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### Qatar wins Unesco board membership

Qatar won membership in the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) for the period 2023-2027 after receiving the highest percentage of votes in the Arab group during the elections that took place for the Board, on the sidelines of the organisation's 42nd session of the General Conference being held in Paris from Nov. 7-22. Qatar received 167 votes in the elections for Electoral Group B, according to an announcement by Unesco. Through becoming a member of the Executive Board, Qatar looks forward to supporting international and regional efforts to strengthen the role of the organisation in its fields of work and to confront common global issues. **Page 2**

### Qatar contributes to evacuation of 54 Bosnians

Qatar contributed in evacuating 54 Bosnian citizens from The Gaza Strip through Rafah crossing in co-ordination with the Palestinian and Bosnian sides. Ambassador of Qatar to the Republic of Egypt Tariq Ali al-Ansari welcomed the Bosnian citizens as Qatar facilitated their arrival to their final destination. Evacuating the holders of foreign nationalities comes within Qatar's humanitarian efforts. **(QNA) Page 2**

### Resistance front stays united with Hamas

The top commander of Iran's Quds force said the resistance front supported the Tehran-backed Hamas group in its war with Israel in Gaza. "Your brothers in the Axis of Resistance stand united with you ... the resistance will not allow the enemy to achieve its dirty goals in Gaza and Palestine," Esmail Qaani said in a message to the commanders of the Tehran-backed group.

### PM meets French minister of armed forces

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Minister of the Armed Forces of the French Republic Sebastien Lecornu, who is visiting the country. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation between the two countries and ways to enhance and develop them. **(QNA)**

### PM demands ceasefire, aid delivery to Gaza

●**Sheikh Mohamed receives call from Norwegian FM**

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received yesterday a phone call from Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway Espen Barth Eide. During the call, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed Qatar's appreciation for the principled position of the Kingdom of Norway on Israeli aggression on Gaza, which left thousands of innocent people dead or injured, in addition to destroying facilities as well as public and private property. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs stressed on the importance of consolidating diplomatic efforts regionally and internationally to reach an immediate ceasefire, open the Rafah border permanently to

guarantee the flow of relief and humanitarian aid convoys to the Palestinian people trapped in Gaza. HE Sheikh Mohamed also expressed Qatar's deep concern regarding the deterioration of humanitarian conditions to catastrophic levels inside the strip. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs stressed Qatar's firm rejection of the Israeli occupation's repeated crimes against civilian facilities, including hospitals, schools, and population centers in the Gaza Strip, considering it a dangerous escalation with grave consequences on the region's security and stability. For his part, the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed his thanks to Qatar for its role in evacuating his country's citizens from Gaza. **(QNA)**

## Medics fear for patients inside Gaza hospitals

●**All hospitals in northern Gaza have effectively been shut down by Israeli occupation forces**

Reuters  
Gaza/Jerusalem

Palestinian medics said yesterday they are increasingly afraid for the lives of hundreds of patients and medical staff at Gaza's biggest hospital, cut off from all links to the outside world for more than a day after Israeli forces entered. Israel said its commandos were still searching through Al Shifa hospital on Thursday, more than a day after they entered its grounds as part of an offensive Israel says aims to wipe out Hamas fighters in the Palestinian enclave. Israel has so far released pictures of what it says were rifles and

flak jackets found on the premises, but no evidence of a vast underground Hamas command headquarters it said was operating in tunnels beneath it. Human Rights Watch cautioned that hospitals have special protections under international humanitarian law. "Hospitals only lose those protections if it can be shown that harmful acts have been carried out from the premises," the watchdog's UN Director Louis Charbonneau said. "The Israeli government hasn't provided any evidence of that." The director of Al Shifa Complex, Mohamed Abu Salamiya, said the hospital was "under occupation authority for 48 hours and every minute that passes" more patients will die.

"We are waiting for slow death," he told Al Jazeera TV. Israeli forces brought a BBC film crew into the hospital overnight and showed it some rifles they said were found there, but the broadcaster said Israeli escorts had barred its team from interacting with patients or staff. Gaza's health ministry said Israeli soldiers had removed bodies from the hospital grounds and destroyed cars parked there, but they were not letting staff or patients leave. Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra said there was no water, food or baby milk in Shifa, which was packed with 650 patients and about 7,000 people displaced by weeks of Israeli air strikes and artillery bombardments.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Health Minister Fahrettin Koca speak with a Palestinian cancer patient, who had crossed from Gaza into Egypt and brought to Turkiye for treatment, at Bilkent City Hospital in Ankara.

### Angola pavilion opened at Expo 2023 Doha

The pavilion of Angola was inaugurated at Expo 2023 Doha yesterday, in the presence of ambassador Antonia Coelho Ramos DCruz, Expo 2023 Doha Commissioner-General Bader al-Dafa, a number of heads of diplomatic missions and ambassadors accredited to Qatar and other dignitaries. The pavilion offers a glimpse into Angola's rich cultural heritage, through artistic performances, including folk dances and traditional music. **Page 12**

## Single GCC visa to give a fillip to Qatar tourism

By Santhosh V Perumal  
Business Reporter

Tourism-related sectors in Doha will remain a "bright spot" and the prospect of a single Gulf visa will provide further support to the sector, according to Cushman and Wakefield Qatar (CWQ). "Tourism-related sectors will remain a bright spot, having outperformed in the first quarter (Q1) with double-digit growth," CWQ said in its latest report, released yesterday. Visitor numbers nearly doubled in July against the previous year period, with total arrivals in January-July close to the full outturn for 2022, it added. "The prospect of a single GCC (Gulf Co-operation Council) visa would provide further support to activity and employment within the sector and to services more broadly," it said. Highlighting that "strong" increase in tourist arrivals, evident since the start of the year, is supporting occupancy rates; it said

by September, 2.46mn people arrived in Qatar, which represented a 140% increase on the same period in 2022, quoting the data of the Planning and Statistics Authority (PSA). **"The prospect of a single GCC visa would provide further support to activity and employment within the sector and to services more broadly"** Visitor arrivals also beat the previous year-to-date record, set in 2015, by 23% - with many of the intervening years being impacted by the Gulf crisis and by Covid-19 pandemic, it said. The PSA statistics showed that occupancy rates remained stable in the third quarter or Q3 compared with the same months last year; however, supply has significantly increased over the same period. The occupancy rates for July and August were recorded at 52% and 53% respectively, compared to 55% and 52% in 2022.

The average daily rates for the entire hotel sector dropped from QR440 to QR404 in Q3, indicating the increasing value for guests as a higher number of hotels compete for guests, according to the report. CWQ said the total supply of hotel rooms in Qatar has now surpassed 38,000 and is expected to surpass 40,000 rooms with the completion of a number of new projects the next year. Total supply of rooms has increased by more than 25% over the past 18 months, an increase driven by Qatar's need to provide hotel accommodation to host the FIFA 2022 World Cup. New hotels that are expected to open in the coming months include Andaz Doha, Four Seasons Resort and Residences at the Pearl Island, NH Collection Oasis Doha Hotel, Rixos Qetaifan North, Rosewood Doha, and Waldorf Astoria West Bay. Qatar's focus on increasing the number of international sporting and conference events has helped to boost occupancy in recent months.

### Florida sued over ban on pro-Gaza student groups

The American Civil Liberties Union challenged Florida's ban on pro-Palestinian university groups, arguing in a federal lawsuit yesterday that the state is violating students' free speech as tensions roll US campuses over Israel's war with Hamas. Florida's university system, joined by Governor Ron DeSantis, last month ordered colleges to shut down chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), a group at the centre of US campus activism since Oct. 7. The suit - against DeSantis, a 2024 Republican presidential hopeful, and several state university system officials - seeks a preliminary injunction to a state order blocking SJP from receiving school funds and using campus facilities.

### 3 Palestinian fighters martyred in W Bank

Three Palestinian men opened fire at a checkpoint on a road between Jerusalem and the West Bank city of Bethlehem yesterday, wounding six Israeli security force members before the attackers were shot dead, Israeli police said. Resistance group Hamas took responsibility for the attack. The fighters arrived in a vehicle from the direction of Bethlehem.





## UN chief expresses deep concern about bombing of QCRG HQ

Secretary-General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres expressed his deep concern about the bombing of the headquarters of Qatar Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza (QCRG) on Monday. He also expressed profound concern about the shelling of civilians and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. The UN Secretary-General emphasized the importance of respecting and protecting civilians and civilian objects at all times. **(QNA)**

## Qatar contributes in evacuating 54 Bosnians from Gaza through Rafah



Qatar contributed in evacuating 54 Bosnian citizens from the Gaza Strip through Rafah crossing in co-ordination with the Palestinian and Bosnian sides. Ambassador of Qatar to Egypt Tariq Ali al-Ansari welcomed the Bosnian citizens as Qatar facilitated their arrival to their final destination. Evacuating the holders of foreign nationalities comes within Qatar's humanitarian efforts and its close co-operation with fraternal and friendly countries to evacuate their citizens wishing to leave Gaza. **(QNA)**



## Qatar ratifies Unesco convention

Qatar deposited the instrument of ratification for the Unesco Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, adopted by Unesco on November 3, 2001, during its 31st session.

The deposit occurred at the ceremony for the ratification of Unesco conventions for member states at the organisation's headquarters in Paris on the sidelines of the 42nd session of the Unesco General Conference held from November 22 to December 7, 2023.

The convention aims to protect underwater heritage from the dangers of commercial and industrial exploitation and looting in waterways worldwide, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

The convention also seeks to facilitate the exchange of information and raise awareness about the importance of this cultural heritage.

Acting Secretary-General of the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science Ali al-Maaraqi pointed out that the



agreement's ratification reflects the concerted efforts exerted by the concerned authorities in Qatar, adding that this ratification confirms the commitment of Qatar to preserve, protect, and ensure the sustainability of underwater cultural heritage, as it is an integral part of human heritage.

HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to Unesco in Paris Dr Nasser al-Henzab stated that accession to the convention embodies the great interest of Qatar in protecting world heritage and supporting all efforts and mechanisms

of the international community through Unesco to promote human heritage.

Director of the International Co-operation and Government Affairs Department at Qatar Museums Dr Fatima al-Sulaiti explained that the convention's ratification aims to enhance the protection of underwater cultural heritage.

It witnesses historical events, trade, exchange, and climate change. The goal is to reconstruct past cultures and to improve knowledge of natural climate conditions. **(QNA)**

## Qatar wins membership in Unesco's Executive Board

**QNA**  
Paris

Qatar won membership in the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) for the period 2023-2027 after receiving the highest percentage of votes in the Arab group during the elections that took place for the Board, on the sidelines of the organisation's 42nd session of the General Conference currently held in Paris from Nov 7-22.

Qatar received 167 votes in the elections results for Electoral Group B, which were announced by Unesco. Through becoming a member in the Executive Board, Qatar looks forward to supporting international and regional efforts to strengthen the role of the organisation in its fields of work and working to confront common global issues.

Ambassador of Qatar to Paris Sheikh Ali bin Jassim al-Thani said that the nomination and victory of Qatar in the Executive Board of Unesco reflects its position towards enhancing international understanding and contributing to meeting the needs of all member states, in order to move forward in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan.

He stressed in a press statement that this victory also reflects

**Ambassador Sheikh Ali bin Jassim al-Thani said that the nomination and victory of Qatar in the Executive Board of Unesco reflects its position towards enhancing international understanding and contributing to meeting the needs of all member states**

the confidence of the international community, represented by the member states of Unesco, in the global standing of Qatar when it comes to contributing to the promotion of education and culture as essential drivers of stability in the world and the Arab region in particular.

For his part, the Acting Secretary-General of the Qatar National Committee for Education, Culture, and Science Ali Abdulrazzaq al-Marafi pointed out that Qatar's victory as a member of the Executive Board confirms its commitment to supporting Unesco in implementing its programs and activities in various areas of its competencies.

HE the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the Unesco Dr Nasser bin Hamad al-Hanzab noted Qatar's affirmation of its full commitment to implementing the organisation's goals and intensifying joint efforts for multilateral action, especially in the current situation that the world is witnessing that call for enhancing international peace and security through education, culture and achieving Sustainable

Development Goals through the organisation's work tasks.

He said that this victory reflects the position of Qatar in the Executive Board, in terms of decision-making in Unesco, which is one of the most important United Nations agencies.

It is worth noting that the election of member states to the Executive Board for a period of four years takes place within the work of the Organisations General Conference.

The Executive Board works through five committees and sub-bodies, namely the Programme and External Relations Commission, the Finance and Administrative Commission, the Special Committee, the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations, and the NGO-Unesco Liaison Committee.

The Executive Board consists of 56 members, and is considered the basic pillar of Unesco for decision-making and following up on the implementation mechanism of draft UN resolutions in the culture, education, social and human sciences, communication and information sectors.

## Defence minister meets French counterpart



HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiyah met with Minister of the Armed Forces of the French Republic Sebastian Lecornu and his accompanying delegation, who are visiting the country. During the meeting, they discussed the latest developments in the region, particularly the Israeli war against Gaza. The meeting was attended by a number of senior officials and officers from both sides. **(QNA)**

## Transport minister attends GCC meeting



HE the Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti has headed the Qatari delegation participating in the 25th Gulf Co-operation Council Transport Ministers' Committee Meeting in Muscat, Oman. The ministers, according to a statement from the Ministry of Transport (MoT), discussed several topics that enhance co-operation among the GCC states in the areas of transportation and mobility. They also took the necessary decisions regarding the GCC Railways Authority and work progress on the GCC railway project and its execution and operation schedules, in addition to developing a land transportation strategy for the GCC countries, the executive regulations of the GCC uniform system for universal land transportation and several other topics relating to maritime transportation and ports.

## MoT concludes Marine Casualty and Incident Investigation regional training



The Ministry of Transport (MoT) has wrapped up the Regional Training Course on Marine Casualty and Incident Investigation, organised in conjunction with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). The training, according to a statement from MoT, was attended by several maritime specialists from the MoT, other government entities and some Arab countries. The course refreshed and updated maritime investigators' knowledge of the IMO's decisions and principles to assist national maritime authorities in conducting uniform investigations into marine casualties and incidents. The training also included explanations on the sharing of information among investigators for enhanced investigation co-operation at the regional level. The week-long course comes in the context of improving maritime specialists' capacity and expertise in the field.



## Ras Laffan Falcons Championship from today

The fifth Ras Laffan Falcons Championship (2023), organised by Al Gannas Qatari Society at Katara - Cultural Village under the sponsorship and support of the Ras Laffan Community Outreach programme and the supporting companies, will start today (Friday). The competition will continue until November 23, a statement from Al Gannas said.

