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority (ACTA) in partnership with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Microsoft Qatar, the Arab Youth Anti-Corruption Hackathon kicked off in Qatar with the participation of 117 programmers from 17 countries.

The winning teams will have the opportunity to further develop the proposed technology solution with the support of the partners of the hackathon seeking to increase the use of ICT solutions as part of their anti-corruption efforts.

Marking the occasion, Director of Public Relations and Communication Department at ACTA, Eid Saeed al-Hajri, said Arab youths are the focal point of this event as they are the force and brilliant minds that will write the future. Their participation in the Arab Youth Anti-Corruption Hackathon represents a golden opportunity to learn and develop their skills in fields of integrity, transparency, and anti-corruption, in addition to promoting their technical and social knowledge and developing their leadership capabilities, he said.

The event comes within the framework of ACTA's efforts and the participation of the UNODC and Microsoft Qatar, which realise the importance of supporting youths and enabling them in the field of anti-corruption using technology.



He called on all participants to provide innovative and effective solutions to anti-corruption and promote transparency, especially since youths can make the region honest and prosperous.

UNODC Regional Representative Dr Hatem Fouad Ali hailed the launch of the initiative which is composed of Arab youth cadres in partnership with Qatar. He expressed happiness at the launch of the "Coding4Integrity" Arab Youth Anti-Corruption Hackathon programme in Doha.

The Global Resource for Anti-Corruption Education and Youth Empowerment (GRACE) initiative of UNODC aims to enable youths to learn about the ethics of integrity and anti-corruption and to join global anti-corruption efforts through the active promotion of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), Ali said.

He added the hackathon aims to empower more than 17 countries from the Arab world, especially

since the participating youths will learn about integrity through this initiative launched by the UNODC.

He expressed hope that the hackathon hosted by Qatar would be an opportunity for Arab youths not only to compete in coming up with the most innovations and ways to involve youths in supporting anti-corruption measures but also become ambassadors for their countries, becoming bearers of the banner of permanent transparency and culture of accountability in the Arab world as future leaders in the Arab world and their community.

Concluding his speech, Fouad stressed the readiness of the UNODC to continue supporting Qatar in its efforts to implement the UNICAC through activities that are based on the transformative power of education and the meaningful empowerment of youths. He expressed his appreciation for the efforts of ACTA to organise



the Arab Youth Anti-Corruption Hackathon.

Regional Representative for the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in the Middle East and North Africa (ROMENA) Cristina Albertin commended Qatar's commitment to partner in these educational activities from early on, referring to the 2015 Doha Declaration on integrating crime prevention and criminal justice.

Albertin praised the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority (ACTA) for hosting and financing this important hackathon, which brings together for the first time more than 100 young people from all over the Middle East and North Africa region.

She pointed out that the hackathon is an occasion to fulfil a double objective of engaging the youth in developing digital technology-based solutions to the very critical issue of corruption, and the means to prevent it, in addition to finding ways to promote integrity. This



is crucial for overall economic growth, social cohesion, and the formation of sustainable, comprehensive, and stable societies, she said.

Microsoft Qatar representative Sheikha Latifa al-Thani said technology has become an integral part of life, changing the forms of communication, learning, working, and real-world problem-solving. She added this hackathon is not just an event, but rather a testament to the innovative power of the youth, as well as a means to bring the Arab world to Qatar to innovate, create, and make a difference.

She highlighted how bringing together young minds from different backgrounds and cultures contributes to creating a melting pot of ideas that gives birth to innovative solutions.

Global Resource for Anti-Corruption Education and Youth Empowerment (GRACE) initiative co-ordinator at UNODC Bianca

Kopp said that this week's hackathon is not only the biggest hackathon ever organised, but the first of its kind targeting the youth, in a flashback to UNODC's new approach to crime prevention, after the Doha Declaration on integrating crime prevention and criminal justice.

Strengthening the rule of law and combating corruption is not the responsibility of governments alone, Kopp said stressing the importance of shifting an entire society's approach, by empowering future generations and listening to their take and feedback on finding solutions to the challenges of today.

She said 2023 marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), adding that the Coding4Integrity initiative is one of UNODC's most innovative and multi-sectoral projects; designed to support the implementation of UNCAC. (QNA)

QU Career Fair opens



Qatar University (QU) launched yesterday the QU Career Fair for its students, to meet and interact with 73 potential employers from various sectors such as energy, industry, finance, business, education, and health.

The four-day event also provides employers with the opportunity to attract effective employees through a direct meeting with students. QU president Dr Omar al-Ansari, the Civil Service and Governmental Development Bureau's (CSGDB) Civil Service Affairs director Saif Ali al-Kaabi, as well as a number of senior officials from QU, and representatives of the participating ministries and

entities were present at the opening. Gadeer Mohd Zainal, head of Student Employment, Career Development Centre, noted that the Career Fair is one of the important events that QU is keen to organise on an annual basis, as it brings together the largest number of employees under one roof. The QU Career Fair provides countless opportunities for students; this includes summer training, academic sponsorship, information about the labour market, and informs students about the required specialisations and the necessary skills. The event also provides students with the opportunity to develop their networking skills.

QU, Al-Sulaiteen Centre in deal for agriculture studies

Qatar University (QU) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Al-Sulaiteen Centre for Research, Studies, and Agricultural Training, it was announced yesterday.

The partnership aims to foster collaboration and leverage shared resources for mutual benefit.

Key areas of co-operation include scientific research, studies, skill enhancement, and practical training.

QU president Dr Omar al-Ansari and Al-Sulaiteen Centre for Research, Studies, and Agricultural Training chairman Abdullah Salem al-Sulaiteen signed the MoU.

The agreement outlines the framework for joint research and agricultural studies, food security initiatives, knowledge exchange, and data sharing, including publications, journals, studies, and statistics, all geared towards enhancing collaboration.

It also encompasses joint developmental and research projects, as well as co-operation in training, organising workshops, conferences, seminars,



Officials at the MoU signing ceremony.

and graduate study programmes, among other areas of mutual interest.

The partnership signifies the vital and active role QU plays in scientific, managerial, technical, and research-based collaboration. QU is committed to contributing to sustainable development in agricultural and environmental fields.

Dr al-Ansari said: "This agreement focuses on collaborative research in agricultural studies and

food security, as well as knowledge exchange that contributes to the development of this field in Qatar."

Dr al-Ansari emphasised that QU, through its Environmental Sciences Department and QU Agricultural Station, will work closely with the Al-Sulaiteen Centre to support agricultural development through research, training, innovation, and joint conferences that will benefit the nation.

Al-Sulaiteen said: "We are pleased with this partnership to develop the agricultural sector by exploring new innovations, particularly in food security and other areas related to agricultural development. We believe in QU and its significant role in contributing to this field, especially with the university's recent achievements. Through this collaboration, we hope to enhance the agricultural sector by sharing experiences between the parties."

Summer 'can bring higher risk of digestive problems'

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) has cautioned that summer heat can affect gastrointestinal health and offered some tips for safeguarding people's digestive system when the temperature rises.

"Many diseases in summer can affect the digestive system, including diarrhoea without vomiting or abdominal pain, which can cause frequent desire to go to the toilet. This happens due to eating food high in vegetable fat and hot spices or eating meat past -or close to- its expiration date," said Dr Atia Ibrahim, family physician, PHCC's Madinat Khalifa Health Centre.

A person may suffer from gastroenteritis that causes watery diarrhoea, vomiting, and abdominal cramps. Intestinal infections are caused by viral, bacterial, or parasitic infections. The infected person may need to do a stool analysis to discover cause and treat it.

Intestinal infections may develop into food poisoning, accompanied by vomiting, bloody diarrhoea, abdominal pain, fever, and a fall in blood pressure. The patient may require



Dr Atia Ibrahim

"Many diseases in summer can affect the digestive system, including diarrhoea without vomiting or abdominal pain, which can cause frequent desire to go to the toilet"

hospitalisation to receive appropriate treatment with intravenous fluids and antibiotics in case the stool and blood tests indicate that

food poisoning is caused by bacterial infections, such as salmonella, shigella, and E. coli.

Some may also suffer from gastric reflux and heartburn when gastric acid flowing from the stomach back up into the food pipe, which may cause pain in the chest, hoarseness, or dry cough. This may occur during the summer due to eating spicy or fatty foods or eating dinner late at night, right before bed. It is thus recommended to have dinner several hours before bed and avoid spicy and fatty foods.

Indigestion is another health problem people may suffer from. Symptoms include bloating, gas and fullness, especially for those who suffer from Irritable Bowel Syndrome. They are advised to eat light meals containing fluids and fibres to prevent constipation and indigestion.

