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WSTA takes steps for Gulf water security

President of Water Sciences & Technology Association (WSTA) Eng Abdulrahman al-Mahmoud highlighted the role undertaken by WSTA in countering the challenges facing water resources in the region and the Gulf water security in general. He stressed that such a role is critical and impactful, particularly at the level of active engagement in exploring a sustainable approach to manage water in the Gulf region. He added that WSTA was strikingly active in preparing the water strategy for GCC states.

Israel strikes Gaza amid new violence

The Israeli army launched a drone strike on the Gaza Strip yesterday after violent protests in which three Palestinians were wounded by Israeli fire, sources on both sides said. The early evening strike is one of a series that have come amid near-daily protests at the border by Palestinians after Israel closed the Erez crossing from Gaza. A Palestinian security source told AFP that an "Israeli aircraft had targeted a Hamas surveillance site east of Gaza City", without mentioning any casualties. Earlier in the day, Palestinian demonstrators faced off against Israeli soldiers stationed along the border fence. **Page 5**

Kyiv claims killing naval commanders

Ukraine has reported breaking through Russian defence lines in the south as its army said yesterday that senior Russian navy commanders were among dozens killed or wounded in a missile attack on Moscow's Black Sea Fleet headquarters in Crimea. "On the left flank (near the village of Verbove) we have a breakthrough and we continue to advance further," General Olexsandr Tarnavskiy said. Last month Kyiv declared a strategic victory when it recaptured the southern village of Robotyne. Tarnavskiy said a major breakthrough would be if Kyiv recaptured the city of Tokmak - 20km from the front line. **Page 11**

Truck bomber kills 13 in central Somalia

A suicide bomber killed 13 people and wounded dozens more in central Somalia yesterday after driving a truck packed with explosives towards a security checkpoint, triggering a blast that razed nearby buildings, police said. Emergency workers used bulldozers to clear the debris as they retrieved bodies and rescued people trapped under rubble after the blast in the town of Beledweyne in Hiran region. "What has happened here is a heinous act," Abdulahi Ahmed Malim, the governor of Hiran, told reporters at the scene. "This was a disaster today and the damage it has inflicted is not small, it destroyed the whole area," he said. "We have recovered the dead bodies of 13 people, most of them are civilians who stayed nearby," Ahmed Yare Adan, a local police officer, said. "There are about 45 wounded people admitted in medical facilities... some of these people are seriously wounded and they are all civilians," he said. The attack came after Somalia's beleaguered government admitted to suffering "several significant setbacks" in its fight against Al Shebaab militants. **Page 6**

Person-centred healthcare helps Qatar overcome big challenges

By Joseph Varghese
 Staff Reporter

A resilient and innovative healthcare system as well as person-centric care helped Qatar in facing and overcoming various challenges of the recent times, noted a senior official of Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) yesterday.

"This is an important time for the healthcare ecosystem in Qatar. The resilience of our healthcare and the innovative and latest technologies have played a key role in overcoming the challenges of our times. The person-centred approach of our healthcare system has greatly helped in providing the best possible healthcare services. This forum is a key driver in fostering a culture of excellence that ensures every patient receives the highest quality of care in a safe and compassionate environment," said, Nasser al-Naimi, deputy



Nasser al-Naimi

chief of Quality, Centre for Patient Experience and Staff Engagement and director, Hamad Healthcare Quality Institute.

Al-Naimi was speaking at the Person-Centred Care Forum 2023 organised by HMC and attended by nearly 2,000 healthcare professionals. The event was in partnership with US-based healthcare consultants, Planetree International and focused on the theme 'Inspire, Innovate, and Adapt: The Future of Person-Centred Care'. **To Page 12**

Health minister meets UN official



HE the Minister of Public Health Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari met in New York yesterday with Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Amina J. Mohamed, on the margin of the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly. The meeting addressed ways to enhance co-operation between Qatar and the United Nations, in addition to discussing key issues being discussed by the UN General Assembly, especially those related to health. HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations Sheikha Aliya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani attended the meeting. **(QNA)**

‘Qatari firms can use Poland as hub for expansion into Europe’

By Santhosh V Perumal
 Business Reporter

Poland, which considers Qatar as a key partner, is keen to act as a hub for the Qatari firms wishing to expand into Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the European Union.

"Qatar is a very important trading partner for us. We import one-third of our LNG (liquefied natural gas) from Qatar and we want to diversify our trade relations to sectors other than energy," Poland's ambassador to Qatar Janusz Janke told the media on the sidelines of a function to announce the fourth

Qatar-Poland New Tech forum.

Poland is a manufacturing hub, so there is scope for greater co-operation in automobiles, tyres and electronics sectors, he said.

Highlighting that Andrzej Duda, President of Poland, had visited Qatar twice, the Polish envoy said it helped in further boosting the economic relations, which are based on strong political understanding.

The bilateral talks had touched on the issues of energy security, co-operation in the areas of security and defence, food security, the possibility of implementing joint trade and investment projects, including under the Three Seas



Poland's ambassador Janusz Janke

"Qatar is a very important trading partner for us. We import one-third of our LNG from Qatar and we want to diversify our trade relations to sectors other than energy"

Initiative, as well as important events on the international arena, including the situation in the Polish-Belarusian border.

Pawel Kulaga, chairman of Qatar-Poland Business Council, said Poland can be treated as a hub, like Qatar is the hub for the Middle East, East Africa and South Asia.

"Qatari companies can use Po-

land to expand into CEE and European Union," he said. Although there aren't many Polish companies in Qatar, he said the potential is "high".

Highlighting that the few Polish companies are in the fields of IT, logistics and food supply, Kulaga said "we have the presence, but can grow significantly".

Grzegorz Gawin, Minister Counsellor, Embassy of Poland, said the Polish companies need to learn more about the Qatari market and vice versa.

"They (Qatari companies) need to explore the central Europe and study the market potential there, and which sectors are growing," he added. **Business Page 1**

185 Qatar athletes participating in 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou

●Sheikh Joaan attends glittering opening ceremony



HE Sheikh Joaan attends the glittering opening ceremony.

QNA
 Hangzhou

The QOC President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani attended the opening ceremony of Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games.

Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday declared the 19th Asian Games open in Hangzhou, after an environmentally friendly opening ceremony paving the way for an event that will see the participation of 12,000 athletes from 45 countries.

Qatar is participating in the



Members of Qatar's delegation take part in the athletes parade during the opening ceremony of the 2022 Asian Games at the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Stadium in Hangzhou in China's eastern Zhejiang province yesterday. Triathlete Tamim Jamal al-Kuwari and dressage rider Maryam al-Buainain carried Qatar's flag at the opening ceremony. **(AFP)**

tournament with a delegation of 185 male and female athletes competing in 27 sport events: archery, athletics, basketball, boxing, chess, cycling, e-sports, equestrian, football, fencing, gymnastics, golf, handball, jiu-jitsu, karate, windsurfing, squash, swimming, tennis, taekwondo, triathlon, table tennis, volleyball, 33 basketball, beach volleyball, weightlifting, and bow and arrow.

Athletes from 45 countries are participating in the tournament, competing for 481 gold medals that will be distributed in 40 different sports, nine of which will qualify for the Summer

Olympic Games scheduled in the French capital, Paris, next year.

This is the third time that China has hosted the Asian Games after Beijing 1990 and Guangzhou 2010. The tournament was scheduled for the summer of 2022, but was postponed to this year due to the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Qatar won 13 medals including 6 gold medals in addition to 4 silver medals and 3 bronze medals in the last Asian Games which were held in Jakarta and Palembang, Indonesia in 2018. **Sport Pages 1, 4**

Qatar attends UN high-level meet on tuberculosis

Qatar participated in the second high-level meeting of the United Nations on the fight against tuberculosis. HE the Minister of Public Health (MoPH), Chairperson of the Executive Board of the World Health Organisation, Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari, represented Qatar in the meeting. Dr al-Kuwari underscored Qatar's firm position on the collective work to achieve the goals that were agreed upon and determined in the sustainable development plan for 2030, along with the strategy on the fight against tuberculosis. Qatar has given a top priority to lay out an integrated healthcare system that offers high-quality preventive and curative health services and adheres to international standards. HE Dr al-Kuwari said, adding that the Qatar national vision 2030 - that sets human development as a core pillar - stresses the importance prioritised for health as a key driver for sustainable development, offering physical and psychological health, as well as welfare for population. **Page 4**

Saudi and Iran FM's discuss bilateral relations

Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah and his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir Abdollahian discussed yesterday bilateral relations and ways of enhancing them in various fields in addition to the latest regional and international developments, on the sidelines of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The two sides also discussed aspects of intensifying consultative meetings at the bilateral and multilateral levels in order to achieve more positive prospects and serve the interests of the two countries. **(QNA)**



Qatar's role in Mena region reviewed



Adviser to HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Majed bin Mohamed al-Ansari participated yesterday in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) Forum organised by the Middle East Institute and SRMG Research Advisory, on the sidelines of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in New York. During the forum, Dr al-Ansari reviewed Qatar's role as a major geopolitical player in the Mena region and touched on the repercussions of the US-Iranian agreement on the exchange of detainees. Dr al-Ansari also met yesterday, in a separate meeting, with Director of the Centre on International Co-operation at the University of New York Sarah Cliffe. The meeting discussed development and mediation efforts in Afghanistan and the African continent. **(QNA)**

Amir condolences with Italian president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of condolences to Italian President Sergio Mattarella on the death of former Italian president Giorgio Napolitano. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of condolences to Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. **(QNA)**

Al-Khulaifi meets UN official



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met yesterday with Under-Secretary-General of the UN Counter-Terrorism Office Vladimir Voronkov on the sidelines of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in New York. The meeting dealt with discussing the existing strategic partnership between Qatar and the UN Counter-Terrorism Office. During the meeting, the Under-Secretary-General expressed his appreciation to Qatar for its support of the offices programmes and initiatives. **(QNA)**

Two-day Icesco conference in Doha to begin tomorrow

QNA

Doha

The Consultative Council for Cultural Development in the Islamic World, whose general-secretariat is held by the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Icesco), held its 18th meeting in Doha under Qatar's chairmanship.

The meeting discussed the agenda, as well as the draft decisions and documents that would be submitted to the 12th Conference of Ministers of Culture in Islamic World, convened by Icesco, and hosted by Qatar tomorrow, represented by the Ministry of Culture. The conference will run for two days.

The meeting approved the establishment of the council's new office in its upcoming session throughout 2024-2025, after Qatar has taken over the presidency from Tunisia. In his remarks following Qatar's assumption of the council's presidency, Assistant Under-Secretary for Cultural Affairs at the Ministry of Culture Dr Ghanem bin Mubarak al-Ali stressed on the affirmative action between Qatar and Icesco, stemming from the belief in Icesco's role in operationalising the joint cultural work in the Islamic world.

Director of Culture and Communication Sector at Icesco, Dr Mohamed Zain al-Abidin, delivered an inaugural speech in which he discussed Icesco's efforts in supporting cultural action in light of its strategic vision and orientations through carrying out programmes and innovative projects in its member states.

The council's inaugural session was followed by work sessions which featured the discussion of a myriad of executive reports and documents that are due to be presented during tomorrow's conference, including the report of Icesco's accomplishments in cultural area, report of the Islamic World Heritage Committee, document of the guidelines of cul-



Qatar takes over from Tunisia the presidency of the Advisory Council for Cultural Development in the Islamic World during the 18th meeting in Doha.



tural policies, sustainable development indicators in an evolving world, in addition to a report on the success of the activities of the celebration of Doha as the capital of culture in the Islamic world presented by Director of the Department of Culture and Arts at the Ministry of Culture, Maryam Yassin al-Hammadi.

Al-Hammadi underscored the concerted efforts of the cultural institutions and other entities in Qatar to have a successful celebration that was held under the slogan 'Our Culture is Light' which featured nearly 300 various events which were not actually limited to culture but were largely focused on thought and global orientations that nurture the culture at home and abroad.

Al-Hammadi said the meeting discussed a plethora of topics that will be laid out on the agenda of the meeting of the ministers of culture tomorrow. In addition, the meeting featured the presentation of an array

of proposals of hosting the capitals of culture in the Islamic world during the upcoming period, including the nomination of Qatari Lusail city as the capital of culture in the Islamic world 2030. The meeting also discussed Icesco's document to combat illicit trafficking in the property, as well as other documents.

During the Icesco's 18th meeting, the representative of the State of Palestine presented a proposal to make Jerusalem a permanent capital of Islamic culture, whilst the representative of Saudi Arabia presented two proposals, the first one related to launching culture indicators in the Islamic world to collect data and monitor cultural and political activities, as well as support the member states in charting their cultural policies, while the second one was pertinent to launching a programme for (Haj route, routes of trade caravans, and the routes of travellers, scholars, students and manuscript, etc).

Unesco adds 47 new sites to World Heritage List

QNA

Riyadh

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) finalised the addition of 47 new sites to its World Heritage List. Member states nominated 50 natural, cultural, and mixed sites during the 45th session of the Unesco World Heritage Committee held in Riyadh.

The committee postponed the

addition of one of the sites, rejected another site, and approved the extension of five other World Heritage sites, Unesco said in a statement.

The new additions included three Arab sites, namely Saudi Arabia's Uruq Bani Ma'arid Reserve, Palestine's Ancient Jericho and Tunisia's Djerba Island.

On the sidelines of its participation in 45th session of the World Heritage Committee, Qatar Museums celebrated the 10th anniversary of the inclusion of the Al

Zubarah archaeological site on the Unesco World Heritage List.

Qatar participated in the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee, represented by HE Qatar's Permanent Representative to Unesco Dr Nasser bin Hamad al-Hanzab, Director of the Department of International Co-operation and Governmental Affairs at Qatar Museums Dr Fatima Hassan al-Sulaiti, and the Head of the International Affairs Department at Qatar Museums Dr Rashid Ali Malhia.

GU-Q conference to explore roots and global impact of Islamophobia



Ebrahim Rasool



Speakers at the conference.

Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) will hold a critical international conference titled 'Global Histories and Practices of Islamophobia' from September 30 to October 1 at the Four Seasons Hotel, Doha.

The public conference brings together a diverse collection of professionals, academics, government officials, artists, and students to explore the global, historical, theological, and political dimensions that drive practices of Islamophobia. The gathering is jointly organised by GU-Q faculty members Dr Firat Oruc, associate professor, Culture and Politics, and Dr Karine Walther and Dr Abdullah Al-Arian, both associate professors of history.

"Islamophobia has become a prominent issue in public discourse over the past decade. As scholars and practitioners, understanding its origins and connections across different times and geographies is crucial to addressing its contemporary forms," noted Dr Al-Arian.

"This conference aims to facilitate this understanding by convening experts from diverse fields and regions, while also offering a public platform for engagement on this pressing global issue," added Dr Oruc.

The conference will open with a keynote address by South African activist and diplomat, ambassador Ebrahim Rasool, founder of the World for All Foundation. His faith-driven advocacy has been instrumental in fostering global

co-operation across faiths and cultures. Over two days, panel discussions will offer scholarly perspectives and spotlight current instances of anti-Islamic sentiment, notably during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 coverage and in the context of the global war on terror.

Prominent academic voices will include the distinguished scholar, Dr John Esposito, professor of religion, International Affairs, and Islamic Studies at Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

The author of over 55 books on religion, Islam, and Islamophobia, Dr Esposito is also the founding director of the Alwaleed Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding and The Bridge Initiative.