The Ras Laffan Falcons Championship is one of the important tournaments by Al Gannas Qatari Society and the second tournament of the season after the Qatar Isfiri Falconry Championship. Al-Talaa competition qualifiers for groups 1 to 7 will kick off at Sabkat Marmi in Sealine, from 5.30am, while the Promising Falconer Competition and the Young Falconer Competition will be held from 1 pm at Al-Gannas Association Centre Square in Ras Laffan. The Promising Falconer Competition, held in two rounds, will be a test for children about the falcon and some tools related to falconry. A number of students from Simaisma Primary School visited the headquarters of Al-Gannas Association, where they learned about the traditional method of hunting with falcons and about the types of falcons.

Saeed Rashid al-Nuaimi from Al Gannas Qatari Society said that school students are usually eager to learn about the authentic heritage represented by falconry.





# Qatar University ExxonMobil Teachers Academy from Sunday

ExxonMobil Qatar and Qatar University (QU) are set to host the Qatar University ExxonMobil Teachers Academy in Doha from November 19-23, a statement said. The academy was first established in 2012 with QU's National Centre for Educational Development (NCED) and the support of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

The intensive professional development programme is held annually for Math and Science teachers from Qatar's government schools.

The academy is modelled after the successful ExxonMobil Teachers Academy in the US and the only edition of the original programme held internationally.

It was developed by a consortium of specialists in Qatar and representatives from the initial programme to build critical skills among young people through their teachers – in support of a sustainable future; and based on the principle of active learning, where the teachers experience various instructional practices from students' perspectives via interactive workshops.

Over the span of a week, science and math teachers will be presented with new and effective teaching strategies that will help encourage their students to develop a passion for these subjects. They will have access to resources that will upgrade their skills and keep them informed of the latest teaching methods and assistive technologies that will allow them to provide their students with a high-quality



The Qatar University ExxonMobil Teachers Academy in Doha was established in 2012 with QU's National Centre for Educational Development (NCED) and the support of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

science and math education.

More than 50 teachers will take part in this year's academy in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and Teach For Qatar (TFQ). Around 40 of these teachers are grade 7-9 math and science teachers from Qatar's government schools; 10 are TFQ fellows, in addition to 13 student teachers from the internship program at QU's College of Education.

The culmination of the academy is only the beginning for these teacher participants to pass on new learning to their students, thus treading the path toward achieving a highly skilled labour force as outlined in Qatar National Vision 2030.

Ahead of each academy, participating teachers go through a rigorous selection process carried out

by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, QU and TFQ. The process identifies capable candidates who are passionate in their disciplines and committed to their students' learning.

By the end of this year's academy, more than 500 teachers from Qatar's school system and 47 TFQ fellows would have taken part. These teachers are expected to impact over 20,000 students from 50 schools. Maha al-Rowaili, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, said: "This academic programme is a local teacher development initiative with a significant impact that contributes to building the foundation for the technologies and innovations of tomorrow through high-quality STEM education.

"We look forward to continu-



The Qatar University ExxonMobil Teachers Academy in Doha is modelled after the successful ExxonMobil Teachers Academy in the US and the only edition of the original programme held internationally.

ing collaboration with ExxonMobil Qatar on the academy and other education projects that aim to change the way students think and work towards a sustainable future through quality teaching and learning," she added.

ExxonMobil Qatar president and general manager Dominic Genetti, said: "The future depends on decisions we are making today about education. This was the key driver behind our collaboration with Qatar University to establish the Qatar University ExxonMobil Teachers Academy in 2012. We're proud that since then, the academy has helped enhance the skill sets and instructional practices of hundreds of teachers in Qatar."

Prof Dr Asma al-Attiyah, dean of the College of Education for QU, said: "With the support of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the academy

has created a group of empowered educators who are equipped with advanced pedagogical skills that will foster a generation of students with a heightened understanding of science, technology, engineering and math subjects. These students will in turn help shape the scientific and technological advancements that will help us move toward a sustainable future.

"This year's version of the academy aims to build teachers' capabilities to use the integrative STEM approach that links science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and to enhance their competencies and experiences in planning and application, which is reflected in the formation of positive attitudes and trends of students towards scientific subjects. It also focuses on improving their abilities for innovation and leadership, and then the quality of their

learning outcomes, which qualifies them as leaders of the future."

Abdulkarim Shaaban, acting director of NCED, and Hala Fayed, programme director for the academy praised the efforts of the academy's NCED specialists team and the co-operation of the math and science supervisors at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in planning the academy's program for this year.

"Qatar University ExxonMobil Teachers Academy is a solid step towards implementing the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to expand the application of the STEM integrated approach in government schools in Qatar."

Rashid al-Khayareen, vice-president, Strategic Relations and Public and Government Affairs Manager for ExxonMobil Qatar, said: "We're thrilled that the Qatar University ExxonMobil Teachers Academy is returning to Doha. We look forward to welcoming all the teachers and Teach For Qatar fellows taking part to another enriching experience in science and math education."

ExxonMobil Qatar and QU began their long-term partnership more than two decades ago. Over the years, their collaborative efforts have resulted in highly effective and successful education programmes and initiatives, particularly in STEM.

ExxonMobil Qatar and QU are committed to continuing their joint efforts to achieve high quality education leading to excellence for all students, the statement added.

## Public Prosecution marks World Diabetes Day

In co-operation with the Qatar Diabetes Association, the Public Relations and Communication Administration of the Public Prosecution organised an awareness campaign on the detection and prevention of diabetes. It was held on the occasion of World Diabetes Day, under the slogan 'Know your risk. Know your response.' In a statement, the Public Prosecution stated that the campaign included an awareness lecture to shed light on the prevention of diabetes and associated complications, the necessity of equitable access to care, and methods that people with diabetes should follow to reduce complications along with encouraging them to follow a healthy diet and exercise sports. The Public Prosecution building was illuminated in blue to raise awareness about the issue of diabetes and its danger to humanity. **(QNA)**



The campaign was inaugurated by QDA's care programme officer Zain Alyafai, who emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts in promoting diabetic awareness and care.

## Reyada Medical Centre launches diabetes awareness campaign

Reyada Medical Centre, a JCI-accredited multi-specialty medical facility, has launched a diabetes awareness campaign in association with Qatar Diabetes Association (QDA) as part of World Diabetes Day. The aim is to raise awareness about diabetes and provide accessible, comprehensive diabetic care to the community, a statement said.

Reyada Medical Centre offered a complimentary diabetic screening package, along with various awareness sessions and activities. The package included essential diagnostics such as blood sugar checkup, blood pressure checkup, and a general practitioner consultation.

Reyada Medical Centre, located on C-Ring Road, Doha, has over 15

departments, radiology, laboratory, pharmacy, optical, and physiotherapy services, and equipped with state-of-the-art technology and a team of healthcare professionals.

The campaign was inaugurated by QDA's care programme officer Zain Alyafai, who emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts in promoting diabetic awareness and care. The campaign underscores the commitment to proactive healthcare, empowering individuals with the knowledge and tools needed to manage their diabetic health effectively.

Jamsheer Hamza, managing director of Reyada Healthcare, stated: "At Reyada Medical Centre, we are dedicated to promoting diabetic health and ensuring its affordability.

Our diabetes awareness campaign aligns with our mission of preventive healthcare, and we believe that creating awareness and offering accessible screening are key steps toward building a healthier community."

Dr Abdul Kalam, executive director of Reyada Healthcare, emphasised the significance of diabetic care, stating: "Managing diabetes is not just about treatment; it's about empowering individuals to take charge of their health. Our campaign reinforces the idea that diabetic care is a collective responsibility, and together, we can make strides toward a healthier, diabetes-aware community." Reyada Medical Centre operates from 7am until 12 midnight, seven days a week.

## HBKU hosts roundtable on rights in Qatar, Gulf region

Qatar and the wider Gulf region's evolving human rights landscape provided the backdrop for a recent roundtable discussion organised on 'Human Rights in Qatar and the Gulf Region: Recent Trends and the Way Forward' by Hamad Bin Khalifa University's College of Law.

Moderated by Dr Eleni Polymenopoulou, associate professor, College of Law, the event featured a panel of legal and public policy experts who offered their perspectives on an array of issues that have shaped human rights law within Qatar and its neighbours in recent years.

Some of the topics explored within the context of regional human rights law included the Covid-19 pandemic, and proliferation of artificial intelligence across the Middle East and North Africa's industrial sectors. The roundtable also highlighted the



state of activism and national human rights institutions around the region.

The panel featured HBKU's Dr Barry Solaiman, assistant professor, College of Law, and Andreas Rechkemmer, professor, College of Public Policy, as well as internationally renowned academics David Keane, assistant professor in Law, School of Law and Government, Dublin City University, and Tenia Kyriazi, professor of legal education, School of Law, Middlesex Univer-

sity, Dubai. "Legal practitioners in the Mena region who work in human rights face an increasingly dynamic landscape shaped by socio-political events that present obstacles and opportunities. The roundtable underlined the College's commitment to addressing today's legal challenges with a future-oriented view and an appreciation of the sweeping effect of technological developments," said Dr Susan L Karamanian, dean, College of Law.

## QU hosts Annual Research Forum and Exhibition 2023

Qatar University (QU) hosted the Annual Research Forum and Exhibition 2023 under the theme 'Research for Future Aspirations'. The opening ceremony was attended by HE Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah, chairman of the Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah International Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development and former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry.

He took part in a leadership dialogue during the opening ceremony attended by; HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Sheikh Dr Faleh bin Nasser bin Ahmed bin Ali al-Thani, former Minister of Energy and Industry HE Dr Mohamed bin Saleh al-Sada, QU president Dr Omar al-Ansari and other dignitaries and officials.

The Annual Research Forum and Exhibition is a meeting platform for students, researchers and academics from QU colleges, research centres, and institutes, including partners and stakeholders internally and externally, to assess, review and discuss research output and activities.

In his opening address, Dr al-Ansari said the Annual Research Forum and Exhibition is considered one of the university's most important events in its continuous pursuit of research, education, and community service. "This qualitative event promotes a culture of awareness and research, nourishing sustainability and innovation projects while keeping pace with technology, artificial intelligence, and serving decision-makers."

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to ExxonMobil, the gold sponsor of the forum. The academic collaboration enhances the research and activities of Qatar University. We are proud of the elite participation in the exhibition, forum, levels, competitions and more than 230 research posters – a commendable effort by colleagues in the research and higher studies sector."

ExxonMobil Qatar president and general manager Dominic Genetti, observed vital discussions took place at the forum, exploring pathways to a more sustainable future through science, innovation, and technology. "We anticipate that its key takeaways can help contribute to sustainability efforts in Qatar, and look forward to next year's event," he added.

Prof Mariam al-Maadeed, vice-



The opening ceremony was attended by HE Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah, who took part in a leadership dialogue.



Prof Mariam al-Maadeed presented an overview of the research sector at QU.



Dr Omar al-Ansari delivering the opening address.

president for Research and Graduate Studies at QU presented an overview of the research sector at QU. She noted that the Annual Research Forum began in 2009 and had been consistent over the years in addressing various topics related to research, commerce, innovation and sustainability. This year's focus is on the four pillars of research at QU: Energy and Environment, Health and Biomedical Sciences, Information and Communication

Technologies (ICT) and Social Sciences and Humanities.

The first day of the forum also featured the opening of the Research Exhibition, the distribution of awards and three panel discussions revolving around the forum's theme and the publication of the Posters Abstracts Proceedings by QU Press.

On the second day, there were two more panel discussion and the announcement of the Internal Grant Award Cycle 7.



Dignitaries and other guests in the audience.





# Ramaphosa lauds Qatari mediation efforts in Gaza crisis

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has praised Qatar's role in mediating the crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories. He commended Qatar for defending the position supported by his country, centred on the two-state solution, with Palestine emerging as a fully recognised state alongside the continued existence of Israel.

This came during a press conference held by President Ramaphosa in Doha, where he affirmed that both South Africa and Qatar condemn the ongoing events in Gaza. He highlighted the transformation of Gaza into a detention camp where genocide is taking place, saying that South Africa declared its position of opposing the

ongoing operation, especially as it is now targeting hospitals, where children, women, adding that scores of the wounded are dying and that preserving life is no longer a reality, that it is being completely ignored and set aside.

He said that, based on this, South Africa, along with many other countries globally, sees it fitting to refer the actions taken by the Israeli government entirely to the International Criminal Court. He urged various countries to exert pressure on Israel to immediately stop its actions, emphasising the urgent need for a ceasefire to save more lives.

He highlighted the disregard for legal principles, with children being killed, noting that half of the

11,000 people who died in Gaza were children describing it as an unprecedented tragedy globally. He called for the UN Security Council to monitor the situation in Gaza, as it is entirely unacceptable for innocent people to be killed in such a manner, leading to collective punishment and the deaths of many.

He said that his visit to Qatar represented an opportunity to explore ways to expand economic relations between the two countries. There were a number of memorandums of understanding signed to deepen the relationship between South Africa and Qatar.

The president said there was a deep desire of Qatari and South African companies to expand eco-

omic relations, citing a strong foundation established between the two governments.

The South African president highlighted the presence of South African companies in Qatar, with major companies like Sasol investing strongly in Qatar, along with medium-sized companies such as Nando's and Ocean Basket, among others.

President Ramaphosa considered Qatar an excellent investment destination for South African businessmen, while South Africa is seen as a very fertile investment place for Qatari companies, especially in renewable energy.

He confirmed Qatar's readiness to consider infrastructure projects and various other sectors. (QNA)



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa is seen off at airport after his visit to Qatar earlier this week.

# IAEA approves 3 national projects for Qatar

QNA  
Doha

The International Agency for Atomic Energy (IAEA) has approved three new national projects for Qatar, to be implemented starting January and lasting for three years. The first project related to the Management of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM) wastes and Residues, which result from oil and gas extraction. The two other projects fall under medical-technical co-operation, the first related to cancer diagnosis, particularly in children, whereas the second is concerned with combating certain animal diseases.

In an interview with the media, Assistant Undersecretary for Environmental Affairs at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MECC) and Qatar's National Liaison Officer for Technical Co-operation Programmes at IAEA Abdulhadi Nasser al-Marri explained that the ministry's Radiation Control Department is currently updating the rules and regulations for managing NORM resulting from the oil industry, which were issued back in 2013, in order to ensure employee safety from exposure to radiation emanating from NORM, as well as protecting the environment against pollution caused by radioactive waste, in line with international safety standards.