Some may also suffer from constipation during the summer, due to the lack of intake of fibres and fluids such as soups, cooked or boiled vegetables, as well as poor intake of green salads with olive oil.

Ministry announces recall of Triumph models

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Al-fardan Automobiles, has announced the recall of Triumph Trident 660, and Tiger Sport 660, 2021-2023 models, over a possible obstruction of the air pressure valve, which may lead

to unstable engine idle.

The MoCI said the recall campaign comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers and ensure that dealers follow up on vehicle defects and repairs.

The MoCI said it will co-ordinate with the dealer to follow

up on the maintenance and repair works and will communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out.

The MoCI has urged all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department,

which processes complaints, inquires and suggestions through the following channels: call centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, Twitter @MOCIQATAR, Instagram MOCIQATAR. MoCI's mobile application is available on iPhone and Android devices - MOCI_QATAR

QM in expanded 45th session of the World Heritage Committee

Qatar Museums (QM) is taking part in the expanded 45th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Saudi Arabia, reflecting Qatar's effective role on a global level, a statement said.

The agenda of the expanded committee has been extended from September 10 to 25, putting a spotlight on Qatar's contribution as one of the 21 members of the committee.

Qatar is represented at the 45th session of the Heritage Committee by HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to Unesco, Dr Nasser bin Hamad al-Henzab; International Co-operation and Government Affairs director Dr Fatima Hassan al-Sulaiti and QM's International Relations Section head Dr Rashid Ali Malheya.

As part of the committee meetings, QM, in co-operation with Office of the Permanent Delegation of Qatar to Unesco, and Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science, will organise an event to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the inclusion of Al Zubarah archaeological site on the Unesco World Heritage List

on September 16. It is where experts and specialists will have the opportunity to review the preservation, restoration and site management plans.

Al Zubarah, located in Qatar, stands as a testament to the region's vibrant past, dating back to the late 18th century when it flourished as a thriving port during the pearl trading era. Its unique urban layout and architectural features offer a glimpse into the maritime and trading activities that shaped the area's history.

Recognising its exceptional value, Al Zubarah was inscribed on the Unesco World Heritage List in 2013 for its outstanding preservation and representation of a historic trading port.

The event is a testament to Qatar's commitment to preserving its cultural heritage and promoting its historical significance on the global stage. It seeks to cultivate a sense of pride and ownership among local and global communities in safeguarding this remarkable historical site for future generations, the statement added.

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SCAN NOW 



Morocco thanks Qatar and other nations for sending rescue teams after earthquake

Morocco has thanked Qatar and other countries for sending rescue teams and urgent medical aid to support relief efforts in the wake of the devastating earthquake that struck several Moroccan cities and provinces. The Moroccan Interior Ministry said in a statement that King Mohamed VI, while chairing a meeting to discuss the repercussions of the earthquake, expressed his sincere thanks to brotherly and friendly countries that showed solidarity with the Moroccan people. The Moroccan authorities conducted an accurate assessment of the needs in the field, and responded to the offers of support made by Qatar and a number of other countries, which proposed

mobilising a group of search and rescue teams, the statement added; pointing to co-ordination between those teams and their Moroccan counterparts with regard to field interventions. The Qatari International Search and Rescue Group, representative of the Permanent Committee for Rescue, Relief and Humanitarian Aid in disaster-stricken areas of brotherly and friendly countries, is helping Morocco in search and rescue operations with specialised vehicles and equipment, in addition to providing urgent humanitarian aid to alleviate the suffering of the quake victims. A strong earthquake rocked Morocco on Friday killing hundreds and causing widespread destruction. (QNA)

Qatar praises IAEA's support for regulatory frameworks

Qatar yesterday praised the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) efforts to support member states to establish nuclear safety frameworks and to build national capacities in the field of radiation protection.

This came in a statement delivered by HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IAEA's Governor from Qatar Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi at the opening of the IAEA Board of Governors meeting in Vienna.

HE Dr al-Hammadi hailed IAEA's central role in orchestrating international efforts, developing safety standards, and helping member states implement them upon their request through various advisory fields, with the aim of strengthening their regulatory functions and national infrastructure, and building competencies in the field of nuclear

and radiation safety, transportation and waste as well as in the areas of emergency preparedness and response.

He touched on Qatar's first participation in the Joint Eighth and Ninth Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) 2023, to which it has become a party.

Qatar submitted its first report to the meeting that included an overview of the State's nuclear activities and its peaceful purposes, history of its relationship with IAEA and its contribution to improving the radiation and nuclear safety infrastructure, and a summary on modernising the radiation and nuclear safety infrastructure in Qatar in co-operation with IAEA through Integrated Regulatory Review Services (IRRS), including the national policy and strategy for safety, government responsibili-

ties for safety, regulatory infrastructure, emergency preparedness and response.

Qatar urged all countries with nuclear facilities, especially in the Middle East, to expedite joining international agreements on nuclear safety, in a bid to increase reassurance of the integrity of operating systems in their reactors, and applying international nuclear safety procedures, given the long-term, transnational impact of nuclear accidents on humans and the environment, especially water resources.

Qatar's delegation to the IAEA Board of Governors meeting is chaired by HE Dr al-Hammadi; Director of International Organisations Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ali bin Khalfan al-Mansouri and Qatar's chargé d'affaires to the UN and international organisations in Vienna Jamal bin Abdul Rahman al-Jaber. (QNA)

150 dead as storm floods hit east Libya

AFP
Benghazi

At least 150 people were killed when freak floods hit eastern Libya, officials said yesterday, after storm "Daniel" swept the Mediterranean, its torrential rains earlier lashing Turkey, Bulgaria and Greece.

Images filmed by residents of the Libyan disaster area showed massive mudslides, collapsed buildings and entire neighbourhoods submerged under muddy water.

Speaking on Libyan network Almasar, Oussama Hamad, prime minister of the east-based government, reported "more than 2,000 dead and thousands missing" in the city of Derna alone, but no medical sources or emergency services have confirmed such figures.

While media outlets in eastern Libya have largely picked up on Hamad's remarks, separate tolls reported from various areas add up to far lower figures.

Mohamed Massoud, a spokesman for Hamad's Benghazi-based administration, said earlier that "at least 150 people were killed as a result of flooding and torrential rains left by storm Daniel in Derna, Jabal al-Akhdar region and the suburbs of Al-Mari".

"This is besides the massive material damage that struck public and private properties," he said.



This handout picture provided by the office of Libya's Benghazi-based interim prime minister yesterday shows people inspecting damage in a flooded area in the eastern city of Benghazi in the wake of the Mediterranean storm "Daniel".

Hundreds of residents were still believed to be trapped in difficult-to-reach areas as rescuers, backed by the army, were trying to come to their aid.

East Libyan authorities had "lost contact with nine soldiers during rescue operations", Massoud said.

He said Hamad and the head of a rescue committee as well as other ministers had travelled to Derna to evaluate the extent of the damage.

Experts have described storm Daniel – which killed at least 27 people when it struck parts of Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria in recent days – as "extreme in terms of the amount of water falling in a space of 24 hours".

Hamad's government – which in war-battered Libya rivals a UN-brokered, internationally recognised transitional administration in Tripoli – yesterday declared Derna a "disaster area".

Libya's western government under Abdelhamid Dbeibah, during an extraordinary ministerial meeting broadcast live on television, announced three days of national mourning and emphasised "the unity of all Libyans" in the face of the disaster.

The National Petroleum Company, whose main oilfields and terminals are in eastern Libya, declared "a state of maximum alert" and suspended flights between production sites where activity was drastically reduced.

Qatar participates in GSO technical council meeting

Qatar took part in the 56th meeting of the Technical Council of the GCC Standardisation Organisation (GSO) that concluded in Salalah under the presidency of Oman, and which was attended by heads and representatives of national standardisation bodies of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries.

Qatar's delegation in the two-day meeting was headed by Chairperson of the Qatar General Authority for Standardisation and Metrology Eng Mohamed bin Saud Mohamed al-Musallam.

The meeting focused on a number of important topics on its agenda, most notably the follow-up to the implementation of the decisions of the 55th Technical Council meeting. It reviewed several memos in the field of standards and metrology, including the memo of the presidency of the GSO on the adoption of draft standards and GCC technical regulations and a memo on the outcomes of GCC technical committees for specifications.

The meeting examined the mechanism for reviewing and auditing lists of draft standards and GCC technical regulations and discussed developments in the international system for the classification of chemicals.