Dalia Mogahed, former policy adviser on Muslim affairs under president Barack Obama, will share her insights and analysis on the impact of Islamophobia. She is the director of research at

the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, Washington, DC, and co-author with Dr Esposito of Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think.

Also among the notable speakers is Sana Saeed, host and senior producer at AJ+, who will offer an analysis of the role of media in shaping public sentiment during the panel session "Constructing the Narrative: Islamophobia and the Media."

The conference is the second in the university's signature Hiwaraat Series following the well-attended Iraq War anniversary conference. Alongside the main discussions, there will be interactive workshops where students and community members can engage with activists and artists who are at the forefront of combating Islamophobia. And a student-led forum will address challenges in higher education related to Islamophobia.

QSW holds event management workshop for staffers, affiliates

Qatar Social Work Foundation (QSW) organised a training workshop on "Event Organisation and Management" for its employees and affiliated centres. The workshop was conducted by Naif al-Shahrani, head of the "TAM" Volunteer Work Network and Actin Manager of Community Awareness at the "Nama" Center.

The workshop focused on enhancing the knowledge and skills necessary for efficient event organisation and management. Practical sessions and group discussions were conducted regarding the mechanisms of event organisation and management, as effective event management is considered a crucial factor in success and sustainability.

Trainer al-Shahrani stressed the importance of training employees responsible for events within QSW and its centres on key aspects of event organisation. He said: "During the workshop, we reviewed practical examples and real-life



The workshop focused on enhancing the knowledge and skills necessary for efficient event organisation and management.

experiences in event organisation and management." He added that the goal of the workshop is to develop the capabilities and skills of employees working in the field of conference and meeting management, both locally and internationally, and to provide them with the latest scientific, technical, and practical knowledge to help them

perform their roles with a high degree of professionalism and expertise in various events organised by the foundation and its centres.

Accordingly, the participants in the workshop expressed their appreciation for the knowledge and information they gained and thanked those responsible for carrying out the workshop.

Qatar Charity aids 617,000 flood victims in Pakistan



Qatar Charity supports flood victims in Pakistan.

A total of 617,594 individuals, including Afghan refugees, affected by the 2022 Pakistan floods, have benefited from Qatar Charity's year-long assistance, provided in the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, food and shelter. The assistance was delivered through Qatar Charity's office in Islamabad in 18 districts across four Pakistani provinces: Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab.

Ameen Abdulrahman, director of Qatar Charity's Pakistan office, said: "Pakistan had faced a devastating flood on a large scale, which has caused thousands of deaths, damaged thousands of houses, and demolished basic infrastructure, including schools and hospitals. Thanks to the do-

nations of the benefactors in Qatar, Qatar Charity contributed to aiding more than 617,000 affected people."

In food assistance, Qatar Charity distributed 39,140 packages containing essential food items during a year, benefiting nearly 273,980 individuals.

As for personal hygiene, 5,000 family-sized hygiene kits were distributed to benefit 35,000 persons. In the field of shelter, Qatar Charity focused on distributing and installing 6,590 tents along with tarpaulin sheets in Balochistan, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This initiative benefited 46,130 people.

Qatar Charity also handed over medicines to Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority to distribute them to health

facilities at the district level, benefiting 92,484 persons. Furthermore, Qatar Charity implemented numerous WASH projects, benefiting 170,000 individuals. In partnership with Unicef, clean drinking water was provided in Balochistan, water storage tanks were installed, and 4,006 handwashing stations were set up. Additionally, 10,022 temporary latrines were installed, and 13,837 hygiene items were distributed for handwashing to protect against waterborne and infectious diseases.

Besides, Qatar Charity's aid included the distribution of relief supplies weighing 40,000 kilograms, in collaboration with the Pakistani organisation 'Hands', to support vulnerable communities affected by the floods.

QIB offers 'Direct Remit Service' via mobile app to Egypt

QIB has announced the expansion of its 'Direct Remit Service' to Egypt as part of the bank's "commitment to upgrade" its money transfer service continually and to meet the growing needs of its customers.

After a successful launch in India, Pakistan, Jordan and the Philippines, QIB has collaborated with a leading bank in Egypt to include Egypt in its expanding list of countries within the QIB Direct Remit network, with plans to include more countries in the future.

Customers can easily initiate a money transfer by logging into the QIB mobile app, selecting their desired destination, and adding the intended recipient to transfer money faster with competitive exchange rates to the beneficiary's bank.

QIB's Direct Remit platform empowers customers with fast and secure money remittance services.

This addition aligns with QIB's customer-centric digital transformation strategy,



placing user convenience at the forefront. D Anand, QIB general manager (Personal Banking Group) said: "Adding Egypt to the list of countries available in our direct remit services via QIB Mobile App demonstrates our steadfast commitment to delivering a seamless, secure, and efficient banking experience for all of our customers."

"We aim to solidify our regional leadership in digital banking through innovation and customer-centricity. Our customers can rest assured that we will be continuously exploring oppor-

tunities to expand the reach and value of our services." Available on the App Store, Google Play, and Huawei AppGallery, customers can download the QIB mobile app and easily self-register using their active ATM/Debit Card number and PIN.

The app offers customers the ability to have full control of their accounts, cards, and transactions, enabling them to fulfil all their banking requirements remotely. Additionally, QIB customers can open a new account and apply for personal loans through the app.

QU to host Tawasol event on Tuesday

The Media Centre for Youth, an affiliate of the Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the branch of Toastmasters at Qatar University Alumni Association is set to organise the 2nd edition of Tawasol (Communication) next Tuesday at the QU students' affairs building.

Held under the theme of Turning Point, Tawasol 2 event primarily aims to highlight the role of elocution and delivery of public speaking through focusing on the activities of the Toastmasters branch, and demonstrating the value of elocution and public speaking skills, as well as ex-

panding the circle of the targeted segment from QU's alumni, to capitalise on the programme of the Toastmasters branch.

The 2nd edition focuses on communication as a key purpose that all arts of delivery of public speaking and successful leadership strive to achieve

The 2nd edition focuses on communication as a key purpose that all arts of delivery of public speaking and successful leadership strive to achieve, and is composed of many se-

ries, such as a prepared model of speech which is delivered in Toastmasters' meetings and is considered an integrated speech in terms of content, impact as well as vocal and physical performance.

The other is speech evaluation in which emphasis is put on prepared speeches, highlighting the good aspects and improvement points, in addition to impromptu speeches dedicated to guests and attendees, as well as a variety of educational, recreational and interactive series presented by a contingent of professionals in their field of expertise. (QNA)

Modern Home hosts panel talk with L'Oreal Professionnel Paris

Modern Home, recently conducted an exclusive panel discussion in partnership with globally acclaimed beauty brand, L'Oreal Professionnel Paris.

The event explored the captivating realm of scalp education with the primary objective of advancing the expertise of local hairstylists in the domains of scalp science, scalp advanced products and maintenance routines. The discussion, held at Marsa Malaz Kempinski recently was moderated by the regional education manager from L'Oreal Professionnel Paris, Pascal Amseyan, and featured the participation of Dr Zeinab Youness, a distinguished dermatologist.

The audience included hairstylists, salon managers, and staff members who share a profound appreciation for the exceptional quality and innovation exemplified by L'Oreal Professionnel Paris.

This event serves as a testament to Modern Home's pivotal role in introducing the most sought-after



Some of the participants in the event.

beauty labels to Qatar and underscores its enduring partnership with L'Oreal, a collaboration that has thrived for over six decades. This joint initiative underscores the unwavering commitment of both brands to excellence in beauty education, providing a platform for professionals to delve into cutting-edge insights and techniques within the realm of hair care.

L'Oreal Professionnel Paris, renowned for its technological approach to haircare, offers a com-

plete range of all types of hair and scalp care solutions. The discussion panel served as an educational platform for hairstylists to gain in-depth knowledge about the scalp advanced product range, meticulously crafted by hair experts and endorsed by dermatologists.

This comprehensive range encompasses a diverse selection of shampoos and treatments tailored to address a myriad of scalp concerns, including sensitivity, oiliness and dandruff.

VCUarts Qatar Fall community classes to begin in October

Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar), a Qatar Foundation partner has announced the selection of art and design community classes that will be offered in the Fall semester.

The courses will run from October 1 to December 13. A total of seven courses will be offered to the public, both introductory and advanced. Together, these will cover several subject areas - ranging from graphic design, interior design, and embroidery to digital drawing, abstract expressionism, and line sketching. The classes, held by VCUarts Qatar's Community and Continuing Education programme twice a year, are designed to engage the creative in everyone, regardless of age, experience, or professional background.

"The Fall 2023 Community Education Programme reinforces our commitment to imparting the principles and foundations of art and design to a wider audience beyond the walls of our university," said Rasha Alkasab, programme manager, Community and Continuing Education.

"The Programme also serves as a gateway for prospective students to discover and explore the diverse disciplines we offer at VCUarts Qatar. As a result, participants can expect to gain a well-rounded skill

set that combines practical know-how and creative thinking, which they will be able to apply across various domains."

The seven courses offered this Fall are: "Introduction to Digital Drawing: Sketchbook" - Sundays, October 1 to November 12; "Interior Design (Basics)" - Mondays, October 2 to November 6; "Graphic Design for Beginners: Design Theory" - Tuesdays, October 3 to November 21; "From Photos to Sketches: Expressive Line Sketching" - Saturdays, October 14 to December 2; "Interior Design (Advanced)" - Sundays and Wednesdays, November 19 to December 13; "Introduction to Embroidery" - Sundays and Tuesdays, November 19 to December 12; Abstract Expressionism Painting - Mondays and Wednesdays, November 20 to December 13.

In addition to these courses, VCUarts Qatar will offer free, online classes as part of a Community Taster Programme that will aim to provide exposure to the disciplines offered at the university, and create awareness of the fundamentals of arts and design within the local community. Three classes catering to beginners are set to be delivered as part of this initiative, focusing on expressive line sketching, design theory and colour trends.

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September 30 – October 1, 2023
Four Seasons Hotel Doha - Qatar

With Islamophobia becoming a household term over the past decade, it is incumbent on scholars and practitioners to explore the historical origins and global connections of this phenomenon to fully understand and confront its current iterations. Convened by members of the Georgetown University in Qatar faculty, this conference brings together a diverse collection of professionals, academics, government officials, artists, and students to explore the global, historical, theological, and political dimensions that drive practices of Islamophobia

Experts speaking at the conference include:
With Arabic Translation



John Esposito
Georgetown University



Dalia Mogahed
Institute for Social Policy and Understanding



Keynote Speaker
Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool
Founder of the World for All Foundation



Salman Sayyid
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Qatar committed to epidemic prevention, says health minister

QNA
New York

Qatar has organised a ministerial meeting for the UN Group of Friends of Solidarity for Global Health Security, on the sidelines of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

HE the Minister of Public Health Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari and Qatar's permanent delegation to the UN participated in the meeting along with several ministers.

HE Dr al-Kuwari said in her speech during the meeting that this gathering represents a pivotal moment to delve deeper into strategies aimed at further raising the level of global health security and well-being, especially in the context of the Summit on the Future and the UN High-Level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance, along with other important high-level initiatives.

This is the appropriate time to review the results of the high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly on epidemic prevention, preparedness and response, and to mobilise the resulting political momentum, she stressed.

The collective experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the grim reality that pandemics pose existential threats that require significant investments and resources for prevention and preparedness, HE Dr al-Kuwari said, pointing that neglecting this imperative will only exacerbate the



impact of pandemics, especially on the world's most vulnerable populations. This increases the severity of the threat of deadly infectious diseases, in addition to its repercussions across the economic, political, and security sectors, she said noting that the pandemic has emphasised the paramount importance of prevention, preparedness, and response.

She noted: "It is no less clear that health cannot exist in isolation. Instead, we must adopt a comprehensive health approach that includes the entire community," explaining that this approach is extremely important given the multifaceted consequences of epidemics that extend across various sectors.

She pointed out the importance of adopting a comprehensive health approach that includes the entire society, given the multifaceted consequences of epidemics

that extend across various sectors.

She voiced Qatar's firm commitment to epidemic prevention, preparedness and response, in close alignment with the human development pillar of the Qatar National Vision 2030, which revolves around caring for a physically and psychologically healthy population.

Under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the healthcare sector in Qatar has witnessed remarkable growth and unprecedented modernity over the past decade, HE Dr al-Kuwari said, explaining that this change extends to emergency medical services, as represented by the opening of the largest trauma and emergency centre in the region in 2019.

Great emphasis has also been placed on developing a highly skilled workforce in the healthcare

field, and ensuring the provision of high-quality care to the population of Qatar, she added.

She voiced Qatar's pride to be the first country to obtain the World Health Organisation (WHO) recognition for all its municipalities as 'Healthy Cities'.

She pointed that Qatar also obtained an advanced rank in the comprehensive health coverage index, which confirms Qatar's firm commitment to providing access to quality health services and enhancing the well-being of society.

Qatar's healthcare achievements also received global praise in 2022, with five hospitals listed among the top 250 academic medical centres worldwide and two hospitals among the top 100, HE Dr al-Kuwari said pointing that Qatar was elected to the Executive Board of the WHO for a three-term term. Receiving the WHO World No Tobacco Day Award in 2022 reaffirms Qatar's commitment to global health, she stressed.

She emphasised that substantial investments in healthcare, preparedness, and a scientific approach, along with comprehensive measures, have led Qatar to maintain one of the lowest Covid-19 mortality rates globally, high vaccination rates, and valuable contributions to the global understanding of Covid-19.

Qatar is a founding member of the group, alongside the Republic of Korea, Canada, Denmark, and Sierra Leone. The group was established in 2020.



Qatar takes part in UN meeting on anti-TB fight

Qatar participated in the second high-level meeting of the UN on the fight against tuberculosis.

HE the Minister of Public Health (MoPH), Chairperson of the Executive Board of the World Health Organisation, Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari, represented Qatar at the meeting.

In her remarks, HE Dr al-Kuwari underscored Qatar's firm position on the collective work to achieve the goals that were agreed upon and determined in the sustainable development plan for 2030, along with the strategy on the fight against tuberculosis.

Qatar has given a top priority to lay out an integrated healthcare system that offers high-quality preventive and curative health services and adheres to international standards, HE Dr al-Kuwari said, adding that the Qatar National Vision 2030 – that sets human development as a core pillar – stresses the importance prioritised for health as a key driver for sustainable development, offering physical and psychological health, as well as welfare for population.

She outlined that the second National Health Strategy 2018-2022 laid out a solid foundation to curb health challenges, with a sharp focus on the population's health and ensure the integrated care for them, particularly with respect to tuberculosis disease, pointing out that MoPH is currently intensifying efforts to launch the third national strategy for health with a special emphasis on curbing tuberculosis.

HE Dr al-Kuwari noted that stemming from the global solidarity and cooperation and in alignment with the commitment to promote global endeavours for a healthier and more equitable future for all, the State of Qatar made an additional pledge during the 7th

conference for the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria for 2022 worth \$50mn for the Global Fund with the total amount of fund reaching \$110mn.

Overall, such consolidated commitment and powerful partnerships undertake a pivotal role in combating communicable diseases, including tuberculosis, she said.