Al-Marri said that the co-operation between the State of Qatar and IAEA is diverse and is going great, resulting with the launch of seven national projects covering agriculture, food safety from radioactive pollutants, in addition to three projects in the field of treatment and diagnosis using radiological techniques, as well as two projects in radiation protection and safety of radiation sources, implemented by the Radiation Control Department at MECC.

He said that these projects include: developing best practices using nuclear techniques in soil,



The Radiation Control Department at MECC follows up the implementation of all national projects together with the relevant national authorities to ensure the constant and effective implementation of projects, in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030, as well as the framework programme approved and signed with IAEA.

nutrients, water and plants to increase feed production, strengthening national capabilities in the field of food safety to test and monitor waste "pollutants" using nuclear techniques, enhancing knowledge and applying dosimetry in the field of diagnostic radiology, and establishing services.

Measuring internal doses, establishing a secondary laboratory to calibrate radiation measuring devices, and strengthening the regulatory infrastructure for effective control over medical, industrial and environmental monitoring, pointing out that the State of Qatar is currently participating in 14 regional projects in the fields of agriculture and education, 4 projects in the health sector, and 7 radiation safety projects. Environmental, and another livestock project.

Abdulhadi Nasser al-Marri pointed out that the State of Qatar has issued a set of guidelines for entities working with radiation control for the purpose of ensuring radiation protection and safety of radiation sources, in line with in-

ternational safety standards issued by IAEA. Additionally, the state set licensing requirements for radiation protection service providers, for example testing for radioactive leakage and/or contamination, and radiological device maintenance.

Al-Marri added that he discussed with IAEA officials currently visiting Doha a number of IAEA initiatives launched recently, and the ways the State of Qatar could benefit from them. Among them are the Rays of Hope initiative, which aims to increase access to treatment using radiation medicine for cancer and other diseases, the Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution (NUTEC Plastics), the Atoms4Food initiative, and the Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action (ZODIAC) initiative.

Abdul Hadi bin Nasser al-Marri reviewed the national projects undertaken by the State of Qatar in co-operation with IAEA, which come within the framework of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, serving sustainable development priorities, and obtaining

technology used in peaceful and scientific sectors, such as environmental, health, agricultural, and educational sectors, highlighting the achievements of MECC in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and its partnership with IAEA.

Al-Marri explained that, through its function as a national liaison office with IAEA, the Radiation Control Department at MECC follows up the implementation of all national projects together with the relevant national authorities and in co-operation with IAEA, to ensure the constant and effective implementation of projects, in line with the State of Qatar's development priorities in accordance with the Qatar National Vision 2030, as well as the framework programme approved and signed with IAEA.

He added that discussions were held on a number of technical areas within the government's National Development Strategy, revolving around maintaining economic prosperity through human capital development, protecting the environment for future generations,



The official visits by high-level IAEA delegations praised Qatar's great development in the fields of radiation medicine and food safety.

in addition to promoting a comprehensive approach to health and social development.

For her part, Director of the Division for Asia and the Pacific in the Department of Technical Co-operation at IAEA Jane Abaya praised Qatari laboratories' advanced and vast capabilities, making them rehabilitation and educational centres for IAEA member states, to train their personal on nuclear medicine devices and radiation therapy for cancer patients, as well as providing training on Food safety laboratory devices and addressing the risks of food contaminants, supporting countries in capacity building to ensure the safety of food exports and imports.

Abaya highly appreciated the Radiation Control Department's projects that include radiation safety, monitoring all radiological activities in Qatar, whether medical, industrial, research, etc., in addition to ensuring the effective implementation of Decree Law No. 31 of 2002 on Radiation Protection, and the regulations issued thereunder to regulate radiation activities and practices in Qatar.

The Director of the Division for Asia and the Pacific in the Department of Technical Co-operation at IAEA pointed to the great co-operation between the State of Qatar and the Agency, their numerous joint projects, and the official vis-

its by high-level IAEA delegations to the State of Qatar, who praised Qatar's great development in various fields, especially in radiation medicine and food safety.

She noted that she together with a group of IAEA experts held several meetings with national institutions, including: Qatar Foundation, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and Hamad Medical Corp, discussing the assistance in nuclear science that IAEA will provide in to high school and university students, in addition to covering Qatars participation in Nuclear Science Olympiad for U-20 students next year, among other topics.

Abaya stated that IAEA is currently co-operating with Qatar in studying environmental issues, including plastic pollution in the sea, one of the biggest challenges facing the world currently, especially given the studies that expect that there will be more plastic than fish in the seas in 2050, if this challenge is not solved through recycling and employing modern technologies to destroy pollutants. Moreover, she stressed the need to raise awareness about the peaceful use of nuclear energy in public schools, as well as creating buffers for nuclear and radiation accidents, and training human personnel to handle such accidents in Qatar and abroad.



Participants of the WCM-Q event.



The conference represented a major milestone in WCM-Q's mission to ensure its alumni make valuable contributions to Qatar's thriving healthcare sector.

# WCM-Q hosts first alumni-run healthcare conference

QNA  
Doha

Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q) hosted a conference for primary care physicians organised entirely by graduates of the college – the first time such a conference has been held. Over the course of two days, WCM-Q-trained physicians delivered in-depth lectures, engaging roundtable discussions, and debates to share the latest updates in clinical best practice with local family physicians, general practitioners, and primary care doctors.

The conference, titled Updates in Primary Care: Specialist-Led

Case-Based Discussions Highlighting the Latest Evidence and Best Clinical Practices, represented a major milestone in WCM-Q's mission to ensure its alumni make valuable contributions to Qatar's thriving healthcare sector.

The conference was co-directed by Dr Mahrukh Rizvi, who graduated from WCM-Q in 2011 and then undertook training in internal medicine, nephrology and critical care medicine at elite healthcare institutions in the US, before returning to WCM-Q in 2022. The other co-directors of the conference were Dr Reshma Bholah, assistant professor of paediatrics at WCM-Q and consultant paediatric nephrologist at Sidra Medicine

(Class of 2011); and Dr Tariq Chukir, assistant professor of medicine at WCM-Q and consultant at the National Obesity Treatment Center at Hamad Medical Corp (Class of 2015).

The event was coordinated by the Division of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) at WCM-Q.

Dr Rizvi, now assistant professor of medicine, said: "As a graduate of WCM-Q and now a professor at the college, it was a great feeling to be able to bring so many fellow alumni together to share our knowledge and expertise with local primary care physicians. We were nurtured by WCM-Q and the State of Qatar so we were very grateful

for the opportunity to give something back."

The first day of the conference presented sessions on evidence-based updates on the diagnosis and management of different forms of headaches, common dermatological conditions, sleep disorders, and thyroid nodules, before concluding with a debate on the role of weight management in treatment of type 2 diabetes.

Day Two began with a roundtable discussion about methods for managing challenging clinical dilemmas, before lectures providing updates on approaches to congestive heart failure, diagnosis and management of asthma, esophageal disorders, updates in

cartilage injury and osteoarthritis, and pharmacological management of musculoskeletal pain in Qatar. The conference concluded with a practical demonstration of simple daily exercises primary care physicians can teach to patients to manage degenerative joint disease of the knee.

Other WCM-Q alumni now at the college who contributed to the conference included Dr Salman al-Jerdi (Class of 2012), now assistant professor of neurology, and Dr Zahra Naqvi (Class of 2014), now assistant professor of psychiatry.

Guest speakers at the conference were Dr Mohamed Salem Abdelgelil of Hamad Medical Corp, and Samantha Poblete van Rijswijk of

Aspetar, while Dr Stella Major, associate professor of family medicine in clinical medicine at WCM-Q, also appeared as a speaker.

Dr Thurayya Arayssi, vice dean for academic and curricular affairs at WCM-Q, said: "The great success of this event shows that our work to establish a strong and highly engaged alumni community is paying dividends for the healthcare sector in Qatar.

A growing number of alumni who leave Qatar after graduation to continue their training in the US are returning to Qatar to serve the community here, help educate the next generation of physicians, and set the very highest standards for patient care."





## Spectacular sunrise

The mesmerising colours of sunrise and dramatic silhouettes of palms captured from Doha Corniche the other day. PICTURE: *Gulf Times* staff photographer Thajudheen.

# DPS-MIS celebrates 23rd Annual Day

**D**PS-Modern Indian School students celebrated India's monumental success in space through their 23rd Annual Day extravaganza, 'Antariksh: A Journey to the Moon and Beyond' on November 9.

## New office-bearers for Our Kitchen Garden Doha

Our Kitchen Garden Doha, an organic agricultural organisation in Qatar registered under the Indian Cultural Centre, has elected new managing committee members for 2023-25. The officials are Jiji Aravind (president), Benny Thomas (general secretary), Yasar (treasurer), Siroz Ravendran (vice-president), Anil Kumar S (joint secretary), Ambhara Pavithran, Ramla Samad, Jawahar Bhatharath, Sooraj, Mohamed Siyad and Rajesh. An organising committee has been formed for running the next two years of programmes. The members are Rema, Asha, Ganesh, Hamsa, Jainas, Mathew, Madhavikutty, Razia, Ramya, Ruby, Sudheer, Wahida, Mansoor and Jitto. Organic farming festival, harvest festival, best farmer awards, school level best child farmer award and environmental quiz which helps to know more about soil and agriculture are some of the highlights of the organisation's activities. Anyone interested in agriculture can become a member by contacting 66193295, a statement said.

## The healing fabric

**By Shafqat Nabi**

Nili. It is a thin, translucent fabric with a loose open weave. This weave structure is used to add stability to the fabric and is widely used for medical dressings. According to the French government's online etymological dictionary, the English origin of the word is derived from a French word, whose ultimate origin word is uncertain, but is often attributed to the Arabic and Persian word qazz ("raw silk"), which itself was obtained from the name of the city of Gaza in Palestine. Identify this fabric.

NI2. French sculptor Auguste Rodin's most famous creation titled 'Le Penseur' is a bust of a figure now displayed in Musée Rodin in Paris. It was initially named The Poet, and was part of a large commission for a doorway surround called The Gates of Hell. Often used in posters for quizzes, how better do we know this sculpture?

N13. Bill Fernandez, a user-interface architect and innovator, was the first full time employee of which company when they incorporated in 1977 and was issued badge

NI4. DeWitt Wallace, while recovering from shrapnel wounds received in World War I, had the idea to gather a sampling of favourite articles on many subjects

of favourable articles on many subjects from various monthly magazines, sometimes condensing and rewriting them, and to combine them into one magazine. For many years, it was the best-selling

consumer magazine in the US. It's global editions reach an additional 40mn people in more than 70 countries, via 49 editions in 21 languages. The periodical

has a global circulation of 10.5mn, making it the largest paid-circulation magazine in the world. Identify this popular family magazine he founded, along with his wife, Ila.

NIS. The Amsterdam stock exchange is considered the oldest "modern" securities market in the world. It was created shortly after the establishment of the Dutch East

India Company in 1602 when equities began trading on a regular basis as a secondary market to trade its shares. In what form did they pay the first dividend? It was not in cash.

NI6. Which 1925 novel starts with this?: "In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've

Tribe

Selena Gomez has voiced a character called *Hotel Transylvania*.

Do you have some interesting bytes to share? 'Tribe Nl.yays!' Every week one question from our readers will be featured. To help us choose, please send it to us at [infotainment.factree@gmail.com](mailto:infotainment.factree@gmail.com) with your college/company (or just 'home-sweet-home').





## Indonesian community holds football tournament

The Indonesian Football Association in Qatar, in welcoming the AFC Asian Cup set to take place in Qatar early next year, organised a one-day football tournament recently.

The event at the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) Sports Centre was attended by hundreds of Indonesian expatriates, including ambassador Ridwan Hassan and AFC Asian Cup Local Organising Committee member Faisal Khaled.

The event was supported by the Indonesian embassy in Qatar, the Indonesian Community Association in Qatar (Permiga), Rumah Seni Al Khor, and the Indonesian Nurses Association in Qatar (PPNI).

The tournament, which has entered its 8th edition, was designed for participants aged 35 years and older, and featured a half-competition system with 10 clubs, each with 15 registered players participating in a 7-a-side game.

IATMI FC was the champion after they defeated the Kuno's of Al Khor in the final round. The trophy was handed over by Ali Mur-



tado, head of Division for Social Culture of the embassy on behalf of the ambassador.

The event which attracted around 600 visitors also featured a food bazaar from licenced Indonesian restaurants in Qatar.

"Again, this event proved to us that the Indonesian community is consistent in supporting Qatar to promote international events which are conducted here. The

tournament is a warm welcome for the AFC Asian Cup which will be held in this country this year" Hassan said.

"In addition to promoting healthy life in Qatar, this football tournament is also conducted as a form of support from the Indonesian community to Qatar, who will be the host for AFC Asian Cup", head organiser Vidi Viciyandrie said.



Indonesia, together with 23 other countries, has qualified for AFC Asian Cup next year. Indonesia would be in Group D, together with Japan, Iraq, and Vietnam. Thousands of Indonesian fans from their home country and those who are living in Qatar are expected to see their national team next year.



## IIS celebrates 39th Annual Day



Ideal Indian School celebrated its 39th Annual Day recently with magnificent cultural performances by students from the kindergarten, junior, girls, and boys sections.

The highlight was a grand cultural display titled 'An Odyssey to Aspirations', featuring around 2,000 students from all sections, captivating the audience with a diverse array of performances, including international, folk, western, fusion, and contemporary dances, songs, musical renditions, and multilingual dramas.

Gold and silver medals were awarded to school rank holders and individual subject toppers in the classes X and XII examinations held in April-March 2023.

The school staff, who completed 15, 20, 25, 30, and 35 years of service were also felicitated with excellence certificates. The evening drew a large audience of students and parents.

School president Dr Hassan Kunhi M P was the chief guest. The guests of honour were Indian embassy first secretary Sachin Dinkar Shankpal, Indian Cultural Centre



(ICC) president Manikantan A P, Indian Community Benevolent Forum vice president Deepak Shetty, ICC's cultural events head Suma Mahesh Gowda, International Toastmasters member Sushmita Pattanaik, Malayalam 98.6FM CEO Anwar Hussain, and principal Shaik Shamim Saheb, along with the heads of sections.

The principal presented the annual report, emphasising the school's commitment to setting high standards and goals in academics, sports, events, discipline, leadership, management systems, and more. A minute of silence was observed in honour of those



who lost their lives in the war in Palestine.

