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Amir, Guyana president hold talks on bolstering relations

•Qatar and Guyana sign agreements on economic co-operation and investments



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Guyanese President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali witness the signing of agreements.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Guyanese President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali holding official talks.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani reviews the guard of honour.

QNA
Georgetown

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and President of Guyana Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali held an official talks session yesterday at the presidential palace in Georgetown.

At the outset of the session, the president welcomed His Highness the Amir and the accompanying delegation, wishing relations between the two countries further development and growth.

He also expressed his aspiration that this visit would further consolidate co-operation relations between the two countries.

For his part, the Amir expressed his thanks and appreciation to the president for the invitation and warm reception, hoping that the visit would contribute to strengthening bilateral relations and pushing them to broader horizons at all levels.

During the session, they discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to enhance and develop them, especially in the field of investment and energy, in

addition to discussing a number of topics of common interest.

The talks session was attended by HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Thani, HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz al-Khalifa, and a number of senior officials.

On the Guyanese side, it was attended by Prime Minister Mark

Amir stresses importance of agreements

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani stressed the importance of the agreements signed by Qatar with Guyana in advancing economic co-operation between the two countries to greater levels, noting that he had held fruitful talks with the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali. In a post on his official account on the social media platform

X, His Highness the Amir said: "Today, I held fruitful talks with President Mohamed Irfaan Ali, during which we agreed to advance our economic co-operation to greater levels. For this purpose, we signed important agreements. I am happy with my visit to Guyana, 'land of many waters' as it is called. Thanks to its president for the invitation and warm reception." (QNA)

Phillips, Vice-President Dr Bharat Jagdeo, Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance Dr Ashni Singh, Minister of Natural Resources Vikram Bharat, Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce Oneide Walrond, Presidential Assistant and Personal Representative of the President and Minister Responsible for South Europe, the Middle East and Africa George Andrew Hallaq, and a number of senior officials.

Prior to the talks, the Amir and the president held a bilateral meeting in which they discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to strengthen and develop them. The Guyanese president held a luncheon banquet in honour of

the Amir and the accompanying delegation.

His Highness the Amir and the president also witnessed the signing of two agreements and a memorandum of understanding between the governments of the two countries.

They witnessed the signing of an agreement on economic, commercial and technical co-operation and an agreement on the encouragement and protection of mutual investments. They also witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding for co-operation in the legal fields.

The signing ceremony was attended by members of the official delegation. It was also attended by a number of ministers and senior officials of Guyana. (QNA) Page 12

Amir leaves Guyana for El Salvador

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani left Georgetown yesterday after a state visit to Guyana, heading to El Salvador on an official visit. The Amir and the accompanying delegation were seen off at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport among others by Guyanese Prime Minister Mark Phillips, Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce Oneide Walrond, Minister of Public Service Sonya Parag. Upon departure, His Highness the Amir sent cables to Guyanese President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali and Prime Minister Mark Phillips, expressing his sincere thanks and appreciation for the warm welcome accorded to him and the accompanying delegation during the state visit.

The Amir expressed happiness at exchanging views on issues of common interest and ways to support and enhance friendly relations and co-operation between the two countries in various fields for the interest of the two peoples, wishing the president and the prime minister good health and wellness, and the friendly people of Guyana continued progress and prosperity. The Amir was accompanied by an official delegation. (QNA)

Ministry launches e-service for amending occupations on work permits

The Ministry of Labour has unveiled a digital service for amending occupations under a general permit, allowing employers to apply for job changes on behalf of their employees. This process can now be processed without requiring a visit to the ministry's main office or its branch locations.

The launch of the new services aligns with the ministry's strategy to develop the digital infrastructure for the labour sector in a way that contributes to

facilitating and streamlining the services provided to those dealing with the ministry.

The new service allows employers to modify the occupations/professions of their employees with a valid work permit, and to inquire about the status of their application, in addition to allowing a direct progression to the attestation system for contracts between the employer and the employee and export information about the modified occupation to the Ministry of Interior. (QNA)

At least 2,300 dead in Libya floods

AFP
Derna, Libya

At least 2,300 people were killed in catastrophic floods that tore through the Libyan city of Derna, the emergency services said yesterday, but a far higher death toll is feared.

As global concern spread, multiple nations offered to urgently send aid and rescue teams to help the war-scarred country that has been overwhelmed by what one UN official labelled "a calamity of epic proportions".

Massive destruction shattered the Mediterranean coastal city of Derna, home to about 100,000



Flash floods in eastern Libya killed more than 2,300 people in the Mediterranean coastal city of Derna alone.

people, where multi-storey buildings on the river banks collapsed and houses and cars vanished in the raging waters.

Emergency services reported an initial death toll of more than 2,300 in Derna alone and said over 5,000 people remained missing while about 7,000 were injured.

But officials from the rival government in eastern Libya said "thousands" more perished in the floods in Derna and that the death toll could surpass 10,000.

The floods were caused by torrential rains from Storm Daniel, which made landfall in Libya on Sunday after earlier lashing Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey.



2nd national forum for human rights kicks off

The 2nd national forum for human rights kicked off yesterday in Doha under the theme of "Human rights of persons with disabilities, protection, and empowerment". Organised by the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and Family, the forum aims to provide a national dialogue platform to share knowledge and expertise, in addition to building capacities, reviewing legislations, policies, plans and programmes relevant to rights of persons with disabilities in Qatar, as

well as promoting their integration into the community like other social segments. HE the Chairperson of NHRC Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiya said the forum is one of the most importance concerns of human rights in the Qatari community after the recognition of the importance of reviewing the national efforts related to respect, protection, and realisation of the rights of this social segment, along with the need to enable them to live independently and integrate into the community. (QNA)



Amiri Air Force and US F-35 aircraft hold joint exercise



The Amiri Air Force's F-15 aircraft conducted a joint exercise with four F-35 aircraft from the US at Al-Udeid Air Base. The three-day exercise included several aerial manoeuvres, within the framework of enhancing co-operation in the field of training and exchange of experiences. (QNA)



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Aligning with carbon market initiatives 'important' for Qatar: minister

By Pratap John
Business Editor

He Minister of Environment and Climate Change Sheikh Dr Faleh bin Nasser bin Ahmed bin Ali al-Thani has stressed the need for Qatar to ensure that it aligns with international carbon market initiatives.

In his opening remarks at the two-day 'Workshop on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and Climate Finance Mechanisms' yesterday Sheikh Dr Faleh noted: "We must build the structures and capacities needed to efficiently engage in international carbon markets to achieve this."

A "well-functioning" framework and strategy for the implementation of a carbon market mechanism is therefore essential, he said. The minister said it is obvious that the public sector has an important role to play in climate mitigation. "However, it is also of highest importance that we engage the private sector in the climate transition and not least ensure that they can utilise the opportunities associated with Article 6."

Despite some progress, it is known that the world faces incredible climate change challenges. Scientists warn that a 2C rise of warming above pre-industrial levels will be exceeded during the 21st century, unless we achieve substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

He said many countries are looking for ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop carbon markets and climate finance mechanisms as a tool to reaching this goal.

"This workshop aims to feed into an inclusive process of developing an appropriate carbon market strategy for the State of Qatar and attempts to ensure that all relevant actors are well informed



HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Sheikh Dr Faleh bin Nasser bin Ahmed bin Ali al-Thani delivering opening remarks at the two-day 'Workshop on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and Climate Finance Mechanisms' yesterday.

PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam

and updated on the latest developments of the international carbon markets.

"For this purpose, we have invited highly qualified experts, both from Qatar and from all over the world, to participate at this workshop and sharing insights and knowledge on recent carbon market developments." Carbon markets, the minister highlighted, "are not something new". The concept was introduced in the USA in the early 1990s.

The notion was internationally recognized in the Kyoto Protocol, which was signed in 1997 and extended during COP18 in Doha in 2012. The Kyoto Protocol introduced the concepts of project-based mechanisms and emissions trading, known as the Joint Implementation (JI) and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

To meet the commitment of the Kyoto Protocol, at the time, the European Union and its member states implemented the first regional Emissions Trading System

(ETS) in 2005. The EU ETS remains the biggest carbon trading scheme in the world until today. In 2015, the Kyoto Protocol was replaced with the Paris Agreement. Article 6 of this agreement introduced the concept of international carbon market approaches.

The concept allows countries to voluntarily cooperate with each other to achieve emission reduction targets set out in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Carbon trading is rapidly growing, with many new initiatives currently being launched around the world. In fact, according to the World Bank, more than two thirds of the world's countries are planning to include carbon markets mechanisms as part of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Aside from the European and US trading systems already mentioned, China, South Korea, UK, and the United Nations already have functioning trading schemes in place.

"I believe that this workshop gives us a good starting point for a collaborative process and hope that this workshop serves as a great opportunity to start our process," Sheikh Dr Faleh said and thanked its partner the Al-Attiyah Foundation for its expertise and knowledge on this very important topic. He also thanked all contributors for sharing their knowledge and insights.

"I should finally take the opportunity to put our attention to the fact that COP28 meeting will be arranged in Dubai in early December this year. With Qatar having a strong presence, gathering with world leaders and climate elite for intensive discussions, including on climate finance, I believe this workshop will provide valuable insights for our participation," the minister added.

QRDI Council, MoECC to drive research for sustainable future

Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), a division of Qatar Research, Development and Innovation (QRDI) Council, in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), has announced the commencement of the inaugural cycle of the joint Climate Change and Environment Research Call.

This initiative marks a pivotal step in addressing Qatar's environmental challenges and advancing the fight against climate change through scientific research, development, and innovation. The Climate Change and Environment Research Call, which will close on November 14, welcomes eligible Lead Principal Investigators (LPIs) affiliated with approved institutions within Qatar. Collaborative institutions, both within and outside Qatar, are encouraged to participate, with up to 20% of the yearly awarded budget available for partners outside Qatar.

This partnership between QRDI Council and the MoECC signifies a shared commitment to addressing environmental challenges and fostering a greener, more resilient future for Qatar. The call for research proposals is a significant step towards achieving these goals, ultimately contributing to Qatar's national and international sustainability targets.

Dr Hisham Sabir, executive director of QNRF Programmes Office, a division of QRDI said: "At QRDI, we are dedicated to fostering research excellence and driving innovation that benefits Qatar and the world. The joint Climate Change & Environment Research Call in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Climate



The new initiative aims to address Qatar's environmental challenges.

Qatar has long demonstrated its commitment to environmental sustainability and combating climate change, making climate action a top priority

Change is a testament to our commitment to supporting research that addresses critical national challenges."

office and authorised research officer at MoECC.

Qatar has long demonstrated its commitment to environmental sustainability and combating climate change, making climate action a top priority. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, in his address to the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2021, emphasised Qatar's dedication to developing climate change-related technologies and clean energy solutions.

Qatar's vulnerability to climate change is heightened by its desert and arid environment and extensive coastlines, making it essential to address rising sea levels and other climate-related threats. Qatar's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement further underscores its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2030, highlighting the urgent need for research and innovation.

Ooredoo marathon to draw 15,000 participants

Ooredoo Doha Marathon 2024, scheduled for February 16, will bring together more than 15,000 participants competing over multiple distances, a statement said. Registration is open for runners wishing to take part.