The heads and representatives of the national



standardisation bodies of GCC member states also considered the memo of the presidency of GSO regarding the decisions of the ministerial committee for standardisation affairs, and discussed the draft agenda of the sixth meeting of the ministerial committee for standardisation affairs, in addition to discussing the memo of the presidency of the GSO regarding the appointment of the secretary-general of the Gulf Metrology Association, as well as considering a proposal to create the GCC quality award. (QNA)

HMC hosts activities to mark World Breastfeeding Month

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) hosted a variety of awareness activities throughout August to promote and support breastfeeding under the theme: "Enabling Breastfeeding: making a Difference for Working Parents".

The activities, held as an extension of the World Breastfeeding Week, included a seminar organised at Women's Wellness and Research Centre (WWRC) for Young Mothers' Group on August 16 and a workshop hosted by Qatar Parenting Network at Workington, Alfardan Centre in Al Dafna on August 19.

Both events were led by Dr Faten Tamim, breastfeeding specialist and baby-friendly hospital initiative lead and her team from WWRC.

In addition to serving as a support group network, the events featured childbirth education, breastfeeding key messages, infant feeding, nutrition and mental health. The main targets for the activities were pregnant and breastfeeding women, especially working mothers, and their families.

A session on the topic, "Balancing Work and Breastfeeding: Empowering Working and Stu-



Women's Wellness and Research Centre

dent Mothers" was held at Qatar University on August 28 to raise awareness about the challenges and importance of supporting breastfeeding among working mothers, and to facilitate a discussion among participants from diverse domains, including faculty and students. The session included an engaging interactive segment where participants were encouraged to share their experiences, ask questions, and provide suggestions.

A closing ceremony was held on August 31 at WWRC. All the activities provided opportunities for participants to reflect on the importance of breastfeeding and the efforts made to create a more

supportive environment for working mothers.

In addition to awarding winners of a poster competition, a quiz competition and unit assessments, working staff were also appreciated for engaging in exclusive breastfeeding despite working full time.

During the closing ceremony, the mothers shared their personal experiences and also described the challenges they had faced and the strategies they had adopted to successfully balance their professional responsibilities with their commitment to breastfeeding. These testimonials served as inspirations for other mothers among the audience.

Six dead as clashes rock refugee camp in Lebanon

AFP
Sidon

At least six people have been killed and dozens wounded in clashes in a Palestinian refugee camp in southern Lebanon, first responders said yesterday as fighting raged for a fifth day.

Violence broke out late Thursday in the Ain al-Helweh camp on the outskirts of the coastal city of Sidon, just weeks after similar clashes pitted members of Fatah movement against fighters.

The toll has risen to at least "six dead, one of them killed yesterday, and more than 70 wounded", said Imad Hallak from the Palestinian Red Crescent's Lebanon branch, revising an earlier figure of 60 wounded.

The casualties include both fighters and civilians, he added. Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah group urged a halt to the fighting.

"We call for an immediate ceasefire," Hezbollah said in a statement yesterday, adding that the group expressed "deep regret" at the violence.

An AFP correspondent in Sidon reported ongoing clashes with automatic gunfire and shelling, after fighting had subsided somewhat overnight.

Bullets and shells fell outside the camp's walls in past days, the correspondent said.

Lebanon's official National News Agency (NNA) said the city's southern entrance was closed to traffic.

The NNA had reported Saturday that three fighters and one civilian had been killed.

Second pilot found dead after UAE helicopter crash

The second pilot of a helicopter that crashed off the coast of the United Arab Emirates has been found dead, authorities said, days after he was declared missing, AFP reported from Dubai. A first pilot was confirmed dead on Friday after the Bell 212 helicopter went down the night before in the Gulf during a training exercise after taking off from Dubai's Al Maktoum International Airport. "Search teams have found the body of the second pilot of the AeroGulf helicopter that crashed off the coast of Umm Al Qaiwain," the state news agency WAM cited the aviation authority as saying. It added that "investigations are still underway" to determine the "circumstances of the accident". The pilots – an Egyptian and a South African – had been on a training flight for AeroGulf, the UAE's leading commercial helicopter operator.

Rescuers race against time as Morocco quake death toll mounts

AFP
Talat Nyacoub

Moroccan rescuers supported by foreign teams yesterday faced an intensifying race against time to dig out any survivors from the rubble of mountain villages after the country's strongest-ever earthquake.

The 6.8-magnitude quake struck the Atlas mountains late Friday southwest of the tourist centre of Marrakesh. It killed at least 2,681 people and injured over 2,500 others, according to the latest official toll.

In the disaster-stricken community of Talat Nyacoub, 12 ambulances and several dozen 4X4s

from the army and police were deployed while around 100 Moroccan rescuers were searching for signs of life in the collapsed buildings.

Nearby, AFP saw a Spanish team of 30 firefighters, a doctor, nurse and two technicians co-ordinating with Moroccan authorities before starting to dig, as a helicopter flew overhead.

"The big difficulty is in zones remote and difficult to access, like here, but the injured are choppered out," said Annika Coll, who heads the Spanish team.

About 70 kilometres north, another Spanish team from the Military Emergencies Unit (UME) had set up camp since Sunday night on the edge of Amizmiz village.



Emergency personnel continue rescue operations in the mountainous area of Tizi N'Test, in the Taroudant province, one of the most devastated in quake-hit Morocco, yesterday.

Moroccan and Spanish rescuers there were hard at work trying to extract five members of a

family from a house that had been crushed by the quake.

AFP journalists in Amizmiz

saw Moroccan troops handing out hundreds of blankets to residents who had lost their homes.

"My mother died, her house is ruined. My place in Amizmiz no longer exists so we sleep outside in tents with my two children aged four months and six years," said Hafid Ait Lahcen, 32, a construction worker.

"No one from the authorities has offered us accommodation. We are completely lost."

In the rural commune of Ighil, at the epicentre of the quake, helicopters made several round trips to deliver aid, AFP correspondents said.

The roads leading to the village were clogged with ambulances and cars trying to deliver

aid, but access had been cut off by a mudslide. "I walked 15 kilometres on foot from my village... to look for food," said Lahcen Ait Malik. "Our children have nothing left to eat."

Albert Vasquez, the Spanish unit's communications officer, said time was short, warning that "it's very difficult to find people alive after three days" but "hope is still there".

The rescuers are assisted by four dogs and microcameras that can be fed into the rubble in an effort to detect signs of life.

For Lahcen and Habiba Baroui, the help came too late.

An ambulance took their father, 81, to hospital with a broken leg.

DISPUTE

Transport strike hits India's Silicon Valley

Thousands of Uber and Ola call service taxis stayed off the roads of Bengaluru yesterday during a larger transport strike, affecting commuters, including school students and office workers, in India's Silicon Valley city. The strike was called to protest against a state government scheme that allows free transport of women in non-premium government buses. Private transporters said the scheme had hurt their livelihood. Uber and Ola spokespeople asked for more time to assess the impact of the strike and shed light on the exact number of taxis that were not plying in the city, which is notorious for its traffic jams.

DISASTER

Strong earthquake rocks Indonesia's North Maluku

A strong 6.2 magnitude earthquake struck Indonesia's remote North Maluku province yesterday, the German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ) said, but there were no immediate reports of heavy damage or deaths. The Indonesian geological agency pegged the magnitude at 5.9 with no threat of tsunami. North Maluku covers the northern part of the Maluku islands. The quake's epicentre was 11km northeast of Jailolo, on Halmahera island, at a depth of 168km, the agency added. The quake was felt in several cities in North Maluku and North Sulawesi. Residents of Jailolo felt the quake, said Boy Telu, a member of staff at a hotel in the town.

PEOPLE

Climber survives plunge on New Zealand mountain

A climber who plunged 1,970 feet down the side of one of New Zealand's most dangerous mountains was "exceptionally lucky" to survive after landing on snow, police said yesterday. The man was in a group of climbers approaching the snow-capped summit of Mount Taranaki on New Zealand's North Island when he lost his footing and slipped. Senior constable Vaughan Smith said the unidentified climber had sustained minor injuries during his fall on Saturday afternoon. "Thanks to recent spring weather, the ice had softened, and the snow caught the climber's fall. He is exceptionally lucky to be alive," Smith said in a statement.