The gathering was welcomed by head girl Mary Stenicka Fernando, head boy Ahmed Mohammed Faisal proposed a vote of thanks.

The programme was co-ordinated by

girls' section vice principal Dr Nazima Bi, KG Section headmistress Shirley De Sales, and media co-ordinator Anvar. The formal programme was hosted by Tanu Madhvi, Sharon, and Masrath.

## IWAQ organises Diwali Bazaar



The Indian Women's Association in Qatar (IWAQ) organised a Diwali Bazaar showcasing the essence of the festival of lights at the Indian Cultural Centre (ICC). The event featured a wide array of stalls offering traditional Indian clothing, jewellery, handicrafts, and festive decorations. IWAQ, a non-profit organisation affiliated to the ICC under the aegis of the Indian embassy, provides a platform for women to showcase their talents and skills, a statement added.

## MES staffer shines at Asia Masters Athletic Meet 2023



Steeson K Mathew, head of Physical Education of MES Indian School has bagged a bronze in javelin throw, representing India at the 22nd Asia Masters Athletic Championship 2023 held in the Philippines from November 8-12. He is now qualified to participate in the 25th World Masters Athletics Championships in Sweden in August 2024. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar said Steeson's achievement in the international arena is a huge motivation for the students who aspire to shine in the field of sports and games. The school management congratulated him.

## Infotainment Factree to host 'The Biggest Quidnunc'

Literary platform Infotainment Factree has announced the launch of 'The Biggest Quidnunc', an open quiz contest' on November 24, a statement said.

A trivia-based general quiz contest, in association with Risin Ventures, will be held at the MIE - Savitribai Phule Pune University, the venue partner. The contest will be anchored by Shafqat Nabi, a brand and fashion management professional and columnist. The contest is open for everyone aged 12 and above. Entries are being accepted on Google Form (<https://bit.ly/tbq>) until November 21, 2023. There is no registration fee.

"We want students to think beyond their text books. The idea is to make the whole learning process interesting and rewarding. We want to take quizzing and other forms of learning beyond those boring question-answer sessions," explained Neelanshu Jamuar, on behalf of Infotainment Factree. The contest will begin with written prelims to select the top four teams for the finals. Each team will consist of two members. The final rounds will feature a wide range of questions, including audio and



video elements. The audience will also have the opportunity to participate in the quiz and win prizes.

Infotainment Factree has earlier organised successful quiz events, including 'Celebrating Bapu, an Open Quiz Contest on the Apostle of Peace and Non-Violence' and 'Goalanza: Quiz With A Kick!' Activities related to the quiz contest have also been planned on Mirchi One, the entertainment partner and Qabayan Radio, the only Filipino radio station in Qatar and the event's FM Radio Partner. Qbake is the nutrition partner. Contest details are also available on social media pages of Infotainment Factree. Any further enquiries may be directed to infotainment.factree@gmail.com

## Class X board exam toppers feted at OIS



Olive International School, Doha, organised a felicitation ceremony on November 9 to honour students for their laudable achievements in their Class X Board Examinations 2022. Achievers from all campuses of OIS were present. The programme commenced with a prayer song by Sunny Daniel. OIS Umm Salal Ali campus headmistress Roopinder Kaur welcomed the gathering. The chief guest, Indian Cultural Centre president Manikantan A P, felicitated the school topper and subject toppers with special citations and trophies. Ashley Hemanth topped the school with 98.2%, while the second rank was shared by Blase Maria, Anshita Naik and Dhwanit Dave with 96.4%. Students

who secured 100% in individual subjects were also felicitated.

OIS vice-chairman Rony Paul motivated the students to keep themselves focused and strive towards their goals with sheer determination and hard work. Principal Jacob Mathew lauded the students for their excellent academic scores. Recalling the efforts of teachers and the help offered by parents, he reiterated his wish to see top scoring students emerging with flying colours in their class XII board exam too.

A dance performance by the students added colour and vibrance to the programme. Al Thumama Campus headmistress Priya Viju proposed a vote of thanks.

## MES overall champion in Sahityolsav-2023

MES Indian School won the overall championship in the 13th inter-school arts and literary competition organised by Risala Study Circle (RSC).

Students from six schools participated in the 'Pravasi Sahityolsav' at Podar Pearl School - Al Meshaf Campus.

Students from classes V to XII competed in elocution, song, drawing, social tweet, poem making, story writing and choral reading, a RSC statement said. MES emerged as the champions with 86 points, while Noble International School and Podar Pearl School scored 70 and 47 points, respectively, securing second and third positions. Indian Community Benevolent Forum president Shanavas Bava and S A M Basheer honoured winners. A statement from MES school listed their winners: Junior boys' category - Rihab Shameer (story writing), Krishna Mahesh (pencil drawing), Mohamed Rabee (elocution) and Abdul Fattah (Mappilapattu). In the junior girls' category Sandria Rihana was first and Rinsha Fathima second in pencil drawing.



In the boys' group event of choral reading for the secondary category, Jitheesh, Johan Cherian, Albin John and Dalyn Sylvanus won the first prize and Aryan Unnikrishnan (poem writing), Mohamed Fizan (elocution), Dalyn Silvanus (social tweet) secured third prize in their respective individual events. In the girls' secondary category, Syeda Rabia Fathima bagged the first prize in poem writing while Soupannika Rajkumar secured

the second prize in social tweet. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar congratulated the winners. RSC, is a socio-cultural organisation working among Indian expatriates for the past three decades. The organisation functions in 16 countries - Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, UAE, Kuwait, US, Georgia, Australia, Germany, Scotland, England, Maldives, Spain and Egypt, the RSC statement added.



## Lawmakers tell Norway government to be ready to recognise Palestinian state

Norway's parliament has adopted a resolution calling on the government to be ready to recognise an "independent" Palestinian state, in a new sign of Europe's anxiety over the Gaza war.

The proposition was made by Norway's ruling coalition to counter a resolution by smaller parties calling for an immediate recognition of a Palestinian state.

Passed with an overwhelming majority in parliament, it said the assembly "asks the government to be ready to recognise Palestine as an independent state when recognition could have a positive impact on the peace process, without making a final peace accord a condition".

The wording means that no recognition is likely in the immediate future but is a sign of the concern over the Gaza war in national assemblies across Europe.

Iceland, Sweden, Poland, Czech Republic and Romania are among countries to have already given legal recognition to a Palestinian state.

Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, voted back into power yesterday, told parliament that he would "work" towards recognition by his country and by Europe.

Since the events of October 7 in Israel and Israel's military onslaught on Gaza since, there have been huge rallies in Britain and other countries in favour of the Palestinian cause. – **AFP**

## Iran's Quds force commander Qaani says resistance front united with Hamas

The top commander of Iran's Quds force said the resistance front supported the Tehran-backed Hamas group in its war with Israel in Gaza.

"Your brothers in the Axis of Resistance stand united with you ... the resistance will not allow the enemy to achieve its dirty goals in Gaza and Palestine," Esmail Qaani said in a message to the commanders of the Tehran-backed group yesterday, Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency reported.

Iran, which refers to its aligned armed groups around the Middle East as being part of the "Resistance Axis", has warned Israel of escalation if it failed to end aggressions in the Gaza Strip.

The Quds Force is the arm of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) that controls its allied militia in the region, from Lebanon to Iraq and Yemen to Syria. – **Reuters**

## Time has come to replace Netanyahu: opposition leader

Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid said yesterday that it is time to replace Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and that there would be broad support to form a unity government led by Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party.

Centrist Lapid, who served briefly as prime minister last year, said he believed a large majority of the 120 lawmakers in the Knesset, or parliament, would sign on to such a coalition.

He made his comments as Israel pressed on with its military offensive in Gaza following the events of October 7 in southern Israel.

"The time has come – we need to establish a national reconstruction government. Likud will lead it, Netanyahu and the extremists will be replaced, over 90 members of the Knesset will be partners in the coalition for healing and recon-

nection," Lapid wrote on social media platform X.

Netanyahu's Likud is the largest party in Israel's ruling coalition, which includes ultranationalist and religious parties. Together they control 64 seats in parliament.

Lapid refused to join Netanyahu's war cabinet at the start of the war, though other centrist lawmakers agreed to do so and help manage the conflict.

"I hear those saying this is not the time. We waited 40 days, there is no more time. What we need now is a government that will deal with nothing other than security and the economy," Lapid wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter. "We can't afford another election cycle in the coming year in which we continue to fight and

explain why the other side is a disaster."

On Wednesday during an interview with Israeli news channel N12, Lapid said: "Netanyahu should leave immediately... We need change, Netanyahu cannot remain prime minister. We cannot allow ourselves to carry out a long campaign under a prime minister who has lost the people's trust."

In the interview, Lapid did not call for early elections, but rather a no-confidence vote in parliament that would allow for the formation of a new government led by another member of Netanyahu's Likud party.

"This is not the time to hold elections," he said. "We should opt for a national reconstruction with another prime minister from Likud." – **Reuters/AFP**

## Niger's junta chief sets up anti-graft body, state court

Niger's military junta chief, who came to power in a July coup, officially set up yesterday an anti-corruption commission and a state court.

State TV broadcast live the two ceremonies to formally establish the transition bodies.

Members of the court and commission two new bodies swore an oath in front of new strongman, General Abdourahamane Tiani, in his first public appearance since leading the July 26 ousting of democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum.

Military chiefs, government members, traditional chiefs, religious figures and foreign diplomats attended the inaugurations in the capital, Niamey.

The new state court replaces the court of cassation and state council, which were dissolved after the coup, according to the order setting out public powers during a transition period leading to elections.

For now, the junta has demanded up to a three-year transition back to civilian rule, but no date has been fixed for elections. The anti-corruption commission's main role will be recovering all illegally acquired and misappropriated public property. It is made up of judges, army and police officers and representatives of civil society.

Tiani has promised to hold a national dialogue, which will help determine how long the transitional period will continue. Bazoum has been held at his residence in the heart of the presidential palace since his toppling.

Niger has been subject to heavy economic sanctions by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) since the coup, driving up inflation and leading to shortages of some products including medicines. – **AFP**

## Malawi imposes cost-cutting travel ban on officials

Malawi's President Lazarus Chakwera has imposed a travel ban on himself and his government to cut public spending and help the country's ailing economy.

The move was announced after the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a \$175mn loan for the southern African nation.

"I am imposing a freeze on all publicly funded international trips for public officers at all levels ... until the end of the financial year in March," Chakwera said in a televised address.

It means the former evangelical preacher will skip a scheduled attendance at the COP28 climate summit later this month in the UAE. Chakwera also mandated that all cabinet members currently abroad on publicly funded trips promptly return home and ordered a 50% reduction in fuel allowances for senior government officials. Earlier this week, the landlocked country announced a 44% devaluation of its currency as it worked to secure the IMF loan. For decades, Malawi has struggled to sustain growth despite inflows of official development assistance, according to the IMF. – **AFP**

# Low turnout looms over Madagascar election boycotted by opposition

AFP/Reuters  
Antananarivo

Madagascar voted in highly contested presidential elections yesterday that were boycotted by most opposition candidates and appeared to have resulted in a very low turnout.

As polling stations closed and counting started, two senior sources at the electoral commission told AFP, on condition of anonymity, that preliminary data suggested less than 20% of those registered showed up to vote.

The electoral body CENI said it did not yet have official figures and could not comment.

Campaign group Transparency International warned authorities against legitimising the results of an electoral process they describes as "opaque and captured".

President Andry Rajoelina has voiced confidence in being re-elected, brushing off weeks of protests that have rocked the Indian Ocean island nation.

However, most opposition candidates disowned the vote.

"We do not recognise these elections and the Malagasy population in its great majority does not recognise them either," Hajo Andrianainarivelo, 56, told a press conference in the capital Antananarivo, speaking on behalf of 10 of 12 opposition candidates.

"The elections did not respect the required democratic standards and this was proven by the participation rate, which was the lowest in Madagascar's electoral history," he added, citing observers' reports which also put turnout at around 20%.

The opposition grouping had urged voters to shun the ballot, complaining of an "institutional coup" in favour of Rajoelina, 49.

"I'm confident in the maturity of Malagasy democracy, and I'm also confident in the choice of the Malagasy people," Rajoelina said after voting in Antananarivo. "There are always people trying to stir up trouble and prevent elections in Madagascar. But I thank the wisdom of the people."

A poor turnout is likely to strengthen the opposition grouping, which has vowed to continue protesting until a fair election is held.

Eleven million people were registered to vote in the country of about 30mn.

Voting passed off calmly in the capital, AFP journalists saw, with voters emerging from rudimentary polling centres, their thumbs stained with indelible ink.



An electoral official holds up a ballot paper as votes are counted at a polling station in Antananarivo.

Left: Bystanders watch as electoral officials (unseen) count votes at a polling station in Antananarivo.

"I'm worried because there are some factions who just want the country to be in chaos," computer science student Francky Randriananantoandro told AFP. "We have to move on, turn the page. For 60 years that was already the case, and I think we have to stop now."

Madagascar is the leading global producer of vanilla but also one of the world's poorest countries and has been shaken by successive crises since independence from France in 1960.

From October, the opposition grouping, including two former presidents, has led near-daily, largely unauthorised protest marches.

Police have regularly dispersed them, firing tear gas.

On Wednesday, authorities imposed a night-time curfew in Antananarivo, following what police said were "various acts of sabotage".

Rajoelina first took power in 2009 on the back of a coup that ousted then president Marc Ravalomanana, who is among the boycotting opposition candidates.

After not contesting the 2013 election due to international pressure, Rajoelina was voted back into power in 2018.

As his opponents refused to campaign, he flew across the country by private plane,

showcasing schools, roads and hospitals built during his tenure.

"I'm voting, but we know this isn't normal," said 43-year-old Eugene Rakatomalala. "There weren't any candidates who did campaigns."

Many others seemed to have stayed away.

Two hours before polls closed, at a polling station in Ravalomanana's stronghold district in Antananarivo, an election official yawned. Another sat with his head resting on his hands.

Only 18% of those registered there had shown up.

"It's really not much," said one official.

Mama Pota, a shop vendor in the capital, said she had no intention of voting.

"I am not going to vote because it is an election that doesn't meet the standards, so what's the point," the 50-year-old said.

At another polling station in a poor district of the capital, officials told an AFP reporter during the afternoon that turnout was around 30%.

For many, politics takes a back seat to making ends meet.

"In the morning, I don't eat – only a little at lunchtime and in the evening. Otherwise, I can't get by, I don't have enough," Josiane Rasomalala, 41, told AFP. "I'm voting because we need a better life."