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



Sabah Rabiah al-Kuwari

runners can qualify 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 Rabiah 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).

Municipality minister meets chief of Bureau International des Expositions



HE the Minister of Municipality Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie met yesterday with Secretary-General of the Bureau International des Expositions Dimitri Kerkentze. The meeting discussed aspects of co-operation, especially with regard to the latest developments in the logistical and technical preparations necessary for Qatar's hosting of the Expo 2023 Doha from October 2, 2023 to March 28, 2024, under the theme "Green Desert, Better Environment." as the exhibition aims to encourage sustainable innovations and reduce desertification to preserve the environment, in accordance with the principles of the Qatar National Vision 2030 which places environmental management and sustainable development at the top of its priorities. (QNA)

QNL programme aims to protect cultural properties, documents

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Qatar National Library's (QNL) programme, Himaya, is effectively countering trafficking of cultural properties and documents, a top official said yesterday.

"The whole world is facing the problem of trafficking of cultural properties which is a threat to the history and identity of the nations. The world needs collective efforts to prevent such actions. That is why we have launched the Himaya programme," HE the Minister of State and QNL president Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kuwari explained.

He was speaking to Gulf Times on the sidelines of the two day workshop 'Second Doha Workshop on Countering the Trafficking of Cultural Property with a focus on Documentary Heritage' organised by QNL.

"The protection of cultural properties is a very important matter. Fortunately, Qatar National Library has a leading programme



Dignitaries at the event.



A section of the audience at the workshop. PICTURES: Thajudheen

called Himaya to protect the cultural properties. Himaya, the Arabic word stands for protection and this initiative is currently well-known and has been accepted by the international community. All the representative and experts in the field are meeting and discussing the issues to get the best outcomes," explained Dr al-Kuwari.

In partnership with the General Authority of Customs and in collaboration with the US, Italian, and French embassies in Qatar, QNL aims to deepen the understanding

and implementation of best practices in preventing the illicit trade of cultural property and documentary heritage.

Dr al-Kuwari noted: "The increasing global threat is evident, despite international conventions like those from Unesco in 1970 and Unidroit in 1995. As smugglers harness modern social media and with geopolitical unrest further propelling these illicit activities, our history, culture, and heritage face unprecedented risks."

Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Jamal,

chairman of the General Authority of Customs; Jean-Baptiste Faivre, ambassador of France; Paolo Toschi, ambassador of Italy; Timmy Davis, US ambassador; and Tan Huijs, executive director of QNL were among the other dignitaries in attendance at the event.

Al-Jamal, said: "Our participation today underscores our crucial role in advancing global efforts to combat the illegal trade in cultural assets. The authority has enacted regulations regarding prohibitions, import and export restrictions,

and the unauthorised transfer of cultural properties. This reiterates Qatar's commitment to fulfilling its obligations under international treaties, particularly the Unesco 1970 Convention aimed at curbing the trafficking of illicit cultural property."

Italian ambassador Toschi pointed: "We are proud to stand alongside QNL in their 'Himaya Project' for the protection of cultural heritage and the fight against illicit trafficking. When it comes to such topics, Italy is one of the most

active countries, both at a national and international level thanks to our experts and bodies such as the Carabinieri force, for the protection of cultural heritage."

According to French envoy, Faivre: "France is highly committed to the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property at the global level. This engagement should go beyond borders; increasing the international co-operation is key. We are delighted today to welcome three high-level French experts to contribute to the workshop."

"Understanding our past is crucial to understanding our present, and to building a future that honours our values and traditions. Cultural heritage artefacts are our gateway to that historical understanding. That is why the United States and Qatar worked during our strategic dialogue to increase our ongoing co-operation in heritage protection, and why several US agencies and the Smithsonian Institute have convened at Qatar National Library to be part of this important workshop," added US ambassador Davis.



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Labour minister, ILO official discuss enhanced co-operation



HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri met yesterday with the visiting Director-General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Gilbert Houngbo.

During the meeting, they discussed aspects of co-operation between Qatar and the ILO, ways to support and develop them and ways to enhance the continuation of bilateral partnership in the labour sector. They emphasised the importance of sustained dialogue as a strategic ap-

proach to enrich the work environment by sharing knowledge and strengthening collaboration across various sectors, alongside mutual visits and experience sharing.

Following the meeting, HE the Minister of Labour and the ILO director-general were briefed on the final phase of the training programme for the labour ministry's staff on mediation in labour disputes, which is organised by the International Training Centre of ILO. (QNA)

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Qatar calls for prioritising education in war, peace

Need to protect schools, universities from attacks stressed

Qatar has affirmed that the responsibility to respect, protect and activate the right to education necessitates putting education at the top of priorities in times of war and peace alike, with the necessity to protect schools, universities, and all educational facilities from attack, as well as always recognising their civilian nature, for them to remain as safe havens, promoting peace, development and stability.

This came in a speech delivered yesterday by HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater via video conference, at an event in Geneva, on the occasion of the celebration of the fourth International Day to Protect Education from Attack.

The event was organised by the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN in Geneva, the Education Above All Foundation (EAA) and the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), under the auspices of the Permanent Missions of Argentina, Nigeria, Norway and Spain to the UN in Geneva, as well as the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) core group, the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies, and Save the Children.

HE AlKhater expressed Qatar's appreciation for all those who worked courageously and tirelessly to ensure educational opportunities for all children, especially for those living in emergency situations due to conflicts or crises. She



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater.

pointed out that despite these sincere efforts, attacks on education and the military use of schools have continued unabated over the past years, by all warring parties in different parts of the world, making it impossible for millions of children to continue their studies and education. She stated that estimates show that half of out-of-school children live in countries affected by conflicts.

She stressed that conflict can never be an excuse to deprive a person of their right to education, adding that disrupting education will not only lead children to risk their lives temporarily but will affect their entire future and the future of their communities.

HE AlKhater said Qatar's commitment to supporting education has always remained steadfast and unwavering, where the provision of quality education nationally and globally is set

as a top priority in its strategic vision. She noted the invaluable support provided by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, an advocate for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), in directing efforts towards protecting education and providing quality education to children who are out-of-school, through her initiative "Education Above All", in addition to initiating the UN General Assembly declaration of September 9 as International Day to Protect Education from Attack.

She pointed out that Qatar has adopted education as one of the strategic tools for regional and international co-operation, with the Education Above All Foundation (EAA) implementing projects via the "Educate a Child" programme, together with 82 global partners in 50 countries, achieving its goal of helping more than 10mn of the most marginalised and out-of-school children by providing them with access to a good primary education.

HE al-Khater pointed out that EAA and other Qatari development and charitable organisations such as the Qatar Fund for Development and Qatar Charity, have built and renovated schools in Palestine and assisted Palestinian refugee students to complete their university education. In addition there is Qatar's support to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) which led to the acceleration of its programmes aimed at providing educational opportunities for Palestinian refugees. (QNA)

Qatari woman wins US award

The US embassy in Qatar has announced that Qatari national Wadha Nasser al-Jabor (pictured) has received a financial award to bring her peer-to-peer education project, "STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) for All," to life in Qatar. She applied for and won the 2023 IVLP Impact Award, which was open worldwide to alumni of the US International Visitor Leadership Programme (IVLP), a Department of State exchange programme in which

al-Jabor participated in Fall 2022. Al-Jabor, a statistician and leadership coach, will use STEAM for All to allow Qatar's children and youth to explore hands-on learning in robotics, programming, circuitry, 3D modelling, and other areas of STEAM. While developing her STEAM for All idea, al-Jabor travelled to San Diego, California; Washington, DC; and Boston, Massachusetts; and Cleveland, Ohio in the US on an IVLP trip themed "Youth Volunteerism and Civic Engagement."



Qatar Charity's WASH project aids IDPs in Sudan

The technical teams of Qatar Charity (QC) have embarked on implementing a new qualitative project to provide drinking water, hygiene tools, and sanitation facilities to internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in the sheltering centres in Port Sudan.

The health authorities in the Red Sea State described the project as a life-saving initiative in terms of providing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in the IDPs camps.

This project is part of Qatar Charity's humanitarian interventions for those affected by the ongoing crisis. It includes providing safe drinking water supplies for 2,500 people for a period of 60 days, distributing 1,200 water collection and storage equipment, conducting WASH campaigns in the sheltering centres, providing hygiene materials and supplies, as well as the maintenance of sewage facilities in some of the targeted centres.

Najlaa Ahmed Ali, the Director of the Environmental Health and Food Control Department in the Red Sea State, said that Qatar Charity has made significant efforts to provide drinking water and to promote hygiene for the IDPs.

She explained that the project targets all the sheltering centres



The project is part of Qatar Charity's humanitarian interventions for those affected by the ongoing crisis.

in Port Sudan, where basic services of top priority are provided to the IDPs, including the provision of pure drinking water and supervision of water chlorination through training volunteers in 12 sheltering centres.

She revealed that Qatar Charity has implemented cleanliness campaigns, distributed hygiene tools and supplies, including the distribution of waste collection containers, conducted maintenance of sewage systems, and constructed many toilets and

handwashing facilities, to ensure proper sanitation. She added: "It is a substantial project with full support from Qatar Charity and it meets a significant need for the IDPs, and we consider it a life-saving project." (QNA)



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'Qatar pays special attention to Arab, Islamic systems'

HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem affirmed that Qatar pays special attention to the Arab and Islamic systems concerned with the issues and concerns of its people, and their participation in decision-making and advancing development.

In a speech delivered on his behalf by HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti during the opening session of the 10th Annual Conference of Association of Secretaries-General of Arab Parliaments, which kicked off in Doha yesterday under the theme "Digital Democracy and Social Communication and the Role of Parliaments in Strengthening them," he stressed the importance of the conference, given that the association is an effective parliamentary system.

He noted the Shura Council's keenness to provide all support and assistance to the association in order to achieve its goals and perform the responsibilities entrusted to it efficiently and competently, pointing out that the secretariats-general are the lifeblood of parliaments and popular participation, and that the association represents an advisory centre and repository of parliamentary expertise.

In this regard, he praised the efforts of the secretariat-general in overcoming the tasks of Arab parliaments and legislative councils and assisting them in implementing their legislative and administrative plans and programmes.

HE al-Ghanem said that enhancing co-operation, exchanging experiences, and reviewing best practices between Secretariats-General in parliaments would develop the performance of secretariats-general and improve the quality of their services, which would be reflected in the performance of parliamentary councils.

HE the Speaker drew attention to the tensions and instability that the Arab world is witnessing in some parts of it, particularly the worsening situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, due to the racist and aggressive practices of the occupying entity and its extremist government, which is escalating its repressive measures against the Palestinian people, and working to destabilise the countries of the entire region.

He pointed out in a related context that the occupied territories are witnessing extremely delicate and dangerous situations with the growth of hate speech and the escalation of repeated violations of the Al-Aqsa Mosque courtyard and storming cities and arresting Palestinian youth under the pretext of resisting the occupation, which led to the martyrdom of more than two hundred Palestinians during this year, including women and children.



HE al-Ghanem noted that the Arab region has been suffering for more than seven decades as a result of the aggression and occupation of Arab lands, stressing that all of this makes co-operation and solidarity an urgent necessity at all levels.