CONFLICT

Taiwan detects 39 Chinese warplanes, aircraft carrier

Taiwan said it had detected 39 Chinese warplanes and an aircraft carrier near the island after a US destroyer and a Canadian frigate transited through the Taiwan Strait over the weekend. Between Sunday and yesterday morning, 26 aircraft and 13 warships were operating around the island, while another 13 planes were detected since the early hours of yesterday, according to Taiwan's defence ministry. China's Shandong carrier was also detected yesterday around Taiwan's southernmost tip Eluanbi, sailing eastward and entering the Western Pacific for training. Taiwan said 22 of the 39 planes it had recently detected crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait.

New Mideast corridor would include trains to India, Delhi says

Reuters
New Delhi

A new ports and railway corridor for the Middle East and South Asia will include train links to India, an Indian foreign ministry official said yesterday, offering new details about the plan unveiled over the weekend at the G20 summit in Delhi.

Asked about the proposals, Ausaf Sayeed, a secretary in the foreign ministry, spelled out that the corridor would include trains to India and not just links by port.

"India would be connected by railroads is the right interpretation, rather than India building the railroads," he said in response to a question at a media briefing.

The multinational rail and ports deal, which includes as members the US, Saudi Arabia, India, the European Union and the UAE, is being viewed as a response to China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative.

The corridor would be "the equivalent of the Silk Route and Spice Road," Saudi Investment Minister Khalid al-Falih said at an event in New Delhi later in the day, adding that it will provide "greater energy connectivity, green materials and processed and finished goods that will rebalance the global trade."

During Saudi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman's state visit to New Delhi yesterday, India and Saudi Arabia also discussed the possibility of trading in local currencies and expediting the negotiations for a free trade agreement between India and the Gulf Co-operation Council,

Saudi 'could open sovereign wealth fund office in GIFT City'

Saudi Arabia could set up an office of its sovereign wealth fund in India's Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT), its investment minister said in New Delhi yesterday. GIFT City is India's tax-neutral financial services centre and a key project for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with the aim of rivaling financial services centres in Dubai and Hong Kong. "I will match your offer and commit today to open an office," Saudi Investment Minister Khalid al-Falih said after India's Trade Minister Piyush Goyal invited Saudi Arabia to set up an office of its sovereign wealth fund, Public Investment Fund (PIF), in GIFT City. Falih was

in Delhi as part of Saudi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman's state visit. Goyal also said he would suggest that his ministry starts an investment promotion office in Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in 2018 joined an Indian consortium to set up a 1.2mn barrels-per-day coastal refinery and petrochemical plant in western Maharashtra, seeking a reliable outlet for their oil. Falih said India has to resolve issues including land acquisition for the planned refinery project. He said Saudi Arabia is looking to invest in sectors including oil, gas, petrochemicals, new energy, technology, manufacturing and defence.

of which Saudi Arabia is a member.

Sayeed said the two countries signed eight agreements yesterday, including a pact to upgrade their hydrocarbon energy partnership to a comprehensive energy partnership for renewables, petroleum and strategic reserves. Saudi Arabia is among the top exporters of petroleum to India. They also agreed to create a joint task force for \$100bn in Saudi investment, half of which is earmarked for a delayed refinery project along India's western coast, Sayeed said. Sayeed said that new corridor will include ports, railways, better roads and also power, gas grids and optical fibre network.

During their talks earlier in the day the Indian leader and the Saudi crown prince also discussed co-operation in space, semiconductors and collaboration in defence manufacturing as well.

India yesterday hailed its "strategic" partnership with Saudi Arabia.

"Together, we made the historic start to establish an economic corridor," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman in New Delhi. "This corridor will not only connect the two countries, but economic co-operation, digital connectivity between Asia, West Asia and Europe," Modi added.

Macron looks to 'consolidate' France's Asia-Pacific push



France's President Emmanuel Macron (centre) takes a selfie with Bangladeshi locals and members of an NGO after a boat ride during his two-day visit in Dhaka yesterday. Macron was in Bangladesh in a bid to "consolidate" France's Asia-Pacific strategy and counterbalance a "new imperialism" in a region where China's influence is increasingly being extended. "Based on democratic principles and the rule of law, in a region facing new imperialism, we want to propose a third way - with no intention to bully our partners or to lead them to an unsustainable scheme," Macron told Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

N Korea's Kim en route to Russia for talks with Putin

Reuters
Seoul/Moscow

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has set off for Russia aboard a special train, a South Korean source said, as Pyongyang and Moscow yesterday confirmed a summit with President Vladimir Putin amid Russia's deepening isolation over the war in Ukraine. Kim would visit Russia in the coming days at

the invitation of Putin, the Kremlin said, while North Korean state news agency KCNA said the two would "meet and have a talk"; without elaborating. US officials have said the pair would discuss possible arms deals to aid Russia's war in Ukraine and provide North Korea with a much-needed economic and political lifeline.

Washington and its allies have been voicing concern at recent signs of closer military co-operation between Russia and the

nuclear-armed North. It will be Kim's second summit with Putin, after the pair met in 2019.

Despite denials by both Pyongyang and Moscow, the US has said talks are advancing actively for North Korea to supply arms to Russia, which has expended vast stocks of weapons in more than 18 months of war.

The North Korean leader left aboard his train late on Sunday, a senior South Korean government official said.

LuLu Group expects to launch IPO in first half 2024, says chairman

Hypermarket chain and mall operator LuLu Group International expects to launch its initial public offering (IPO) in the first half of 2024, its chairman said yesterday, adding that the company's shares will be listed in Gulf.

The UAE-headquartered company has appointed Moelis and Co as its advisor for the IPO. LuLu's chairman and managing director Yusuf Ali told reporters on the sidelines at an event in New Delhi.

Yusuf Ali added that the IPO would be launched in the Gulf, although a specific stock exchange had not yet been decided.

Regarding investments in India, Yusuf Ali said the company has invested Rs200bn (\$2.41bn) so far and intends to raise this number to Rs500bn (\$6.03bn) by 2025.

Ex-Philippine senator in court



Former Philippine senator and human rights campaigner Leila de Lima waves as she arrives at the Duterte Trial Court in Manila yesterday. De Lima, an outspoken critic of former president Rodrigo Duterte and his anti-drug war, has been in jail for more than six years on narcotics-related charges she insists were fabricated to silence her.

President Biden leads US tech push in Vietnam

AFP
Hanoi

President Joe Biden and senior executives from top US tech firms including Google and Intel met Vietnamese business leaders yesterday after the two countries agreed to deepen co-operation as Washington seeks to counter China's growing clout.

Biden and Vietnam's ruling Communist Party chief - the country's paramount leader - struck a "comprehensive strategic partnership" as Washington pushes to boost its network of allies around Asia and the Pacific.

The US sees manufacturing dynamo Vietnam as an important part of its plan to decrease reliance on China for supplies of strategic resources, and the new pact includes agreements on semiconductors and rare earths.

Executives from tech behemoth Google, chip makers Intel and GlobalFoundries, and aviation giant Boeing joined Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken for an "innovation and investment summit".

They held talks with senior figures from a host of leading Vietnamese tech and manufacturing companies including electric car maker VinFast, Internet firm VNG and digital wallet Momo.

At the talks, Biden announced that flag-carrier Vietnam Airlines had agreed a \$7.8bn deal with Boeing to buy 50 medium-haul 737 airliners.

Other deals announced include Microsoft developing a "generative AI-based solution tailored for Vietnam" and NVIDIA teaming up with local companies to deploy artificial intelligence in the cloud, automotive and healthcare sectors.

UK man accused of spying for China claims innocence

Reuters
London

A man British media have reported was arrested on suspicion of spying for China while working as a parliamentary researcher said via his lawyers yesterday he was "completely innocent" and that he had only ever tried to educate others about China.

London's Metropolitan Police said on Sunday two men had been arrested in March under the Official Secrets Act. The Sunday Times reported one was a parliamentary researcher and yesterday the Times published a picture of who they said

the suspect was.

Lindsay Hoyle, the speaker of parliament, urged lawmakers, who sometimes use so-called parliamentary privilege to speak freely without the fear of being sued for example on the grounds of defamation, not to identify them so as not to prejudice the investigation.

The arrests are yet another blow to relations between Britain and China that ministers had hoped to revive after being strained by tensions over security, investment and human rights.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak told reporters he had raised "his very strong concerns about any interference in our parliamentary

democracy", at a meeting with Chinese Premier Li Qiang at the G20 summit in India on Sunday.

"I feel forced to respond to the media accusations that I am a 'Chinese spy'. It is wrong that I should be obliged to make any form of public comment on the misreporting that has taken place," the man said in a statement from his lawyers Birnberg Peirce referring to "extravagant news coverage".

"However, given what has been reported, it is vital that it is known that I am completely innocent. I have spent my career to date trying to educate others about the challenge and threats presented by the Chinese Communist Party."