HE Dr al-Kuwari said she is optimistic the outcomes of the meeting will constitute a critical milestone in the fight against tuberculosis, and ultimately make a tangible difference in the life of millions of people worldwide, notwithstanding the great challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The sustainable health systems, investment in research and development, as well as equitable access to the means of prevention, test, cure, and care are pivotal in alleviating people's suffering, reducing fatalities, in addition to halting the spread of tuberculosis, she said.

Stemming from this, she added, the optimal role carried by the World Health Organisation (WHO) is recognised since WHO is the leading entity in health field, along with its unwavering efforts which are highly appreciated in the global response to tuberculosis and in providing counselling and support.

The meeting was held under the theme of: "Advancing science, finance and innovation, and their benefits, to urgently end the global tuberculosis epidemic, in particular, by ensuring equitable access to prevention, testing, treatment and care." It conducted an overarching review to achieve the goals on tuberculosis as agreed at the national, regional, and international levels in the political declaration of 2018, as well as identify loopholes and solutions to accelerate progress towards ending tuberculosis by 2030. (QNA)

Qatari cash aid for needy families in Gaza Strip

HE the Chairman of Qatar's Gaza Reconstruction Committee ambassador Mohamed al-Emadi said that the committee, in co-operation with the Qatar Fund for Development, will begin disbursing cash assistance grants to needy families in the Gaza Strip, starting today.

Al-Emadi said about 100,000 needy families in the governorates of the Gaza Strip will receive \$100 per family.

He said that the distribution will take place through the UN and more than 300 designated centres and commercial stores. (QNA)



HE ambassador Mohamed al-Emadi

Alzheimer's awareness walk

Centre for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly (Ehsan), an affiliate of Ministry of Social Development and Family's Qatar Social Work Foundation, organised an Alzheimer's awareness walk.

Held under the slogan "not too early, not too late", the walk kicked off from the Katara Cultural Village Foundation (Katara) to Lusail Trail, with the participation of 100 Rafeeq bikes. The Alzheimer's awareness walk witnessed the participation of large numbers of the public, interested parties, a number of state institutions, and social media celebrities. Additionally, numerous buildings were illuminated in purple in solidarity with and support to the awareness campaign.

Starting on September first, Ehsan Centre launched an awareness campaign on Alzheimer's disease, whereby the centre posted on its social media accounts a series of posts and videos educating about the Alzheimer's, and its prevention methods, in addition to highlighting the need to provide social support for those affected and their families.

The campaign defined the disease as an acquired and gradual brain disorder that leads to a gradual loss of memory, which could be prevented by practicing mental exercises, learning new skills, sports, harnessing social relationships, keeping diabetes and Hypertension (high blood pressure) in check, in addition to eating healthy.

Waseef caters to real estate needs in Dukhan, Zekreet

Waseef leading real estate management and marketing company has distinguished itself by operating diverse real estate projects that cover all parts of the country.

It focuses on managing residential, commercial, and mixed-use projects developed by the Al Burooj Real Estate Group in the Dukhan and Zekreet areas.

Waseef's projects in these two areas are known for their creativity and integration, meeting the real needs of the real estate market and enhancing their industrial, touristic, and residential positions.

Recognising the significance of the Zekreet tourist region, Waseef operates and manages the Zekreet Market, which is strategically located near the Dukhan highway, making it a prominent and distinctive landmark in the region. It caters to the needs of residents, visitors, and tourists alike, offering 40 retail units that encompass various business opportunities, including restaurants and retail stores, all in one place. Additionally, it includes 31 residential apartments and provides comprehensive facilities, parking spaces, and various services. The occupancy rate in this market is 100%.

To meet the needs of the working population, Waseef also manages Zekreet Workers' Village, located in the city of Dukhan. This village comprises 200 residential units for the workforce and 48 units for junior employees, providing an exceptional living experience that meets all their needs. The occupancy




rate in this village is also 100%.

In the meantime, Dukhan Market is designed with modern facilities and services to provide residents and visitors with a pioneering shopping experience in one of Qatar's fastest-growing cities. The market includes 18 spacious retail stores and 10 administrative offices to cater to the desires of its customers, establishing itself as a leading shopping hub. The occupancy rate in this market is 80%.

Considering the significant growth in Dukhan, the Dukhan Real Estate Gardens Complex was developed behind the market. It offers luxurious residential apartments, modern amenities, and multiple green spaces. This project

consists of 48 spacious residential units with two or three bedrooms, ensuring good ventilation, ample natural light, and plenty of parking spaces. The occupancy rate in this project is 100%.

Waseef provides a range of services in the Dukhan and Zekreet areas, including maintenance for all systems and buildings, 24/7 security services, continuous monitoring of safety and emergency systems to ensure the best possible environment for project beneficiaries. Besides, the rental rates in these projects accommodate various income levels in line with current prices in Qatar, ensuring fair competition among real estate companies in the country.



QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY
INVITATION TO TENDER
QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ-372248	DESIGN, ENGG. AND SUPPLY OF REFRACTORY & BACK-UP INSULATION WITH VAPOUR BARRIER TO PRIMARY REFORMER WALLS INCLUDING SUPERVISION	500/- (Non-refundable)	270,000/- (Two Hundred Seventy Thousand Only)	24.09.2023 25.09.2023 26.09.2023 27.09.2023 28.09.2023 01.10.2023 02.10.2023	24.10.2023

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
 - Account Name : **QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)**
 - Account Number : **0013-025828-058**
 - IBAN : **QA51QNBAA000000000013025828058**
 - Bank Name : **QATAR NATIONAL BANK**
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender (**Very Important**), during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to purchase@qafco.com.qa on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform separately after the last date of Tender Fee Receipt Submission Date.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the last date of Tender Fee Receipt Submission Date, you may contact at 'purchase@qafco.com.qa' or on 44227797
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- Bids shall be submitted at QAFCO Tender Office, between 0930 – 1130 hours and 1230 – 1400 hours, of any working day of the Company, on/before the "Tender Closing Date".

Army strikes Gaza again amid violence at border

AFP
Gaza City

The Israeli army launched a drone strike on the Gaza Strip yesterday after violent protests in which three Palestinians were wounded by Israeli fire, sources on both sides said.

The early evening strike is one of a series that have come amid near-daily protests at the border by Palestinians after Israel closed the Erez crossing from Gaza.

A drone “struck a military post belonging to the Hamas organisation, adjacent to the area where a violent riot was taking place”, the army said.

It added that “shots were fired toward” Israeli soldiers near the border during the strike, without reporting any casualties.

A Palestinian security source said that an “Israeli aircraft had targeted a Hamas surveillance site east of Gaza City”, without mentioning any casualties.

Earlier in the day, Palestinian demonstrators faced off against Israeli soldiers stationed along the border fence, an AFP journalist reported.

Demonstrators set fire to tyres and threw stones at Israeli soldiers.

Three Palestinians were wounded by Israeli fire, according to the Gaza health ministry.



Soldiers and Palestinian protesters clash near the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Israel has imposed an air, land and sea blockade on the Palestinian enclave ever since the Hamas seized control in 2007.

Thousands of Palestinian workers from Gaza have been prevented from entering Israel by the closure of the Erez crossing, which an Israeli NGO, Gisha, condemned as

“collective punishment”.

Israel has issued work permits to some 18,500 Gazans, COGAT, the Israeli defence ministry body responsible for Palestinian civil affairs, said on Tuesday.

Since September 13, six Palestinians have been killed and nearly 100 wounded during violence at

the border, according to figures from the health ministry in Gaza.

Armed conflict sporadically erupts between Israel and fighters in the Gaza Strip.

In May, an exchange of Israeli air strikes and Gaza rocket fire resulted in the deaths of 34 Palestinians and one Israeli.

Israeli, Lebanese troops exchange tear gas on Golan border

AFP
Jerusalem

Israeli and Lebanese troops exchanged tear gas fire yesterday on a disputed and highly militarised section of the demarcation line with the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, the two armies said.

The Israeli army said its troops used “riot dispersal means” to turn around a Lebanese earthmover that had strayed into Israeli-held territory.

The Lebanese army said it was the Israeli “enemy” which had violated the demarcation line and fired smoke bombs at its troops escorting the bulldozer.

The demarcation line in the so-called Shebaa Farms area where the stand-off took place has been disputed by successive governments in Beirut which have argued that the area is Lebanese and should have been returned by Israel when it pulled out of the rest of south Lebanon in 2000.

Israel argues the area is part of the Golan Heights, which it captured from Syria in the Six-Day War of 1967 and later annexed in a move never recognised by the United Nations.

Following Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon, there were repeated clashes in the area between Israeli troops and fighters

of Lebanese group Hezbollah which culminated in a devastating war in 2006, and the area remains highly militarised.

“Earlier today, (Israeli) soldiers spotted an engineering vehicle’s shovel crossing the (UN-demarcated) Blue Line from Lebanon into Israeli (annexed) territory in the area of Mount Dov,” where Israel maintains a military camp, the Israeli army said.

“In response... soldiers used riot dispersal means. The vehicle returned to Lebanese territory”

The Lebanese army said its troops had escorted the bulldozer, which was “removing an earth mound erected by the Israeli enemy north of the withdrawal line... in the area of Basra - South”

After being targeted by Israeli smoke bombs, “the patrol members responded to the attack by firing tear gas at the enemy members, forcing them to withdraw”.

According to Israeli media reports, the Lebanese earthmover penetrated just two metres over the demarcation line.

Sporadic incidents still occur along the demarcation line. In July, the Israeli military said it had carried out retaliatory strikes against south Lebanon after an anti-tank missile was fired from the area.

Lebanon rescues Syrians in sinking migrant boat

The Lebanese military yesterday rescued 27 Syrian migrants from drowning after their rubber boat capsized off the country’s northern coast, the armed forces said, AFP reported from Beirut.

The navy, with support from the civil defence, “was able to rescue 27 illegal migrants aboard a rubber boat that was sinking off the Chekka coast”, an army statement said. A military official, who requested anonymity as he was not allowed to speak to the press, said the migrants were all Syrian. Migrants seeking to reach Europe from Lebanon generally head for the east Mediterranean island of Cyprus 175 kilometres away.

Also yesterday, security forces said they arrested a Lebanese people smuggler and 42 Syrians as he was in a vehicle “filled with a large number of Syrians”.

Police said the driver confessed planning to smuggle them by boat to Cyprus. The would-be migrants said during questioning they had paid between \$5,000 and \$7,000 a head to reach Europe via Cyprus, the statement added. “We have been trying to stop them on land before they leave by sea,” a security source said, again requesting anonymity.

Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan resume Nile dam talks

AFP
Nairobi

Ethiopia said yesterday that it has begun a second round of negotiations with Egypt and Sudan over a controversial megadam built by Addis Ababa on the Nile, the source of long-running tensions between the three nations.

Ethiopia this month announced the completion of the fourth and final filling of the Grand Renaissance Dam, prompting immediate condemnation from Cairo, which denounced the move as illegal.

Egypt and Sudan fear the massive \$4.2bn dam will severely reduce the share of Nile water they receive and had repeatedly asked Addis Ababa to stop filling it until an agreement was reached. For years at loggerheads over the issue, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed agreed in July to finalise a deal within four months, resuming talks in Au-

gust. “The second round of the tripartite negotiation among #Ethiopia, #Egypt, and #Sudan on the... annual operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (#GERD) has commenced today, September 23, 2023, in Addis Ababa,” Ethiopia’s foreign ministry said on X, formerly Twitter.

“Ethiopia is committed to reaching a negotiated and amicable solution through the ongoing trilateral process.” Protracted negotiations over the dam since 2011 have thus far failed to bring about an agreement between Ethiopia and its downstream neighbours. Egypt has long viewed the dam as an existential threat, as it relies on the Nile for 97% of its water needs. The dam is central to Ethiopia’s development plans, and in February 2022 Addis Ababa announced that it had begun generating electricity for the first time.

At full capacity, the huge hydroelectric dam – 1.8 kilometres long and 145 metres high – could generate more than 5,000 megawatts.

Nearly two weeks on, official Libya flood toll tops 3,800

AFP
Benghazi

Nearly two weeks after a flash flood devastated the Libyan port city of Derna, the official death toll keeps rising, passing 3,800 yesterday.

A total of 3,845 people are now confirmed to have died, said Mohamed Eljarh, spokesman for the relief committee set up by the authorities in eastern Libya.

He said the figure included only those whose burial had been recorded by the health ministry, so it is “expected to rise every day unfortunately”.

Bodies buried by residents in the first few days after the disaster struck on the night of September 10-11 had not been included, he said.

Officials were working with the community to compile a list of unrecorded burials as well as a register of the missing, who international aid organisations say may number 10,000 or more.

Many of the dead are believed to have been swept out to sea, from



A volunteer chef prepares meals for people displaced from eastern Libya following a deadly flood and housed in Tripoli, at a kitchen facility in the capital, yesterday.

where their bodies are still washing ashore. Others are thought to be buried beneath the debris that carpets whole neighbourhoods of Derna. More than 43,000 people have been displaced from the city and neighbouring parts of eastern Libya, the International Organisation for Migration said earlier this week.

Sudan’s army chief favours negotiated settlement to war

Reuters
New York/Cairo

Sudan’s army chief said on Friday he had not sought military support on a recent regional tour and that his preference was for a peaceful solution to the conflict that has killed thousands and displaced millions of civilians.

General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan also said in an interview with Reuters that he had asked neighbouring states to stop sending mercenaries in support of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

War between the army and the RSF broke out in mid-April over plans for a political transition and the integration of the RSF into the army, four years after long-time ruler Omar al-Bashir was overthrown in a popular uprising.

“Every war ends in peace, whether through negotiations or force. We are proceeding on those two paths, and our preferred path is the path of negotiations,” Burhan said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Burhan added that he believed that stalled talks by Saudi Arabia and the US in Jeddah could still succeed.

Burhan has made a series of foreign visits in recent weeks after remaining in Sudan for the first months of the war. The purpose was to seek solutions, not military support, though he had asked other states to block external backing that he asserts the RSF is receiving, he said.

“We asked our neighbours to help us monitor the borders to stop the flow of mercenaries,” said Burhan.

RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, said in a video speech released on Thursday to coincide with an address by Burhan to the UN General Assembly that he was ready for a ceasefire and political talks.

Previous claims by both sides that they want peace and are ready for ceasefires have failed to stop bloodshed.



General Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan

Witnesses say the army’s bombardments have caused civilian casualties and that the RSF is responsible for widespread looting, sexual violence and other abuses, as well as participating in ethnically targeted attacks in Darfur.

Burhan on Friday dismissed accusations against the army as propaganda by its rivals. The RSF has denied it is behind the violence in Darfur, and will hold its men accountable for abuses.

Burhan said that army deployment in El Geneina, which suffered the worst mass killings in Darfur, has been limited, hindering their ability to respond.

The violence peaked after the governor of West Darfur was killed on June 14. Burhan said he told the governor to seek protection at a military camp, but the governor had rejected that.

“The armed forces present in El Geneina are not sufficient in number to spread out in every area,” he said.

WAREHOUSE FOR RENT

- ✔ Warehouse for rent in Industrial area
- ✔ Warehouse 600 Sqm/1200 Sqm
- ✔ Municipality Approved
- ✔ Civil Defence Approved
- ✔ Secure Boundary Wall
- ✔ 24/7 Security

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Suicide truck bomber kills 13 in Somalia

AFP
Mogadishu

A suicide bomber killed 13 people and wounded dozens more in central Somalia yesterday after driving a truck packed with explosives towards a security checkpoint, triggering a blast that razed nearby buildings, police said.