He added that as parliamentarians representing the Arab peoples, they should call for the need for the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the various national and international parliamentary organizations to adopt a serious and firm stance against the repeated brutal attacks committed by the Israeli authorities against the brotherly Palestinian people and that the international community and the UN have to work to stop these attacks.

At the beginning of his speech after welcoming the participants, HE the Speaker of the Shura Council extended his deepest condo-

lences and sympathy to Morocco and Libya, the government and people, for the victims of the devastating earthquake that Morocco was exposed to, and for the victims of the floods that swept northeastern Libya, wishing a speedy recovery for the injured, and safety for the two brotherly countries and their people.

For his part, in his remarks during the opening session of the conference, HE the Shura Council Secretary-General, President of the Association of Secretaries-General of Arab Parliaments Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al-Fadala stressed the great interest that Qatar, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, attaches to the efforts, activities, and achievements of the Association of Secretaries-General of Arab Parliaments through its interaction with the latest regional and international issues. (QNA)

The Ivy cast dazzles Qatar

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Turkish celebrities Burçin Terzioglu, Hazal Türesan and Yigit Kirazci, the lead cast of the soon-to-be-launched Turkish series *The Ivy*, yesterday attended a promotional event in Doha. Prominent members of Qatar's business, entertainment, and media industry attended the private screening of the first episode at an event hosted by TOD at Doha Oasis.



Yigit Kirazci, Burçin Terzioglu and Hazal Türesan (left to right) at the event in Doha yesterday. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

In TOD Original's *The Ivy*, a murder shatters the illusion of perfection in Eden Garden Houses, an enclave for the wealthy. The arrival of Arzu (Hazal) unravels hidden secrets, leading to her own demise. Tensions escalate as Ezgi (Burçin) accuses her husband Kerem (Onur Tuna) of the crime, prompting a clash of denials and accusations.

Directed by Gökmen Usta, with a script written by Savas Korkmaz, *The Ivy* is available in Arabic for Mena viewers. "Turkish content has a special place in the hearts of Arab audiences, captivating them with its rich storytelling, emotional depth, and cultural resonance. The charismatic performances of Turkish actors, combined with the allure of exotic settings, create a unique viewing experience that resonates deeply across the Arab world, fostering a strong and enduring connection," said John Paul McKeerlie, vice-president of Marketing and Sales at TOD.

"I am very happy to have met with our Mena audience for the series *The Ivy*, which I enjoyed acting in very much," said Terzioglu. Kirazci said: "I believe our collective spirit will shine through in our work, leaving a lasting impression on our viewers." Hazal shared how excited she is to take part in this new series. Viewers can tune in to the premiere of *The Ivy* on TOD, starting September 21, where the platform will be releasing two episodes per week.

QT to host two concerts this month

Qatar Tourism (QT) has announced a new line-up of events set to take place on September 21 and 23. On September 21, and in collaboration with "Tarteel," a concert will feature top-performing Khaliji artists Khalid Abdurrahman, Musaad Albelushi and Nasser Alkubaisi.



The concert will take place at Al Mayassa Theatre at QNCC. Doors will open at 6.30pm. On September 23, the same venue will see a set by acclaimed Egyptian musician, Omar Khairat, on September 23.

In a press statement, QT's Communications head Dr Buthaina al-Janahi said: "We are excited to bring this diverse range of talent to Qatar's beautiful venues, and we look forward to showcasing Qatar as a prime destination for such notable events."

In addition to the upcoming line-up of concerts, residents can explore QT's recently published September edition of its monthly 'Qatar Calendar,' the official guide on headline events taking place across the country.



OMODA & JAECOO debut with Star-studded lineup at Geneva International Motor Show - The Pinnacle of Urban Off-Roading awaits its First Appearance in Qatar



80% within 35 minutes, combined with V2L technology, offering power on-demand. This unlocks environmentally-friendly and convenient mobility, heralding the future of green living.

JAECOO's Qatar Debut Draws Anticipation

Born from over a decade of joint venture experience, JAECOO embodies the finesse of precision and luxury, blending the expertise and craftsmanship of renowned British and German design teams. Dedicated to crafting the perfect vehicle for discerning urban elites globally, JAECOO perfectly addresses the intricate tastes and outdoor exploratory needs of its audience. With superior four-wheel drive capabilities, advanced safety features, and cutting-edge intelligent technology, it fills a market void. By leveraging sustainable methods and innovative technologies, JAECOO defines the harmonious fusion of eco-friendliness and off-roading, setting fresh trends. With JAECOO 7



and JAECOO 8 making their debut in Qatar and an immersive booth featuring interactive tech, attendees can expect a holistic demonstration of JAECOO's unique style and off-roading prowess. It's clear that JAECOO is poised to ignite a fervor for a new urban off-roading paradigm in Doha.

Additionally, both the OMODA 5 EV and JAECOO 7 are slated for release in Qatar by year-end. Given the stage set by the Geneva International Motor Show, their market performance in Qatar is eagerly anticipated.



After a three-year hiatus, one of the world's top five auto shows, the "Geneva International Motor Show," is set to take place from October 5 to 14 in Doha, the capital of Qatar. Eco-conscious future SUV brand OMODA and the pioneering off-road brand JAECOO are gearing up for a star-studded appearance.

The trailblazing crossover SUV OMODA 5 and its electric counterpart, OMODA 5 EV, will share the stage, unveiling a new era of driving pleasure and green technology. Further complementing this will be JAECOO, the epitome of quality and style, as it showcases JAECOO 7 and JAECOO 8 in their Qatar debut, embodying the continuation and transcendence of a legacy.

OMODA 5 EV - Green Tech Illuminates the Path to the Future

The OMODA 5 EV, OMODA's flagship electric SUV, stands as a

groundbreaking masterpiece, merging cutting-edge design language with innovative electrification technologies. Deconstructing crossover aesthetics and futurism, the visionary and innovative principles of the OMODA 5 EV meld with avant-garde aesthetics. Its silhouette, chiseled by light and shadow, paired with a technologically advanced front fascia, exudes dynamism. The interior is an ode to the future, with minimalist tech-centric gear shift design and a bold reinterpretation of what an electric SUV should be.

Beyond its forward-thinking design, the OMODA 5 EV's tri-electric technology is truly exceptional, characterized by low energy consumption and high range. Remarkably, its energy usage stands at just 15KWh/100KM, with a range reaching 450KM, allowing drivers seamless journeys without frequent charging. Its ultra-fast charging technology can replenish the battery to

QPC launches training course on Political Journalism Analysis

Qatar Press Centre (QPC), in collaboration with the Media Development Department at the Qatar Media Corporation, is organising a training course titled 'Political Journalism Analysis'.

The course, presented by Dr Abdullah Khalifa al-Shaigi, professor of political science at the University of Kuwait, is being attended by a group of journalists, media professionals, opinion writers, and columnists.

Sheikh Khaled bin Abdulaziz al-Thani, director of Media Development Department, explained that the course is in partnership with Qatar Press Centre to equip participants with the necessary tools for political analysis. These are crucial skills which journalists and professionals in the media field should acquire, as these play a significant role in increasing awareness and enhancing their communication skills.

"We have been keen in maintaining diversity in the selection of participants from various media sectors, including newspapers, radio, television, Qatar News Agency, and social media activists."

Sheikh Khaled stressed he is proud of the role played by the Qatar Press Centre in contributing to the development of journalism and media. He emphasised that there will be more future collaborations between the Media Development Department and the centre in terms of such courses and other activities.

Dr al-Shaigi pointed out that political analysis requires unconventional skills that anyone working in media or dealing with it should acquire. This is especially important because politicians are often known to say a lot without revealing much.

Accordingly, it is necessary for every journalist or opinion writer



Sadeq Mohamed al-Amari



Sheikh Khaled bin Abdulaziz al-Thani

to have the necessary skills to understand what is happening, decipher the facts behind the words, and interpret political stands.

He added that the five-day course will provide participants with insights that will illuminate their path in political analysis, boosting their confidence in addressing issues on television or at the media platforms in general.

Sadeq Mohamed al-Amari, CEO of Qatar Press Centre, said the Political Journalism Analysis course aims to refine the skills of participants and provide them with the information needed to read the news from different angles. "It will help them uncover the subtleties of events, political statements, and understand the crises and transformations in our regional and global milieu."

He also highlighted that the course instructor is considered one of the political experts in the region and has made significant joint projects in the coming days.



The training session in progress.



Dr Abdullah Khalifa al-Shaigi

contributions to event analysis. Further, he is well-informed about the dynamics of Washington and an expert in US-GCC relations.

Al-Amari also expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Media Development Department at the Qatar Media Corporation for its close co-operation with the Qatar Press Centre and, indicating the presence of several joint projects in the coming days.

Vodafone Qatar hosts panel discussion on 'Embracing the 5.5G World'



Industry experts in the panel discussion.

Vodafone Qatar recently hosted a panel discussion during the Seeds for the Future Qatar event titled 'Embracing the 5.5G World: Unleashing Innovative & Sustainable Growth in the Middle East and Central Asia (ME & CA) Region'.

Bringing together industry leaders and experts, the panel delved into the transformative potential of 5.5G technology and its role in driving innovation and sustainable development across the ME & CA region. Students participating in the Seeds for the Future programme engaged with industry experts and gained invaluable knowledge from the field. It was pointed out that the ME & CA countries were strategic in the fast adoption of 5G. Today, the region looks set to be among the first globally to leverage the benefits of 5.5G.

At the Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Shanghai, global tech giant Huawei announced that it will launch a complete set of commercial 5.5G network equipment in 2024, marking the beginning of the 5.5G era for the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry. Huawei also stated that 5.5G will reach 1.5bn subscribers by 2030. In addition to the development of key technologies for 5.5G wireless and optical access networks, Huawei has been working on applying AI-native technologies to 5.5G core networks to continuously enhance network capabilities and availability. Ramy Boctor, chief technology officer at Vodafone Qatar, stated: "Qatar was one of the first few nations globally to embrace the 5G technology and has already put a roadmap in place to

transition to 5.5G in partnership with key stakeholders, like vendors, regulators, and strategic partners. By planning for upcoming events and the digital transformation, we've positioned ourselves at the forefront of this technological revolution."

Jawad Abbassi, head of Mena at GSMA, said: "5.5G is not just another step - it's a transformative leap for the global economy. As part of 3GPP Release 18, its potential to contribute \$600bn to the world economy, approximately 1% of GDP, is profound. This new era of connectivity will fuel innovation, create opportunities, and reshape industries, demonstrating the real value of advanced wireless technologies."

Dalal al-Ishaq, Infrastructure and Access Section head at the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA), said: "Qatar has been at the forefront of 5G deployment and made significant progress in this field. The CRA ensures to set up a favourable regulatory environment, provides guidelines, and allocates the necessary radio spectrum bands for 5G deployment. The 5.5G technology will benefit consumers and various sectors in Qatar, including education, health, tourism, and others."

Kamal Zian, chief security officer at Huawei Gulf North, said:

"5.5G stands as an evolutionary milestone between 5G and 6G, a bridge that connects the present to the future. It's more than just technology, it's about enriching lives and transforming industries. "With the ability to upgrade network capabilities by 10 times and create 100 times more

business opportunities for operators, 5.5G opens doors to extraordinary use cases. From immersive extended reality (XR) experiences to revolutionary IoT technologies, its potential is boundless to realising business, industry, and social value."