The statement from the lawyers did not disclose the identity of the man. British police typically do not identify suspects who have been arrested until they are charged, to protect those who may be released with no charges.

The two have been released on police bail until early October, the police said. The second man has made no public comment.

The Chinese embassy in the UK said the allegations were made up. "The so-called claim that China is suspected of 'stealing British intelligence' is completely fabricated and malicious slander," the embassy said on its website, urging relevant parties to stop anti-China

political manipulation and "self-directed political force".

Britain had been hoping to improve ties with China, with Foreign Minister James Cleverly visiting Beijing last month to make the first tentative steps to repair relations.

But Britain's security services have long warned politicians about the threat posed to parliament.

Last year, MI5 director general Ken McCallum warned politicians that the Chinese authorities were playing "the long game" in cultivating contacts.

He said they were "seeking to co-opt and influence not just prominent parliamentarians from across the political landscape, but people

much earlier in their careers in public life, gradually building a debt of obligation".

But so far, government ministers suggested there would be no change in London's approach, which Sunak sees as engaging with China while being able to raise points of disagreement.

"They do represent an epoch-defining challenge to the UK, (but) we do not think it is right to reduce the approach to just one word," Sunak's spokesperson told reporters when asked whether China should be seen as a threat to Britain.

"We need to take the opportunity to engage with China, not to just shout from the sidelines."



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GULF TIMES

New sub, N-drones: Why is North Korea developing its navy?

Over the past year North Korea has moved to boost its navy with new nuclear weapons, including an underwater drone, warships, and its first operational missile submarine, unveiled on Friday.

North Korea's navy has historically been dwarfed by the country's land forces, and overshadowed by its rapidly advancing ballistic missile programme.

Now, leader Kim Jong-un has said the navy will play a key role in the country's nuclear deterrence, and analysts say it may also assure support among naval commanders and boost national pride.

"Until quite recently, Kim has largely appeared to neglect naval nuclear programmes," said Ankit Panda of the US-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "The recent refocus on naval nuclear capabilities has likely been welcomed by the Korean People's Navy."

Here is what we know about North Korea's navy and its latest advancements.

How big is North Korea's navy?

The Korean People's Army Naval Force (KPNF) has about 470 surface vessels, including guided missile ships, torpedo boats, small patrol vessels, and fire support boats, according to the South Korean military's 2022 Defence White Paper.

Its has about 70 submarines, including Romeo-class vessels of Soviet-era design, and midget submarines.

The navy also has about 40 support craft and 250 landing craft. The navy is divided into two fleet commands that cover the country's east and west coasts, and about 60% of the force is positioned south of Pyongyang, the White Paper said.

Like the N-drone, the use of new sub in a war may be limited, according to analysts

"The North Korean Naval Force possesses the capacity to carry out a surprise attack any time," the paper said.

"However, its capacity for deep-sea operations is limited because its force is primarily consisted of small, high-speed vessels."

What are the navy's new weapons?

In March and April North Korea tested what it said was a nuclear-capable unmanned underwater

attack weapon.

Dubbed "Haeil", or tsunami, the new drone system is intended to make sneak attacks in enemy waters and destroy naval strike groups and major operational ports with an underwater explosion, state media said.

Analysts said the weapon's operational concept was similar to Russia's Poseidon nuclear torpedoes, a new category of retaliatory weapon meant to create destructive, radioactive blasts in coastal areas.

However, a report by the Washington-based 38 North at the time said the weapon's slow speed and limited range made it substantially inferior to the North's existing nuclear-armed ballistic and cruise missiles in terms of time-to-target, accuracy and lethality.

In August, Kim inspected a new Amnok-class corvette, a patrol ship that state media said was capable of firing nuclear-armed cruise missiles.

"Despite the fact that the majority of the weapons and sensors on board are severely obsolete in comparison with western or Asian designs, it is a major step forward for North Korea," the specialist website Naval News said in an analysis, calling its nuclear cruise missile capability a "game changer" for potential adversaries.

On Friday, North Korea said it had launched its first operational "tactical nuclear attack submarine" and assigned it to the eastern fleet.

The vessel appears to be a modified Romeo-class submarine with 10 launch tubes, most likely armed with ballistic missiles and cruise missiles.

South Korean officials said it appears that the new submarine may not be fully functional, but they did not elaborate.

Like the nuclear drone, its use in a war may be limited compared with North Korea's more robust land-based missiles, analysts said.

"Their submarines just aren't going to be able to be as survivable as their land-based forces," said Vann Van Diepen, a former US government weapons expert who works with 38 North. "And they'll have a hard time deploying enough missiles at sea to make a big difference." — Reuters

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Democracy must prevail in Sahel

By Josep Borrell
Brussels

Some events are more memorable than others and serve as landmarks for a term in office. I will always remember attending a ceremony in Paris, in December 2019, to honour 13 French soldiers who had died in Mali. It was my first official act as High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

I also will remember my visit to Niger in July. I witnessed the tangible results of EU-Niger co-operation with the inauguration of the Gorou Banda solar power plant near Niamey. In Agadez, I also saw hundreds of social housing units built with EU support. Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum's ambitious vision and actions offered real hope in a region that had fallen prey to authoritarian drift. That is why, shortly after my visit, the military coup on July 26 was a shock for me.

After a discussion with my European counterparts, in the presence of the Nigerien minister of foreign affairs and the president of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas), I would like to share a few thoughts on the situation in Niger and the Sahel.

We must maintain unwavering

support for Bazoum, the democratically elected president, for "as long as it takes," demanding a return to constitutional order in Niger. The future of democracy across the region is at stake. The democracy that the people of Niger want, the one that Ecowas is promoting, and the one that the EU is defending around the world.

Our support for Ecowas also must not waver. There is no room for secondary arrangements or parallel mediation channels. As Europeans, we have long supported the search for "African solutions to African problems." At a time when Ecowas is taking an unprecedentedly firm and consequential stand, we must follow up our words with action.

In addition to defending its democratic values, the EU also has a major interest in seeing Niger return to the path of constitutional order. Another Sahelian country falling into the hands of a military junta would have far-reaching negative consequences for Europe in terms of security, migration flows, and the geopolitical balance of power. It is a mistake to believe that military juntas can effectively combat terrorist movements or human trafficking. The best bulwarks against such threats are democratic states with the ambition, will, and means to create new opportunities for their people.

Certainly, EU policy toward the Sahel has not been as successful as

we had hoped in recent years. We have sometimes been too focused on the security dimension alone, and our efforts to help strengthen the rule of law and provide basic services have not been sufficient or visible enough. The "strategic patience" we have shown toward the military juntas in the region has also not had any concrete results other than encouraging new vocations.

Despite this necessary self-criticism, we must not forget that Europe's roadmap in the Sahel in recent years has been a Sahelian one. We have committed our soldiers, our money, and our political capital to the region because Sahelian countries asked us to do so.

What can we do now? We can suspend our budgetary support for, and security cooperation with, Niger; work toward the adoption of sanctions; and show solidarity in response to the unjustified expulsion of the ambassador of one of our member states. However, we also must go further. Since it would not be reasonable to keep doing the same thing and expect a different result, we must adopt a different approach.

Security co-operation, the issuing of visas, and economic development programs must be reconsidered, and we must move quickly in deciding what needs to change – both with respect to Niger and other countries across the Sahel. We will need to hold this showdown with the military juntas without falling into the traps

set by regimes that rely principally on manipulation and disinformation. With little results to show for their anti-terrorism or economic-development efforts, the region's juntas have found these to be their most effective tools.

The Sahel is a test for the entire EU. No-one should be pleased by the difficulties that France is encountering in the region. It has become a convenient scapegoat for juntas looking to manufacture national cohesion while concealing their own failures and abuses. But France is not the problem in the Sahel; the military juntas are, because they lack both the means to fight terrorism effectively, and the ambition to improve their people's daily lives and future prospects.

Those who rejoice, in Europe or elsewhere, at the difficulties encountered by Europeans in the Sahel do not fully appreciate what is at stake. We will all pay a high price if we fail to remain coherent and united. Only a united Europe can influence the course of events. The coming weeks will tell whether we are up to the task of responding to expectations in this strategic region.

— Project Syndicate

● Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is Vice President of the European Commission for a Stronger Europe in the World.