# Kenya's parliament approves proposed Haiti police deployment

AFP  
Nairobi

Kenya's parliament has approved the proposed deployment of its police to Haiti to lead a UN-backed multinational mission aimed at restoring peace and security in the gang-plagued Caribbean nation.

The United Nations Security Council gave the go-ahead in early October for the Kenya-led mission to help the overwhelmed Haitian police battle rampant gang violence.

However, Kenya's involvement has been criticised at home and the government is currently barred from deploying any police

to Haiti due to an ongoing court challenge to its plans.

"This House approves the deployment of the officers of the National Police Service to multinational security support mission to Haiti," Deputy Speaker Gladys Boss Shollei told lawmakers during yesterday's charged session.

The government has said it is ready to provide up to 1,000 personnel and vowed that preparations for the mission would continue, despite the court challenge.

The Nairobi High Court is considering a petition brought by opposition politician Ekuru Aukot, who argued that the mission was unconstitutional as it was not backed by any law or treaty.

Judge Enock Mwita said yesterday that

the orders blocking the deployment would stay until January 26 when he will "deliver a judgment".

Ahead of yesterday's hearing, Aukot criticised parliament for proceeding with the vote, accusing lawmakers of "disobeying (the) court order".

However, National Assembly majority leader Kimani Ichung'wah said lawmakers were not breaking any laws as "standing orders do not stop parliament from doing its constitutional mandate".

"It is not sub-judice," he said, defying calls by the minority opposition to call off the debate.

Rights watchdogs also say that Kenyan police have a history of using sometimes lethal force against civilians and that they

pose an unacceptable risk in Haiti, where foreign troops have committed abuses during past interventions.

Interior Minister Kithure Kindiki defended the deployment last month, saying: "We are not taking our officers to Haiti as guinea pigs."

Kindiki declared last week that Kenya would not deploy its troops unless the mission was fully funded by UN member states, with a \$600mn budget already drawn up.

President William Ruto has described the Kenyan undertaking as a "mission for humanity" in a nation ravaged by colonialism.

The UN-backed mission – initially approved for one year – envisions Kenyan

police on the offensive with their Haitian counterparts, who are outnumbered and outgunned by gang members.

The mission will also aim to create conditions to hold elections, which have not taken place in Haiti since 2016.

Kenya is seen as a democratic anchor in East Africa and has participated in peace-keeping operations in its immediate region, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia as well as other parts of the world.

Haiti, the Western hemisphere's poorest nation, has been in turmoil for years, with armed gangs taking over parts of the country and unleashing brutal violence, with the economy and public health system in tatters.





COMMENT

Reworked migrants treaty with Rwanda to be ready in days: UK

Britain yesterday said a new treaty to send migrants to Rwanda could be ready for ratification within “days” after a court blocked an earlier and controversial agreement as unlawful. The new treaty, which would then take at least three weeks to be approved by UK lawmakers, follows a Supreme Court ruling Wednesday that the current deal between the two countries should not go ahead. It was a major setback for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who is under pressure to reduce irregular immigration to Britain. Sunak immediately vowed to persevere with the controversial plan by securing a new treaty with Kigali.

LAW AND ORDER

Police officers face probe over handling of serial killer case

Eight London police officers are being investigated for gross misconduct over their handling of a serial killer case, the police complaints watchdog said yesterday. The Independent Office for Police Conduct began a reinvestigation last year into how the case of Stephen Port, who was jailed for life for the murder of four men between 2014 and 2015, was originally handled after receiving fresh evidence. The eight officers are being investigated over possible breaches of police professional standards. A review by another police watchdog had said earlier that London’s Metropolitan Police had failed to recognise that the deaths in the case were connected.

TRAGEDY

Four dead as two Indonesian military planes crash

Four people, including two pilots, were killed in Indonesia yesterday when two military aircraft crashed into a mountainside during training, an air force spokesperson said. Two Embraer Super Tucano planes took off from the East Java city of Malang yesterday morning before losing contact half an hour later during regular formation training. “All the bodies have been found,” spokesperson Agung Sasongko Jati said. “Two are already in the hangar, two are still in transportation to the base.” He said the two pilots and two co-pilots were found after information from the public about where their planes had crashed.

PROPOSAL

Australia plans curbs on foreign detainees released after ruling

Australia said it would introduce legislation to allow ankle bracelets, curfews and other rules to monitor dozens of foreigners with criminal records after a court released them from immigration detention. The ruling said indefinite immigration detention, pursued by Australia, was unlawful. The ruling forced the government to release 83 foreigners, which included those convicted for crimes like murder and sexual assault. Amid growing political pressure, the government said it has introduced legislation into parliament that will give it powers to put in place strict new visa restrictions and criminal penalties on these individuals.

Philippines snubs China call for prior notice on resupply missions to ship

Reuters  
Manila

The Philippines does not have to give China prior notice about resupply missions in its own territory in the South China Sea, as the operations, including the “upkeep” of a grounded navy ship, are legitimate, its foreign ministry said yesterday.

The department of foreign affairs (DFA) also called on China to remove all “illegal structures” it built within the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone (EEZ), cease reclamation in those areas and be accountable for the damage the activities caused.

China has repeatedly accused the Philippines of illegally entering its waters without its permission during its missions to transport food and water to Filipino soldiers living aboard a navy ship that Manila grounded at the disputed Second Thomas Shoal. The atoll is called Ayungin by the Philippines and Renai Reef by China.

“We are being asked to give prior notification each time we conduct a resupply mission to Ayungin Shoal. We will not do so,” DFA spokesperson Teresita Daza said in a statement.

China claims sovereignty over nearly the entire South China Sea, pointing to a line on its maps that cuts into the EEZs of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and

Indonesia. Taiwan, which China also claims as part of its territory, has said it does not accept Beijing’s maps. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 said the line on China’s maps had no legal basis, which Beijing rejects.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin reiterated his support for the court ruling during a meeting with his Manila counterpart in Jakarta. Both have denounced harassment by China towards Philippine vessels conducting the resupply mission. A spokesperson for the Philippines National Security Council yesterday flagged a disinformation campaign by “propagandists” and “information operators” that aims to undermine US-Philippines relations and sway public opinion in China’s favour. The narratives include portraying “the relationship between the US and the Philippines as superior-inferior relationship,” said Jonathan Malaya. “It just so happened that in this particular dispute the interests of the US and the Philippines aligned,” Malaya told reporters. “We are cognizant of the fact that there will be a time that the interests of the Philippines and the US will diverge.”

Since the grounding of the Sierra Madre ship at the atoll in 1999 in Manila’s attempt to assert its sovereignty claim, China has repeatedly called on the Philippines to tow the vessel away, based on an agreement which Manila says does not exist.

UK authorises gene therapy for blood disorders in world first

Britain has authorised a gene therapy that aims to cure sickle-cell disease and another type of inherited blood disorder for patients aged 12 and over, the country’s medical regulator said, becoming the first in the world to do so. Casgevy is the first medicine to be licensed that uses the gene-editing tool CRISPR, which won its inventors the Nobel Prize in 2020, Britain’s Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency said. Sickle cell disease and -thalassaemia are genetic conditions caused by errors in the genes for haemoglobin, which is used by red blood cells to carry oxygen around the body. “Both sickle cell disease and -thalassaemia are painful, life-long conditions that in some cases can be fatal,” MHRA said. In clinical trials Casgevy has been found to restore healthy haemoglobin production in the majority of participants with sickle-cell disease and transfusion-dependent -thalassaemia, relieving the symptoms of disease.

India minister in Jakarta for Asean meet



Indonesia’s Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto (left) greets India’s Defence Minister Rajnath Singh upon the latter’s arrival for the 10th Association of Southeast Asian Nations Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) in Jakarta yesterday.

250 Rohingya refugees reach Indonesia

About 250 desperate Rohingya refugees reached western Indonesia on a decrepit, overcrowded wooden boat yesterday, bringing the total number reported by local officials to have arrived this week to nearly 600. The boat holding the members of the persecuted Myanmar minority, many barefoot and some pleading for help, sat just off the coast in the archipelago nation’s Aceh province. Some made a dash for shore after residents refused to let them land, collapsing to

the sand and begging for the vessel’s exhausted passengers to be allowed to disembark. The mostly Muslim Rohingya are heavily persecuted in Myanmar and thousands risk their lives each year on long and expensive sea journeys, often in flimsy boats, to try to reach Malaysia or Indonesia. Men, women, children and babies could be seen looking to shore as angry locals told them not to land the boat, which some on board said had sailed from Bangladesh.

Tin Maung Swe confirmed the order while stressing that the situation in the capital, in central Myanmar, was calm.

“This is the plan to help in the event of an emergency,” he said.

A parallel government formed by pro-democracy politicians to oppose the military, and allied with some insurgent factions, has launched a “Road to Naypyitaw” campaign which it says is aimed at taking control of the capital.

Junta spokesperson Zaw Min Tun said the military was facing “heavy assaults from a significant number of armed rebel soldiers” in Shan state in the northeast, Kayah state in the east and Rakhine state in the

west. Zaw Min Tun said some military positions had been evacuated and the insurgents had been using drones to drop hundreds of bombs on military posts.

“We are urgently taking measures to protect against drone bomb attacks effectively,” the junta spokesperson said.

The clashes have sent refugees into all of Myanmar’s neighbours, including thousands who fled into India in recent days from fighting in Chin State in the northwest.

Arindam Bagchi, spokesperson for India’s foreign ministry said yesterday New Delhi was “deeply concerned” about the situation along the border.

More Myanmar troops fleeing rebel attacks enter India

Reuters  
New Delhi

At least 29 more Myanmar soldiers entered India yesterday fleeing an attack by insurgents on their military base close to the Indian border, an Indian police official said, as rebels step up their assaults against the ruling junta.

Earlier this week, 43 Myanmar soldiers entered India’s Mizoram state after their military bases were overrun by the rebels. Nearly 40 were sent back by Indian authorities through a different border crossing point a few hundred kilometres east. Myanmar’s military has battled

ethnic minority and other insurgencies for decades but a 2021 coup has brought unprecedented co-ordination between anti-military forces that are mounting the biggest challenge to the army in years.

The country’s military rulers have ordered all government staff and those with military experience to prepare to serve in case of emergency, Tin Maung Swe, secretary of an administrative council in the capital, Naypyitaw said yesterday, after the junta reported “heavy assaults” in several places.

“If necessary, such a unit might be required to go out and serve for natural disasters, and security,” the junta’s council said in an order.

26 dead, many hospitalised in China building blaze

Reuters  
Beijing

A fire that erupted in the office of a coal company in northern China has killed 26 people, state media said yesterday, raising the death toll for the latest in a series of deadly accidents in the coal industry.

President Xi Jinping, on a trip to the US, urged the authorities to ensure more safety measures are put in place to avoid such incidents, the state-run Xinhua news agency said.

Xi called for “all efforts” to treat the injured as well as investigate who was responsible for the fire.

At least 38 people were injured in the blaze, which broke out at 6.50am at the four-storey Yongju Coal Industry Joint Building in the country’s top coal-producing hub of Shanxi. Calls to the company were not answered.

State broadcaster CCTV initially reported that the fire had killed 11 people and injured at least 51.

Video footage posted on the social media site Weibo showed bright flames and thick black smoke billowing from the building, while dozens of people stood in the parking lot watching.

The building shown in the video matched images of the coal company’s headquarters posted on its website.

All mining firms in Lishi district, where

the accident occurred, were asked to suspend production, state media reported, citing local emergency management bureau.

Police have detained several people for questioning, CCTV said, adding that the cause of the blaze was being investigated.

China’s State Council has dispatched a team to the scene to guide the rescue and emergency response work, CCTV said.

China’s coal producers are under scrutiny for a series of accidents in mines in recent months, which has weighed on production as mines stop work for safety inspections.

In April, 29 people were killed as a fire ripped through a hospital in Beijing, leading to criticism of local authorities on social media sites.

Desperate kin wait for men to be freed from tunnel

Akash Singh Negi has spent three sleepless nights outside a blocked highway tunnel under construction in the Indian Himalayas, shivering in the cold while waiting for his father to be rescued. Gabbar Singh Negi is one of 40 men trapped inside since Sunday morning when a portion of the tunnel collapsed and blocked their exit. Efforts to reach them have made little progress. Rescuers started using a new drilling machine sent in by New Delhi yesterday. The plan is to create space for a pipe that can be used by the trapped men to crawl to safety. They have electricity for lights and are already being supplied food, water and oxygen through a pipe. Authorities say the men are doing well and it’s just a matter of time before they are brought out. “We are being told that the rescue mission will be completed soon but it has been five days,” Negi, 18, said yesterday. “I have been able to talk to my father through a steel pipe and he

has told us not to worry. But we are worried,” he said, adding that his father is a supervisor employed by the private engineering firm contracted to build the tunnel. The 4.5km tunnel is part of the Char Dham highway, one of the most ambitious projects of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government. The 40 trapped men are low-wage workers. V K Singh, federal deputy minister for road transport and highways, said at the site he was “very optimistic” about saving all 40 workers. Relatives of four of the 40 men have managed to reach the site in Silkyara, high in the hills of Uttarakhand where night temperatures have fallen to 13 degrees Celsius as winter sets in. Negi’s uncle, Prem Singh Negi, said the government and the rescue team have been giving them “fake assurances”. “It is the fifth day and they have not drilled through the debris yet. We want them to be out soon,” Prem Singh Negi said.



## Biden and Xi restore military ties, gloss over US president’s off-script remark

AFP  
Washington

US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed at their first summit in a year on Wednesday to restore military communications between the two countries, even as Biden went off script by saying he still considered Xi a “dictator”.

The leaders shook hands and strolled around a garden at a historic California estate during four-hour talks aimed at preventing growing tensions between the world’s largest economies from spiralling into conflict.

They also agreed that China would crack down on the production of ingredients for fentanyl, responsible for a deadly epidemic of opioid abuse in the United States, with Xi saying that he “sympathises” with US victims of the deadly drug, which has ravaged communities across the country.

However, Xi and Biden remained far apart on the wider flashpoint of Taiwan,

with the Chinese president telling his US counterpart to stop arming the island and that reunification was “unstoppable.”

Beijing claims sovereignty over the self-ruling democracy and has not ruled out seizing it by force.

The two leaders had not met in person since they held talks in Bali in November 2022, and relations nosedived after the United States shot down an alleged Chinese spy balloon in February this year.

However, Biden told a press conference at the Filoli estate that his talks with Xi, whom he has known since 2011, were “some of the most constructive and productive discussions we’ve had”.