Throughout the event, discussions revolved around the potential beneficiaries of 5.5G advancements, opportunities and challenges presented by 5.5G, the role of 5.5G in addressing climate change through green development, and the collaborative efforts required to realise the full potential of the 5.5G future. Huawei proposed the concept of a '5.5G Era' based on an end-to-end solution that integrates comprehensive evolved technologies, including 5.5G, F5.5G, and Net5.5G. This solution would protect operators' previous investment in 5G, while also improving network performance by 10 times. This 5.5G Era would feature 10-gigabit peak downlink speeds and gigabit peak uplink speeds to meet increasingly diverse service requirements.

It would also refresh the industry vision by using new technologies like passive Internet of Things (IoT) to unlock a market of 100bn IoT connections. Huawei has already started helping a number of operators around the world begin commercial verification of 5.5G. Ammar Tobba, vice-president of Public Affairs and Communications at Huawei Middle East & Central Asia, emphasised the role of 5.5G as a crucial bridge between 5G and 6G, underscoring its ability to address diverse industry requirements and foster innovation.

L'Écrin de Paris photo exhibition opens at Printemps Doha

Renowned French photographer Jean-François Fortchanter is set to grace the cultural scene of Doha with a remarkable photography exhibition. Collaborating with the prestigious French

A Special Place in His Heart

For Jean-François Fortchanter, Place Vendôme holds a unique place in his heart. Just as people have their favourite places where they feel an intimate connection, he



fine jewelry brand Baumer Vendôme, he brings a captivating collection of over 40 meticulously curated pieces to the halls of Printemps Doha. The exhibition, titled "L'Écrin de Paris" (The Parisian Jewel Box), is scheduled to run from September 4th to November 4th, 2023, offering art enthusiasts and photography aficionados in Qatar a rare opportunity to immerse themselves in the beauty of Place Vendôme.

A Celebrated Figure and His Beloved Theme

Jean-François Fortchanter has long been celebrated within the realm of private art collectors, and his work has captivated audiences worldwide. In his beloved theme: the iconic Parisian square, Place Vendôme. In 2022, he had the honour of personally showcasing his work there, attracting an awe-inspiring half-million visitors. Now, for the first time in Doha, he unveils an enhanced rendition of this recent exhibition, showcasing the allure and magnificence of Place Vendôme in an entirely new light.

finds a sense of peace and harmony within the confines of Place Vendôme. To him, it's not just a square; it's a place brimming with life, where people are welcoming, and history breathes through the cobblestones.

A Symphony of Beauty and History

Jean-François Fortchanter's deep connection to Place Vendôme is evident in his work. He captures the essence of this magical square with the skill of a seasoned artist. When asked about his inspiration, he describes the plaza as a place where magic operates the moment you set foot on it. Its proportions, facades, and the play of light create an enchanting symphony that envelops anyone who visits. The history of Place Vendôme, steeped in the genius of creators like Frédéric Chopin, Gabrielle Chanel, and Ernest Hemingway, provides an endless source of inspiration for this talented photographer.

A Man of Many Talents

Jean-François Fortchanter is not just a photographer; he is also a poet and a writer. In addition to his creative pursuits,



he serves as the founding President of The Planète Albert Khan Association, an organization that annually presents awards to humanists, personalities, photographers, actors, journalists, and writers. His multifaceted talents and commitment to the arts have made him a notable figure in the world of culture and creativity.

The Exhibition

The "L'Écrin de Paris" exhibition is a testament to Jean-François Fortchanter's passion for Place Vendôme and his exceptional talent for capturing its essence through the lens. It is meticulously curated and spans three levels of Printemps Doha. From September 4th to November 4th, 2023, the doors of the exhibition will be open to the public, offering free admission to all who wish to experience the beauty and history of Place Vendôme through the eyes of this gifted photographer.

In collaboration with Baumer Vendôme and Printemps Doha, Jean-François Fortchanter invites you to embark on a visual journey into the heart of Paris, a journey where the magic of Place Vendôme comes to life through his lens. Don't miss this unique opportunity to witness the beauty, history, and enchantment of Place Vendôme in "L'Écrin de Paris."



Embassy aims to enhance Thai-Qatar food security ties

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The Thailand embassy in Doha is keen to deepen its bilateral ties with Qatar particularly in the area of food security, citing Thailand's abundance of agricultural produce ranging from rice, vegetables and fruits to poultry.

"I intend to expand co-operation with Qatar based on Qatar National Vision 2030, especially on food security because in Thailand, we have many agricultural products... from rice, vegetables and fruits to poultry," Thai ambassador Sira Swangsilpa said at a recent meeting with the media.

With a food security strategy in place, the two countries could explore greater co-ordination and collaboration over the next six years, he stated.

Besides rice, some of the Thai food products being exported to Qatar include fresh, chilled or frozen fish; prepared or preserved fish, crustaceans and mollusk; and fresh, frozen and dried fruits; among others.

Many Thai products are offered by major supermarkets in Qatar such as LuLu Group, which collaborated with the Thai Trade



Thai ambassador Sira Swangsilpa.

Commission. In addition, the number of Thai restaurants in Doha has witnessed a notable increase. Qatar's appetite for Thai cuisine has also contributed to the strengthening of cultural ties.

Aimed at fostering better mutual understanding and co-operation, the Thai embassy announced that it is hosting the "Thailand's Shariah-Compliant Innovation" seminar, set on September 14 at Banyan Tree Doha.

The event, according to the embassy, will discuss a diverse array of subjects, including the pioneering advancements in Halal science and technology, safeguarding consumer interests, and investigating potential collaborative opportunities within academia.

The seminar will tackle a 'Revolutionary Rapid Test Kit', a break-

through in detecting non-Halal elements in food products, an innovation that aligns with Thailand's commitment to meeting the highest Halal certification standards.

According to the embassy, the event will also feature sessions led by industry experts, including Associate Prof D. Winai Dahlani, founding director of The Halal Science Centre at Chulalongkorn University, and Dr Anat Denyinghot, assistant director at the same institution.

About trade ties, Swangsilpa noted that trade volume between the two countries stands at \$4.5bn, with Thailand exporting automotive products, air conditioning machines and parts, and electrical equipment, among others, while importing natural gas from Qatar.

Swangsilpa, who is in his third month since arriving in Doha, said he met with members of the Thai community in Qatar, including children attending Thai and English language classes.

The envoy highlighted the growing number of visitors from Qatar, noting that around 100,000 tourists visit Thailand annually for leisure and medical tourism. He said Qatari are entitled to a 30-day visa on arrival to Thailand.

with T1D. According to the International Diabetes Federation's Diabetes Atlas, Qatar is ranked fourth globally with the highest incidence of T1D. Currently there is a lack of screening studies on T1D in Qatar and generally in the Mena region.

Titled "DIA-MENA: Type 1 Diabetes Islet Autoantibody Screening Initiative in the Middle East and North Africa", the programme will initially pilot autoantibody and genetic screenings in Qatar, aiming to predict the future risks of T1D in children. The pilot will form the basis to establish national paediatric T1D autoantibody screenings across the country; which can serve as a model for the rest of the Middle East and North Africa region.

The grant, won by Dr Ammira al-Shabeeb Akil, lead principal investigator and head of the Precision Medicine for Diabetes Prevention lab at Sidra Medicine, will encompass a comprehensive research-based screening programme over the span of four years. Key support will be provided by Sidra Medicine's precision medicine programme, pathology,

genetics and genomic medicine clinics. "Most global screening initiatives to identify children at high risk of developing T1D have targeted relatives of individuals living with the disease. However, latest data shows that more than 85% of the children who end up with T1D, do not have affected relatives with the same disease. By combining the comprehensive islet autoantibodies and genetic risk scores testing, we intend to detect and provide estimates of the prevalence of early-stage T1D in children," said Dr Akil.

Through the JDRF grant and in partnership with the Qatar Genome Programme and the Primary Health Care Corporation, Dr Akil's team will embark on a combined screening pilot programme on young children from the ages of 1 1/2 years to 14 years old; using a small blood sample and pathology-based testing technology that has been developed in-house at Sidra Medicine by Dr Akil's team.

By determining the individuals most likely to develop T1D, the DIA-MENA programme will also become the focal point in guiding future clinical trials in Qatar.

The event aims at exchanging expertise, discussing views, and presenting perspectives and thoughts with MoT's partners concerned with developing the transportation and mobility sector, as well as highlighting key plans and strategies for comprehensive and gradual transitioning to an integrated, sustainable and eco-friendly transit system.

The conference will include six panel discussions and more than 20 speakers, highlighting the latest advancements of Qatar's



Dr Hanadi al-Hamad

and the symptoms of the person they care for worsens over time.

The Memory Clinic, which was first set up in Rumailah Hospital, now also provides clinics in several primary care health centres, and also provides a specialised service to diagnose memory loss and cognitive decline and advice on suitable treatment options.

This year's Alzheimer's awareness campaign in Qatar is held under the banner of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Ageing and Dementia, a joint programme between the World Health Organisation and HMC that is dedicated to the development and strengthening of national and regional institutional capacity and enhancing the scientific validity of its global health work in the field of healthy ageing and dementia care and services.

Dr al-Hamad added: "We have built up a wealth of knowledge and experience over the past decade as we focused our efforts on improving the healthcare for our older population. We have developed better access to care and improved pathways to integrated healthcare services that are targeted to the needs of the older adults. The Collaborating Centre allows us to share this knowledge through the WHO and benefit from the valuable tools and programmes they have as well."

HMC to promote awareness on Alzheimer's in September

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) has joined the global community this month to observe World Alzheimer's Month, dedicated to raising awareness, challenging stigma, and advocating support and research in support of people living with dementia.

This year's theme is 'never too early, never too late,' which highlights the importance of addressing the risk factors for dementia at any stage in adult life.

Dr Hanadi al-Hamad, deputy chief for Long-Term Care, Rehabilitation and Geriatric Care, explained the importance of focusing on the risk factors and risk reduction. "While there has been a huge transformation in dementia perception and care over the last decade, it is hugely important for us to better understand and respond to the risk factors associated with this condition. Many are considered to be modifiable risk factors or lifestyle factors, such as high blood pressure, uncontrolled diabetes, unaddressed hearing loss, lack of physical activity, or unmanaged depression. Adopting a healthy lifestyle will promote overall good health, including brain health."

"This year's World Alzheimer's Month theme of 'never too early, never too late' highlights the key role of identifying risk factors and adopting proactive risk reduction measures to delay,

and potentially even prevent, the onset of dementia. This includes ongoing risk reduction strategies for individuals who have already received diagnosis," noted Dr al-Hamad. "We are therefore delighted to arrange activities this month to educate the public as well as deliver specialised training to healthcare staff in understanding the signs and symptoms of dementia and encourage better understanding of the modifiable risk factors linked to lifestyle."

Services such as the free and confidential RAHA Alzheimer's and Memory Services Helpline has been immensely valuable in providing faster access to care and helping to relieve some of the stress that caregivers can feel as the illness progresses,

HGH renovation 'from next year'

Hamad General Hospital (HGH) will remain open during the first phase of its renovation works, set to begin in 2024, and continue to provide a wide range of healthcare services while undergoing a significant upgrade to its systems and facilities, local Arabic daily *Arrayah* reported.