Ne window for climate-vulnerable countries

By Ken Ofori-Atta and Axel van Trotsenburg
Nairobi

Amid an escalating climate emergency and a global debt crisis, calls for a new "fit for climate" global financial architecture are growing louder throughout the developing world. The urgent need for decisive action has been underscored by Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley's Bridgetown Initiative, the V20 group of climate-vulnerable countries, and the recent Paris Summit for a New Global Financing Pact. This week's Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi presented a unique opportunity to promote much-needed measures to support low-income countries in pursuing sustainable growth.

The situation is particularly urgent in Africa. According to recent estimates by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the continent requires \$2.8tn in climate financing between 2020 and 2030. But Africa currently receives only 3% of global climate finance, of which just 14% comes from the private sector. It is worth noting that the continent accounts for 3.8% of global greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions, while the Global North is responsible for 90%.

But even though the world's most vulnerable countries are bearing the brunt of a crisis they did not create, development-related climate financing has actually decreased, as has overall development aid to Africa. Preliminary 2022 figures show that flows of bilateral official development assistance (ODA) from OECD Development Assistance Committee members to Africa totalled \$34bn last year, a decline of 7.4% in real terms compared to 2021. Meanwhile, total private market assets under management surged to \$11.7tn in 2022, having increased at an annual rate of nearly 20% since 2017.

Given the severity and urgency of the climate crisis, the international community must rally to devise and agree on concrete solutions ahead

of November's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai. To build resilience against inevitable climate shocks, we must fully fund the "loss and damage" fund global leaders agreed to establish at last year's COP27 in Egypt, agree to double funding for adaptation efforts, and apply the "polluter pays" principle to maritime activities.

To reduce GHG emissions and mitigate the worst effects of climate change will require mobilising financial resources on an unprecedented scale. But the proposals currently circulating among global policymakers lack focus. In the face of the greatest challenge to human survivability, we risk getting trapped, like Sisyphus, in a cycle of futile, incremental actions. In the lead-up to COP28, we must focus on a few essential steps that could spur global climate action and help limit global warming to the internationally agreed target of 1.5C.

First, we must tackle Africa's debt problem. The international community must support vulnerable developing countries grappling with debt crises and enable them to invest in climate adaptation, resilience, and sustainable development. To achieve debt sustainability, developing countries must diversify their economies, negotiate debt-restructuring deals, and ensure transparent and accountable governance. Developed countries and global financial institutions, especially the 550 members of the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, could support these efforts by providing concessional financing for climate-adaptation policies.

Second, ongoing efforts to reform the system of multilateral development banks, including the World Bank's "Evolution Roadmap" initiative, could enable MDBs to assist developing countries at the speed and scale necessary to meet global development goals and address challenges such as climate change, energy access, and pandemic preparedness. These reforms should also seek to direct resources toward regional lenders such as the AfDB and the Inter-

American Development Bank.

Third, significant investments should be redirected toward the green transition, with a particular focus on expanding climate-vulnerable countries' access to renewable energy. To this end, African governments could initiate regional programs to harness their natural resources to produce clean energy.

Lastly, the International Development Association, the World Bank's soft-loan facility, has emerged as a crucial tool capable of delivering the level of support Africa requires. The IDA already serves as Africa's primary source of concessional financing, and African countries account for 75% of IDA commitments totalling \$34.2bn – or \$25.8bn – in the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2023.

Apart from being familiar to and trusted by governments across the continent, the IDA effectively amplifies donor contributions, a particularly valuable feature at a time when donor countries are fiscally constrained. We hope that the G20 and the Paris Summit's call for an ambitious IDA replenishment will translate into substantial support aimed at addressing the challenges facing beneficiary countries.

Despite the massive challenges ahead, establishing a new climate-ready global financial architecture remains feasible. By working together and ensuring that all countries pay their fair share, the international community could bridge political divides and achieve tangible progress toward ensuring a habitable world. But to do this, we must maintain the current momentum until we reach our goal: enabling climate-vulnerable countries to achieve sustainable, resilient growth.

— Project Syndicate

● Ken Ofori-Atta, Minister of Finance for the Republic of Ghana, is Chair of the V20. Axel van Trotsenburg is Senior Managing Director of Development Policy and Partnerships at the World Bank.

US okays updated Covid vaccines for fall

AFP
Washington

The United States yesterday approved Covid vaccines with formulations that more closely target currently circulating variants, as infections are once more on the rise. The new approvals relate to updated vaccines produced by Moderna and Pfizer that correspond to an Omicron sublineage. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) concluded that the benefits of receiving the shots outweighs the risk for those aged six months and up. “Vaccination remains critical to public health and continued protection against serious consequences of Covid-19, including hospitalisation and death,” senior FDA official Peter Marks said. Both companies released statements saying they expect their vaccines to be widely available in pharmacies and clinics within the coming days. A panel convened by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will meet tomorrow to offer clinical recommendations about who should receive the updated vaccines. However, President Joe Biden’s administration has consistently pushed for annual Covid boosters for most Americans and it is expected the CDC will offer similar guidance. That policy would be at odds with much of Europe, where boosters are generally recommended for the elderly or those at higher risk because of underlying medical conditions. This is the case in the United Kingdom, France and Germany, for example. Moderna and Pfizer’s updated vaccines target variant XBB.1.5, which has already largely faded from circulation in the United

Explainer: Who should get the shot this year?

By Michael Erman

The US drug regulator authorised updated Covid-19 vaccines from Pfizer and its partner BioNTech as well as from Moderna yesterday as the country prepares to start an autumn vaccination campaign as soon as this week. A third vaccine from Novavax remains under review. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the shots for those aged 12 and above, and authorised them for emergency use in children aged 6 months through 11 years. Advisers to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are set to meet today to discuss recommendations on who should get the vaccines this year. CDC Director Mandy Cohen said last month she expects the shots to be given annually, but not all doctors agree everyone needs them each year.

How is this year’s vaccine different from last year?

Pfizer with BioNTech, Moderna and Novavax all have created new versions of their Covid-19 vaccines. Unlike last year’s booster shot that included the original strain of the virus and the then-dominant Omicron variant, this year’s shot targets only XBB.1.5, the predominant variant through most of 2023. The companies have said their retooled vaccines have been shown in early testing to work against newer Omicron



A nurse fills up syringes with the Covid-19 vaccines for residents who are over 50 years old and immunocompromised and eligible to receive their second booster shots in Waterford, Michigan, in April last year. (Reuters)

Should seniors, the immunocompromised and pregnant people get the shot this year?

There is broad consensus among doctors that these groups should receive at least an annual Covid-19 vaccine to protect against the virus because of

their elevated risk of severe disease, hospitalisation and death. For instance, the British government’s vaccine committee said only adults 65 and older and some of these other categories will be offered the shot as they are the most likely to benefit.

Should younger, healthy adults get the new vaccine?

Many doctors believe the vaccine should be recommended annually for everyone, much like influenza vaccines. Dr William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University infectious diseases specialist and a liaison to the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunisation Practices, said a simple and straight-forward recommendation is likely best. “If you’re six months of age or older, you should get a flu vaccine. Sounds good to me for Covid also,” Schaffner said. Dr David Boulware, a University of Minnesota infectious diseases specialist, said he would recommend that healthy adults get the shots. According to research he has published, people who have received booster shots have symptoms that are less severe and shorter-lasting if they get sick. Dr Paul Offit, a University of Pennsylvania infectious disease expert and a member of the FDA’s vaccine advisory panel, said he believes the shots should be recommended annually only for high-risk groups. Studies have not shown the booster shots protect against disease in lower-risk

populations, Offit said.

Should people suffering with long Covid get the shot?

There is some data that suggests that vaccination after infection may contribute to a reduction in long Covid symptoms. Regardless, doctors have said that a second episode of Covid-19 could rekindle prior long Covid or worsen ongoing symptoms, and vaccination could help protect against that.

Should children receive a Covid-19 vaccine this year?

Opinions vary on the need for the shots in children. University of Minnesota epidemiologist Michael Osterholm said children made up a larger percentage of deaths and hospitalisations among those currently with Covid. Although hospitalisations in general are fairly low, over the past month people ages 17 and under have accounted for around 5-6% of Covid-19 hospitalisations, compared with around 4% on average over the previous two years, according to CDC data. “If parents want to vaccinate their kids, they should be allowed to,” Osterholm said. Boulware said he believes giving children boosters is unnecessary unless there is an immunocompromised person in the household. The American Academy of Pediatrics said it would make its recommendations after the CDC’s advisory committee meets.

— Reuters

States. But it holds up well against newer strains such as EG.5 and BA.2.86, said the FDA. Although the WHO and the United States ended their public health declarations of emergency in May, Americans should still be able to receive the new vaccines for free via private insurance and government subsidised programmes.