Emergency workers used bulldozers to clear the debris as they retrieved bodies and rescued people trapped under rubble after the blast in the town of Beledweyne in Hiran region.

“What has happened here is a heinous act,” Abdulahi Ahmed Malim, the governor of Hiran, told reporters at the scene.

“This was a disaster today and the damage it has inflicted is not small, it destroyed the whole area,” he said.

“We have recovered the dead bodies of 13 people, most of them civilians who stayed nearby,” Ahmed Yare Adan, a local police officer, said by phone.

“There are about 45 wounded people admitted in medical facilities... some of these people are seriously wounded and they are all civilians,” he said.

The attack came after Somalia’s beleaguered government admitted

to suffering “several significant setbacks” in its fight against Al Shebaab militants.

The fighters have waged an insurgency for over 15 years to overthrow the fragile internationally backed government in Mogadishu.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for yesterday’s bombing.

Police officer Abdukadir Yasin, who rushed to the scene after the blast, said rescuers were pulling wounded victims to safety from under the rubble. “The destruction caused is immense, more than 10 dead bodies were confirmed already and the death toll can be higher,” he said.

Residents said the explosion caused houses to collapse, burying people under debris while they were at home. “The whole town is shocked,” said Abdifatah Hassan, a resident of the neighbourhood.

An African Union (AU) force deployed in Somalia in 2007 with a six-month mandate but still remains on the ground. The government is now seeking to delay a planned reduction of foreign troops by three months.

UN resolutions call for the African Union Transition in Somalia (ATMIS) force to be reduced to zero by the end of next year, handing over security to the Somali army and police. Somali troops

launched a major offensive against the Al Qaeda-affiliated Al Shebaab in central Somalia in August last year. They joined forces with local clan militias in an operation backed by the AU force and US air strikes.

Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud took office in May last year vowing “all-out war” against Al Shebaab, who were driven from Mogadishu in 2011 but control swathes of the countryside.

Mohamud, who has recently been visiting the frontline, said in August that government would “eliminate” the militants by the end of the year.

But Somalia’s national security adviser recently wrote to the UN requesting a 90-day delay to the planned pullout of 3,000 AU troops by the end of September.

In the letter, seen by AFP, he said the government had “managed to re-liberate towns, villages and critical supply routes” during its offensive but had suffered “several significant setbacks” since late August.

“This unforeseen turn of events has stretched our military forces thin, exposed vulnerabilities in our frontlines and necessitated a thorough reorganisation to ensure we maintain our momentum in countering the Al Shebaab threat,” the letter said.



Ghanaians gather for a third day of anti-government protests amid police arrests in Accra, yesterday.

Multi-day protests over economic crisis grip Ghana’s capital

Reuters
Accra

Hundreds of demonstrators gathered in the Ghanaian capital Accra yesterday for a third day of anti-government protests linked to economic hardship that have led to dozens of arrests.

Protesters, some waving placards or the Ghanaian flag, decried the high cost of living and a lack of jobs as they marched under the watch of riot police. The gold, oil and cocoa-producing nation has been battling its worst economic

crisis in a generation brought on by spiralling public debt.

“The average Ghanaian can’t afford three square meals (per day)... the government doesn’t care,” said 24-year-old unemployed protester Romeo, who like others at the demonstration was wearing a red beret.

Police blocked the road to prevent protesters approaching Jubilee House, the seat of the presidency, which organisers Democracy Hub have vowed to occupy.

On Thursday, police said 49 people had been detained for unlawful assembly and violating the

public order act on the first day of the three-day action. There was no sign of further arrests and the situation appeared calm yesterday. Last year, protests over soaring prices and other economic challenges led to clashes with police. The government sealed a \$3bn, three-year loan programme with the International Monetary Fund in May, but detractors say the authorities have done too little to help those struggling to make ends meet amid the protracted downturn.

Economic growth is forecast to slow to 1.5% this year from 3.1% in 2022.

Africa’s top pop culture festival showcases homegrown superheroes

AFP
Johannesburg

Africa’s largest pop culture festival opened this week with a spotlight on homegrown superheroes including a black knight battling South Africa’s rolling power cuts and a warrior inspired by the legendary Zulu king Shaka.

Clad in superhero capes and sci-fi costumes, thousands of people flocked to a vast expo centre south of Johannesburg, South Africa, on Friday for the first day of Comic Con Africa, which runs until tomorrow.

The festival, in its fourth edition, has a dedicated ‘Afro Geek’ pavilion, showcasing comics reflecting African heritage and society.

“The cartoons we used to watch, particularly Tarzan, had this colonial mentality around Africans... it would be a character in Africa but the Africans would be invisible,” Trevor Ngwenya, an artist, said.

“It didn’t sit well with me.” Ngwenya’s latest project is a superhero inspired by King Shaka, the 19th-century leader still revered for having united a large swathe of the country as the Zulu nation.

Other ‘Afro Geek’ offerings in-



A cosplayer poses for a portrait at Comic Con Africa in Johannesburg, yesterday.

clude a paladin fighting the relentless power outages that have battered South Africa in recent years and a comic series inspired by African mythology.

“Seeing superheroes that I look like brings more of a relatability to me. It makes me want to read the comics a little more,” said Ethan Msithini, 26, an animator promoting the Kidwiz Inc series featuring the blackout busting hero.

The festival has been praised for opening doors for cosplayers in a country and continent where the industry is not as established as in more developed parts of the world. “I just really love that people of colour are taking back ownership of certain things like fantasy and sci-fi,” said Abigail Backman-Daniels, a festivalgoer dressed as a Valkyrie from the *Thor* movie franchise.

AFP
Niamey

Niger’s coup leaders accused the head of the UN on Friday of obstructing their participation in the body’s General Assembly, saying it was “likely to undermine any effort to end the crisis in our country”.

Rebel elite soldiers overthrew president Mohamed Bazoum on July 26 and have since detained him at home with his family.

Negotiations to restore civilian rule have yet to bear fruit, with the junta demanding a three-year transition and the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) calling for the immediate return of the democratically elected Bazoum.

The coup has also been strongly criticised by Western governments and global bodies such as the UN, which is holding its General Assembly of world leaders in New York this week.

In a news release read on public television, the military said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres “went astray in the exercise of his mission by obstructing Niger’s full participation in the 78th session of the UN General Assembly”. It criticised “the perfidious actions” of the UN leader, adding that they were “likely to undermine any effort to end the crisis in our country”.

Bakary Yaou Sangare, who before the coup was Niger’s ambassador to the UN and is now its foreign minister, was the new leaders’ chosen representative for the gathering.

But, according to a diplomatic source, there was also an application by the overthrown government to represent Niamey.

“In case of competing credentials from a mem-

ber state the secretary-general defers the matter to the Credentials Committee of the General Assembly who will deliberate on the matter,” Guterres’ spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

“The secretary-general does not decide.” Because the committee will not meet until later, no representative from Niger was added to the speakers’ list.

Niger “forcefully rejects and denounces this clear interference by Mr Guterres in the internal affairs of a sovereign state”, the junta said.

One of the world’s poorest nations, Niger is the fourth country in West Africa to suffer a coup since 2020, following Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali. Bazoum’s removal heightened international worries over the Sahel region, which faces growing insurgencies linked to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State group.

Regional sanctions since the coup mean food and medicines are scarce in landlocked Niger, prices are skyrocketing and there are blackouts after Nigeria cut electricity supplies.

Senegal’s President Macky Sall said on Thursday a diplomatic solution in Niger was “still possible”.

“I hope that reason will ultimately prevail... that it is still possible to move forward reasonably to a solution,” Sall said in an interview with France’s RFI and France 24 media outlets.

He urged Niger’s coup leaders “to not push (us) to the final decision which would be a military intervention”.

The military leaders of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger signed a mutual defence pact this month, saying they aimed to “establish an architecture of collective defence and mutual assistance for the benefit of our populations”.

Ethiopia at UN calls for swift progress on peace deal

AFP
UN

Ethiopia told the UN yesterday it wanted quicker implementation of a peace deal in Tigray, including on disarmament of former rebels.

Ethiopia’s government and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) in November last year reached an accord in Pretoria that has largely halted a brutal two-year war.

“The implementation of the agreement continues to make significant progress despite some delays in the execution of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process,” Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen said in a speech to the UN General Assembly.

“There is a need to expedite this process and ensure its successful completion,” he said.

The TPLF, formerly Ethiopia’s dominant party, agreed to disarm



Ethiopia’s Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen speaks during the UN General Assembly (UNGA) at the UN headquarters in New York City, yesterday.

under the Pretoria deal as government forces advanced.

An African Union monitoring mission confirmed in January that the TPLF had begun surrendering heavy weapons, and Tigray authorities said in July that more than 50,000 fighters had

been demobilized, but the scale of implementation remains unclear.

Demeke said that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s government, which has faced intense criticism including from the US over alleged human rights violations, remained “committed to consolidate peace and stability throughout the country”.

The agreement brokered in South Africa by the African Union “is a practical embodiment of African solutions to African problems,” Demeke said.

Complicating efforts, forces from the neighbouring region of Amhara still control Western Tigray, in a potentially dangerous flashpoint.

The Pretoria agreement called for the withdrawal of foreign forces, but residents say there remains a presence of troops from neighbouring Eritrea, which has been accused of some of the worst abuses after intervening against the TPLF.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MUHAMMAD TAMIM BIN SHAMSUDEEN

holder of

INDIAN Passport No. Y5794459
QID No. 31835602193

hereby change my name

from

MUHAMMAD TAMIM BIN SHAMSUDEEN

to

TAMIM BIN SHAMSUDEEN

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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QID No. 28914410616

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Top US Democratic senator indicted for corruption

AFP
New York

Federal prosecutors have charged powerful US Senator Robert Menendez with bribery and extortion, saying gold bars and hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash had been found at the high-ranking Democrat's home.

In one of several allegations, the Justice Department said Menendez had provided sensitive information to the Egyptian government in order to help an Egyptian-American businessman protect his monopoly.

It was the second corruption indictment in eight years against the veteran New Jersey politician, 69, and may place into question his hold on his seat in Congress and the Democratic Party's slim majority in the Senate.

Hours after the indictment Menendez stepped down "temporarily" as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, a position

that had given him significant influence over US foreign relations.

"The senator and his wife accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes in exchange for Senator Menendez using his power and influence to protect and to enrich those businessmen and to benefit the government of Egypt," said Damian Williams, the federal prosecutor for the Manhattan, New York district.

In a statement, Menendez called the allegations "baseless" and characterised the indictment as a personal attack on him and his wife Nadine Menendez, who was also indicted.

"They have misrepresented the normal work of a Congressional office," Menendez said.

Calls for his resignation even came from fellow Democrats, with New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy saying the charges were "deeply disturbing."

"The alleged facts are so serious that they compromise the ability of Senator Menendez to effectively



UNDER FIRE: Robert Menendez

represent the people of our state. Therefore, I am calling for his immediate resignation," he said in a statement.

But Menendez was defiant in a statement issued Friday evening: "It is not lost on me how quickly some are rushing to judge a Latino and push him out of his seat. I am not going anywhere."

Prosecutors said they found

more than a half-million dollars in cash in Menendez's New Jersey home and in his wife's safe deposit box, allegedly received from three New Jersey businessmen seeking his help.

Much of the cash was stuffed in envelopes and boxes and hidden around their home, some tucked into jackets bearing his name.

Gold bars worth around \$150,000 and a luxury Mercedes-Benz convertible, gifted by one of the businessmen, were also found.

Prosecutors said they had evidence showing that around the time he and his wife received the gold bars, Menendez searched Google to find out how much they were worth.

Menendez took the money to help protect two of the businessmen from Justice Department investigations, and to help the third, Egyptian-American Wael Hana, with a business monopoly granted to him by the Egyptian government, the indictment said.

"Among other actions, Menendez provided sensitive US Government information and took other steps that secretly aided the Government of Egypt," it said.

Menendez, his wife, Hana and the two other businessmen, Jose Uribe and Fred Daibes, were charged with two counts of bribery and fraud.

Menendez and his wife were also charged with extortion.

If found guilty, the most serious of the charges can bring up to 20 years in prison.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement that Menendez "has been a dedicated public servant."

"He has a right to due process and a fair trial," Schumer said.

A senator since 2006 and before that a member of the House of Representatives for 14 years, Menendez has been a Democratic stalwart in Congress for three decades.

In his position as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Menendez, the son of Cuban immigrants, has been a fierce op-

ponent of normalising relations with the Castro regime in Cuba.

He also opposed authoritarian regimes like Venezuela and China, stymied arms deals with Turkey, and strongly supported Israel.

In 2015, he was charged with accepting bribes of private flights, luxury vacations and over \$750,000 in illegal campaign donations.

But the charges were dismissed three years later after a deadlocked jury could not reach a verdict in the case. He comes up for re-election to the Senate next year, and it was not immediately clear how the new indictment would affect his once-impenetrable standing with New Jersey voters.

"To my supporters, friends and the community at large, I ask that you recall the other times the prosecutors got it wrong and that you reserve judgement," Menendez said.

Democrats head into the 2024 elections with a narrow 51-49 majority in the Senate.

Recycling plastic not enough, warns UN

AFP
United Nations

With the production of plastic on the rise worldwide and creating ever more pollution, the UN environment chief warned that humanity cannot just recycle its way out of the mess, and she called for a total rethink about the way we use plastics.

"There are different sort of onramps to the highway to solutions. But I think everybody recognises that the status quo is just not an option," said Inger Andersen, director of the UN Environment Program, in an interview with AFP on the sidelines of the General Assembly in New York.

Andersen was talking two weeks after the publication of the first draft of a future international treaty on plastic pollution, which is expected to be finalised by the end of 2024.

It reflects the wide range of ambitions of the 175 countries involved, notably the gap between those who argue for a reduction in the production of raw polymers and those who insist on reuse and recycling.

First, Andersen said the aim was to get rid of as many single-use plastics as possible, "eliminating what's frankly not necessary: that thing that is wrapped in plastic that's completely mindless, that is maybe even wrapped by nature itself," like an orange or a banana.

Then, "there is thinking about the product itself. Does the product need to be liquid? Can we rethink the product... can it be powder, can it be compressed,

can it be concentrated?" she said, saying that when entering a supermarket, she goes straight to the soap aisle to see if solid versions are available.

"We also have to reduce the overall supply of new raw polymer," she said, noting that this was one option in the draft text of the treaty.

For sure, "we have to recycle as much as we can. But as we look at it now, plastic uses is increasing," Andersen told AFP.

"So what is clear is that we cannot recycle our way out of this mess."

Annual production of plastics has more than doubled in the past 20 years, to reach 460mn tonnes. It could triple by 2060 if nothing changes.

However, only nine percent is recycled. Plastic waste of all sizes is found today at the bottom of the oceans, in the stomachs of birds and on the tops of mountains, while microplastics have been detected in blood, breast milk and placentas.

"If we continue to pump into the economy all this new raw polymer, there is no way that we will stop the plastic flow into the oceans," she said.

And the health of the oceans is crucial for the future of humanity. The future treaty on plastic pollution would complement the global arsenal to protect the oceans, including the new historic treaty to protect the high seas signed this week by some 70 countries.

"The fact that we're going to move forward and protect that piece of the ocean that is beyond national boundaries is mind-blowingly important," Andersen said.

Haiti crisis force finally gathers steam after UN talks

An international force for violence-plagued Haiti has come closer to reality after months of fruitless efforts, with the United States saying up to a dozen countries had offered support and pledged its own logistical assistance.