A source told the daily that during the first phase of the renovation, two wings for inpatient care at HGH will be closed, and services relocated. However, more than 370 inpatient beds will remain available to cover medical, surgical, and critical care services. Most of the outpatient clinics, the trauma centre and the emergency

department will continue to operate as usual. The source pointed out that the renovation process, expected to last for around three years, will involve the creation of individual rooms, advanced technology systems and modern environments.

This will lead to improved patient care experience in the years to come. HGH, which dates back to 1982, is the largest hospital in the country, providing medical care to hundreds of thousands annually, through outpatient clinics, surgical procedures, inpatient care, laboratories and radiology services.

Sidra Medicine wins \$1mn research grant



Dr Ammira al-Shabeeb Akil

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By determining the individuals most likely to develop T1D, the DIA-MENA programme will also become the focal point in guiding future clinical trials in Qatar.

Frustration mounts with Morocco quake aid yet to reach some survivors

Reuters
Talat N'Yaaqoub

Many survivors of Morocco's earthquake struggled in makeshift shelters yesterday after a fourth night in the open, while villagers in devastated mountain areas voiced frustration at having received no help from the authorities.

The death toll from the 6.8 magnitude quake that struck in the High Atlas Mountains late on Friday evening rose to 2,901, while the number of people injured more than doubled to 5,530, state television reported.

It was the North African country's deadliest earthquake since 1960 and its most powerful in more than a century.

Rescuers from Spain, Britain and Qatar were helping Morocco's



A woman sits next to a refrigerator and other salvaged items amidst the rubble in the earthquake-hit village of Douzrou in Al-Haouz province in the High Atlas mountains of central Morocco, yesterday.

search teams, while Italy, Belgium, France and Germany said their offers of assistance had yet to be approved.

The situation was most desperate for people in remote areas cut off by landslides triggered by the earthquake that blocked access

roads, while in accessible locations relief efforts were stepping up with tents and distribution of food and water.

Mehdi Ait Bouyali, 24, was camping along the Tizi n'Test road, which connects remote valleys to the historic city of Marrakech, with

a few other survivors who had also fled their destroyed villages.

He said the group had received food and blankets from people driving by but nothing from the state. "The villages of the valley have been forgotten. We need any kind of help. We need tents," he said, criticising the government's relief efforts.

In his first televised appearance since the earthquake struck, King Mohamed VI visited Marrakech — 72km from the tremor's epicentre — to meet injured people at a hospital, where the state news agency said he donated blood.

State media said on Saturday he chaired a meeting assigning aid funds. Hamid Ait Bouyali, 40, was also camping on the roadside.

"The authorities are focusing on the bigger communities and not the remote villages that are worst affected," he said.

Paramilitaries kill 17 civilians in Sudan capital

AFP
Wad Madani

Sudanese paramilitaries killed at least 17 civilians yesterday in northern Khartoum, a medical source said, as the UN warned the conflict between two rival generals has "broken the nation".

Witnesses reported shelling by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces in the Karari district of Omdurman, a part of greater Khartoum that has seen fierce battles between the RSF and the regular army.

A medical source told AFP "17 civilians were killed" in the attack, five months into the conflict between the army under General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF commanded by his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

Nearly 7,500 people have been killed in Sudan since the conflict broke out on April 15, according to a conservative estimate from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data project.

"In the past week, more than 103 civilians have been killed during military operations by both parties in Khartoum and Omdurman," UN human rights chief Volker Turk told the Human Rights Council in Geneva yesterday.

On Sunday, at least 51 people were killed and dozens wounded in air strikes on a southern Khartoum market, Turk reported, in one of the deadliest single attacks since fighting began.

According to activists, a dozen bodies were unidentified and like many of those killed on the street and missing from their families — buried by volunteers in shallow graves.

OFFICIAL

China releases new measures for Taiwan 'integration'

China yesterday outlined measures for strengthening integration with Taiwan, in an indication that Beijing aims to expand links with the island that were severed during the Covid-19 pandemic. The document jointly issued yesterday by the ruling Communist Party's Central Committee and the State Council consists of more than 20 "opinions" for laying a "new path towards integrated development" between Taiwan and the culturally similar mainland province of Fujian. They include making it easier for Taiwanese people to live, work, study and do business in Fujian, as well as encouragement for companies in the province to hire staff from Taiwan.

WILDLIFE

Chinese city hunts for crocodiles on the loose

A Chinese city has launched an operation to find a large number of crocodiles that escaped when floods hit the region in recent days, authorities said yesterday. A typhoon brought sustained heavy rains to southern China last week, triggering inundations in Hong Kong and other areas. Deluges around the city of Maoming in Guangdong province caused a lake at a commercial crocodile farm to overflow with over 70 animals escaping, local media reported. A person at the local emergency management office said officials were "working to deal with" the reptilian runaways. The person did not say how many animals were on the loose.

PROPOSAL

UK to introduce X-ray age checks for asylum seekers

The UK government said it is introducing legislation allowing bone and teeth X-rays to verify the age of asylum seekers suspected of falsely claiming to be minors. The government is trying to curb what it calls "illegal" migration to the UK. Legislation unveiled this week by the justice ministry, which still needs parliament's approval, will "authorise the use of X-rays in scientific age assessments", the interior ministry said. The interior ministry will introduce further laws specifying that X-rays of teeth and bones of the hands and wrists as well as MRIs of knees and collar bones "can be used as part of the age assessment process".

DATA

UK jobless rate rises as wage growth hits record high

The UK unemployment rate edged higher to 4.3% in the three months to the end of July, as wage growth remained at a record high, official data showed yesterday. Unemployment had been 4.2% in the quarter to the end of June, the Office for National Statistics added in a statement. The figures came a day after administrators of struggling UK household goods retailer Wilko said that more than 10,000 staff will lose their jobs after the firm failed to find a buyer. In further gloomy jobs news yesterday, high street bank Barclays confirmed that it would axe some 450 mid- to senior-level roles across the country.

India govt warns automakers of higher taxes in pollution fight

Reuters

New Delhi

India's road transport minister yesterday said he will propose an additional 10% tax on diesel vehicles and warned automakers of even higher levies to come to force them away from diesel-burners and cut fuel emissions and pollution.

Nitin Gadkari made the comments at the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) annual conference in New Delhi, where executives of Tata Motors, Mahindra and Mahindra, Maruti Suzuki and foreign carmakers such as Mercedes and Volkswagen had gathered.

Gadkari said he will ask the finance minister for an "additional 10%" goods and services tax on diesel vehicles to tackle problems related to pollution.

India currently imposes a 28% tax and additional so-called "cess" is levied depending on the vehicles' engine capacity.

"Say bye to diesel soon, otherwise we will increase so much tax that it will become difficult for you to sell these vehicles," Gadkari told the conference.

"We have to leave petrol and die-

sel soon and walk on the new path of being pollution free ... There should be a diversification (by companies) as soon as possible," he said in a warning to automakers.

Gadkari's comments sparked widespread discussion among auto executives at the Delhi conference, with some describing the move as a "bombshell" announcement.

Mercedes India managing director, Santosh Iyer, said many customers still prefer diesel vehicles and any change in tax policies will lead to a shift in automakers' "portfolio strategy".

"We will need six-odd months to change our production planning processes but we can always vary and shift based on the demand," he said.

Pollution is a growing problem across India. Attempts to cut vehicular emissions, reduce fuel imports and curb stubble burning have not yielded great results in a country where the proposed coal power capacity is the highest after China.

The minister later wrote on social media platform X, formerly Twitter, the proposal to increase tax was not "currently under active consideration by the government".

Shares of automakers Mahindra and Mahindra, Tata Motors and commercial vehicle maker, Ashok

Leyland, dropped between 2.2% and 2.5%.

The finance ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Gadkari has also issued warnings at past SIAM conferences. In 2017, Gadkari told auto executives they should move towards electric vehicles (EVs), saying: "I am going to do this, whether you like it or not. And I am not going to ask you. I will bulldoze it."

India has in recent years promoted electric vehicle sales with tax incentives, though less than 2% of India's nearly 4mn in car sales last fiscal year were EVs. The government has said it wants EVs to make up 30% of total car sales by 2030.

The number of diesel vehicles in the world's third-largest car market has fallen to 18% from 50% a decade ago, Gadkari said, warning that just like India pushed through stricter fuel emission norms against opposition from the industry, it will similarly drive up taxes to push out diesel vehicles.

Veejay Ram Nakra, chief executive officer for the automotive division of Mahindra and Mahindra, told TV news channel ET Now that any change in duty structure "will certainly have an impact on volume of sales."

Kerala reports two deaths from Nipah virus



Staff members install a sign reading 'Nipah isolation ward, entry strictly prohibited' at a hospital where a ward is being prepared for suspected Nipah virus patients in Kozhikode district, Kerala, yesterday. India recorded two deaths from the rare Nipah virus in Kerala, an official from the National Institute of Virology said yesterday.

India retail inflation eases in August, upside risks remain

Reuters

New Delhi

India's retail inflation eased in August as food prices moderated, but remained above the upper end of the central bank's target band for a second consecutive month, keeping policymakers watchful.

Annual retail inflation in August was 6.83%, compared with 7.44% in July - a 15-month high - according to data released by the ministry of statistics yesterday.

Food inflation, which accounts

for nearly half of the overall basket, was up 9.94% in August compared with a rise of 11.51% in July.

"Offering a modicum of relief, the CPI inflation eased below the 7% mark ... largely led by vegetables, amidst some moderation in the prints for clothing and footwear, housing and miscellaneous items as well," said Aditi Nayak, economist at ICRA.

Food prices have been a key concern for policymakers since last year as erratic weather conditions have hurt the output of vegetables, milk and cereals.

Inflation has been above the central bank's 2%-6% target band for seven months out of the last 12.

Earlier this month, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das said India's monetary policy committee would remain watchful of the evolving inflation situation, but the recent spikes in vegetable prices would start to ebb.

Vegetable inflation eased to 26.14% in August from 37.34% in the previous month. Cereal inflation in August eased to 11.85% from 13.04% in July.

Russian sellers 'stop fertiliser discounts to India'

Reuters

Mumbai/London

Russian companies have ceased offering fertiliser such as di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) to India at discounted prices due to tightening global supplies after becoming the biggest suppliers to the country last year, three industry sources said.

The move in August by Russian companies to instead offer fertilisers at market prices could increase India's import costs and subsidy burden amid a rally in global prices, as a top exporter, China, tries to curtail overseas sales. "There are no discounts," said a New Delhi-based senior industry official involved in the negotiations with overseas suppliers.

"Russian companies are offering fertilisers at the market

prices," the official said, declining to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter. India's fertiliser imports from Russia surged 246% to a record 4.35mn metric tonnes in the 2022-23 financial year ended on March 31 as suppliers gave discounts to the global market price for DAP, urea and NPK fertilisers.

Russia's aggressive selling last year eroded the Indian market share of other fertiliser exporters including China, Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE. "Russian companies were offering DAP at discounts of as high as \$80 (per tonne). However, now they are not offering discounts of even \$5," said another Indian company official.