Experts have mixed opinions about how widely the new shots should be targeted. “I believe that every American is better off getting a Covid booster this fall,” Ashish Jha, who served as the White House Covid response coordinator, told AFP. “People at the highest risk will benefit the most, but even

lower-risk individuals do better if they are vaccinated.” But others would prefer the United States follow a more targeted strategy given the differing risk-benefit profiles across age groups. “I believe boosters should be given to only particular at-risk groups (like older individuals) since a one-size-fits all ap-

proach can decrease trust in public health,” said Monica Gandhi of the University of California, San Francisco. Both the Pfizer and Moderna shots, which are based on mRNA technology, carry rare risks of heart inflammation, especially among young men, for example. Covid took a horrific toll across the world, killing nearly 7mn

people, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). But thanks to vaccines, prior immunity and better treatments, the virus has become far more manageable. In the United States, excess deaths — the total number of people dying for any given cause — has been nearly normal since springtime.

50th anniversary of Pinochet coup



Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, Bolivian President Luis Arce, Chilean President Gabriel Boric, Colombian President Gustavo Petro and Uruguayan President Luis Lacalle Pou attend an official ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the coup that toppled Salvador Allende and started Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship, at La Moneda government palace, in Santiago, Chile, yesterday. (Reuters)

Blinken tipped to host China FM before year-end

Washington expects US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will host China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi in the United States before year-end, whether at next week’s UN General Assembly (UNGA) or after, the State Department said yesterday. “I’ll let the Chinese government speak to whether Wang Yi will or will not attend UNGA next week. But that said, whether it’s UNGA or whether it is after UNGA sometime before the end of the year, it is still our expectation that Secretary Blinken will host Foreign Minister Wang Yi here in the United States,” State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters. The *Wall Street Journal* reported

last week that China is planning to dispatch Vice-President Han Zheng to UNGA, instead of sending Wang Yi on a broader US trip as previously signalled, citing people briefed on the matter. The annual gathering of world leaders comes after US President Joe Biden on Sunday expressed disappointment that Chinese President Xi Jinping was not attending an upcoming summit of G20 leaders in India, but added that he was going to “get to see him.” Biden did not elaborate but the next likely opportunity for Biden to hold talks with Xi, as the two countries seek to stabilise troubled relations, is an Asia-Pacific Economic Co-

operation (APEC) summit in San Francisco in November. China’s top security agency has hinted that any meeting between Xi and Biden in San Francisco later this year will depend on the US “showing sufficient sincerity”. “As the president has said, he hopes to meet with President Xi sometime later this fall. We believe there is no substitute for one-on-one conversations at the leader level, so we will continue to work towards the possibility of that,” Miller said yesterday. Blinken travelled to Beijing in June, where he met with Wang’s predecessor, Qin Gang, in the first visit by the top US diplomat to China in five years.

Thousands mark Catalonia Day as regional parties become Spain kingmakers

Reuters
Barcelona

Thousands of Catalan independence supporters took to the streets of central Barcelona yesterday in a march to mark the Spanish region’s National Day, just as separatist parties take centre stage in efforts to form a national government. Marchers carried red, yellow and blue “Estelada” flags and chanted slogans demanding Catalonia’s secession from Spain, packing into the Plaça d’Espanya square to hear speeches from leaders of the pro-independence movement. However, Reuters journalists said turnout at this year’s La Diada events, as the National Day is known, was relatively low compared to past ones. Police pegged it at 115,000 people, while the march’s organisers said 800,000 took part. Attendance has waned in recent years as support for breaking away from Spain has decreased. But the two main Catalan parties are now in the middle of negotiations with Acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and his allies on forming a new Spanish government, and hope the talks may boost the flagging independence

cause ahead of regional elections in 2025. “Whatever political agreement we reach, whatever we propose, will be to move closer to the goal of every nation, which is to be a free and independent state,” Jordi Turull, general secretary of the Junts per Catalunya party, said at a Diada event yesterday prior to the main demonstration in the evening. Imma Caboti, a Catalan living in the United States who had returned to Barcelona for La Diada, said Catalonia’s separatist parties should continue to press for independence. “We understand the politics is about trading and giving, but we don’t want them to give up this opportunity and we want them to stand firm,” she told Reuters. To form a government following an inconclusive election in July, Sanchez, of the Socialist Party, would need the seven lawmakers of the conservative Junts and the seven votes from the more moderate Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC). Junts leader Carlos Puigdemont, who lives in self-imposed exile in Belgium as he is wanted in Spain for spearheading a failed secession bid in 2017, last week insisted on an amnesty for pro-independence leaders as a condi-

tion for talks. Puigdemont laid out tough conditions for his party’s support in parliament for Sanchez to stay in power. He called for Spain to abandon judicial actions against separatists, although he stopped short of demanding a new vote on independence. His rival at the ERC, Pere Aragonés, on Sunday went a step further, demanding a referendum. “An amnesty alone will not resolve the sovereignty conflict with the state. Catalonia wants a free vote on independence,” Aragonés, who is president of the region, said in Barcelona. Alberto Nunez Feijoo, whose conservative People’s Party (PP) won the most votes in the July 23 election, will take the first stab at a vote to form a government on September 27, but his chances are seen as slim since his party opposes any concessions to separatists. Support for Catalan independence has slipped since 2017, when a referendum which was ruled illegal by a court brought on Spain’s worst political crisis in decades. A survey published by the Catalan Centre for Public Opinion (CEO), operated by the regional government, in July found 52% opposed splitting from Spain while 42% supported independence.

Swashbuckling French tycoon gets Netflix series

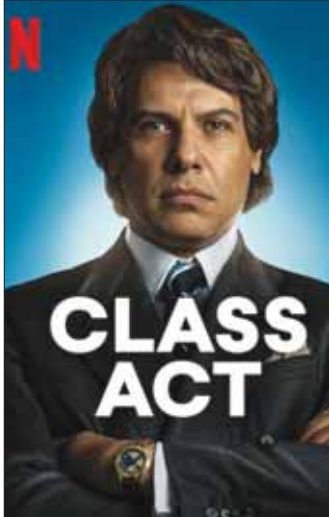
Netflix tomorrow releases a series based on the life of Bernard Tapie, the controversial and popular French business magnate who was jailed in one of football’s biggest match-fixing scandals, amid protests from his family. Tapie, who died in 2021 at 78, was also a prolific actor and occasional politician — he even became a government minister — but made his biggest mark in French public life as owner of the Olympique de Marseille (OM) football club. He also gained prominence in the early 1990s with the purchase of German sports apparel firm Adidas, getting it back on solid financial footing before a sale that blew up into a financial scandal

that reached the upper echelons of French politics. The self-made man’s fall was as spectacular as his life, with several criminal convictions, including for fixing a Marseille match. The series “neither attributes nor deflects blame”, screenwriter and series co-creator Olivier Demangel told AFP, calling it “pure fiction”. Tapie is played by French actor Laurent Lafitte, whose picture displaying a clear likeness to his subject has been plastered on French billboards ahead of the launch of the seven-episode series that retraces 30 years of Tapie’s life. It starts in 1966 with his first

successful appearance in a TV talent show, and ends with his incarceration for match-fixing in 1997. “This is the story of a television salesman who wanted to get into television and who ended up incorporating television,” Demangel said. Tapie himself was hostile to the Netflix project when the streaming giant first floated it three years ago, according to director Tristan Seguela, who knew Tapie personally. “He said to me: ‘I’ll stop you right there, the answer is no’,” Seguela told AFP, saying however that he ignored Tapie’s objections. Since then, Tapie’s daughter Sophie has come out against the

show, saying “there is no limit to disrespect”. His widow, Dominique, told the *Monaco-Matin* newspaper that “I don’t fear this series, I deplore it”. Seguela said it was a deliberate choice to keep Tapie’s family at arm’s length, to preserve “our freedom” in creating the fictional profile. Demangel said the main sources for the show were around 40 books on Tapie and masses of press reports, video archives and court documents. “This is our take on this person and his life,” he said. Among the liberties taken by the creators was the attribution of some scenes when Tapie was urban affairs minister to president

Francois Mitterrand, when they really involved prime minister Pierre Berezgoy. Actor Lafitte said he was not certain that the series, which he said was “very French”, would appeal to international audiences. “Americans will say: So this is about a guy who starts with nothing and makes it. Big deal,” he laughed. French-produced shows already on Netflix include the gentleman detective story *Lupin* with Omar Sy, political thriller *Marseille* starring Gerard Depardieu, and, most recently, *Bardot* which recounts the early life of superstar actor Brigitte Bardot. tells the story of the superstar actor’s early life.