"Ten to 12 came with concrete offers to this mission," State Department number two Victoria Nuland said after a ministerial meeting on Haiti on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Kenya has offered to lead the force with a contribution of 1,000 security personnel and Jamaica, the Bahamas and Antigua have made known their willingness to participate. Nuland did not name all the countries.

Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry has been calling for nearly a year for a force to deploy to the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, where armed gangs have seized control of vast swathes of land following intersecting public health, political and economic crises.

In an address to the General Assembly after he took part in the US-led talks, Henry said the Security Council "must act urgently" in authorising the multinational force.

"Kidnappings for ransom, looting, arson, massacres, sexual violence, organ trafficking, human trafficking, murders, extrajudicial killings, child soldiers, blockades of major roads — this is a non-exhaustive list of the crimes perpetrated by the armed gangs," Henry said.

He asked for "brotherly solidarity to help us turn this dark page. I ask the international community to act, and act quickly."

Until the Kenyan offer, no country had been willing to take charge of the Haiti force, with Canada considering but determining it was too risky.

Harris tasked with new role fighting US gun violence



US President Joe Biden applauds as Vice-President Kamala Harris speaks announcing the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, in the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington, DC. (AFP)

AFP
Washington

US Vice-President Kamala Harris has taken on a new role fighting gun violence, a job likely to give her more visibility ahead of the 2024 election.

The 58-year-old Democrat will head up the new White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, which will provide coordination on the issue but largely lacks any kind of enforceable power to tackle the scourge in a country that has more firearms than people.

"We know true freedom is not possible if people are not safe," Harris said in a statement announcing the new office.

"We do not have a moment to spare nor a life to spare" while the United States is "torn apart" by gun violence, she said at the White House.

"After every mass shooting, we hear a simple message, the same

message all over the country," she added, saying Americans are begging for their leaders to "do something, please do something."

Despite the new push, the White House does not have unilateral power to meaningfully limit gun use in the United States, such as by banning assault weapons.

Any substantial moves would have to come from Congress, where fiercely anti-gun regulation Republicans control the House of Representatives.

Biden has therefore tried to work around legislative requirements and imposed certain regulatory and administrative restrictions, which have only a limited scope.

The new role adds a significant job to Harris's portfolio just a little over a year ahead of the 2024 race, in which she and the 80-year-old president are facing re-election.

The vice-president has already been tasked with handling other

politically sensitive issues such as immigration.

Tackling gun violence gives the former California prosecutor the chance to work on a visible issue that often garners more widespread consensus from the American public. According to the Gun Violence Archive, a non-governmental organisation, 44,374 people were killed by guns across the United States last year.

Gun deaths have slowed slightly this year, at 28,793 for the first eight months, according to the archive.

Harris — the first woman to become vice president as well as the first Black person and person of South Asian descent to hold the job — also recently embarked on the so-called Fight for Our Freedoms College Tour, in which she visited several US universities.

She was generally received with enthusiasm, in contrast to her often-flagging favourability poll numbers.

In shadow of Hollywood strikes, beauty professionals suffer

By Andréa Bambino
New York

Professional hairdressers and makeup artists work in the shadows of celebrities to make them sparkle on sets, red carpets and magazine covers.

But from New York to Los Angeles, the historic strike of American screenwriters and actors is leaving the workers responsible for making up the stars with blank appointment books and empty savings accounts.

Matthew Monzon, 52, has been a celebrity hairdresser in New York since 1997, coiffing the likes of Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Brooke Shields, Keri Russell and Anna Kendrick.

But since the screenwriters, and even more notably the actors, have stopped work — part of collective bargaining efforts to obtain fair pay from studios as well as curbs on the use of AI — Monzon says "finances are dwindling"

So far he told AFP he's been able to cover his rent and health insurance payments, but that "there are very small amounts in my bank account at this point."

But he supports the movement: "I want the actors and the writers to get what they deserve."

From costume designers to makeup artists, manicurists to stylists to hairdressers — the impact of the strikes has rippled across the entire entertainment ecosystem that depends on a packed Hollywood calendar.

Negotiations between studio bosses and screenwriters resumed this week, but talks are slow.

For Rebecca Restrepo, that's left daily life at a standstill.

She used to lug 60-pound suitcases of makeup and lighting, dashing between TV studios and hotels.

But she says since July, things have dried up: "Zero work."

"Right now, I have a personal client, she's a billionaire. But



Shoppers browse a flea market where out-of-work film and TV crew members were selling items to earn cash during the Hollywood strikes in Burbank, California. (Reuters)

they only need make up once in a blue moon!" said the resident of Queens. Restrepo said her industry is feeling the hit even more intensely because the pandemic

meant "a year-and-a-half without work."

"And now with this strike, you know we were all just trying to make day to day and now, it's kill-

ing all of us." Most beauty professionals work independently with the help of an agency, which maintains their client list and portfolio along with organising their schedule.

Many of these artists worked in fashion before moving into the world of Hollywood and celebrities into the 2000s.

They describe their work as an art that adapts to circumstance: "A premiere, it's super glamorous; an evening talk show, it's a little more chic, more cocktail; a morning talk show, you want to keep it fresh and natural," Restrepo explained.

But today, they describe an increasingly competitive field, arduous working conditions and uncertainty about the profession's future.

"Because of Instagram, everyone has a filter, everyone's a retoucher, everyone thinks they're a makeup artist," said Restrepo.

"It's like the Wild West"

Matin Maulawizada has been a

makeup artist established in New York for 26 years, and has worked on stars including Angelina Jolie and Claire Danes.

He said pay rates have been cut to a tenth of what productions used to give prior to the advent of streaming platforms.

At 59, Maulawizada is hoping to join the Make-Up Artists & Hair Stylists Guild for New York's audiovisual and theatre industries of New York, in order to benefit from standards negotiated with production studios or Broadway theatres.

He also launched an Instagram initiative called the "beauty-4beautyproject" to support professionals like him, who are impacted by the strikes.

Marco Santini, who does hair for Jessica Chastain, Lucy Liu and Uma Thurman, is more disillusioned. He's convinced artificial intelligence will pound the final nail in the coffin of his profession: "When you have an avatar, you don't need a hairdresser." — **AFP**

China, resources-rich East Timor upgrade bilateral relations

Reuters
Beijing

China and East Timor have upgraded bilateral ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership, potentially giving Beijing more influence in the region while satisfying the young half-island nation's desire for stronger ties with major economies.

The agreement to enhance relations came after China's President Xi Jinping met with East Timor's Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou ahead of the opening ceremony of the Asian Games, the Chinese foreign ministry said in a statement yesterday.

"Both sides will increase mutual support and strengthen international co-operation," said Xi.

Last year, when Jose Ramos Horta was inaugurated as East Timor's fifth president since the country's independence in 2002, the Nobel laureate pledged to forge closer relations with China, especially in energy, agriculture and infrastructure. He said he would continue to foster a relationship with the United States, but added that East Timor would not be implicated in any rivalry between

Beijing and Washington. East Timor welcomes strong ties with all countries, including its southern neighbour Australia, Ramos Horta said last year.

Upgrading their ties, China and East Timor agreed to co-operation under the Belt and Road Initiative championed by Xi, that could open the way for investment in infrastructure. Looking beyond South-east Asia, China has built ties with

small nations in the Pacific during recent years, worrying the United States and allies Australia and New Zealand, who have long seen the region as their sphere of influence.

China sent its military-run hospital ship to the Pacific in July to visit countries including East Timor and the Solomon islands.

In a joint statement yesterday, China and East Timor said they would jointly explore for oil

and gas. East Timor is looking to start producing natural gas from its Greater Sunrise fields around 2030, hoping to develop the offshore project that has been stuck in limbo for decades. The development of the Greater Sunrise field is critical to the Southeast Asia island nation's economy as its main source of revenue - the Bayu Undan oil and gas field - stopped producing gas earlier this year.



An aerial view shows smoke billowing from a factory after a fire in Pingtung.

Taiwan golf ball factory fire kills at least six



Smoke billowing from a factory after a fire in Pingtung, southern Taiwan.



Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen speaks to a woman while visiting a funeral home to pay respect to the firefighters who died during a fire at a factory in Pingtung, Taiwan.

AFP
Taipei

A fire at a golf ball factory in Taiwan killed at least six people, three of them firefighters who died in an explosion, authorities said yesterday. The fire, which began Friday evening and raged all night, injured more than 100 people, most of them workers, the Pingtung county government told local media.

One firefighter and three other people are missing. Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen visited the scene on Saturday morning and expressed condolences to the victims' families. She said an investigation into the cause of the tragedy is underway. "I want to thank everyone for their hard work and please stay safe," Tsai told emergency response personnel.

She also stopped at the morgue to pay respects to the victims and visited the injured at a hospital.

An official with the Pingtung Fire Department told local media that chemical peroxide stored inside the factory could have been the cause of the one large and several smaller explosions.

Several people were trapped inside due to the blasts, which caused a section of the factory roof to collapse.

Thailand party names new leader

Reuters
Bangkok

Thailand's opposition Move Forward named a new leader yesterday after Pita Limjaroenrat, who led the party to a stunning election victory in May, was thwarted in his efforts to become premier.

Chaithawat Tulathon, a former political magazine editor, will head Move Forward, which won the most seats in parliament on a wave of youth and urban support over its anti-establishment policies. The progressive party will lead the opposition after conservative lawmakers and an unelected senate blocked its attempts to form a government.

Pita stepped down as party leader earlier this month amid a host of legal and legislative challenges that many see as part of a pattern by the pro-military and royalist establishment to diminish a new generation of leaders. In July, he was suspended from parliament over allegations he owned shares in a media company, making him unfit for office. Pita denies this.

Chaithawat, who was previously the party's secretary-general, called the move a "temporary restructuring" while Pita clears his name. Pita would continue on as advisor to the party and manage activities outside parliament, Chaitawat said. Earlier this week, the courts banned a prominent Move Forward party supporter, Pannika Wanich, from politics for life over a photo she posted online more than a decade ago that was deemed disrespectful to the monarchy



Chaithawat Tulathon, the new leader of the Move Forward Party, speaks after being elected by the party's members at the party HQ in Bangkok.

and in breach of ethical standards. Move Forward has pledged to amend the country's harsh royal insult law which penalises perceived slights against the monarchy with up to 15 years in prison. The country's constitution, drafted during junta rule, has "become a potent tool to arbitrarily attack outspoken politicians," Sunai Phasuk, senior researcher on Thailand for Human Rights Watch told Reuters.

"This could easily wipe out members of the opposition, who give commentary calling for reforms," he added.

Even China's 1.4bn population can't fill all its vacant homes: former official

Reuters
Beijing

Even China's population of 1.4bn would not be enough to fill all the empty apartments littered across the country, a former official said yesterday, in a rare public critique of the country's crisis-hit property market.

China's property sector, once the pillar of the economy, has slumped since 2021 when real estate giant China Evergrande Group defaulted on its debt obligations following a clampdown on new borrowing.

Big-name developers such as Country Garden Holdings continue to teeter close to default even to this day, keeping home-buyer sentiment depressed.

As of the end of August, the

combined floor area of unsold homes stood at 648mn sq m, the latest data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) show.

That would be equal to 7.2mn homes, according to Reuters calculations, based on the average home size of 90sq m.

That does not count the numerous residential projects that have already been sold but not yet completed due to cash-flow problems, or the multiple homes purchased by speculators in the last market upturn in 2016 that remain vacant, which together make up the bulk of unused space, experts estimate.

"How many vacant homes are there now? Each expert gives a very different number, with the most extreme believing the current number of vacant homes are enough for 3bn people," said He

Keng, 81, a former deputy head of the statistics bureau.

"That estimate might be a bit much, but 1.4bn people probably can't fill them," He said at a forum in the southern Chinese city Dongguan, according to a video released by the official media China News Service.

His negative view of the economically significant sector at a public forum stands in sharp contrast to the official narrative that the Chinese economy is "resilient".

"All sorts of comments predicting the collapse of China's economy keep surfacing every now and then, but what has collapsed is such rhetoric, not China's economy," a spokesperson at the foreign ministry said at a recent news conference.

Asean Natuna Solidarity Exercise 2023

Right: The Royal Malaysian Navy KD Terengganu sails during the final day of the Asean Natuna Solidarity Exercise 2023 off Lagong island, in Indonesia's Riau Islands province yesterday.



Left: Children hold flags of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations during the final day of the Asean Natuna Solidarity Exercise 2023 on Lagong island.



Indonesian military chief Admiral Yudo Margono attends the final day of the Asean Natuna Solidarity Exercise 2023.



Below: An Indonesian Air Force Cassa 212 aircraft simulates the delivery of aid during the final day of the Asean Natuna Solidarity Exercise 2023.

Vietnam executes man despite diplomatic appeals for mercy

AFP
Hanoi

Vietnam has executed long-time death row prisoner Le Van Manh, a lawyer confirmed yesterday, despite international pleas to spare his life. In 2005 Manh was charged with robbery, as well as the rape and murder of a 13-year-old girl in the northern Thanh Hoa province.

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) said police obtained a confession through torture that was relied upon to convict him.

Manh later retracted the confession, saying that police had beaten him severely. The Supreme Court in Hanoi handed down the death penalty at an appeal trial in 2008. Hanoi lawyer Nguyen Ha Luan, who helped Manh's family petition the Vietnamese president to halt the execution, posted his death certificate on social media yesterday. "According to reports and official letters, defendant Le Van

Manh was executed... the (execution) notice letter has been sent to the family," he said on Facebook.

The death certificate stated: "Le Van Manh born in 1982. Nationality: Vietnamese. Died at 08:45 on September 22, 2023, at execution house of Hoa Binh provincial police."

His body was buried at Cho Nhang cemetery, the lawyer said, citing official documents sent to Manh's family. Earlier this week, the diplomatic missions of the European Union, Canada, Norway and the United Kingdom in Vietnam urged authorities to show Manh mercy. "We strongly oppose the use of capital punishment at all times and in all circumstances, which is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and can never be justified, and advocate for Vietnam to adopt a moratorium on all executions," the joint statement said. Amnesty International called the execution "sickening".

"Despite knowing in detail that Le Van Manh's case was mired in

serious irregularities and violations of the right to a fair trial... authorities in Vietnam executed him anyway mere days after informing his family to make arrangements for his remains," Chiara Sangiorgio, Amnesty's death penalty expert, said yesterday.

The ICJ said Manh's execution "is a violation of his right to life and freedom from cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment under international human rights law".

"Vietnam must join the global trend towards the abolition of the death penalty and the establishment of a moratorium on the use of the death penalty," the ICJ's spokesman said. Phil Robertson, Human Rights Watch's deputy director for Asia, said Manh's execution was "a striking example of everything that is wrong with the Vietnamese judicial system".

"The Vietnamese government should immediately commute all death penalty sentences to stop these miscarriages of justice," he said.

Britain’s colossal HS2 project in danger of going off the rails

AFP
London

HS2, the UK’s second high-speed train line after the one leading to the Channel Tunnel, has suffered spiralling costs despite the route being cut short, raising fears the project could be further derailed.

Designed to bring the major cities in the north of England closer to London, its cost was estimated at £37.5bn (\$46bn) in 2013. It has since soared to around £100bn.