The United States would compete “vigorously” but “responsibly” with an increasingly assertive China “so it doesn’t veer into conflict or accidental conflict”, Biden said. “He and I agreed that each one of us could pick up the phone, call directly and we’ll be heard immediately.”

The separate move to restore high-level US-China military-to-military communications, which China severed after then-

US House speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in 2022, was “critically important” to avoid possible conflicts, Biden added.

The two sides also agreed to hold talks on artificial intelligence and to deepen co-operation on climate change ahead of the COP28 conference in Dubai next month.

However, a day of painstakingly choreographed diplomacy ended with a not-so-diplomatic remark as Biden walked off-stage after his press conference.

When a reporter asked if he would still say Xi was a dictator as he had in June, a remark that prompted an angry response from Beijing at the time, Biden replied: “Well look, he is.”

“He’s a dictator in the sense that he’s a guy who’s running a country, a Communist country, that’s based on a form of government totally different than ours,” Biden said.

Diplomats had spent months trying to get the talks to happen, and then arranging the smallest details at the exclusive estate, which featured in the US television soap opera *Dynasty* in the 1980s.

Xi appeared to brush off the comment, telling an audience hours later that growing US-China ties were vital to both countries.

“I believe that once the door to China-US relations is opened, it will not be closed again,” he said. “China is ready to be a partner and friend of the United States.”

The carefully cultivated symbolism of the day saw red carpet handshakes, delegations sitting on either side of a huge table, and culminating with Biden and Xi taking the air in the grounds.

They also shared a working lunch of herbed ricotta ravioli and tarragon chicken with gold rice pilaf.

Xi and Biden waved at reporters during their garden walk, and Biden had raised two thumbs up when asked how the talks went.

The Chinese leader had earlier warned that “turning their back on each other was not an option” and said that “Planet Earth is big enough for the two countries to succeed”.

Biden and Xi also discussed the wars in

Gaza and Ukraine, on which their countries have found themselves backing opposing sides.

However, Xi also had tough words for Biden after the talks, particularly on the subject of Taiwan.

“The US side should ... stop arming Taiwan, and support China’s peaceful reunification,” Xi told Biden, according to a readout from China’s foreign ministry. “China will realise reunification, and this is unstoppable.”

Xi nevertheless insisted in a later speech to business leaders that Beijing did not want confrontation with anyone.

“China does not seek spheres of influence, and will not fight a cold or hot war with any country,” he said. “The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation cannot be achieved without a peaceful and stable international environment.”

Russia, a partner of China in what Washington sees as a growing authoritarian alliance, welcomed the meeting, with the Kremlin calling the talks “important for everyone”.



River turtles are seen in a plastic basin before being released into a river in the Peruvian Amazon, in San Jose de Lupuna, Peru.

## Heatwave speeds up turtle hatching in Peru

Reuters  
San Jose de Lupuna, Peru

In the Peruvian Amazon, an extended heatwave and drought have shortened the incubation period for thousands of turtle hatchlings released into the river by biologists as part of a local environmental programme.

Around 3,200 yellow-spotted Amazon river turtles, known locally as taricayas, were freed as part of a plan to repopulate the species, which is threatened by hunting.

The tiny hatchlings were carefully carried in containers up to the shores of the river on Tuesday, then released with the help of local children.

The baby turtles quickly scurried into the water.

“We’ve experienced a drought this year a little on the strong side; that’s why hatching has been a bit higher than in previous years since the sun is so strong,” said biologist Zabryna Pipa Perea of the Amarumayu Movement, a private initiative dedicated to protecting the Amazon’s native species.

Peru has the second-largest Amazonian rainforest territory, after neighbouring Brazil.

The turtles, with brown or

olive-coloured shells, are known for their distinctive yellow spots and black scales.

Hatchlings measure just a few centimetres long.

Normally, their incubation period lasts 60-72 days, which this year was cut to around 45 days, according to Pipa.

“This is due to the high temperature and greater drought in the area,” she said.

Since the beginning of the year, Peru has been facing the effects of the weather phenomenon known as El Nino, which produces an increase in the temperature of the Pacific Ocean and causes heavy rains on the coast, while triggering heatwaves and droughts in other areas.

Scientists agree that conservation of the Amazon rainforest is vital to avoid catastrophic climate change, because of its capacity to absorb greenhouse gases.

However, over the past two decades, more than 19,700sq km (7,600sq miles) of the Peruvian Amazon have been destroyed, according to data from the government.

“We’re releasing life. This year we’re releasing 3,200 taricayas, bringing us up to 23,000 released (as part of the programme),” Pipa said.

## NGO says European Commission breaks own online rules

A digital privacy campaign group filed a complaint against the European Commission yesterday, accusing the EU executive arm of violating its own rules on online advertising.

The Austrian non-profit organisation known as noyb (none of your business) took its case against the commission’s directorate general for migration and home affairs to the European Data Protection Supervisor.

The group said the commission used “unlawful micro-targeting” on X, formerly known as Twitter, to promote a legislative proposal aimed at combatting online child sex abuse, according to noyb.

The proposal would require messaging services to detect, report and remove child sex abuse material on their platforms but data protection groups fear it could lead to mass surveillance.

Noyb said the commission’s advertisements backing the legislation targeted users based on political views and religious beliefs.

European Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson acknowledged in October that there were question marks over whether the ads complied with EU digital rules and they are being reviewed. - **AFP**

## Russia imprisons artist over Ukraine supermarket protest

A Russian court has sentenced artist Alexandra Skochilenko to seven years in prison for spreading “false information” about the army after she swapped supermarket price tags with slogans criticising Russia’s offensive in Ukraine.

The 33-year-old, known as Sasha, is the latest among thousands of Russians to be detained, jailed or fined for speaking out.

Supporters shouted “shame” and “we’re with you Sasha” after the judge, Oksana Demiasheva, read out

the verdict, an AFP journalist in court reported.

Skochilenko had said in an earlier hearing that she “just wanted to stop the war. That was my motivation”.

On March 31 last year - as Russia pursued a siege of Ukraine’s port city of Mariupol - Skochilenko replaced five price tags in a branch of one of Russia’s largest supermarket chains in Saint Petersburg.

An elderly shopper reported the swapped tags to police. - **AFP**



A near-empty platform is pictured yesterday at the main station of Frankfurt am Main, western Germany.

## German train drivers’ strike causes disruption

AFP  
Frankfurt

A strike by German train drivers caused widespread disruption on the country’s rail network yesterday, as their union pushes for improved working conditions.

The drivers began the 20-hour walkout late on Wednesday and it lasted until 6pm (1700 GMT) yesterday, the latest industrial action to hit the country.

Only 20% of long-distance trains were running while local trains were “unable to operate at all” in some regions, said Achim Stauss, spokesman for rail operator Deutsche Bahn.

At a Berlin station, passenger Christine van der Koelen criticised the drivers for their “excessive” demands.

“At the end of the day, the parties have to negotiate” but “I find it problematic that we, the

passengers, have to put up with this”, she added.

The strike was called by the GDV union after a first round of pay talks with rail chiefs broke down.

The union is seeking a €555 (\$600) a month salary increase, a tax-free, €3,000 bonus to cope with inflation, and a reduction in working hours from 38 to 35 a week.

This agreement would run for 12 months, with more negotiations to follow after that.

Deutsche Bahn has offered an 11% pay increase as well an inflation bonus of up to €2,850, but has rejected reduced working hours as excessive.

The union represents about 10,000 staff in its talks with Deutsche Bahn, according to the operator.

Earlier this year, a series of strikes by a larger transport union, EVG, on the rail network caused widespread disruption.

## Finland to close border crossings with Russia over migrant influx

Reuters/AFP  
Helsinki

Finland will close four of the nine crossing points on its border with Russia tomorrow to stem a flow of asylum-seekers to the Nordic nation, Prime Minister Petteri Orpo said yesterday.

Neighbouring Norway, which shares a border with Russia in the Arctic, is also ready to close its border at short notice if necessary, Norwegian Justice Minister Emilie Enger Mehl said.

Finland’s president said on Wednesday that a rise in the number of asylum applicants arriving on the eastern border appeared to be Russian revenge for Finland’s defence co-operation with the United States, an assertion dismissed by Moscow.

Orpo said yesterday that there were “various signs that entering Finland is be-

ing aided and encouraged, organised”. “We have been prepared for different kinds of actions, malice, by Russia, and therefore this situation doesn’t come as a surprise.”

Finland, a European Union country whose accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) alliance this year after decades of non-alignment angered Moscow, shares a 1,340km (833-mile) border with Russia that also serves as the EU’s external border.

“Russia’s instrumentalisation of migrants is shameful. I fully support the measures taken by Finland,” European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen posted on social media, thanking the Finnish Border Guards “for protecting our European borders”.

The four crossings, all in southeastern Finland, are normally the busiest points of travel between the two countries.

“The government has today decided

that Finland will close some eastern border crossing points. The eastern border for that part will close on the night between Friday and Saturday,” Orpo told a press conference.

Finland’s non-discrimination ombudsman, Kristina Stenman, said Helsinki still had a duty under international treaties and EU law to allow asylum-seekers to file applications.

“If a person comes to a border station and says they are seeking international protection, the application needs to be received,” Stenman told Reuters.

Dozens of asylum-seekers from countries such as Iraq, Yemen, Somalia and Syria have arrived each day this week via Russia, Finland’s border guards have said, after fewer than one per day on average.

The accumulated number of arrivals since September stands at 280 asylum-seekers, the Border Guard Authority said.

Asylum-seekers arriving via Russia will from tomorrow be allowed to hand in their applications only at two northern border crossings, the government said.

Some 3,000 people use Finland’s south-eastern border crossings on a daily basis.

Orpo said he understood the closures would make everyday life more difficult for people allowed to travel between Finland and Russia.

Making clear Finland would reverse course if the asylum arrivals ended, Orpo said: “Our message is strong, we want this phenomenon to end so we can continue the border traffic like we have until now.”

More than 1,200 asylum-seekers, mostly Syrians, arrived in Norway from Russia during a sudden influx in 2015.

Finland, a country of 5.5mn people, is erecting a 200km fence on one section of its border with Russia that is due to be completed by 2026.





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GULF TIMES

## Justice for street vendors

A wave of evictions recently hit in Dakar's bustling Liberté 6 market, a roughly mile-long commercial hub that has served its community for more than 20 years. Hundreds of street vendors' stalls were bulldozed to make way for a new bus system. Authorities gave prior notice and an indemnity to help with the loss of business, but did not address the real problem: the lack of trading space.

Street vending is a legitimate economic activity that provides livelihoods for millions and accounts for a large share of urban employment in many cities across the Global South. Nearly 59,000 street vendors work in Dakar, accounting for 13.8% of total employment, while metropolitan Lima has roughly 450,000, comprising 8.8% of total employment. And these numbers are likely growing as the informal economy absorbs many of those left unemployed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is a livelihood that requires one resource above all: access to busy, pedestrian-friendly, well-connected, and affordable public space. But government authorities focus instead on "cleaning up" cities, which means clearing the streets of vendors. In their view, informal traders are a nuisance: they litter and clutter streets, obstruct urban mobility, and occupy precious space that could be used for modernisation or beautification projects, or sold to deep-pocketed developers and transformed into oases of leisure for urban elites.

The failure to provide street vendors with the space they need is short-sighted, at best (eviction campaigns never solve the "problem" – workers often have no choice but to set up shop again). In 2015, the International Labour Organisation recommended that subsistence workers be permitted to use public space as member states move from informal to formal economies. Yet time and again, governments have implemented narrow policies and legal frameworks that curtail access.

In fact, this pattern has become embedded in policymakers' strategies to formalise the informal economy. These strategies, focused

### Fair distribution of public space is crucial to recognising street vendors

mainly on getting informal workers to register and pay taxes, can provide important opportunities, including access to social protection, financing, and professional training. But they almost never recognise public space as a workplace, perpetuating the status quo. Instead, they build complex structures on shaky foundations – namely,

punitive legal and policy frameworks that criminalise informal trading and deny the most vulnerable access to economic activities. Proposals to relocate street vendors to enclosed markets are often empty promises – or implemented with little or no consultation with the affected individuals, resulting in poorly planned markets far from the city's commercial hubs and difficult to reach. Vendors either shun or quickly abandon them, returning instead to the streets from which they were removed.

Acutely aware of their precarity, street vendors usually have one goal: to trade without fear of harassment or eviction. "I know we are not allowed to work here, but I have a family to feed," said an informal worker selling mobile phones from a small kiosk in Guédiawaye, a municipality on the outskirts of Dakar, in an interview in 2022 conducted by my organisation, WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising). "All I want is to be able to work and make a living," added the man, who asked not to be named. Pointing to an empty patch of land across the street, he said, "With other vendors, we asked the municipality to authorise us to sell there, but we got no response."

The United Nations' New Urban Agenda, adopted in 2016, recognises that public space can function as a workplace reality and supports measures that allow for the "best possible commercial use of street-level floors, fostering both formal and informal local markets and commerce." A legal framework that guarantees informal vendors access to this space must underpin any formalisation strategy. In fact, it is a logical prerequisite for all other aspects of formalisation, like registration and taxation.

Of course, as a scarce resource, urban public space is highly sought after, and there are many competing interests. But its effective management requires input from workers in informal employment, as various initiatives have demonstrated. In India, for example, the 2014 Street Vendors Act established "town vending committees," consisting of government officials, sellers, and others, to make decisions about trading locations and monitor evictions and relocations. In the 1990s, the Lima municipality involved street vendors from the outset in its relocation planning process to ensure that they had proper access to infrastructure and customers. Between 2009 and 2011, the Dakar municipality started an effective dialogue with informal traders about relocation.