The current price of Russian DAP is approximately \$570 per tonne on a cost and freight (CFR) basis for Indian buyers, which is the same price offered to other Asian buyers, said a Russian industry official.

Indian police arrest cow vigilante linked to riots

Indian police yesterday arrested the leader of a vigilante group devoted to protecting cows who had been accused of inciting deadly religious riots near New Delhi in July. Monu Manesar leads a chapter of the Hindu right-wing group Bajrang Dal and is a suspect in the mob lynching in February of two Muslim men accused of cow smuggling. Manesar remained free and continued to post inflammatory anti-Muslim content regularly on Facebook and Instagram for months after authorities linked him to the murders. He announced in July plans to attend a Hindu procession in Nuh, a largely Muslim district near the capital. At least six people were killed and dozens injured in the resulting unrest, which continued for days and spilled over to Delhi's outskirts. Nuh district police officer Shubhjeet Singh confirmed Manesar's arrest on charges of spreading hateful content on social media.

Princess Catherine visits prison



Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales, visits HMP High Down in Sutton, Britain, yesterday. The princess was checked by Penny, a black Labrador, as she followed security protocols at HMP High Down. The princess, a patron of addiction charity The Forward Trust, visited the Category C prison to learn about its work helping prisoners recover from addiction.

Philippine Nobel winner Ressa acquitted of tax evasion

AFP

Manila

Philippine Nobel laureate Maria Ressa was yesterday cleared of tax evasion following a five-year legal battle, hailing the verdict as a win for press freedom and voicing hope she will be cleared of other charges she insists are politically motivated.

"You gotta have faith," a visibly relieved Ressa told reporters outside the court after the acquittal.

"Guys, it's up to us. We hold the line, and this proved that we can hold the line."

Ressa and Rappler had faced five government charges of tax evasion stemming from the 2015 issue of Philippine depositary receipts, used by companies to raise money

founded in 2012, face an uncertain future as they contest another two court cases.

A vocal critic of Duterte and his deadly drug war, Ressa has long maintained that the charges against her and Rappler were politically motivated.

"Today, we celebrate the triumph of facts over politics," Rappler said in a statement.

"We thank the court for this just decision and for recognising that the fraudulent, false, and flimsy charges made by the Bureau of Internal Revenue do not have any basis in fact."

Human Rights Watch senior researcher Carlos Conde said the acquittal of Ressa and Rappler was "long overdue" and urged Presi-

dent Ferdinand Marcos to "ensure that legal harassment of Maria Ressa and other journalists ends".

Ressa and a former colleague Rey Santos Jr are appealing a cyber libel conviction that carries a nearly seven-year jail sentence.

Rappler, meanwhile, is challenging a Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission order to close for allegedly violating a ban on foreign ownership in media.

Under the constitution, only Philippine citizens or entities controlled by citizens can invest in the media.

That case springs from a 2015 investment by the US-based Omidyar Network, established by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar.

The Omidyar Network later transferred its Rappler investment to the site's local managers to stave off efforts by Duterte to shut it down.

Despite the remaining hurdles, Ressa was characteristically defiant and optimistic yesterday, telling reporters the latest acquittal "strengthens our resolve to continue with the justice system".

"It shows that the court system works and we hope to see the remaining charges dismissed," she said.

Ressa and Rappler's legal troubles began in 2016 with the election of Duterte, who frequently

launched foul-mouthed attacks against his critics.

They have faced what press freedom advocates describe as a grinding series of criminal charges, arrests and online abuse.

Duterte's government claimed it had nothing to do with any of the cases against Ressa.

Another high-profile Duterte critic, human rights campaigner Leila de Lima, has spent more than six years in jail on drug trafficking charges she said were fabricated to silence her.

Throughout the campaign against her, Ressa, who is also a US citizen, has remained based in the Philippines.

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GULF TIMES

A slowing China economy is a global concern

China's \$18tn-plus economy is a key driver of global growth, but fears of an economic slowdown have gripped the country.

Expansion in the world's second largest economy has already been sputtering amid sluggish consumer spending, a shaky property market, flagging exports amid a US drive for "de-risking," record youth unemployment and towering local government debt.

The impact of these strains is starting to be felt around the globe on everything from commodity prices to equity markets.

As the world's second-largest economy, a weaker growth trend in China would have an impact on almost every country.

When China's growth rate accelerates by 1 percentage point, other countries benefit by about 0.3 percentage point, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Countries like Australia and Chile, which export raw materials such as iron ore and copper, are usually affected the most.

China is also a big buyer of oil from the Middle East, and tech products from its East Asian neighbours.

Foreign businesses that operate in China, from Volkswagen to Nike and McDonald's are vulnerable to slower revenue growth and lower stock valuations.

Countries around the world that welcome Chinese tourists may see less spending.

For the US, which remains China's biggest trading partner, a slowdown in the world's second-largest economy can help lower inflation, but probably not by enough to move the dial for the Federal Reserve, unless there's a hard landing in China.

When China's growth rate accelerates by 1 percentage point, other countries benefit by about 0.3 percentage point, according to the IMF

like steel, cement and glass - accounts for about 20% of the country's gross domestic product.

Goldman Sachs Group estimates the housing downturn will reduce China's GDP growth by 1.5 percentage points this year.

China has taken a series of incremental steps to boost its economy, but Beijing isn't pulling out a "bazooka" stimulus package - something measured in trillions of yuan - like it did during the global financial crisis in 2008-09, or even when the pandemic hit in 2020.

Much of the reluctance lies in a drive by the government to control the growth of debt in the country, especially at the municipal level; a desire to shrink the property sector's outsized influence on the economy; and an aversion to doling out cash to consumers, Western-style.

Slower economic growth in China could reduce Beijing's global influence if, for instance, it cuts back on lending to developing nations.

Policymakers in Tokyo believe China's deepening economic woes could hit Japan's fragile recovery, especially if Beijing fails to shore up demand with meaningful stimulus, potentially delaying an exit from ultra-loose monetary policy.

In a sign of growing pessimism over China, the government said its economic report for August that "concern over China's outlook" was among risks to Japan's recovery.

China is Japan's largest trading partner, accounting for 20% of its exports, having replaced the US in 2020.

Exports to China fell 8.6% in the first half of this year as demand for cars, steel and electronics wilted.

Economists believe China's downturn could knock 1-2 percentage points off Japan's annual growth, fuelling fears of a prolonged slowdown in Asia's two biggest economies, which combined account for about a fifth of global GDP.

The IMF forecasts China will be the top contributor to global growth over the next five years, with a share expected to represent 22.6% of total world growth - double that of the US.

A lot of the world's jobs and production depend on China, with its vast market and factory floors.

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G20 fails on fossil fuel phase out as 'dark cloud' looms

**Bloc agrees to triple global renewables capacity****Trillions of dollars a year needed for green shift**

By Bhasker Tripathi
New Delhi

Amid warnings that the world is failing do enough to slow climate change, the Group of 20 big economies has set a goal of tripling renewable energy capacity but faced criticism for spurning bolder steps to halt the use of fossil fuels.

The G20 "New Delhi Leaders' Declaration", at a weekend summit in India, promised to reach net-zero emissions of climate-heating gases "by or around" mid-century to avert ever more damaging heatwaves, droughts, wildfires and rising seas.

The leaders set a goal of tripling global renewable energy capacity by 2030, and stressed that the transition of the energy systems remain "sustainable", "inclusive" and "just" while "leaving no-one behind".

The declaration, by countries which are the source of nearly 80% of the world's climate-heating emissions and about 85% of world's GDP, also highlighted that the shift to a greener economy will require trillions of dollars annually.

Home to 93% of global coal power plants, the group reiterated a promise from last year's G20 in Bali, Indonesia, for a "phase down" of highly polluting coal power, rather than a bolder "phase out" favoured by many developed nations.

China and India are the world's top consumers of coal.

The G20 also stopped short of setting a goal to phase out all use of fossil fuels, the main source of humanity's greenhouse gas emissions.

On Friday, a UN assessment of global climate

action under the 2015 Paris Agreement said governments were not on track to limit warming to the most ambitious target of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial times.

"Much more is needed on all fronts," the UN Climate Change Secretariat said, pointing to "a rapidly narrowing window to raise ambition". Average surface temperatures are already up about 1.2C.

In a deeply divided G20 due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Indian G20 presidency called the consensus declaration a big win.

Climate change looms like 'dark cloud'

Climate activists and academics around the world lauded some progress on climate change but said that the group's overall commitments were insufficient.

"While the G20's commitment to renewable energy targets is commendable, it sidesteps the root cause - our global dependency on fossil fuels," said Harjeet Singh, head of global political strategy at Climate Action Network (CAN), a global network of civil societies from 130 countries.

"As the climate crisis looms like a dark cloud over humanity, the world cries out for a just transition away from fossil fuels," Singh said.

He said rich nations in the G20 had done too little to curb their own emissions and to provide finance to emerging economies.

Analysts said the G20's decisions could set the tone for two-week UN climate talks of almost 200 nations in Dubai, known as COP28, starting in late November.

"Tripling of renewables alone will not get us to 1.5C," said Linda Kalcher, executive director of Strategic Perspectives, a European think-tank.

"We need a strong fossil fuel phase out goal adopted at COP28. We cannot afford business as usual for oil and gas companies anymore," she added.

Urgency of climate action collides with geopolitics

The G20's only mention of fossil fuels was in reiterating a 2009 call for a phase out of "inefficient fossil fuel" subsidies.

Swati Dsouza, lead analyst and India coordinator of International Energy Agency (IEA) said "the clear and concise language" about renewables was a step in the right direction.

"Moreover, if this gets into COP summaries, it becomes another hook for countries to expand the ambition of their national climate plans, she said.

G20 member Saudi Arabia, which is heavily dependent on oil exports, has long opposed a phase out of fossil fuel use.

And a source aware of the talks said Saudi Arabia only agreed to the language on renewables after the text included a mention of other zero and low emission technologies to limit emissions, including largely unproven carbon capture and storage.

Another contentious issue was over how to reflect findings by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that global emissions have to peak "at the latest by 2025".

The declaration said that the countries "recognised" the IPCC findings limiting global warming to 1.5C requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in climate heating emissions of 43% by 2030 relative to the 2019 levels.

But, mentioning 2025, the declaration said "this does not imply peaking in all countries within this timeframe".

Developing nations argue that they need more time to cut emissions than developed economies which have grown rich by burning fossil fuels since the Industrial Revolution.

"Global carbon emissions are unlikely to peak before 2025 and hence the targets stated look too optimistic," said Dhruba Purkayastha, India director of the Climate Policy Initiative, a global think tank.

Trillions of dollars needed for climate finance

On finance, the G20 countries noted a need for \$5.8 - \$5.9tn before 2030 for developing countries to reach their climate action goals.

The countries also noted a report on prepared under the Indian presidency, which estimates that the world needs an annual investment of over \$4tn for clean energy technologies by 2030.

The declaration also reiterated that developed nations have failed to meet a 2009 commitment to mobilise \$100bn a year in climate finance for developing nations by 2020. Developed nations say the goal will be met in 2023.

G20 leaders expressed strong support for reforming multilateral development banks to help mobilise more climate finance for developing nations.

However, "there is little direction provided as to how this would be possible," Purkayastha said.

Experts welcomed the G20 declaration's strong support for a just energy transition.

"Just energy transitions can improve jobs and livelihoods, and strengthen economic resilience," the preamble of the declaration said. "We affirm that no country should have to choose between fighting poverty and fighting for our planet."

"We will pursue development models that implement sustainable, inclusive and just transitions globally, while leaving no one behind." — Thomson Reuters Foundation



US takes on Google in landmark antitrust trial

AFP
Washington

A landmark case pitting the US government against Google over the dominance of the company's world-dominating search engine kicked off in a Washington courtroom yesterday.

"This case is about the future of the Internet and whether Google will ever face meaningful competition in search," said Justice Department Kenneth Dintzer as the United States government began making its case against the tech titan.

Over the course of 10 weeks of testimony involving more than 100 witnesses, Google will try to persuade Judge Amit P Mehta that the landmark case brought by the Department of Justice is without merit.

Held in a Washington courtroom, the trial is the biggest US antitrust case against a big tech company since the same department took on Microsoft more than two decades ago over the dominance of its Windows operating system.

"Even for Washington DC, I think we have the highest concen-



tration of blue suits in any location here today," Mehta joked, observing the dozens of lawyers packed into his courtroom.

The Google case centres on the government's contention that the tech titan unfairly gained its domination of online search by forging exclusivity contracts with device makers, mobile operators and other companies that left rivals no chance to compete.

Dintzer told Judge Mehta that Google pays out \$10bn every year to Apple and others to secure its search engine default status on phones and web browsers, thereby burying upstarts before they have a chance to grow.

Over the past decade, this created what the government calls a

"feedback loop" in which Google's dominance of search grew ever bigger because of its monopolist access to user data that rivals could never match.

That dominance has made Google parent Alphabet one of the world's richest companies, with search ads generating nearly 60% of the company's revenue, dwarfing income from other activities such as YouTube or Android phones.

"We will track what Google did to maintain its monopoly... It's not about what it could have done or should have done, it's about what they did," Dintzer told the court.

Google firmly rejected the US case saying that its search engine was successful because of its quality and the huge investments made over the years.

"Google has for decades innovated and improved its search engine, plaintiffs escape this inescapable truth," Google's lawyer John Schmidlein argued before the court.

"This court cannot intervene in the market and say 'Google you are not allowed to compete!' That is anathema to US antitrust law," he said.



Kent Walker, President of Global Affairs and Chief legal officer of Alphabet Inc, arrives at federal court yesterday in Washington, DC. (AFP)

He could dismiss the government's arguments or order drastic remedial action such as a breakup of Google's businesses or a revamp of the way it operates.

Whatever the outcome, the ruling will almost certainly be appealed by either side, potentially dragging the case on for years.

Launched in 1998, Washington's case against Microsoft ended in a settlement in 2001 after an appeal reversed an order that the company be split up.

The US government launched its case against Google during the Trump administration and the suit carried over in the transition to President Joe Biden.

Biden has also made a point of challenging tech giants and nominated well-known tech critics to key posts, but with little yet to show for it.

In January, Biden's Department of Justice launched a separate case against Google involving its advertising business and this could go to trial next year.

The company also faces various lawsuits from US states that accuse it of abusing monopolies in ad tech and for blocking competition in its Google Play app store.

Marseille woman hit by stray bullet in turf war dies

A 24-year-old woman has died after being hit by a stray bullet in an attack on a drug-dealing hotspot in the French Mediterranean city of Marseille, prosecutors said yesterday. The woman was hit late on Sunday evening when a burst of fire from a Kalashnikov rifle tore through her apartment building. She was declared brain-dead on Monday. Around 40 people have been killed in drug-related violence in Marseille this year – a situation described as a "bloodbath" by city authorities. "This is a total tragedy," Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told broadcaster France Bleu during a visit to the port city, which has a history of drug-related violence. Sunday's shooting raises new concerns about the impact of drug crime in Marseille, which is set to host fixtures for the Rugby World Cup and a visit from Pope Francis in the coming weeks.

Darmanin said it would take "a lot of police" to tackle the violence between drug gangs. The minister was in Marseille to open a new building for an elite police unit called the RAID. The dead woman was hit by a bullet that pierced the plywood surround of her third-floor window, the city's chief prosecutor, Dominique Laurens, said. "She was admitted to hospital with a serious wound to the head and in danger for her life. She died in the early hours of yesterday," she added. Two other women, aged 79 and 86, and a 71-year-old man escaped unharmed after their apartments were also struck by bullets.



Police personnel escort British-Pakistani children (right) and their grandfather Mohamed Sharif (third left) after appearing in a local court in Jhelum yesterday. (AFP)

Children of couple that fled Britain put into Pakistan state custody

AFP
Islamabad

Five British-Pakistani children brought to Pakistan by a fugitive couple wanted over the death of a 10-year-old girl in Britain were taken into the custody of state protective services yesterday, police said.

Surrey Police in Britain said last week the welfare of the five children was "a priority" after Sara Sharif was found dead with multiple injuries in her family home in August.

They believe her father Urfan Sharif, aged 41, his partner Beinash Batool, 29, and his brother Faisal Malik, 28, fled to Pakistan with the children aged between one and 13 before Sara's body was found, sparking an international manhunt.

The children were found at Sharif's father's house in Jhelum, around 120km east of the Pakistan capital, after police received information that the couple were hiding there. "We have been conducting investigations and raids for some time and were finally successful in recovering the children yesterday," Mudassar Khan, spokesman for the Jhelum police, told AFP.

Pakistan police are still investigating how long the children had been in the house as the search for Sharif and Batool continues. The house where the children were found was otherwise empty. After a court appearance yesterday "the area magistrate has ordered the children be handed over into the custody of the child protection bureau," Khan said.

The fugitive couple said last week they were prepared to cooperate with UK authorities. "Sara's death was an incident. Our family in Pakistan are severely affected by all that is going on," Batool said in a video shared with AFP by her relatives.

US CDC to decide who should get the new Covid-19 shots

By Bhanvi Satija and Julie Steenhuysen

A US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advisory panel met yesterday to come up with a recommendation on whether updated Covid-19 shots approved by the government should be used broadly or targeted to specific at-risk populations, setting the stage for the launch of a vaccination campaign.

The CDC advisers are set to decide on whether to recommend that everyone ages 5 and older receive a dose of the updated shots – and signalled that they were leaning toward such a broad use. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Monday authorised updated Covid vaccines made by Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech SE as well as by Moderna. Novavax said the FDA was still reviewing its shot.

The shots are part of a push by public health officials to align the next Covid vaccines more closely with the actual circulating variant of the virus, similar to the way annual flu shots are designed. A vaccination campaign is expected to be kicked off in the

coming days. In their presentation at the ongoing meeting, the advisers said they were supportive of a universal Covid-19 vaccine recommendation across age groups at this time. At issue is whether the advisers will call for targeting specific populations for the new boosters – such as older adults and people with underlying medical conditions or compromised immune systems – or a campaign with the broader population in mind.

All three vaccine manufacturers will also make presentations at the meeting of the CDC advisers. "There is an urgent need for alternatives to mRNA-based vaccines, including protein vaccines, and so in that regard, we will review such a submission expeditiously," FDA official Dr David Kaslow said in response to a question about Novavax's vaccine.

Novavax's protein-based vaccine is based on an older technology than the messenger RNA vaccine, which has been used for decades to combat diseases.

Kaslow said he was not at liberty to speak about Novavax's shot specifically.

CDC Director Mandy Cohen will make the final decision some

time after the committee's vote, and may or may not follow the panel's advice.

Keeping up with the latest variants of the ever-evolving coronavirus has been a challenge for public health officials globally since the pandemic began in 2020, with some possessing more worrisome characteristics than others. Vaccines can be formulated to target specific variants. The variants circulating the most widely in the United States right now are subvariants of what is called the XBB lineage of the virus.

"I do think that a broad boosting strategy makes sense," said Caitlin Rivers, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security in Baltimore, adding that while the virus was not causing as many hospitalisations and deaths as before, it is still circulating.

Covid infections and hospitalisations have been rising in the United States, Europe and Asia but remain well below previous peaks. US deaths are now relatively low – reported at around 2,000 last month – though the country has experienced 1.1mn Covid deaths since the outset of the pandemic. – Reuters

Spain strips Pinochet of Franco-era award

Spain yesterday withdrew a military award given to deceased Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, saying it wanted to rectify a "historic injustice" 50 years after the Chilean coup. Pinochet, who seized power in Chile on September 11, 1973, was awarded the Cross of Military Merit by Spain in 1975 when it was ruled by dictator Francisco Franco. The US-backed coup in Chile toppled Marxist leader Salvador Allende and underscored covert interference by the United States. It ushered in the 17-year Pinochet dictatorship under which more than 3,200 people were killed or "disappeared" and tens of thousands tortured.

"We have decided to withdraw the Grand Cross of Military Merit from the dictator Pinochet," government spokeswoman Isabel Rodriguez said. The council of ministers yesterday ratified the decision, which had been announced by left-wing Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Monday evening.

"Fifty years ago, Chilean democracy was the victim of a brutal attack that shook the world," the Spanish leader posted on X.

"The time has come to right a historic injustice." Chilean president Gabriel Boric thanked Sanchez, saying: "For memory and justice, but above all for the future, so that this never happens again".

'Indiana Jones' art sleuth recovers stolen Van Gogh

By Jan Hennop
The Hague

A Dutch art detective has recovered a precious Vincent van Gogh painting that was stolen from a museum in a daring midnight heist during the coronavirus lockdown three-and-a-half years ago, police said yesterday.

Arthur Brand took possession of the missing painting, the 1884 "Parsonage Garden at Nuenen in Spring", worth between three and six million euros (\$3.2 and \$6.4mn), at his Amsterdam home on Monday, stuffed in a blue IKEA bag.

Brand, dubbed the 'Indiana Jones of the Art World' for tracing a series of high-profile lost artworks, told AFP that confirming the painting was the stolen Van Gogh was "one of the greatest moments of my life."

"Arthur Brand, in co-operation with the Dutch police, has solved this matter," Richard Bronswijk of the Dutch police arts crime unit confirmed to AFP.

"This is definitely the real one,

there's no doubt about it."

Brand told AFP that frequent calls by him and the Dutch police to hand back the stolen artwork finally paid off when a man, whose identity was not revealed for his own safety, handed Brand the painting in a blue IKEA bag, covered with bubble-wrap and stuffed in a pillow casing.

A video clip supplied by Brand showed him unpacking the painting in his lounge and gasping in astonishment when he realised what it was.

"I couldn't believe it," he said.

The painting was burgled from the Singer Laren Museum near Amsterdam on March 30, 2020 in a heist that made headlines around the world.

Dutch police released video images shortly after the burglary showing a thief smashing through a glass door in the middle of the night, before running out with the painting tucked under his right arm.

In April 2021, police arrested a man named in Dutch media as Nils M for the theft. He was later convicted and sentenced to eight



An handout picture released by Dutch art detective Arthur Brand shows a portrait of him posing with the painting title 'Parsonage Garden at Nuenen in Spring', painted by Vincent van Gogh in 1884, at his home in Amsterdam, yesterday. (AFP)

years behind bars. M was also convicted for stealing another masterpiece by Frans Hals called 'Two Laughing Boys' in a separate heist.

"After a few months I heard from a source in the criminal world who had bought the Van Gogh," from Nils M, said Brand,

recently behind bars for a separate case involving the large-scale import and export of cocaine, Brand said.

K wanted to use the painting as collateral to negotiate a reduction in his sentence.

Brand confirmed Peter Roy K's identity, stressing he had said before that "no deal for a reduced sentence would be made."

The whereabouts of the Van Gogh however remained unknown until two weeks ago when a mysterious man contacted Brand saying he wanted to return it.

After some negotiation, Brand persuaded the man – who had "nothing to do with the theft," according to the art detective – to hand back the artwork.

"The man told me 'I want to return the Van Gogh. It has caused a massive headache'" because it could not be used as a bargaining chip, Brand said.

"In an operation done in close coordination with the Dutch police, we got the painting back," he said. The painting, which comes from relatively early on in Van Gogh's career, before the prolific

artist embarked on his trademark post-impressionist paintings such as "Sunflowers" and his vivid self-portraits, had already been handed back to the director of the Groninger Museum, from where it was on loan to the Singer Laren Museum.

"At first there was disbelief. Staff were asking themselves 'can this be true?'" said Karina Smrkovsky, head of communications at the Groninger museum.

"Then, when it was confirmed, our disbelief turned into delight. We are incredibly happy that it has been returned," Smrkovsky told AFP.

"We are incredibly thankful to Arthur Brand for getting it back."

Smrkovsky said however that the painting would not be on public display immediately, most probably only next year.

"We are delighted that art lovers from all over the world once again will be able to see this wonderful painting," said Evert van Os, museum director at Singer Laren.

Meanwhile Frans Hals' 'Two Laughing Boys' remains missing – but Brand said he hoped it would also be returned soon.



Amir accorded official reception ceremony in Guyana



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani arrived in the capital Georgetown yesterday on a state visit to Guyana.

The Amir was welcomed upon arrival at the Cheddi Jagan International

International Airport by Guyanese Prime Minister Mark Phillips and a number of ministers. Acting charge d'affaires at the Qatari embassy in Georgetown Mohamed Ebrahim al-Rumaihi, Guyanese ambassador to Qatar Sa-

fraaz Ahmad Shadood, members of Qatar's diplomatic corps, and a number of senior officials were also present.

The Amir was accorded an official reception ceremony. It started with the playing of the Qatari and

Guyanese national anthems. His Highness reviewed the guard of honour, which was accompanied by a 21-gun salute. He then shook hands with members of the Guyanese official delegation and senior officials. (QNA)

Qatar, Guyana ... growing relations towards promising partnership

Within Qatar's consistent strategy of building bridges, solid relations, and strong political and economic partnerships with various countries around the world, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani begins a state visit to Guyana, during which he will discuss with President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them in various fields, in addition to a range of international issues and developments of common interest.

The Amir's visit will contribute to supporting and strengthening bilateral relations at all levels, especially in the economic, political, and cultural fields, as well as opening up greater prospects for these relations. It will also contribute to raising the volume of investments and trade exchange between the two countries, especially in the energy and food security sectors to fulfil the aspirations of the two countries' leaders and their friendly people for peace, security and prosperity.

Since their establishment in 1996, the bilateral relations have witnessed remarkable development in many fields. Last May, the embassy of Guyana opened in Doha, a step that would take bilateral relations to a new stage of fruitful partnership in light of the keenness and common desire of both parties to strengthen and develop it in various fields.

The existing relations between the two countries are characterised by strength and stability. The relations are based on mutual respect and common interests, and on creating a stable and peaceful environment to encourage joint investments and improve the welfare and aspirations of the two friendly countries and peoples.

Since the establishment of relations between Qatar and Guyana, mutual visits, consultations

and contacts between the two countries at various levels and sectors have been continuing, the latest of which was the visit of President Dr Ali to Doha last May. During the visit, the Amir and the president discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to enhance and develop them, especially in the investment and energy fields, in addition to discussing several topics of common interest.

The two leaders expressed their aspiration that the inauguration of Guyana's embassy in Qatar would contribute to strengthening relations and broaden horizons of co-operation and partnership. They also agreed to send a technical team from Qatar to Guyana to review the available projects especially infrastructure and road projects.

During his visit to Qatar, the president said that the talks he held covered topics related to investment opportunities in Guyana.

In his meeting with the Qatar Chamber (QC) First Vice-Chairman Mohamed bin Twar al-Kuwari, the president stressed his country's interest in developing trade co-operation with Qatar across many sectors including oil, gas, and food security, particularly that Qatar attaches great attention to these two sectors and have made many achievements in them. He called on Qatari investors to invest in his country that offers investment opportunities in many sectors, mainly in oil and gas, infrastructure, tourism, services, hospitality, agriculture, and others.

Guyana has a very open investment policy that is free of discrimination. It enjoys a stable and safe investment environment, and is currently focused on building a competitive, sustainable, and resilient economy.

Guyana is located on the northeastern coast of the South American continent. It is bordered by

the Atlantic Ocean to the north, Suriname to the east, Brazil to the south and southwest, and Venezuela to the northwest.

With an area of 214,969 square kilometres, it is the third smallest country in South America after Suriname and Uruguay. It is home to about 800,000 people, with the city of Georgetown as its capital. About 35% of Guyana's area is located in the Amazon basin. The name Guyana originates from the language used by the indigenous people, meaning the "land of abundant waters," as it enjoys an extensive network of rivers, waterfalls, and bays. It includes 276 waterfalls and four major rivers, making hydroelectric power a reliable source of electricity. Sunlight throughout the year also creates a constant source of solar energy. The water in Guyana is not only linked to the abundance of fresh river water but also includes the Atlantic Ocean, which Guyana overlooks with a coastline extending 459km. The great Kaieteur Falls in Guyana, with a height of 226 metres, is about five times higher than Niagara Falls.

Guyana is famous for gold, diamonds, and semi-precious stones production, with the mining sector exporting these materials and other high-quality bauxite, copper, iron, nickel, and aluminium. Guyana is seeking to attract foreign investments to support its economy. Guyana's economy has witnessed a radical transformation since the discovery of crude oil there in 2015 and commercial exploration in 2019. According to a statement issued by ExxonMobil in 2020, Guyana has a large, high-quality oil reserve, estimated at 33bn undiscovered barrels, with the potential to produce 750,000 barrels per day by 2025, which could significantly change Guyana's economic prospects and put it on the world's richest countries list. (QNA)

Guyana envoy: Amir's visit 'historic and significant'

Guyana's ambassador to Qatar Safraaz Ahmad Shadood has described His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to Guyana as historic and significant since it is the first state visit for an Arab leader to his country. In his remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ambassador said that the Amir's visit is of extreme importance which gives a strong indication of what the future holds in terms of growing relations.

Shadood praised the efforts made to enhance bilateral relations through agreements, expressing his confidence that His Highness' visit would positively impact the peoples of the two friendly countries and their future. He hailed Qatar's foreign policy and its distinction in various fields, saying that it's very futuristic thinking, thanks to its wise leadership. The ambassador touched on the growing relations the two countries have witnessed since establishing the diplomatic relations in 1996. He noted that the Amir and Guyana's President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali held talks over the phone in October 2020, where they discussed issues regarding developing close co-operation

in energy, agriculture, food security and climate. Shadood pointed out that the Amir and the president also discussed the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic, expressing appreciation that Qatar provided medical assistance to Guyana by providing a mobile military hospital, ventilators, and other medical equipment.

The ambassador noted HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi's visit to Guyana in 2022, in addition to the visits made by several Qatari businesspersons. President Dr Ali visited Doha in May 2023.

He added that the relations between the two countries saw a huge momentum and unprecedented activity during 2021-2023 as President Dr Ali visited Doha and now the Amir is visiting Georgetown.

The ambassador praised Qatar's global leading role, saying that Qatar is a friend of many countries and gained its reputation as a global mediator to settle disputes which is not an easy matter, as well as being the world sports capital. In a related context, he noted Qatar's hosting of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and achieving exceptional results.

Ambassador Shadood stressed that Guyana is trying to benefit from Qatar's experience, saying that its approach is being applied now in Guyana, as the track that Qatar took to become a world sports capital is the same track that Guyana is taking currently. He touched on the economic resources of Guyana, especially in the energy, oil, and agriculture sectors, stressing that they are two significant priorities in developing co-operation between Qatar and Guyana, in addition to food security and climate. (QNA)

Amir's visit will 'broaden horizons of co-operation'

Acting charge d'affaires at the Qatari embassy in Guyana Mohamed Ebrahim al-Rumaihi has underlined that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to Georgetown will lay the foundation for building more distinguished relations between the two countries and upgrade them in various fields.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Rumaihi noted that the Amir is the first Arab leader to visit Guyana which is one of the most important countries in the Caribbean.

He pointed out that the Amir's talks with President of Guyana Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali will constitute a pillar for strengthening relations, expanding the horizons of co-operation, and raising them to the level of partnership, especially in trade and economy, and opening a window for Qatari investments in Guyana, to serve the interests of the two friendly countries and peoples.

He indicated that the visit will include the signing of two agreements: an agreement to encourage

and protect mutual investments, and an agreement related to economic, commercial, and technical co-operation, in addition to a memorandum of understanding for cooperation in the legal fields.

He pointed out that Guyana is eagerly looking forward to promoting relations with Qatar in various fields, and expresses a serious desire to attract Qatari investments in vital sectors, whether in energy, tourism, or commodity exchange, in a way that contributes to supporting the economy and tourism in both countries.

Al-Rumaihi emphasised that the opening of embassies of both countries will contribute to strengthening the bilateral relations and accelerating the pace of co-operation. He expected the coming period to see mutual visits between businessmen to explore investment opportunities and business fields available to both sides and to benefit from many incentives, facilities, and advantages offered by the governments of the two countries in these areas. (QNA)

Guyana lies in the northeast of South America on the Atlantic Ocean, framed by Venezuela, Suriname and Brazil. The culture of this English-speaking country has a strong Caribbean vibe that is evident in music, art, architecture and especially, its cuisine. Guyana also has the feel of Amazonia. Whether exploring the vast primary tropical rainforest, or visiting Kaieteur Falls, one of the world's tallest and most powerful single drop waterfalls, Guyana offers exciting travel experiences. Indigenous community-owned and operated tourism businesses offer travellers the opportunity to get a first-hand look at cultural traditions that have

Kaieteur Falls in Guyana is one of the world's tallest and most powerful single drop waterfalls.



An aerial view of downtown Georgetown in Guyana.

Guyana, a vibrant nation, traveller's haven

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survived for centuries. With no need for a translator, travellers are able to really get to know their indigenous hosts, and gain true insight into their lives. Worthwhile destinations also include the vibrant and historic capital city of Georgetown, the relaxing country life and farm lands found along the coast, the endless rivers and savannahs in the south of the country, and many waterways that make up the Essequibo region - some dotted with nature resorts and even home to the ruin of Dutch forts.

Kaieteur Falls in Guyana is one of the world's tallest and most powerful single drop waterfalls.