“It’s one of the most expensive railway projects in the world, in cost per mile,” said Sam Dumitriu, head of policy for the economic growth group Britain Remade,

which has compared infrastructure projects in 14 countries. The 215km of track between London and Birmingham, the first section of the line, will cost £396mn per mile (£247mn per km), more than eight times as much as the Tours-Bordeaux high-speed line that entered service in 2017, the organisation estimated.

Dumitriu pointed out that building railways, tramlines and roads is much more expensive in the UK than in other European countries. This is partly due to the broad opportunities given to local residents and environmentalists to make objections, which “are often taken onboard,” he explained. In the case of HS2, this has led to an increase in the number of tunnels.

There is also a lack of qualified personnel due to the rarity of major projects (HS2 is the first line to be built in north London in 150 years), and projects are often more ambitious – and therefore more expensive – than in other countries. “Why is it more expensive to build in Britain than in say China?” asked HS2 chairman Sir Jon Thompson in a *Daily Telegraph* article published in February. “Here we do not ride roughshod over the environment, over planning law, over local authorities and local people. “We have some of the strictest planning and environmental legislation in the world,” he explained.

Unlike similar projects in Spain, HS2 will carry people directly into the centre of cities “in some of the

most expensive land and property areas in the world,” further raising costs, said Thompson.

And in contrast to France, “we choose tunnelling over the demolition of whole communities and swathes of countryside to protect people, wildlife and our precious green spaces,” he added. But the bill is causing headaches for the government.

In November 2021, it ditched a section of track that was supposed to link Birmingham with Leeds, infuriating local politicians who accused the government of reneging on its promises to disadvantaged regions of the north. In March, Downing Street postponed the construction of other sections by two years and announced that the

line would not initially go as far as Euston station, in central London.

The UK’s Infrastructure and Projects Authority said in July that the project looked “unachievable” in its current form. Even with cuts, the project could still cost more than £90bn once the recent surge in inflation is taken into account, the *Financial Times* estimated this week. The government is considering cancelling another section, between Birmingham and Manchester, British media has reported. So far, the government says it has not decided anything. But Finance Minister Jeremy Hunt, when asked on Thursday about the concerns of local politicians, told LBC radio that “they will also be worried if we have an infrastructure

project where the costs are getting totally out of control.”

John Kelsey, a professor of construction and project management at University College London, said the British rail sector, a global pioneer in the 19th century, was suffering from outdated practices and infrastructure. More innovative procurement and better collaboration between contractors could “lead to a long-term reduction in costs, or at least increasing efficiency,” he told AFP. Ageing infrastructure also adds to costs for “new projects where they have to interface with the existing rail network,” he added. Work on the first section of HS2 began in April 2020, with the first trains due to run between 2029 and 2033.



A protester wearing as a cape a modified Union Jack flag with stars like the EU flag stands in the crowds.



Protesters listen to speeches after marching from Hyde Park to Palace of Westminster in central London during a rally calling for the UK to rejoin the EU yesterday.

Pro-EU supporters march for UK to rejoin bloc

AFP
London

Hundreds of people waving European Union flags yesterday rallied in central London calling for Britain to rejoin the bloc. The National Rejoin March (NRM) gathered near Hyde Park and was due to culminate in Parliament Square as supportive motorists beeped their horns.

Protesters brandished placards reading “the road to rejoin the EU starts here”, and “rejoin, rejoice”.

The NRM movement backs a

return to membership of the EU which Britain left after voting in favour of Brexit in a 2016 referendum. An exit deal was negotiated under the premiership of former Conservative prime minister Boris Johnson and came into force in 2021, with a review set for 2025.

Peter Corr, leader and co-founder of NRM, said he decided to organise the march as it “felt like everyone had given up” on the cause. “Brexit was a huge mistake, we’re all – especially working class and poorer people – paying for it and we need to do something about it,” Corr, a lorry driver from the central English

city of Derby, told the domestic PA news agency. Protester Rachel Ashley, wearing over-sized star-shaped glasses, told AFP she was “just absolutely furious” about Brexit. “I know people who are utterly mortified. They are so deeply ashamed.... They’ve been played for fools,” she said. Another Brexit critic, Frances Smith, a 68-year-old retiree, said she saw herself as a European.

“To take that away from me is wicked,” she said. The opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer on Friday was forced to deny he wanted to rejoin the EU after recent comments led the ruling

Conservatives to accuse him of wanting to “unpick Brexit”.

Starmer insisted there was no case for returning to the EU, its customs union or the single market. The leader of the Liberal Democrats, the fourth largest party in parliament, has also said voters are no longer “talking about Europe” on the doorstep.

The Lib Dems had previously pledged to “stop Brexit”. “We want Britain to be back at the heart of Europe but we’re also realistic that’s going to take some time,” Ed Davey said ahead of his party’s annual conference yesterday.



A protester holds a sign reading “Rejoin” after marching from Hyde Park to Palace of Westminster in central London.

India confiscates properties of top Sikh separatist

AFP
New Delhi

India’s top investigation agency confiscated yesterday the properties of a prominent Sikh separatist and close ally of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, whose killing has sparked a diplomatic row between India and Canada.

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a lawyer believed to be based in Canada, was designated as a terrorist by Indian authorities in 2020 and is wanted on charges of terrorism and sedition. He is also the founder of the US-based group Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), whose Canada chapter was headed by Nijjar before he was gunned down by masked assailants in June near Vancouver.

The group, which has been banned by India, has been a vocal advocate for the creation of an independent Sikh homeland called Khalistan. A diplomatic firestorm erupted this week with Canadian Prime Minister Justin

Trudeau saying there were “credible reasons to believe that agents of the government of India were involved” in Nijjar’s death.

New Delhi dismissed Trudeau’s allegations as “absurd”, tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions followed, and India has stopped processing visa applications by Canadians. Pannun jumped into the raging row and issued a video telling Canadian Hindus to “go back to India”, claiming they had adopted a “jingoistic approach” by siding with New Delhi.

In an interview with an Indian news channel, Pannun said Nijjar had been his “close associate” for over 20 years and was like a “younger brother” to him. He also blamed India for Nijjar’s killing. Soon after his interview was aired, the Indian government issued an advisory to news networks asking them to refrain from giving a platform to people accused of “heinous crimes”.

Armed with court orders, officials of India’s National Inves-

tigation Agency (NIA) yesterday confiscated Pannun’s house in Chandigarh, the capital of the Sikh-majority state of Punjab, it said in a statement.

The NIA also confiscated agricultural land belonging to him in Amritsar, it added.

It accused Pannun of “actively exhorting Punjab-based gangsters and youth” on social media “to fight for the cause of independent state of Khalistan, challenging the sovereignty, integrity and security of the country”. In a statement mailed to AFP, Pannun’s office downplayed the confiscation of his properties.

“The issue at the heart of the conflict with India is not the properties of Pannun,” it said.

“This is about the Sikh homeland Punjab that is occupied by India and the resources of the indigenous people of Punjab that are being plundered by Delhi,” it added.

Sikhism is a minority religion originating in northern India that

traces its roots back to the 15th century and drew influences from both Hinduism and Islam. The Khalistan campaign was largely considered a benign fringe movement until the early 1980s, when a charismatic Sikh fundamentalist launched a violent separatist insurgency.

It culminated with Indian forces storming the Golden Temple, the faith’s holiest shrine in Amritsar, where separatists had barricaded themselves. India’s prime minister Indira Gandhi was subsequently assassinated by two of her Sikh bodyguards.

The insurgency was eventually brought under control and the Khalistan movement’s most vocal advocates are now among the large Sikh diaspora, particularly in Canada, Britain and Australia.

But memories of the violence – in which thousands died – still haunt India, which has outlawed the Khalistan movement and listed several associated groups as “terrorist organisations”.

UK party conference season opens ahead of election in 2024

AFP
London

The UK party political conference season opened yesterday with the start of the Liberal Democrat’s annual meet, as the country gears up for a general election expected in 2024. The centrist Lib Dems have seen their political fortunes wane dramatically since 2010 when they joined the Conservatives as a junior coalition partner in former Conservative prime minister David Cameron’s government.

Five years later they were almost wiped out, losing 49 of their 57 parliamentary seats, as voters punished them for backing Cameron’s austerity measures and ex-party leader Nick Clegg’s decision to renege on an election pledge not to raise university tuition fees. The party will use its conference in Bournemouth on England’s south coast to agree policies aimed at wooing so-called “bluwall” voters – people in southern England who are Conservative-leaning but drifting away from the party.

The Conservative’s Rishi Sunak, who only became prime minister last October, must call an election by the end of January 2025 at the latest. At the last election in 2019, the Lib Dems pledged to stop Brexit.

But speaking ahead of the conference party leader Ed Davey said that was no longer on the table.

“We want Britain to be back at the heart of Europe but we’re also realistic that’s going to take some time,” he told 5 News, adding that people “aren’t talking about Europe”.

Davey added yesterday that the Lib Dems had voted against the trade deal ex-Conservative prime minister Boris Johnson negotiated with the EU when it left. He told the domestic PA news agency that the main opposition Labour Party had not opposed it and consequently he was worried about their approach should they win the next election.

“When parties talk about tinkering around the edges, they’re not really advocating the root-and-branch reform that Liberal Democrats believe is important to rebuild our relationship with Europe,” he said. The cost of green policies is expected to be a central issue of the next election, after Sunak on Thursday announced a major reset of the UK’s strategy to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 amid a cost of living crisis.

In its 2019 election manifesto, the Lib Dems promised to tax frequent flyers and set a highly ambitious target of generating 80 percent of electricity from renewables. The policy would have required a massive acceleration in the construction of solar farms and wind turbines on land and at sea.

The Lib Dems currently have just 15 seats in the 650-seat Westminster parliament behind the Conservative Party (352 seats) and the Labour Party (196). The party had traditionally been the third largest party in British politics but now has fewer seats than the Scottish National Party (44).

After the Lib Dems, the Conservatives will hold their party conference in Manchester on October 1-4, followed by Labour in Liverpool on October 8-11.

US says it expects India to work with Canada on murder case

The United States made clear that it expected the Indian government to work with Canada on efforts to investigate the possible involvement of New Delhi agents in the murder of a Canadian citizen in June.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Monday that Ottawa had credible intelligence linking Indian agents to the murder of Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, prompting an angry reaction from New Delhi, which denies the allegation.

“We are deeply concerned about the allegations that Prime Minister Trudeau has raised,” US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters in a press briefing. “It would be important that India work with the

Canadians on this investigation. We want to see accountability.”

The White House has spoken of its concerns over the allegations, but Blinken is the most senior US official to have commented thus far. Traditional Canadian allies, including the United States, appeared to take a cautious approach to the matter earlier this week.

Political analysts said this was partly because the United States and other major players see India as a counterweight to the growing influence of China. “We have been consulting throughout very closely with our Canadian colleagues, not just consulting but co-ordinating with them on this issue,” Blinken said. During a press conference Trudeau

was asked about the allegations, and he repeated his call for the Indian government to co-operate. “We are there to work constructively with India. We hope that they engage with us so that we can get to the bottom of this very serious matter,” Trudeau said.

On Friday, Trudeau also said Canada shared its concerns with New Delhi some time ago. “Canada has shared the credible allegations that I talked about on Monday with India. We did that many weeks ago,” Trudeau told reporters.

The Canadian government has amassed both human and signals intelligence in a months-long investigation into the Sikh separatist leader’s murder, CBC News

reported separately on Thursday citing sources. The report said the intelligence included communications of Indian officials present in Canada, adding some of the information was provided by an unidentified ally in the Five Eyes alliance. Five Eyes is an intelligence-sharing network that includes the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

However, Trudeau has not provided any details about what Canada’s spy agencies have collected, and his office has not confirmed or denied the CBC report.

Senior Canadian government sources have said that Trudeau would not have spoken publicly without having a high level of confidence in the intelligence. - **Reuters**

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GULF TIMES

Can US rate-hold help maintain predictability and stability in global economy?

The US central bank – Federal Reserve (Fed) recently held interest rates steady, while also indicating it still expects one more hike before the end of the year and fewer cuts than previously indicated next year.

That final increase, if realised by the year-end, would do it for this cycle, according to projections the central bank released at the end of its two-day meeting on September 20. If the Fed goes ahead with the move, it would make a full dozen hikes since the policy tightening began in March 2022.

Along with the rate projections, the Fed also sharply revised up its economic growth expectations for this year, with gross domestic product now expected to rise 2.1% this year.

Countries with large amounts of debt in US dollars are particularly sensitive to changes in US interest rates

interest rates, there were global concerns about ripple effects throughout the rest of the world.

At a basic level, raising interest rates go hand-in-hand with appreciating currencies. And in many parts of the world, the US dollar is used as a benchmark of current and future economic growth. In developed countries, a strong dollar is seen in a positive light. But circumstances are different in emerging economies.

Undoubtedly, the US dollar is the global reserve currency. So, when the Fed adjusts interest rates, it affects the attractiveness of holding US dollars.

Therefore, a rate hold will stabilise the value of the dollar in international markets, which in turn influence exchange rates and capital flows around the world.

Analysts say changes in US interest rates influence the flow of capital in and out of different countries. Consequently, the hold on interest rates make US investments relatively more attractive compared to those in other countries. This might lead to increased foreign investment in the US, which can stimulate economic activity.

Many commodities, such as oil and gold, are priced in US dollars. A stable interest rate environment, therefore, helps keep commodity prices more predictable for global markets.

Countries with large amounts of debt in US dollars are particularly sensitive to changes in US interest rates. If the US were to raise rates, it could make it more expensive for these countries to service their debt, potentially leading to financial instability.

The interest rate set by the Fed indirectly influences interest rates around the world. A hold in US rates is expected to contribute to global stability in borrowing costs.

Changes in interest rates affect consumer spending and business investment. If the Fed holds rates steady, it helps maintain stability in the US economy, which is one of the largest consumer markets in the world.

This stability positively impacts world's trade since a stable interest rate environment contributes to a sense of predictability and stability in the global economy.