These examples are far from perfect. The inclusive planning process was discontinued in Lima (though it did result in successful relocations), as were the dialogues in Dakar, while India's Street Vendors Act is only partly implemented. But they show that the inclusive management of public space is possible. — Project Syndicate

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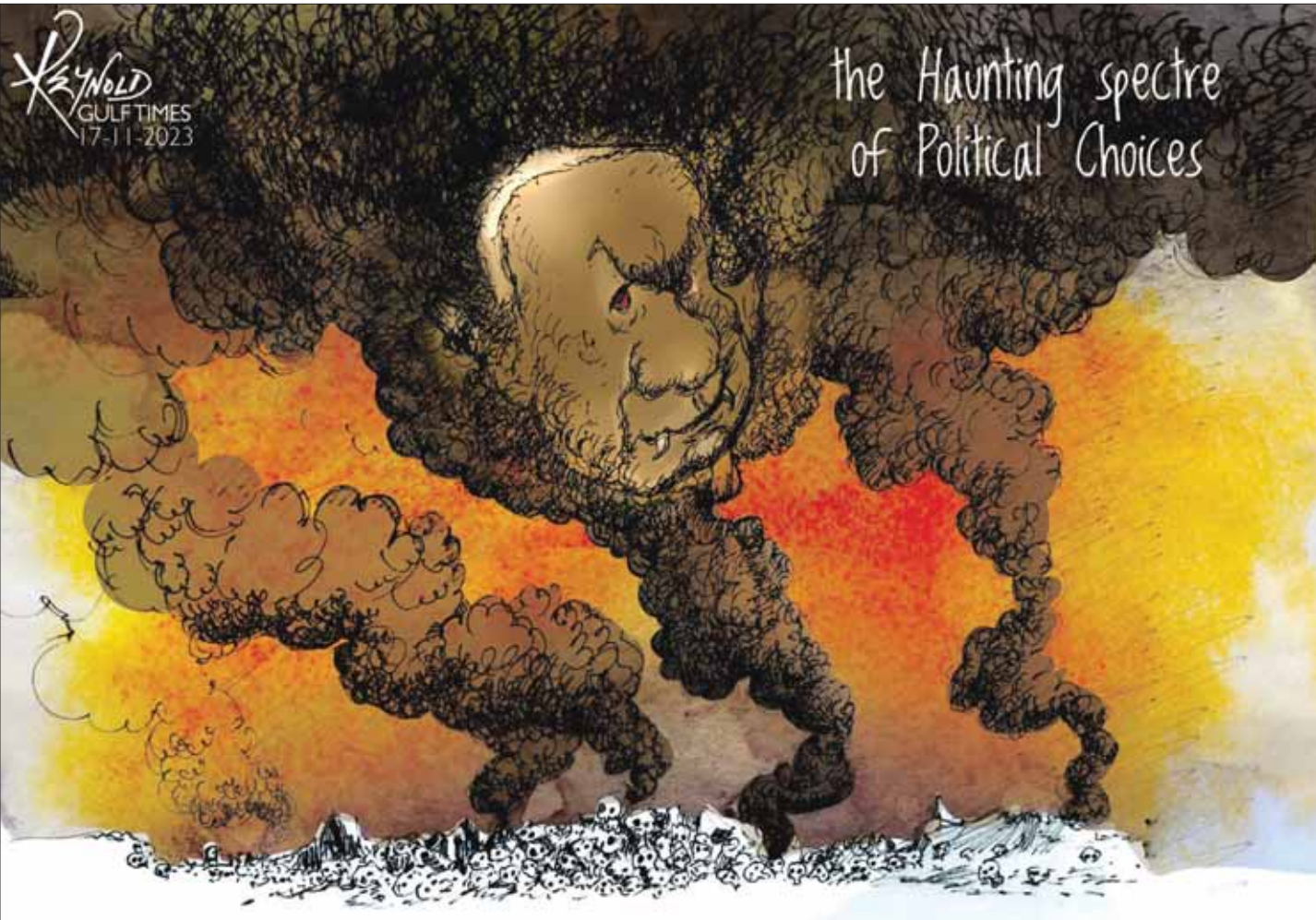
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## A case for energy realism at COP28

By Ana Palacio  
Madrid

At this year's upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, world leaders will, for the first time, officially take stock of global progress toward the goals set out in the Paris climate agreement in 2015.

The growing frequency of extreme-weather events makes this a decisive moment for climate action, and it is no secret that countries are falling short of their Paris commitments. The question is whether the assembled leaders – whose ranks will include Pope Francis – will be able to navigate the myriad complex challenges impeding progress.

One particularly thorny challenge is the "energy trilemma": the need to balance the reliability, affordability, and sustainability of supplies. While sustainability is obviously critical – which means rapidly reducing emissions in order to limit global warming to 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels, as set out in the Paris agreement – it cannot come at the expense of access. On the contrary, the world must increase access to energy: 775mn people worldwide currently lack electricity.

The energy trilemma lies at the root of key controversies surrounding climate negotiations. The United Arab Emirates has been using its position as one of the world's biggest oil exporters to persuade its fellow oil-rich countries to accelerate their emissions-reduction efforts. The Global Decarbonisation Alliance, an effort to prod major state oil companies to reduce their greenhouse-gas emissions, is expected to be unveiled at COP28.

We know that effective climate action will require the engagement of a wide array of stakeholders. For example, in order to cover the massive costs of climate action – it is estimated that Africa's Nationally Determined Contributions alone will cost nearly \$3tn – private finance is essential. That is why it bodes well that Wall Street heavyweights, led



by BlackRock CEO Larry Fink, are flocking to COP28, after staying away from last year's conference.

When it comes to climate action, engaging with Big Finance might seem less problematic than including Big Oil. But the energy trilemma implies otherwise. Though the International Energy Agency suggested last month that 2030 would mark the "beginning of the end of the fossil-fuel era," Opec rejected the IEA's forecasts, arguing that they were based on ideology, rather than facts.

The hydrocarbons exporters may well have a point. The IEA report paints an optimistic picture, predicting that global demand for coal, oil, and natural gas will peak by 2030, as electric-vehicle adoption accelerates and renewables gain a larger role in the global electricity mix. But as energy experts were quick to point out, these projections depend on several factors.

For starters, the IEA is betting that economic growth in China – the world's largest polluter – will slow enough to bring about a significant reduction in energy demand. Moreover, it assumes that governments will fulfil their climate-policy pledges, despite strong evidence to the contrary. In the United Kingdom and Germany, green measures have been rolled back, and in the United States, Republicans are working hard to dilute the clean-energy provisions contained in the Inflation Reduction Act.

There is another problem. The IEA focuses on when fossil-fuel demand will peak, but fails to consider adequately the shape of the consumption curve before and after. Energy demand may well plateau at its highest-ever level for some time, rather than quickly beginning to fall. That demand will have to be met, and the extent to which renewables will be able to cover it is not yet clear. Opec's warning against underinvesting in energy security thus should not be dismissed out of hand.

Allowing idealism and ideology to dominate discussion of the energy transition will lead only to incomplete or unrealistic solutions. Though use of renewables is growing, fossil fuels continue to account for a large share of the global energy mix. Moreover, there is no guarantee that energy demand will fall in the short or even medium term, not least because the developed world's burgeoning middle class has shown a strong and growing appetite for affordable energy.

Big Oil is well aware of this. Last month, US oil- and -gas giant Chevron announced its purchase of rival Hess for some \$53bn, and ExxonMobil acquired Pioneer Natural Resources for nearly \$60bn. While these acquisitions may have been partly motivated by the desire to evade buyback pressure from shareholders, they also represent a bet that firms will benefit from the ability to produce more oil and gas in the coming decades.

Phasing out fossil fuels is inevitable. But, as enticing as the IEA's projections might be, the precise trajectory and timeline are far from certain. If COP28 is to be a success, participants must recognise this and work together to find pragmatic and realistic solutions to the energy trilemma that enable real progress toward a global economy that is dynamic, sustainable, and inclusive. — Project Syndicate

● Ana Palacio, a former foreign minister of Spain and former senior vice-president and general counsel of the World Bank Group, is a visiting lecturer at Georgetown University.

## Argentina's fed-up farmers lean towards outsider Milei

AFP  
Saladillo

Argentine livestock salesman Pablo Cicare stands among a herd of Angus cows, source of some of the world's finest beef, that he dreams of being able to freely export after Sunday's presidential election.

Here in the pampas, Argentina's vast and fertile grasslands that stretch as far as the eye can see, farmers are fed up with excessive government controls and taxes that have long choked the agricultural industry.

"Business is very complicated. The government has trampled on farmers for so many years. Farmers need to be able to export freely," said Cicare.

He preferred not to say who he would vote for, but in Saladillo, 200km from the capital Buenos Aires, libertarian outsider Javier Milei led the first-round election. His rival, Economy Minister Sergio Massa, trailed in third place.

Nationally, Massa scored the most votes, despite overseeing annual inflation of 143%, and the runoff is expected to be tight.



Cattle is seen at a farm in Saladillo, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina. The countryside, the source of Argentina's wealth though with little political influence, goes to the presidential ballot uncomfortable. (AFP)

The dire state of the economy is the main concern of voters weary of repeated fiscal crises, inflation and currency controls.

To control inflation, the government limits the export of agricultural products and strictly controls the exchange rate at which producers can sell their goods abroad.

"I am going to vote for Javier Milei, because I agree with his ideas of more freedom... and letting the market regulate the economy," said 80-year-old dairy and wheat farmer Maximo Russ, near the city of Junin.

"If the entire system is liberalised,

exports are opened up, and Argentina opens up to the world ... logically there will be investment, and there will be much more production, and the country will grow much more."

Aside from its famed grass-fed beef, of which it is one of the world's biggest producers, Argentina is also a major exporter of soybean products and wheat.

Agriculture contributes up to 25 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

After the country's worst drought in a century saw agricultural exports plummet, leading to a shortfall of

\$20bn in revenue, the industry is expecting an excellent harvest in 2024.

Some fear this boom will lead to even more taxes if Massa wins.

While some in the industry are confident in their choice of the eccentric free-market outsider Milei, who has also said he will get rid of the central bank and dollarise the economy, others, like Cicare, are merely choosing "the lesser evil."

Political expert Carlos Germano said the agriculture sector found it "very difficult to trust the policies of the ruling party... what the agricultural sector is asking for is predictability."

Historian Roy Hora said Milei's policies provided some with the belief that there could be "a kind of light at the end of the tunnel."

However, the sparsely populated countryside does not have a huge impact on the outcome of the vote, he said.

And some in the industry are leaning towards Massa as the best option. "I am so sick of politics," said field manager Javier Sunblad, overlooking a field of wheat and 400 head of cattle.

"I don't like either of them. I like Milei the least."



# The meaning of the dual testimony of faith

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessing of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad (*sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*), and on his household and all of his Companions.

How many times have you heard or even said the following words? *Ash-hadu allaa ilaaha illallah wa ashadu anna Muhammadar Rasoolullah*. [I bear witness that there is no deity except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah]. Yes indeed, it is the two-part testimony or declaration of faith by which the one who utters it enters into the fold of Islam. More importantly however, is whether you as a listener or as the one who has made this declaration have really considered the meaning of this great declaration and its implications for the one who utters it?

## Importance of Understanding the Testimony

This testimony of faith is the foundation upon which Islam is based. The concept of life, the universe and man is diffused from it, and upon it is based the message of all Messengers (*‘alaihimus salaam*) beginning with Noah (*‘alaihi salaam*) and ending with Muhammad (*sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*), peace be upon them all. The first half of the testimony constitutes what is also known as *al-kalima*, which literally means ‘the word’ *Laa ilaaha illallah*.

Allah the Exalted says: We did not send a Messenger before you without revealing to him: ‘There is no God worthy of being worshipped except I, therefore worship Me’ [*Al-Anbiyaa* - 21:25]

## The Testimony Comprises Two Pillars: Denial and Affirmation

1. The first half of this first part *Laa ilaaha* – There is no *laaah* (deity) – denies everyone and everything other than Allah, the Exalted, the attribute of divinity. This is known as *nafy* (negation) in Arabic.

2. The second half of this declaration *il-lallah* (except Allah) affirms and restricts divinity to Allah alone. That is, the slave must believe that Allah is the only true God, and therefore must not dedicate any act of worship to other than Allah. This is known in Arabic as *ithbaat* (affirmation).



## Conditions of the First Half of the Declaration

Confessing the testimony of faith must be coupled with fulfilling its seven conditions. Every door has a key that unlocks it. These conditions may be analogised with the teeth of that key in order that it function properly. Though one may have indeed entered Islam upon uttering the words it can also be said that complete faith cannot be attained unless he fully understands the implications of his testimony.

1. Knowledge which negates Ignorance. Allah states: So know [O Muhammad (*sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*), Peace be upon him] that *La ilaaha Illa-Allah*. (There is no God but Allah). [Q 47:19]. The more a believer knows about Allah and His Deen the less likely is he to fall prey to the traps of Satan and more likely to benefit himself and others.

2. Certainty which negates Doubt. Only those are the believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger (*sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*), and afterward doubt not but strive with their wealth and their lives in the Cause of Allah. They are the truthful. [*Al-Hujuraat* - 49:15]. The declaration

should be made with the fullest conviction and confidence that Allah is One and Alone and Islam is indeed the true religion.

3. Sincerity and purity of intent which negates *Shirk*. Surely the religion (i.e. worship and obedience) is for Allah only. [*Az-Zumar* - 39:3]. No deed will be accepted if it is not done with pure intent and aim to please Allah.

4. Truthfulness which negates hypocrisy. Do people think that they will be left alone because they say ‘We believe’ and will not be tested? And we indeed tested those who were before them. And Allah will certainly make known those who are true and will certainly make known those who are liars. [*Al-Ankabut* - 29:2,3]. It is very simple for one to feign belief but it is Allah who indeed knows the inner truthfulness of all who claim to believe in Him.

5. Love and devotion which negates disdain of Allah’s religion. And to mankind are some who take some (associates for worship) besides Allah as rivals; they love them as they love Allah. But those who believe love Allah more (than anything else). [*Al-Baqarah* - 2:165]. Loving Allah necessitates that the believer put full trust in him and loves all that he learns of what Al-

lah has commanded and forbidden. Therefore the true believer loves each and every aspect of Islam and he loves those others who likewise do so.

6. Submission which negates Disobedience. And turn in repentance to your Lord and submit to Him in Islam. [*Az-Zumar* 39:54]. To willfully disobey when Allah’s commands have been made clear is to belie the declaration of faith.

7. Acceptance which negates Rejection or Denial. Truly when it was said to them: ‘There is no God except Allah’, they puffed themselves up with pride (i.e. denied it). And (they) said : ‘Are we going to abandon our gods for the sake of a mad poet? [*As-Saffaat* 37:35-36]. There can be nothing but full acceptance of the truth of the declaration. Partial acceptance is like no acceptance at all.

## The Second Half of the Testimony: Muhammadan Rasoolullah

This is the declaration that “Muhammad (*sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) is the Messenger of Allah”. This second part of the testimony of faith is no less important than the first. In fact. It is impossible for one to be a true believer in the first part

without also believing in the second. It necessitates belief in the following:

1. Total submission to Muhammad (*sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) in whatever he ordered. Allah states: But no, by your Lord, they can have no faith, until they make you judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions and accept them with full submission. [Q4:65] and He who obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah [Q4:80]

2 . Avoiding what he (*sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) forbade. And whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad), gives you, take it and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it). [*Al-Hashr* 59:7].