‘Voices of Qatar’ aims to inspire global travellers to visit country



Tania al-Majid



Chef Noof al-Marri



Amal al-Shammari



Mohamed al-Sada



Shaima Sherif



Khalifa al-Haroon

QT's new initiative to reveal untold stories by Qatar's cultural changemakers

Qatar Tourism launched its newest initiative, ‘Voices of Qatar’ yesterday, celebrating local talents and their impact on Qatar’s past, present, and future.

Through filmed interviews and personal narratives, the latest series of videos offer visitors a fresh and unique perspective on Qatar – its heritage and its contemporary culture.

From master chefs to innovators, artists to sports champions, ‘Voices of Qatar’ goes behind the scenes with cultural changemakers whose stories on challenges faced, triumphs won and changes made will surely inspire travellers to visit Qatar and experience the waves of their impact.

Cultural changemakers that audiences will be able to watch and hear from, include: Tania al-Majid, deputy director of Curatorial Affairs, National Museum of Qatar (NMQ); Chef Noof al-Marri, Master of the Desert Rose Cafe, NMQ; Amal al-Shammari, director, Embrace Doha; Shaima Sherif, managing director, Embrace Doha; Mohamed al-Sada, pearl diver; Khalifa al-Haroon, founder, I Love Qatar; Maryam al-Homaid, artist and designer; Yousef Ahmad, artist; Mubarak al-Malik, street artist; Chef Edgar Hurtado, executive chef at Curiosa by Jean-Georges, Four Seasons Hotel; Nasser al-Attiyah, rally champion; Dr Gonzalo Castro de la Mata, executive director, Earthna; Nada al-Sulaiti, founder and designer, Hairaat; Ghanim al-Sulaiti, vegan guru and eco entrepreneur; Children and young explorers.

Available on the Visit Qatar YouTube channel, the latest initiative comes on the heels of Qatar’s impressive achievement of welcoming more visitors in the first eight months of 2023 than in all of 2022, a true reflection of Qatar’s ability to sustain positive momentum well beyond the FIFA World Cup tournament.

Since the start of the year, QT has launched numerous events



Maryam al-Homaid



Nada al-Sulaiti



Ghanim al-Sulaiti



Yousef Ahmad



Mubarak al-Malik



Chef Edgar Hurtado



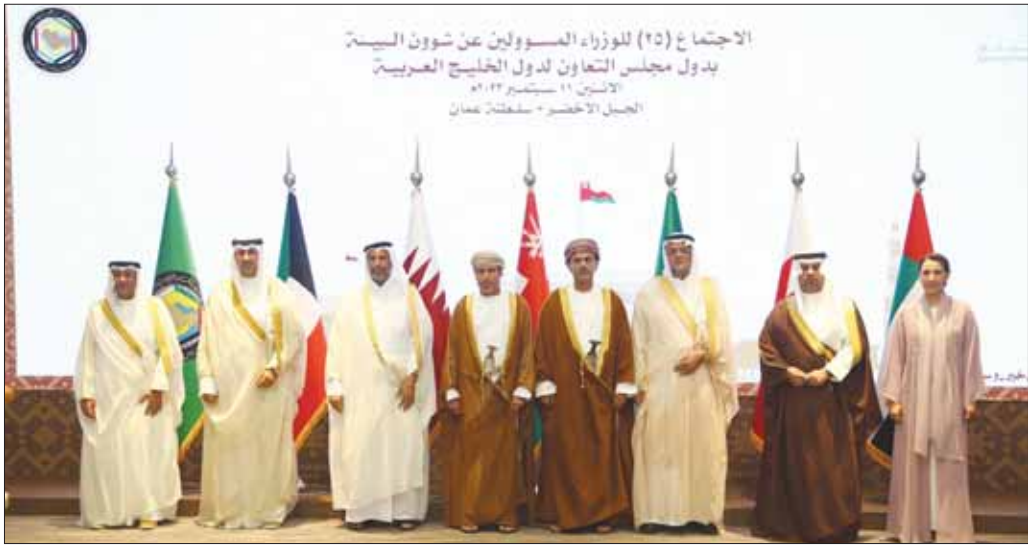
Nasser al-Attiyah



Dr Gonzalo Castro de la Mata

and festivals, encouraging travellers to visit Qatar. Looking ahead, QT is gearing up to host the Geneva International Motor Show

Qatar in October, which promises to be a fully immersive celebration of automotive excellence across the country.



Qatar attends GCC climate affairs meeting in Oman



Qatar participated yesterday in the 25th meeting of the ministers responsible for climate affairs in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, held in Oman.

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 meeting which discussed several environ-

mental and climate issues on the agenda.

Qatar also participated in the 43rd meeting of the GCC under-secretaries responsible for environmental affairs. (QNA)

HBKU team creates Mena’s first AI match prediction model

From Page 1

“We are grateful to QNRF for their unwavering support of this critical and valuable study. Thanks to them and the QFA, we were able to lend our expertise toward strengthening pro-

fessional football in Qatar,” said al-Mulla.

“To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study focusing on players’ performance to predict the winning team based on deep learning techniques in any Mena region

football league. The proposed machine learning model will support players, coaching staff and team management in Qatar to focus on specific performance metrics that may help them win football matches,” said Dr Alam.

Stars of Science underlines benefits of innovation culture in the Middle East



Stars of Science Season 15 explores potential and capabilities of Arab youth.

Almost 60% of the Arab world’s population is made up of people under 25 years of age, and the potential, capabilities and promise that this demography holds for scientific innovation are being explored through Season 15 of *Stars of Science*.

A platform for showcasing regional talent and innovation, Qatar Foundation’s (QF) long-standing edutainment show will see *Stars of Science* participants develop their solutions with the support of mentors and an experienced team, progressing through several elimination rounds to secure a spot in the Grand Final, where two winners will each be awarded a share of the prize in seed funding.

Prof Fouad Mrad, consultant and long-time juror on *Stars of Science*, commented on the cultural impact *Stars of Science* has on the Arab entrepreneurial ecosystem: “The show incentivises people not to settle on reading books and have award certificates hanging on the walls,” he said. “We need to become productive individuals who innovate, enjoy the entrepreneurial journey, and drive transformation in creating jobs for others instead of plead-

ing for one.” Yosouf al-Salehi, the executive director of Qatar Science & Technology Park – also a member of QF – and a previous juror on *Stars of Science*, believes the show’s success lies in its ability to provide accessibility and de-mystifying science, which is crucial in mobilising the next generation of Arab innovators. “The region as a whole has made significant strides in digital infrastructure and sustainable development over the years,” he said.

“However, there still remains a lot to tackle in terms of promoting entrepreneurship, encouraging risk-taking, and raising awareness of technology-driven solutions. In this context, *Stars of Science* has done a fantastic job in bridging the knowledge gap and breaking down the cultural barriers to achieving that mindset.”

The *Stars of Science* alumni community, with 161 members across 18 Arab countries, illustrates the show’s influence in the region. In the last 15 years the show has launched over 55 alumni into entrepreneurial ventures, navigating product and business development, investors funding, and strategic partnerships.

Notable winners and finalists have demonstrated the boundless power of innovation across diverse sectors.

Season 2 finalist, Ahmad al-Ghazi, from Saudi Arabia invented a motorised walker for the elderly. His flagship product ‘Can-Go’, the world’s smartest walking cane, was launched in May 2022 from his Silicon Valley firm, Can Mobilities.

In food tech, Season 4 winner Khalid Aboujassoum – also the first Qatari winner of *Stars of Science* – introduced ‘Oliver’, a smart cooking appliance, and more recently ‘The Oliver fleet’, a “set-it-and-forget-it” autonomous cooking solution for commercial kitchens of all types and sizes.

After her participation in *Stars of Science* Season 10, Dr Nour Majbour, from Syria, emerged as a symbol of female empowerment in the Arab world, inspiring women to pursue a future in STEM. She registered her project QABY, a research kit designed to diagnose Parkinson’s disease in its early stages through antibodies, as a trademark with QF. She is now serving as a Transitional Biomarkers Senior Scientist at AstraZeneca, UK.

Qatar takes part in meeting of GCC directors of public security



Qatar participated in the fourth meeting of Directors of Public Security of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) held yesterday at the headquarters of the General-Secretariat in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Director of Public Security Maj Gen Abdullah Mohamed al-Suwaidi led Qatar’s delegation to the meeting. The meeting discussed an array of topics on its agenda that would bolster co-operation and joint security action in GCC states. (QNA)