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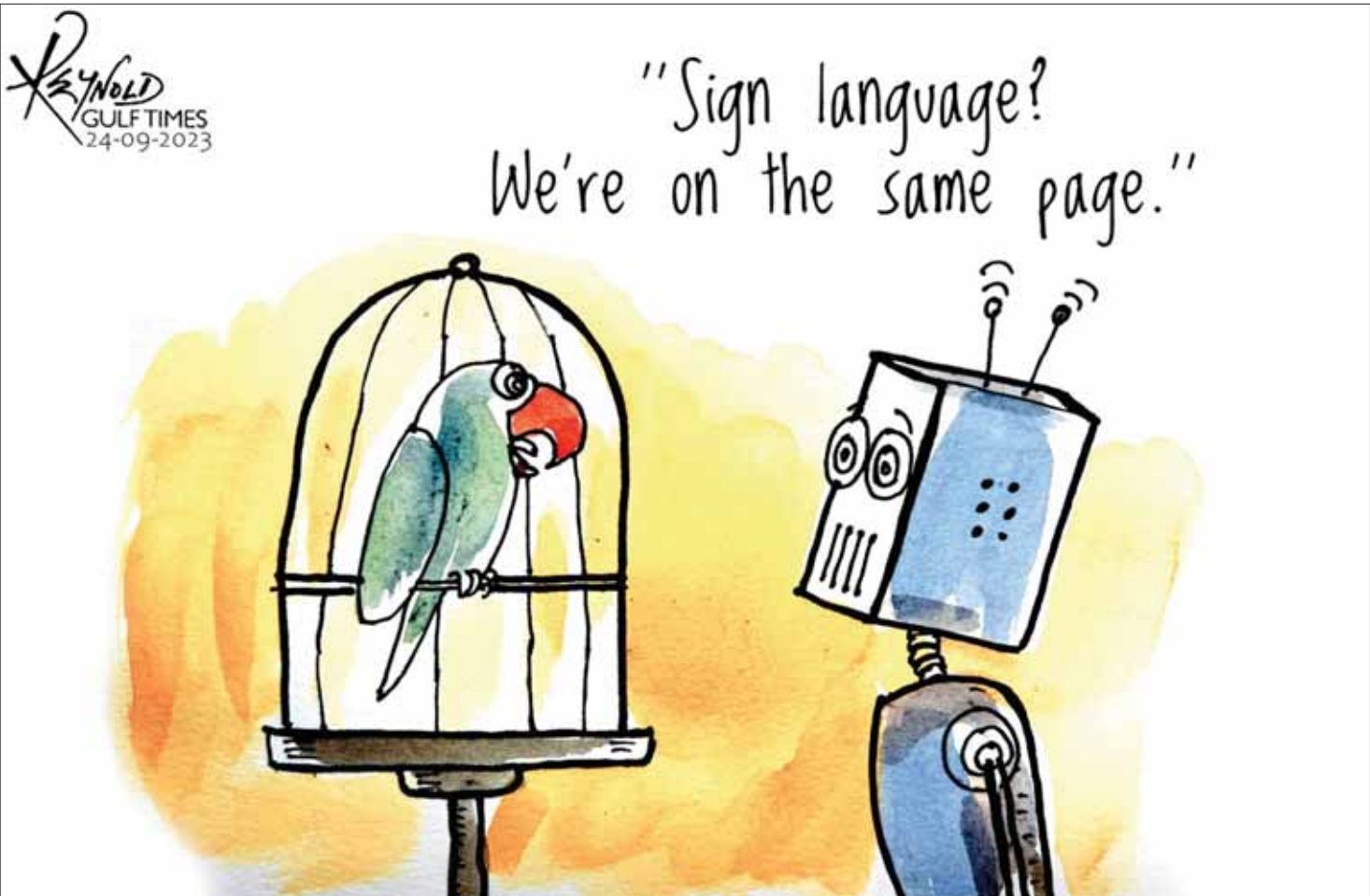
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What's the connection between sustainability and peace?



By Dr Leslie A. Pal
Doha

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a comprehensive global roadmap for addressing critical challenges facing humanity, including poverty, inequality, environmental sustainability, and peace. A crucial link exists between these goals and the pursuit of peace and stability, particularly embodied in Goal 16, which promotes "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions." This connection underscores the integral role the SDGs play in securing peace on a global scale.

Goal 16 is dedicated explicitly to peace and peace-building efforts. It aspires to create peaceful, inclusive societies by providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable, and transparent institutions. There are several key targets and indicators within this goal that directly impact peace and security. These include reducing violence, ensuring equal access to justice, promoting the rule of law, reducing corruption and bribery, and establishing institutions that are accountable and transparent.

The interplay between the SDGs and peace is multifaceted. Poverty, inequality, and lack of access to basic services like education and healthcare often create conditions conducive to conflict and instability. By addressing these issues through the SDGs, we can mitigate the root causes of violence and foster more harmonious societies.

Environmental sustainability, as addressed in various SDGs such as Goal 13 (Climate Action) and Goal 15 (Life on Land), is also crucial for peace. Climate-related disputes over resources, forced migration due to environmental degradation, and the potential for more frequent and severe natural disasters can all lead to conflicts. SDGs that promote environmental stewardship help prevent such

conflicts and contribute to global stability.

The International Day of Peace, observed on September 21st each year, underscores the practical relevance of the SDGs to global peace efforts. Established by the United Nations in 1981, the calls for a worldwide ceasefire and a non-violence. It also provides an annual opportunity to raise awareness about peace-related issues and encourages individuals, communities, and nations to commit to peace-building initiatives.

The SDGs and International Day of Peace share a common goal: to create a more peaceful and sustainable world. By pursuing the SDGs, we not only address the root causes of conflict but also

build the foundations for lasting peace. Sustainable development encompasses economic prosperity, social equity, environmental responsibility, and peace – collectively forging a path towards a better future for all. Recognising the synergy between these objectives reinforces our commitment to a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world, as envisioned by the United Nations and celebrated on the International Day of Peace.

● Dr Leslie A. Pal is the Founding Dean of the College of Public Policy at Hamad Bin Khalifa University.

(The thoughts and views expressed are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect an official University stance).

About Hamad Bin Khalifa University
Innovating Today, Shaping Tomorrow.

Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF), was founded in 2010 as a research-intensive university that acts as a catalyst for transformative change in Qatar and the region while having global impact. Located in Education City, HBKU is committed to building and cultivating human capacity through an enriching academic experience, innovative ecosystem, and unique partnerships. HBKU delivers multidisciplinary undergraduate and graduate programmes through its colleges, and provides opportunities for research and scholarship through its institutes and centres. For more information about HBKU, visit www.hbku.edu.qa

How to achieve universal cancer care against odds

By Sonali Johnson
Geneva

At the upcoming second United Nations High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage, the world's governments are expected to adopt a new set of commitments focused on accelerating implementation of UHC. No resolution will be complete without the explicit inclusion of comprehensive cancer services.

Cancer causes an estimated ten million deaths each year. Beyond the human suffering, the disease has profound – and growing – economic consequences: by 2030, spending on cancer care worldwide is projected to reach \$458bn. In many countries, patients have to pay for much of their cancer care out of pocket – a burden that often leads to financial catastrophe.

Given this, investing in cost-effective prevention and early-detection strategies is not only a moral imperative, but also an economic one. Prevention is far cheaper than treatment, and where cancer cannot be prevented, early detection makes successful treatment more likely, at a far lower cost.

When cancer does progress, the full range of quality therapies – including surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy – should be accessible and affordable to all. For noncommunicable diseases overall, every dollar invested in cost-effective interventions can generate a return of up to \$7 through reduced healthcare costs and improved productivity.

While prevention and treatment are vital, so is palliative care, which alleviates unnecessary suffering



In Pakistan, the Shaukat Khanum Cancer Hospital network offers world-class cancer care.

for patients, their families, and caregivers, and provides survivorship plans for remaining healthy. In the wake of a pandemic that significantly disrupted palliative-care services, and with a rising number of cancer survivors worldwide, investments in both areas are urgently needed.

Comprehensive cancer care is essential to achieving social-development goals related to equality, social justice, and health. And, with sufficient political will, universal care can be achieved. In Pakistan, the Shaukat Khanum Cancer Hospital network offers world-class cancer care. The King Hussein Cancer Center has significantly expanded cancer care and scientific research in Jordan, and collaborates with international partners such as St. Jude Children's Research Hospital to deliver care to patients from Syria and Lebanon.

But countries face many challenges in incorporating cancer care into UHC schemes. In Kenya, for example, collaborative efforts by a range of cancer-control organisations have expanded access to services and removed financial barriers, but

reaching rural populations remains difficult. In Indonesia, a decentralised health system has improved health equity, but gaps remain in cancer prevention and early diagnosis. Even in Thailand, which has integrated six areas of cancer control – cancer informatics, primary prevention, early detection, treatment, palliative care, and cancer-control research – into its UHC scheme, improved public-awareness initiatives are needed to ensure that the relevant services are being used.

Nonetheless, the Thai model highlights the potential public-health benefits of UHC schemes that include comprehensive cancer care. Recognising that potential, the Union for International Cancer Control, which has more than 1,150 members in more than 170 countries and territories, works continuously with governments and other stakeholders around the world to develop and implement national cancer-control strategies and integrate them into national health-insurance plans.

Just as a goal without a plan is merely a wish, a plan without dedicated resources gathers dust.

Unless essential cancer services are covered by basic health-insurance schemes, they will remain inaccessible or unaffordable to many who need them. And where insurance exists, limits on out-of-pocket spending are crucial. Cancer patients often reach their deductible soon after diagnosis, owing to the large number of tests and procedures that are required. But treatment often lasts months or years and involves numerous visits to doctors, tests, surgeries, radiation treatments, drugs, and other services.

An effective national cancer-control strategy must reflect a nuanced understanding of cost-effectiveness that encompasses not just upfront costs, but also long-term savings, including through improved quality of life and increased productivity. It must also include a commitment to addressing not only the illness itself, but each individual's holistic experience, and a firm resolve to break down financial and cultural barriers that prevent early diagnosis and treatment.

The UN High-Level Meeting provides a rare opportunity to elevate cancer care on the global UHC agenda. That is why it is welcome news that cancer has been referenced in the meeting's draft resolution. But governments must not stop at lofty pledges and verbal commitments. Only concrete action to implement UHC that includes quality cancer services and accounts for the diverse needs of populations across economic strata and regions, can ensure that cancer care does not become a missing piece in the global health puzzle. – Project Syndicate

● Sonali Johnson is Head of Knowledge and Advocacy at the Union for International Cancer Control.

Azerbaijan seizes arms from Nagorno-Karabakh rebels

AFP
Shusha

Azerbaijan forces tightened their grip on the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh yesterday as international concern mounted over the plight of ethnic Armenian civilians trapped there.

As the first Red Cross aid convoy crossed into the disputed enclave since Azerbaijan launched this week's lightning offensive, government forces said rebel "demilitarisation" had begun.

Moscow announced on Friday that ethnic Armenian separatist fighters had begun to surrender weapons under a Russian-mediated agreement, and yesterday the Azerbaijan forces were keen to show off a captured rebel arsenal.

"We are in close co-operation with the Russian peacekeepers who are conducting the demilitarisation" and giving "support to civilians", Azerbaijani military spokesman Colonel Anar Eyvazov said in the Shusha district, outside the regional capital Stepanakert.

Azerbaijani forces now control the area and the town of Shusha appears deserted. Troops have

mortar positions on high ground overlooking the approach to Stepanakert, AFP reporters saw.

Government forces displayed an arsenal of infantry weapons, including sniper rifles, hundreds of Kalashnikov rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and four tanks painted with cross insignia, that they said they had seized from the separatists.

"We have more like that in the forest, but we can't bring them all here," said Lieutenant General Mais Barkhudarov, commander of Azerbaijan's 2nd Army Corps.

To the southwest, the so-called Lachin Corridor that once connected the breakaway region to Armenia is also controlled by government forces, which have mounted a de facto blockade for the past nine months.

A humanitarian convoy of the International Committee of the Red Cross was nevertheless able to cross into the area yesterday – the first since fighting erupted earlier this week.

On the Armenian side of the border, at the Kornidzor checkpoint, local ICRC spokesman Zara Amatuni told AFP that 70 metric tonnes of food and humanitarian aid "have passed through the Lachin Corridor".



An Azerbaijani officer presents military gear seized from Nagorno-Karabakh forces displayed for the press at an Azerbaijani forces' held position in Shusha, in Azerbaijan's controlled region of Nagorno-Karabakh, yesterday. (AFP)

If the ceasefire holds it could mark the end of a conflict between Caucasus rivals Armenia and Azerbaijan that has raged, off and on, through the three decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Russia said yesterday that an Azerbaijani soldier was "wounded during an exchange of fire", adding that it is conducting an investigation into the incident with Baku and separatist officials.

On Friday, Moscow confirmed

that the rebels had surrendered their first batch of weapons and the process is expected to continue through the weekend, as international bodies – including the German government – expressed concern for civilians.

A US congressional delegation was in Armenia to meet Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and travelled up to the closed border to inspect the blockade with the head of Armenia's Syunik region, Robert Ghukasyan, and

the American ambassador Kristina Kvien. Senator Gary Peters of Michigan used binoculars to look across the border towards Russian peacekeeper positions, as Azerbaijani trucks could be seen transporting material for a new highway being built as the government secures the region.

"Certainly people are very fearful of what could be occurring in there, and I think the world needs to know exactly what's happening," Peters told reporters at the border.

At the United Nations General Assembly, Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov insisted "that Azerbaijan is determined to reintegrate ethnic Armenian residents of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan as equal citizens."

The years of fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh have been marked by abuses on both sides and there are fears of a new refugee crisis. This week's Azerbaijani offensive left tens of thousands of ethnic Armenians cut off from electricity in the disputed enclave.

In the Armenian border town of Kornidzor, civilians have been gathering, some of them waiting for days, at the last checkpoint before Azerbaijani territory hop-

ing for news of relatives.

"I've been here for three days and nights, sleeping in my car," said 28-year-old Garik Zakaryan, as displaced Armenians borrowed a soldier's telescope to scan a village across the valley.

It was shelled by Azerbaijani forces on Tuesday. No-one was killed, but witnesses who managed to escape report that 150 inhabitants were forced to take refuge close to a Russian peacekeeper base a kilometre from the last Armenian positions.

Zakaryan got his family out in December, three days before Azerbaijan blockaded the area, but he is worried for friends and family still across the border.

"I don't have much hope of seeing them soon, but I couldn't just do nothing. Just being here, being able to see the Russian base, I feel better," he said.

Separatist leaders have said they are in Russian-mediated talks with Baku to organise the withdrawal process and the return of civilians displaced by the fighting.

They say they are discussing how citizens access to and from Nagorno-Karabakh, where up to 120,000 ethnic Armenians live, will work.

Russia rejects UN bid to revive Black Sea grain deal

Reuters
United Nations

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov yesterday dismissed the West as an "empire of lies" and said the latest UN proposals to revive the Black Sea grain initiative would not fly because they do not deliver on promises made to Moscow.

Lavrov spoke after a week of intense global diplomacy at the annual gathering of world leaders at UN headquarters in New York where Ukraine and its Western allies sought to drum up support for Kyiv as it fights against Russia's invasion.

In a letter to Lavrov last month, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres outlined four measures the UN could facilitate to improve Russia's grain and fertiliser exports in a bid to convince Moscow to return to the Black Sea deal, which allowed Ukraine to export grain through the corridor and helped address a global food shortage.

"We explained to the secretary-general why his proposals won't work. We don't reject them. They're simply not realistic. They cannot be implemented," Lavrov said.

He said a 10-point peace plan promoted by Kyiv was "completely not feasible" and that the conflict would be resolved on the battlefield if Ukraine and the West stuck to it.

Lavrov added that Moscow left the Black Sea grain initiative because promises made to Russia – including on removing sanctions on a Russian bank and reconnecting it to the global SWIFT system – had not been met.

One year later, Nord Stream sabotage remains a mystery

By Michelle Fitzpatrick
with Pierrick Yvon
Frankfurt/Berlin

The September 26, 2022 explosions that damaged the Nord Stream pipelines cut off a major route for Russian gas exports to Europe and fuelled geopolitical tensions already running high over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

But one year on, and despite investigations in three countries, the question of who was responsible for the brazen act of sabotage remains unanswered.

In the absence of hard evidence, different theories have emerged pointing the finger at Ukraine, Russia or the United States. All have denied involvement.

Late last September, a series of underwater blasts ruptured three of the four pipelines that make up Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2, spewing gas into the Baltic Sea.

Russian energy giant Gazprom had in August already halted flows through Nord Stream 1, the main conduit for Russian natural gas to Germany, amid disputes over the war in Ukraine.

The newly completed Nord Stream 2 twin pipelines never opened as Berlin pulled the plug on the project days before Russian troops entered Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

The €10bn (\$10.6bn) Nord Stream 2 had long been opposed by Ukraine, the US and eastern European countries who feared it would give Russia too much influence over Germany's energy security. Because the leaks occurred in their exclusive economic zones, Denmark and Sweden opened probes into the attack, as did Germany.

All three countries have kept a tight lid on their

investigations, which analysts say is unsurprising given the potential diplomatic fallout of what they might uncover.

Sweden's public prosecutor Mats Ljungqvist has said the "primary assumption is that a state is behind it".

Sweden was now "in the final phase of the investigation", he told AFP this week.

German federal prosecutors searched a sailing yacht in January that may have been used to transport the explosives. They seized objects from the vessel and found traces of explosives. They have refused to comment on media speculation that a team of five men and one woman chartered the "Andromeda" sailing yacht from Rostock port to carry out the operation.

"The identity of the perpetrators and their motives" remain the subject of ongoing investigations, the federal prosecution's office told AFP.

Investigative journalists have been carrying out their own research to solve the Nord Stream whodunnit, leading to sometimes sensational – if unconfirmed – reports.

Dutch military intelligence warned the CIA of a Ukrainian plan to blow up the pipelines three months before the attack, Dutch broadcaster NOS and Germany's *Die Zeit* and *ARD* said in June. The *Washington Post* made a similar claim.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky has repeatedly denied his country was behind the sabotage.

"I would never do that," he told Germany's *Bild* newspaper in June, adding that he would "like to see proof".

The *New York Times* wrote in March that US officials had seen intelligence indicating that a "pro-Ukrainian group"

was responsible, without Zelensky's knowledge.

German media have focused their attention on the "Andromeda", with reporters from *Der Spiegel* magazine and broadcaster ZDF recreating the journey they believe was made by the six-person crew.

According to their reporting, a forged passport used to hire the sailboat leads back to a Ukrainian soldier while the charter fee was paid by a company registered in Poland with ties to a woman in Kyiv.

However, Danish media have reported that a Russian naval vessel specialised in submarine operations, the SS-750, was photographed near the site of the blasts days before the attack.

A claim by US investigative journalist Seymour Hersh in February that the US was behind the attacks and that Norway assisted was dismissed as "fiction" by the White House.

Experts have not ruled out a "false flag" operation by Russia, with clues deliberately placed to pin the blame on Ukraine.

Andreas Umland, an analyst at the Stockholm Centre for Eastern European Studies, sees Russia as "the most likely" culprit.

Any suspected involvement by Kyiv in an attack on Europe's energy infrastructure could threaten the support of allies, which would benefit Russia.

At the same time, the destroyed pipelines could help Gazprom avoid compensation claims for undelivered gas, even though the company displayed a reluctance to keep the taps open before the blasts.

Moscow may have sought "to kill two birds with one stone", Umland said.

The Kremlin has strongly denied responsibility.

Kyiv: Russian lines broken, 'senior' naval officers killed

AFP
Kyiv

Ukraine has reported breaking through Russian defence lines in the south as its army said yesterday that senior Russian navy commanders were among dozens killed or wounded in a missile attack on Moscow's Black Sea Fleet headquarters in Crimea.

In the latest claims of progress in the Zaporizhzhia area, the Ukrainian general leading the counteroffensive there told US media that the advance was still underway.

"On the left flank (near the village of Verbove) we have a breakthrough and we continue to advance further," general Oleksandr Tarnavskiy told CNN in an interview published on Friday.

Ukraine launched its counteroffensive to claw back territory from Russian forces in June.

Progress has been slow, with much of the territory heavily mined, but Kyiv has in recent weeks reported making strategic advances in the Zaporizhzhia region.

"Not as fast as it was expected, not like in the movies about the Second World War," Tarnavskiy said in the CNN interview, adding it was important "not to lose this initiative".

Last month Kyiv declared a strategic victory when it recaptured the southern village of Robotyne.

Tarnavskiy said a major breakthrough would be if Kyiv recaptured the city of Tokmak – 20km from the front line – which fell to

Russian forces at the start of their invasion.

Retaking Tokmak would allow Ukrainian forces to push further toward occupied Melitopol and annexed Crimea.

"I think it (a breakthrough) would happen after Tokmak," he said, but warned: "At the moment (Russian forces) are relying on the depth of their defensive line there."

Tarnavskiy disagreed with some predictions that Ukraine's push could be further slowed in the coming winter months.

"The weather can be a serious obstacle during advance, but considering how we move forward, mostly without vehicles, I don't think (it) will heavily influence the counteroffensive," he said.

He gave some insight into the type of fighting taking place in the south, 19 months into Moscow's invasion, saying "Right now, neither the enemy nor us use large formations, companies, battalions or brigades. We use assault squads, groups of 10 to 15 men".

"They conduct titanic work of concentrating enemy fire on them and using all the means they have to use to survive."

The interview was published a day after Kyiv struck Russia's Black Sea Fleet headquarters in the Crimean port of Sevastopol, claiming to have killed "senior" commanders. The army said the strike happened during "a meeting of the Russian navy's leadership".

Kyiv's intelligence chief Kyrylo Budanov said the attack killed "at least nine people", including generals, in comments to Voice of America.

Pope calls for pan-European action on migration

Reuters
Marseilles (France)

Pope Francis yesterday condemned "belligerent nationalisms" and called for a pan-European response to migration to stop the Mediterranean, where thousands have drowned, from becoming "the graveyard of dignity".

Immigration issues dominated his 27-hour trip to Marseilles, a French port that for centuries has been a crossroads of cultures and religions.

On Friday, he said migrants who risk drowning at sea "must be rescued" because doing so was "a duty of humanity" and that those who impede rescues commit "a gesture of hate".

Francis doubled down in a long speech last morning when he concluded a Church conference on Mediterranean issues.

"There is a cry of pain that resonates most of all, and it is turning the Mediterranean, the 'mare nostrum', from the cradle of civilisation into the 'mare mortuum', the graveyard of dignity: it is the stifled cry of migrant brothers and sisters,"

he said, using Latin terms meaning "our sea" and "sea of death".

On the flight to Marseilles on Friday, Francis was moved as he was shown a picture of a migrant child by Reuters photographer Yara Nardi. The photo was a close-up shot of the eyes of 18-month-old Prince, who with his mother Claudine Nsoe, had arrived by sea on the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa from North Africa.

President Emmanuel Macron, other government officials and European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde attended a papal Mass yesterday afternoon for 50,000 people who packed the city's Velodrome stadium. Authorities said another 100,000 lined his route to the stadium.

Left-wing politicians have criticised Macron over his decision to attend the Mass, saying it violates strict separation of state and faith, known as laïcité. He said he was attending out of respect for the pope.

At the conference yesterday morning, Francis called on people to "hear the cries of pain" rising from migrants seeking a better life.



A baby is held up to Pope Francis as he arrives at the Velodrome stadium in his popemobile for a mass in the southern port city of Marseilles yesterday. He is the first Pope in 500 years to visit the city of Marseille. (AFP)

"How greatly we need this at the present juncture, when antiquated and belligerent nationalisms want to make the dream of

the community of nations fade!" he said. He did not name any countries. Governments in several European

countries, including Italy, Hungary, and Poland, are led by outspoken opponents of immigration. The pope also contested those who characterise migration as an "invasion," saying it is a long-term issue that would have to be met with compassion.

He called for an expansion of legal paths to immigration with emphasis on accepting those fleeing war, hunger and poverty, rather than on "preservation of one's own wellbeing".

According to UN Refugee Agency UNHCR, about 178,500 migrants have come to Europe via the Mediterranean this year, while about 2,500 died or went missing.

While Francis has said often that migrants should be shared among the 27 EU countries, his overall openness towards migrants, including once calling their exclusion "scandalous, disgusting and sinful," has riled conservative politicians.

The pope, who was returning to Rome after the Mass, began the day by visiting a centre for the needy in Marseilles' Saint Mauront district, one of France's poorest, run by the order of nuns founded by Saint Mother Teresa.



Doha bedecks streets with flags and banners for Expo 2023

As the countdown to the International Horticultural Exhibition Doha 2023 begins, the concerned departments have completed the decoration of streets and tourist facilities across the city with flags and figures that express Qatar's readiness for this global event, which is being held for the first time in the Middle East and North Africa region. The expo will run from October 2, 2023 to March 28, 2024.

Local Arabic daily *Arrayah* reported that the beautification of the main and major streets in preparation for the big event have been completed, including Hamad International Airport Road, the Corniche Street, Al Bidda Street, Onaiza Street, and many others surrounding the event site at Al Bidda Park. In addition, Darb Lusail has been adorned with logos and welcome phrases.

The banners include several welcoming and promotional phrases for the exhibition, the most prominent of which are "The World Gathers Again in



Doha," "Three Million Visitors from Around the World," "A World of Celebrations," and "179 Days of Fun."

The official platforms of Expo 2023 on the social media have intensified the promotion with videos and images to engage

the public about the exhibition, which includes numerous activities and events that will bring an atmosphere of fun and enjoyment to the country for over six months.

Meanwhile, the Organising Committee has pointed out that

the key facilities in the Family Zone include the Family Amphitheatre, Crafts and Environmental Market, Food Courtyard, Participation Zone, and Events Zone. It also pointed out that the Cultural Zone facilities include the Conference Centre, Exhibi-

tion Centre, Photography Exhibition, and Food Courtyard.

The Family Amphitheatre at Expo 2023 Doha can accommodate 2,000 viewers and will host a variety of special events that will turn performances into exploration journeys combining

education and entertainment. It is considered an excellent outdoor venue for a wide range of educational entertainment shows and activities suitable for children and families, making it the perfect destination for a nice day outdoors.

Qatar TV wins praise for its coverage of Moroccan quake, Libyan floods

The Qatar TV news centre provided comprehensive and exclusive coverage from the first moment of the Moroccan earthquake and the Derna floods in Libya.

The work team at Qatar TV interacted with the efforts of the Qatari International Search and Rescue Group heading to Morocco, which is considered the first rescue team to arrive at the earthquake site.

The research group was accompanied by a work team from Qatar TV, and despite the work team facing the difficulty of movement and communication, the rugged areas where the earthquake occurred, and the lack of much information, the news centre team was able to carry out its work and provide many news materials that included ten direct link reports, six follow-up reports, and four news reports.

The reports presented by Qatar TV included a report on the search and rescue team's attempt to pull the imam of a mosque alive from under the rubble, in the Al Haouz province. A report on a land and air tour to search for stricken areas in the Amizmiz region and the Taroudant region, and a report on the Moroccan press's reaction to the efforts of the Qatari rescue team.

Another report on progress in the work of search and rescue teams in the Al Haouz province, a report on Qatari efforts in Marrakesh, and a report on the attempt to rescue a man whose house collapsed on the Atlas Mountains in the "Tinfentine" region.

The news centre team also hosted seven guests from the Qatari search and rescue group, two Moroccan journalists, in addition to two local residents, and two from the Qatari Red Crescent.



The centre prepared internal reports, video and written news from various news agencies, with the aim of keeping pace with the event and highlighting the role of Qatar in rescuing, providing relief and assisting the stricken areas.

It also reported progress in the relief operation of the Qatari and international search and rescue group in Morocco after the devastating earthquake that struck several Moroccan cities a few days ago.

The report highlighted the rescue group's efforts in blood donation operations at King Mohamed VI University Hospital. Its efforts to continue its serious work in co-ordination with international rescue teams and the Moroccan search and rescue team.

According to the report, the group is carrying out its relief work in several locations that were identified in co-ordination with the Moroccan authorities, namely: the Amrit region in the Ahwaz province and rugged mountainous sites in the same region.



Coverage of Libya moment by moment

Within the framework of the distinguished media coverage provided by Qatar TV, the role of field media presence in conveying the true picture of the situation and the impact of disasters on the affected areas is highlighted. The news centre followed the relief operations in Libya from the first moment, and its team interacted with the Qatari air bridge to transport aid to the brotherly country.

The television broadcast news and reports about the disaster from the newsroom, relying on agencies and on pictures filmed by Qatar TV, especially related to sending aid, via the Qatari air bridge, whether from Doha or from Benghazi airport. A direct link was also made with the Qatar TV delegate to Libya.

Media field presence is a means of monitoring progress on the ground in real time, as it allows viewers to remain constantly informed about changes in the situation and the government and relief response.

This encourages providing support and contributing to humanitarian efforts to mitigate the impact of disasters.

On the other hand, the field media presence of Qatar TV plays a vital role in the responsible authorities' contribution to providing urgent and sufficient assistance. Conveying a clear picture increases officials' action quickly and enables them to take the necessary measures to address disaster-related challenges.

Thus, Qatar TV plays an effective role in highlighting the importance of preparing for and responding to disasters and encouraging active participation in humanitarian efforts to contribute to providing aid and support to affected areas.

Qatar TV's response to cover humanitarian events and the urgent response comes from the role played by the media and media channels in covering news about crises and supporting relief efforts.

As they contribute to directing the public's attention to solidarity and unity with those affected by humanitarian crises and natural disasters. This contributes to raising public awareness and encourages interaction and donations to support victims and those affected, as they contribute to important global events, be it in the earthquake in Morocco or the Derna Hurricane in Libya equally.

Qatar TV played a prominent role in covering events in Morocco and Libya from a humanitarian and media perspective. On the humanitarian side, it provided many special media reports to follow up on rescue operations and relief efforts and gave voice to the testimonies of survivors and the importance of concerted humanitarian efforts in such difficult moments.

Person-centred healthcare helps Qatar overcome big challenges



Some of the dignitaries at the event.

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"Last year we were able to host one of the biggest sporting events, FIFA World Cup 2022, and the resilience of the healthcare system helped us to successfully host the event. We were also able to withstand the challenges of the pandemic due to the particular aspects of our healthcare system. In recent years, we have seen the changes and shift in healthcare aided by technology and person-centred care," explained al-Naimi.

The annual forum focused on bringing together healthcare professionals who share a passion for creating patient and family experience that improves health outcomes and healthcare culture. The conference had three tracks this year: Innovation in Person-Centred Care Practice, Compassion - Empathy in Action, and Partnership and Co-designing Care.

Dr Abdulla al-Ansari, HMC's chief medical officer and forum co-chair said: "I am especially pleased with the number of Qatar-based presentations and speakers in this year's Forum. It demonstrates that we are truly creating our own culture of person-centred care at HMC and in Qatar. It also shows our continuous dedication to person-centred care reflects its unwavering commitment to providing compassionate, holistic, and patient-centric services."

International speakers for the event included renowned patient experience expert Doug Johnson from the US; Dr Eugene C Nelson, director of Population Health Measurement and co-director of the Coproduction Laboratory at the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth and patient advocate Regina Holliday.



Dr Susan Frampton.

Dr Susan Frampton, president of Planetree International said the organisation was pleased to be partnering with HMC again for the Forum for 2023.

"Planetree is a mission-driven non-profit organisation setting the global standard for person-centred excellence across the continuum of care. We use a proven, evidence-based framework that puts patients and families at the centre of the care experience and emphasises the importance of caregiver well-being, patient dignity, and community health," Dr Frampton said.

"The 2023 Forum aligns perfectly with our framework for person-centred excellence, delivering innovative and actionable approaches to enable organisations at every stage of their person-centred journey to deliver high value, compassionate care. Planetree International is pleased to support the forum and we are also pleased to see the growing momentum for person-centred excellence in Qatar and the region."