3. Believing in all those matters he informed us about. The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord and so do the believers [Q 2:285]

4. Loving the Messenger (*sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*). The Prophet has said about himself None of you truly believes until I am more beloved to him than his parents [lit. father], his children [lit. son] and all of mankind. [Al-Bukhari]

## A Sobering Thought

Allah states: O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness and a bringer of glad tidings and a Warner. And as one who invites to Allah (i.e, to worship Him Alone) by His Leave and as a Lamp spreading Light (through your instructions). [*Al-Ahzaab* - 33:45, 46]

In an age when there is actually controversy over whether or not a Muslim must actually obey Muhammad (*sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) and adhere to his way, no true Muslim should remain ignorant of the great meanings contained within the two-part testimony by which one joins this great Deen of Islam. It may well be true as is said by some “There are many who have been Muslims for all of their lives who are really in need of taking the *Shahaadat* all over again.” The Prophet Muhammad (*sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) is the one who brought us Islam in its final form and exemplified it in his speech and character. Though him (*sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) Allah has spread His light all over this earth and surely in such a dark place as the world can at times be, there is nothing more needed than a beacon to show us the way.

# Allah’s Command to people to repent for what they did

Allah the Almighty, said: Allah accepts only the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and foolishness and repent soon afterwards. [4:17]

Allah says: Then, verily! Your Lord, for those who do evil in ignorance and afterward repent and do righteous deeds, verily, your Lord thereafter, (to such) is Oft -Forgiving, Most Merciful. [16:119]

Thus although the companions and those who followed them say: “Each disobedient person is an ignorant person,” as has been explained in another place, this saying includes those who know it was unlawful as well.

This is a proof that one is a doer of an evil deed, even though he did not hear the address that clarifies the prohibited action. If he repents of it, Allah the Almighty forgives him and has mercy on him. He does not deserve punishment except after the address has been conveyed and the proof established.

If repentance and asking for forgiveness are for abandoning obligations, and for the action which one commits not knowing it is a sin while committing it, then this clarifies the many things that repentance and seeking forgiveness would cover. When repentance and asking for forgiveness are mentioned before many people, they recall the disgraceful deeds they have done. Common knowledge tells them that such acts are disgraceful, like immoral behavior and open oppression.

As for following religion without knowing it is sinful - with the exception of those who are aware of their falsehood like the religions (creeds) of the polytheists, and the distorted beliefs of the people of the Book - then repentance and asking for forgiveness in such cases is obligatory, even though their followers think that they follow guidance. The same applies to the innovators.

This is why a group of predecessors - Ath-Thawri is one of them - said: Innovation is dearer to Iblis than disobedience. Because one repents from the act of disobedience and it is liable to be forgiven; while the innovator does not repent.

This is the meaning of what has been narrated by a group: Allah the Almighty has withheld repentance from each innovator. Meaning that the innovator will not repent for it, because he thinks that he is following guidance. But if he repents, Allah the Almighty accepts his repentance as He accepts the repentance of the disbeliever.

Whoever says that Allah will not accept the repentance of an innovator at all, he is severely mistaken. As for what is said that: Allah the Almighty does not allow the innovator to repent. It means that as long as he adheres to what he innovated and sees it as good, then he does not repent from it (thinking that he is guided). But if Allah, the Almighty, shows him its evil, (and he repented from it), Allah, the Almighty will accept his repentance in the same way as when the disbeliever sees that he is in error. It is well



known that many of those who were innovating in the religion of Allah the Almighty came to know that they were in manifest error and repented from it, and Allah accepted their repentance. None knows their true number but Allah.

When Ibn Abbaas (*radiallahu ‘anhu*) went to the Khawaarij to debate with them, about half or more of them repented. Such a portion of people who do not know the evil they commit represent a large number of people of the Qiblah, and the number is even greater among other people.

So there are a great many cases of people abandoning what is obligatory, while

they do not know that it is obligatory. Then when one comes to know that what he abandoned was something good, part of faith and Tawheed, that it is something for which he was commanded to repent and ask for forgiveness, as he repents for what he had done of evil deeds, (he would repent and ask for forgiveness).

Thus, the repentant repents for what he had abandoned, missed, and neglected of the rights of Allah, the Almighty, just as he repents from what he committed of evil deeds; even if he committed this or abandoned that before the Message reached him. Once the Message reaches him, punishment for abandoning and committing becomes due. As for him being a doer of blameworthy deeds, and abandoning good deeds for which one would be blameworthy, he is still considered repentant as previously clarified; where we mentioned the two views, the view of those who negated the blame and punishment and the view of those who affirmed both the blame and the punishment.

If it is said: “If it is not punishable, it is not disgraceful.” Then the reply can be from two views.

1. It is a cause for punishment, but this depends upon a condition, and that condition is the proof. Allah, the Almighty says: And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, and He saved you from it. [3:103]

If He did not rescue them they would have fallen. Whoever stands at the brink of the

fire, then his destruction depends upon falling into it. The case differs if one is far from the brink, because he is far away from perishing. Thus, those people were close to destruction and torment.

2. They are blameworthy, deficient, and hold a lower position because of this. If it is preordained for them not to be punished, they do not deserve what the safe person deserves of dignity and reward. This is a good punishment in the form of depriving them of good, and it is one of the two forms of punishment.

It is known that everyone who misses a desirable action, misses its reward; but there is a difference between what he misses because he could not obtain it, and what he neglects which he already had. This falls under the category of the sins for which one is not punished.

As for the one whom a Messenger was not sent to during his life, there are some narrations that Messengers will be sent to them at the gathering places on the Day of Judgment, as explained elsewhere.

People disputed about obligation and prohibition. Can these be realised without punishment for abandonment?

Here are the two views:

1. It cannot be achieved; since if it is not punished for, it is as if it were allowed.
2. It can be achieved; since one can be blamed even though he is not punished.

[Excerpted from the book *Seeking Forgiveness* by Taqiuddin Ahmed ‘Abdul-Halim]

# Hope – the most sublime rank for the followers

The believers’ relationship with their Lord is characterised both by fear and hope, such that the former deters them from sins and disobedience, whereas the latter drives them towards good deeds.

Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, said:

“Hoping for the reward of Allah is one of the most supreme and honourable ranks of one who pursues the right path. Allah The Almighty praises those [who do that], when He Says (what means): {There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.} [Qur’an 33:21] It was also narrated in a *Hadith Quds*i, that Allah The Almighty Says: ‘O son of Adam, If you supplicate to Me, expecting My forgiveness, I will forgive you however great or many your sins may be’ When a person has hope, it means that he or she is bound and attached to these names of his or her Lord: ‘The Benevolent, The Beneficent’ The more one knows Allah The Almighty, His names, attributes and the dominance of His mercy over His wrath, the more his or her hope increases [in Him]. Had it not been for hope, the servitude of the heart and organs [to Allah] would have ceased, and monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, where the name of Allah is frequently mentioned, would have been demolished. If not for the spirit of hope,

[our] limbs would not have performed acts of obedience, and neither would the ships of good deeds have sailed in the seas of will without its pleasant breeze.”

Similarly, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “If a believer [truly] knew of the punishment of Allah, no one would expect His Paradise. Equally, were a disbeliever to know of the [actual] mercy of Allah, none would despair of His Paradise.” ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ood, may Allah be pleased with him, remarked, “The most encouraging verse in the Qur’an is in the Chapter *Az-Zumar* (The Groups); Allah The Almighty Says (what means), {Say, “O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.”} [Qur’an 39:53]

One of those who visited Maalik ibn Anas, may Allah have mercy upon him, during the night in which he died, asked him, “O Abu ‘Abdullah, how do you find yourself?” He, may Allah have mercy upon him, answered, “I do not know what to say to you except that you will soon see [aspects] of the clemency of Allah that you have never expected.”

Glory be to Allah The Almighty! If those who turn away from Him only know how He waits for their return and how Merciful He is to them, they will long for Him enormously. Indeed, if this is His will towards such people, how will He be to those who draw near to Him? ‘Abdul-

lah ibn al-Mubaarak approached Sufyaan Ath-Thawri, may Allah have mercy upon them both, on the night of [standing in] ‘Arafah, and found him kneeling [in prayer], as his eyes overflowed with tears; he asked, “Who is the worst person in this gathering [in the plains of ‘Arafah]?” Sufyaan Ath-Thawri, may Allah have mercy upon him, replied: “Whoever thinks that Allah will not forgive their sins [i.e., of the people who are present].”

On a similar night, Al-Fudhayl ibn ‘Iyadh, may Allah have mercy upon him, observed people’s glorification [of Allah The Almighty] and their crying, so he asked those around him: “If those people went to a man and requested one-sixth of a dirham from him, would he let them return empty-handed?” When they replied in the negative, he commented: “By Allah, pardoning is easier for Allah than [that].” Therefore, I implore Allah The Almighty, seeking His forgiveness, knowing fully that He absolves and forgives; even if people’s sins are great, they are minor in comparison to His mercy.

Hence, a slave should have much hope in Him, especially when he or she is on the verge of death. Allah The Almighty Says, as narrated in a Hadith: “I am [to him or her] as My slave thinks of Me.” That is why, perhaps, when Waathilah ibn Al-Asqa’ may Allah be pleased with him, went to see Yazeed ibn al-Aswad, may Allah have mercy upon him, as he lay dying, he asked him, “What is your expectation about Allah?”

The latter replied: “My sins have brought me to the brink of ruin, but I hope for the mercy of Allah.” So, Waathilah, may Allah be pleased with him, [happily] exclaimed “Allah is The Greatest”, and then said, “I heard the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, say: ‘Allah The Almighty Says: ‘I am as My slave thinks of Me, so let him think of Me what he wants.’” For the same reason, when Sulaymaan At-Taymi, may Allah have mercy upon him, was dying, he instructed his son: “O Mu’tamir, talk to me about exemptions [in Islam], so that I may meet Allah while having good expectations of Him.”

## Hope prompts one to do good deeds

It is witnessed as a reality in life that many neglect good deeds and dare to commit evil and sins, claiming that they trust in the mercy and forgiveness of Allah The Almighty. Undoubtedly, this is a misunderstanding of the true meaning of hope. The words of Al-Hasan al-Basri, may Allah have mercy upon him, are applicable to such people mentioned above; he says: “There are people whose confidence in forgiveness diverts them from doing what is moral, so much so that they die with no virtues. They proclaim: ‘we have good expectation of Allah! Surely, they are liars, for if they had hope [in Him], they would have done good [to support their claim]”

Allah The Almighty is indeed the most Forgiving, Ever Merciful; however, I would

like to draw your attention, dear reader, to the subtle meaning embedded in the verse (which means): [Indeed, those who have believed and those who have emigrated and fought in the cause of Allah - those expect the mercy of Allah. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.} [Qur’an 2:218]. Contemplate how this verse alludes to these people hoping for the mercy of Allah The Almighty alongside doing those great noble deeds.

Dear Muslim, let us, then, do good and repent from our sins and evil which we have committed. Let us repeat the words of Mahmood al-Warraaq, may Allah have mercy upon him: “O Allah, I have much hope in Your forgiveness and You [alone] manage my affairs. I have concealed my secrets from my relatives and others; You are the only One to Whom I disclose them as I am confident that You will veil them. O Allah! Do not fail me on the Day of Resurrection when all hidden matters will be exposed. O Allah, do not reveal my secrets before people; Your protection will provide me with an argument [for my forgiveness], even though I have no basis for contention or a real excuse.”

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>





Snapshots from the inauguration ceremony yesterday.

# Angola’s pavilion opens

Angola's pavilion was inaugurated at Expo 2023 Doha in the presence of Angolan ambassador Antonia Coelho Ramos d'Cruz, Expo 2023 Doha commissioner-general Bader al-Dafa, a number of heads of diplomatic missions and ambassadors accredited to the state, those interested in environmental affairs, and members of the Angolan community in Qatar.

The pavilion offers visitors a glimpse into Angola's heritage through artistic performances.

Guests took a guided tour throughout the pavilion, which featured Angola's national food, inviting visitors to savour

the flavours that define the country's culinary identity. Angolan handicraft and artefacts were also presented. Angola's pavilion welcomed guests with souvenirs and an introduction to the country's cultures and its key crops. Ramos d'Cruz expressed his happiness at the opening of his country's pavilion at the expo, and praised the support from Expo 2023 Doha's organising committee.

He said that Angola has always shown interest in participating in major international events of this kind, as such events contribute to highlighting the potential of the resource-rich country. – QNA



# Ethiopia’s pavilion displays mixture of culture, heritage and traditions



Ethiopia's pavilion at Expo 2023 Doha.



Ethiopia's pavilion in the International Zone at the International Horticultural Expo 2023 Doha welcomes visitors to experience its artistic blend of authenticity, cultural heritage, and customs and traditions of 80 ethnic groups living in Ethiopia.

The pavilion showcases the development of its natural resources.

The pavilion also provides ideas about potential investment opportunities in Ethiopia in areas that include textiles, leather goods, pharmaceuticals, processing agricultural products, mining, communications, information technology and tourism, as well as new and emerging fields like transportation, railways, health, consulting, advertising services and e-commerce.

Visitors to the Ethiopian pavilion will be able to watch the tradition of coffee preparation, starting from raw coffee beans.

They can see the process of growing and harvesting coffee, which is the favourite drink of Ethiopians.

The pavilion also displays the most prominent products that distinguish the country, such as handicraft using natural materials and popular traditional clothing in many colours.

Certain types of flowers that Ethiopia is known for will be showcased in the pavilion. – QNA

## Winter herald



Rain clouds hover above Doha's West Bay skyline as seen from Old Doha Port's Mina District yesterday morning. **PICTURE:** Rizwan Rehmat

## More rain expected today



Numerous parts of Qatar received moderate to heavy rain yesterday as seen in these pictures from Doha, with more forecast today, according to the Met office. Thundery rain associated with strong wind and poor horizontal visibility are forecast today, both inshore and offshore. The offshore warning also adds high sea. Inshore the wind will be southwesterly-northwesterly 8-18 knots, gusting to 40kt with thundery rain, whereas offshore, the wind will be mainly northwesterly 8-18kt, gusting to 45kt at first with thundery rain. The expected temperatures today are a minimum and maximum in the range of 20°-27° Celsius and 27C-28C, respectively. Yesterday's minimum and maximum temperatures were in the 23C-26C and 28C-31C range, respectively.

**PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam