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Amir receives phone calls from Bahraini king, US president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received yesterday a phone call from his brother King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifah of the kingdom of Bahrain. During the phone call, they discussed bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and ways to support and develop them, in addition to discussing regional and international developments of common concern, especially current developments in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories.

- His Highness the Amir also received a phone call from US President Joe Biden. During the call, they discussed the latest developments in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories. They also discussed the strategic relations between the two countries and means of boosting and developing them, in addition to regional and international developments. (QNA)

Qatar Gaza committee chief denounces Israeli allegations



of Gaza, is about 3km from Al-Shifa Medical Complex, stressing that the Israeli occupation's claims in this regard are completely false. (QNA)

Bahrain calls for 'hostage trade'

The Bahraini crown prince yesterday called for a "hostage trade" between Hamas and Israel in order to achieve a break in hostilities that he said could lead to an end to the war on Gaza. Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifah also said that security would not be realised without a two-state solution, in which he described the United States as "indispensable" in achieving. "It is a time for straight talking," he said, urging Hamas to release Israeli women and children

held hostage in Gaza and for Israel in exchange to release from its prisons Palestinian women and children, who he described as non-combatants. Prince Salman, speaking at the IISS Manama Dialogue, also called for Palestinian elections, once the war ends, that would lead to a "just and lasting peace" that he described as the establishment of an Palestinian state which he said would also lead to security and stability for Israel. (Reuters)

Qatar, Bahrain discuss ways to strengthen ties

● Bahraini crown prince meets PM

QNA
Manama

Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the sisterly kingdom of Bahrain Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifah received yesterday at Al-Qudaibiya Palace in Manama his brother, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani.

They discussed the level of co-operation that was reached between the State of Qatar and the kingdom of Bahrain, as well as ways to strengthen and develop it at all levels.

The crown prince and prime minister expressed, during the meeting, his best wishes for Qatar for continued progress and development, noting the fraternal relations that unite the two countries and peoples.

He pointed out the importance of continuing to strengthen these relations towards greater levels that contribute to achieving shared aspirations and reflects the growth and prosperity of the two brotherly countries and peoples.

The meeting dealt with discussing the Qatar-Bahrain Bridge project, and the concerned authorities in both countries were directed to complete the plans and begin implementing the project.

The two sides also discussed a number of issues of joint interest, and the latest regional and international developments, including developments in the situation in the Gaza Strip, where they stressed the need to immediately stop the war in Gaza and protect civilians, and that the only way to stability in the region is to implement the decisions of international legitimacy to establish an independent Palestinian state on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

For his part, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed his thanks and appreciation to the crown prince and prime minister for the interest he attaches to developing the relations that bring together the two

King of Bahrain receives prime minister



King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifah of the sisterly Kingdom of Bahrain received yesterday at Al-Safriyah Palace in Manama HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, who paid an official visit to Bahrain. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs conveyed, during the meeting, the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the king of Bahrain,

and His Highness's wishes to the Bahraini people for further progress and prosperity. For his part, the king of Bahrain entrusted HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs with his greetings to His Highness the Amir and his wishes for the Qatari people further development and prosperity. The meeting dealt with discussing bilateral relations and the means to enhance them in all fields. (QNA) Page 2



Bahraini Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifah receiving HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani in Manama yesterday.

brotherly countries and peoples. The crown prince and prime minister held a luncheon banquet in honour of HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. (QNA) Page 2

UN: starvation imminent in Gaza, no let-up in Israeli assault

● Gaza fatalities rise to above 12,000, more than 5,000 children dead

UN aid deliveries to Gaza were suspended yesterday due to shortages of fuel and a communications shut down, deepening the misery of thousands of hungry and homeless Palestinians as Israel continued its assault on Gaza.

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) said civilians faced the "immediate possibility of starvation" due to the lack of food supplies.

International officials say a humanitarian crisis for the 2.3mn residents of Gaza is entering a new, more dire phase as war enters its seventh week.

Since Oct 7, Israel has bombed much of Gaza to rubble, ordered the depopulation of the entire northern half of the enclave and made around two-thirds of Gazans homeless.

Gaza authorities say more than 12,000 people are confirmed dead, 5,000 of them children, with many others trapped under rubble.

The Israeli army said it had found the bodies of two hostages in buildings near, though not inside, the hospital grounds.

Israel has long maintained that the hospital sat above a vast

underground bunker housing a Hamas command headquarters. Hospital staff say this is false and that Israel's findings there have so far established no such thing.

Hamas denies using hospitals for military purposes. It says some hostages have received treatment at medical centres but they have not been held inside them.

Al-Shifa staff said a premature baby died at the hospital yesterday, the first baby to die there in the two days since Israeli forces entered. Three had died in the previous days while the hospital was surrounded.

Five babies were in a very serious condition, Al-Shifa hospital compound director Mohamed Abu Salmiya told Al Jazeera.

"We are trying to keep them alive, wrapping them in cellophane, putting bottles of hot water near them to keep them alive, our attempts are what is keeping them alive." Communication with outside organisations had been cut and pleas to evacuate those in most desperate condition had gone unanswered, he said.

"There is nothing in the hospital except more dead bodies, there isn't any kind of life necessities in

the hospital, no electricity, no water, no oxygen, no food. The Israeli army is wandering around freely in the hospital. The hospital is besieged from everywhere, tanks surround us from everywhere." The last hospital fully functioning in the northern half of Gaza, Al-Ahli, was forced to close its surgery department after it ran out of anaesthetics. British-Palestinian surgeon Ghassan Abu Sitta, who escaped on foot to the south, told Reuters he had decided to leave because he was now powerless to help patients.

"It has been a living nightmare — leaving 500 wounded knowing that there's nothing left for you to be able to do for them, it's just the most heartbreaking thing I ever had to do," Abu Sitta said by phone.

With the war about to enter its seventh week, there was no sign of any let-up despite international calls for a ceasefire or at least for humanitarian pauses.

The UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), quoting Palestinian data, said Israeli attacks had destroyed or damaged at least 45% of Gaza's housing units. Page 7

QNCC aims to become 'phygital' provider of events

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) aims to expand its scope of activities to event organising and digital activities, a top official told *Gulf Times* in an exclusive interview.

"Our idea is to expand the activities from a venue provider to event organiser and digital activities," explained QNCC general manager Robert Tripoli.

"We are very excited about next year as we have signed several agreements in this regard. Digital activities are more and more an important part with the events

industry. We aim to be a 360 degree event provider for our customers and not purely a venue provider," he said.

QNCC's strategy is to become a complete player within the events industry in the country leading to the realisation of the Qatar National Vision 2030 and help the country increase the footfalls from abroad.

"We are in talks with some of the partners to bring some international events here. We would love sooner than later to become a 'phygital' provider of events," Tripoli stated. Phygital (physical plus digital) is a marketing term that describes blending digital experiences with physical ones.



QNCC general manager Robert Tripoli speaks to *Gulf Times*. PICTURE: Thajudheen

The official noted that QNCC will wrap up 2023 with 114 major events. "Towards the end of last year we were hosting the international media centre for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Then we had several major events like the UN Least Developed Countries Congress among others. Towards the end of this month we will host WISE (World Innovation Summit for Education) and GPCA (Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association) Forum in December. We have already reached over 90% of the pre-Covid levels."

Tripoli said that QNCC is the main venue for academic and professional congresses as well as for concerts in

Qatar. Relating to his experience as the head of the major convention centre in Milan which is about 45km away from the city centre, he said that the location of QNCC is a great advantage.

"The location is a great advantage for QNCC because with all the connectivity to the place, distance is not an obstacle for people to reach here. There are multiple options and lot of parking spaces for the visitors. All in all, it is at a great location for everyone to reach. Moreover we are in the centre of the Education City and it is most ideal place for all the academic, health and professional conferences," added Tripoli.



PM arrives in Manama



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani arrived yesterday in Manama on an official visit to Bahrain. HE Sheikh Mohamed was welcomed upon his arrival at Sakhr Air Base by Governor of the Southern Governorate Sheikh Khalifah bin Ali al-Khalifah and Foreign Minister Dr Abdulatif bin Rashid al-Zayani. (QNA)



Bahraini king meets PM



King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifah of Bahrain meeting in Manama yesterday with HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani.

MoFA secretary-general participates in opening ceremony of Manama Dialogue

HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi participated yesterday in the opening ceremony of the 19th edition of the Manama Dialogue, which is hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Manama from Nov 17-19. In its current edition, the dialogue focuses on developments and crises in the Middle East region, diplomatic efforts to reduce escalation, and the regional role in light of international competition. (QNA)



Over 170 vital entities to take part in National Cyber Drill

QNA
Doha

Head of National Cyber Initiatives Assurance Department at the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) Mohamed Murshid al-Mannai revealed that the National Cyber Drill for the current year under the title “Secure Your Data” will be held from Nov 20-29, with the participation of about 170 vital entities in Qatar. In an exclusive interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Mannai said that National Cyber Drill began as a pioneering initiative in 2013 and have become an annual national drill since then. He explained that the cybersecurity drill, with its core exercises, serves as an important administrative tool aimed at identifying and improving gaps, as well as determining the effectiveness of response and recovery strategies, to minimise the impact on society, economy and the sustainability of national cybersecurity stability. The head of National Cyber Initiatives Assurance Department



Head of National Cyber Initiatives Assurance Department Mohamed Murshid al-Mannai speaking to QNA.

emphasised that cybersecurity drills aim to measure efficiency of participating institutions to address cybersecurity risks from the perspective of the readiness of the human, technological, and operational elements. He noted that cyber drills exercises are excellent tools for evaluating adopted plans and programs in terms of comprehensiveness, interconnection, and accuracy. He underlined that the cyber drill also aims to raise awareness among institutions and participants about this year's theme, enhancing their compliance with laws related to data privacy and classification, and ensuring the practical implementation of these laws.

Al-Mannai explained that the basic component of the drill is the “scenario”, so the strength and modernity of the scenario is reflected in raising the level of awareness of the dangers of cyber threats, as well as keeping the scenario abreast of the latest hacks and methods that hackers follow in

general. He emphasised the importance of the cyber drill in ensuring the ability of the participating entity or institution to protect its assets from being hacked, and the extent to which its procedures followed in confronting recent hacks are compatible with their various scenarios, indicating that continuing the cyber drills contributes to building permanent knowledge and awareness of cybersecurity incidents and their mechanisms. Head of National Cyber Initiatives Assurance Department reviewed NCSA's various efforts and roles in confronting cybersecurity threats, pointing out that the agency continuously shares threat bulletins, which include hacking methods, how to be exposed, and the protection mechanism, in addition to vulnerability bulletins that aim to inform all entities of the spread of any new vulnerability, and to ensure that each entity is able to protect its data from it. He also stressed the importance of NCSA's proactive work to raise general awareness about data protection and privacy, providing principles, guidance, and tools to

assist institutions in facing potential risks, noting that the agency is conducting various training workshops, lectures, and consultations in collaboration with various entities and institutions. Al-Mannai affirmed that achieving cybersecurity relies on both the National Cyber Security Agency and the entities considered partners in securing Qatar's cyberspace, adding that the agency's duty is to assist various institutions and empower them to protect themselves through appropriate technology, proper procedures, and qualified personnel, contributing positively to the ability of institutions to safeguard their assets. He explained one of the key outcomes of the cybersecurity drill is the presentation of an analytical report revealing the participating team's ability to deal with the threat outlined in the scenario, and identify its position within the same sector at the national level, in addition to identify weaknesses and provide necessary suggestions to overcome them along with an implementation mechanism.

In Brief

Customs seizes hashish from postal parcel

The Air Cargo Customs Department has thwarted an attempt to smuggle 235gm of hashish to Qatar. According to a post by the General Authority of Customs (GAC) on its official X account, the banned narcotic substance was found hidden in a postal consignment.

Falcon contest rescheduled

Al Gannas Qatari Society has announced that the competitions scheduled yesterday (Friday) at the start of the Fifth Ras Laffan Falcons Championship (2023) have been postponed due to the heavy rains on Thursday. Accordingly, all the competitions of the championship will begin today (Saturday) and continue until November 25, instead of November 23. This competition is considered one of the most important championships for falconers and includes two separate events for the young falconers and the promising falconers to engage the youngsters in the traditional game.

Qatari dad-daughter artist duo blend tradition and technology

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Qatar Tourism's ‘Voices of Qatar’ provides a glimpse of the shared artistic journey of renowned Qatari artist Yousef Ahmad and his daughter, artist/designer Maryam al-Homaid, blending traditional and digital mediums to create a seamless link between the past and the present. In a YouTube series, al-Homaid talks about how her dad's exploration of the past inspires her, while she stays focused on the changing present: “Both dad and I are inspired by our context. For him, going to the past and recalling all these memories; for me, talking about the present moment and how it transforms and changes every day.” The father-daughter duo highlights their unique perspectives in the creative process where al-Homaid reminisces about spending her childhood in her father's studio. “Ever since I was young, I used to spend a lot of time in my dad's studio, dominant with oil and paint smell, watch my father paint,” she said.



Al-Homaid shares her fondness for merging digital and physical mediums.

Ahmad, on the other hand, describes his studio as his paradise, detailing how the elements of the Qatari landscape – the desert, clear skies, and calm sea – fuel his creativity. This, he pointed out, allows him to present Qatar to the world through his drawings and paintings. According to QM, Ahmad's exploration of shapes and structures

has transformed over the years, with a notable shift to working on paper in the 1980s. Motivated by various paper types from different locations, he began crafting his paper two decades ago, utilising Qatari palm trees. This artistic journey symbolises his deep bond with the Qatari land, reflecting his roots and personal memories. His creations showcase the timeless beauty

of handmade paper. Al-Homaid, pushing boundaries in the contemporary art scene, stresses her fondness for merging digital and physical mediums: “I like to mix digital mediums with physical mediums. But for me, the most important thing is to deliver and document the change that's happening in Qatar.” She said that her innovative approach extends to designing rugs and textiles, offering a dynamic interpretation of Qatar's evolving landscape. Ahmad, a pioneer in the Qatar art scene and among the first generation of Qatari artists to pursue education abroad, believes in continuous experimentation and the lasting connection between the artist and his environment. “I believe that the artist keeps experimenting till his last breath: tied to his homeland, tied to his



Ahmad believes in continuous experimentation and the lasting connection between the artist and his environment. (Screengrab from ‘Voices of Qatar’ YouTube video)

place, and tied to his environment. True art lives from generation to generation,” said the artist. Al-Homaid echoes her father's sentiment, acknowledging the booming and exciting contemporary art scene in Qatar. “It's (Qatar) a global arts centre but my dad is the original. I feel like I am carrying his legacy in that way and inspiring the next generation to, kind of, carry on with artistic expression,” she said.

QU's College of Pharmacy awarded accreditation from CCAPP

The College of Pharmacy at Qatar University (QU) has received accreditation certificates from the Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs (CCAPP) for both its Bachelor's Program and Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) Program.

The College welcomed a medical team led by Dr Wayne Hindmarch, CEO of the Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs (CCAPP), and Dean Emeritus for the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Toronto, for a momentous occasion.

During this visit, Dr Hindmarch and his distinguished team formally presented accreditation certificates from CCAPP for both the Bachelor's Program and the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) Program at QU's College of Pharmacy. The event was attended by Prof Mohamed Izham, Dean of the College of Pharmacy at QU, VIPs from the Health Cluster, and faculty and administrators from the College.

The significance of this presentation lies in the College of Pharmacy at QU becoming the inaugural international program to receive full accreditation status from CCAPP in Canada. These accreditation certificates underscore the College's steadfast dedication to



upholding the highest educational standards and excellence in pharmaceutical disciplines.

More than a mere acknowledgment, this event celebrates the relentless dedication and hard work of the faculty, staff, and students at the College of Pharmacy. Accreditation from esteemed institutions like CCAPP not only validates the exceptional quality of the programs offered but also solidifies the College's position as a frontrunner in pharmaceutical education within the region. (QNA)



QU inaugurates new student facility for Honors Program

QNA
Doha

Qatar University (QU) unveiled its latest facility dedicated to male students enrolled in the Honors Program. The inauguration ceremony witnessed the presence of Vice-President for Academic Affairs Prof Ibrahim al-Kaabi, Director of the Honors Program Dr Yousri al-Marzouki and members of the Honors Program Council, faculty and programme students.

Situated within the College of Law building, the new facility encompasses the "Honors' Community Lounge," alongside administrative and service offices tailored to support the Honors Program. Additionally, it houses faculty offices, providing a conducive environment to efficiently accomplish the programme's objectives and activities.

Al-Kaabi emphasised the significance of inaugurating this facility, stating that the establishment of this facility aligns with the vision of the Honors Program under the umbrella of the Deanship of General Studies.

This program stands as a cornerstone in QU, fostering educational excellence in line with the university's strategy for educational enhancement.

He further emphasised the university's commitment, saying that the Deanship of General Studies



took this initiative to improve and launch the development plan that aligns with the university vision as well as Qatar National Vision 2030. The new facility is expected to catalyse a qualitative transformation in students' experiences, providing a positive academic environment that nurtures skills of mastery, innovation and lifelong learning. It is poised to enhance their awareness of local and international issues, foster social responsibility, and cultivate critical and entrepreneurial thinking, al-Kaabi explained.

Al-Marzouki highlighted the program's evolution, stating that since its inception in 2009 with just four students, the Honors Program stands today as a thriving educational community within the university, accommodating approximately 100 students each semester across various disciplines. Presently, the program hosts around

470 students. Additionally, it holds membership in the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC).

He emphasised the program's aim to provide talented students with a rich academic experience, with a focus on developing skills in research and experimentation, as well as encouraging students to participate in innovative scientific and training courses, which contributes to them making real social changes after their graduation.

This new facility reflects the Honors Program's commitment to providing an educational environment that enhances students' excellence and encourages them to achieve their accomplishments.

Al-Marzouki expressed his hopes of continuing co-operation with the Honours Program Council and the university's colleges to enhance the program's goals and fulfil the aspirations of QU.

QF invites applications for Akhlaquna awards

QNA
Doha

Qatar Foundation (QF) for Education, Science and Community Development is inviting young individuals and those with initiatives focused on spreading positive values and constructive behaviours within their communities to apply for the Akhlaquna Awards 2024.

Applications are open from now until February 1, 2024, across four categories. Both the categories for Akhlaquna Junior Award for ages 7-14 and the Akhlaquna Youth Award for ages 15-18 require submissions through schools in Qatar.

The Akhlaquna Individual Contributions Award category accepts applications from Qatar for ages 19-45, which focus on projects related to ethics, and for individuals from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for ages 25-45. This expansion aims to broaden the initiative's reach and underscore the message of moral values inspired by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Lastly, the Akhlaquna Appreciation Award category is dedicated to recognizing individuals known for their loyalty and accomplishments in their careers and life journeys.

Akhlaquna Project Manager Ahmed Yousef al-Malki said: "The Akhlaquna initiative goes beyond mere recognition; it actively strives to emphasise its profound positive and moral impact. It fosters the cultivation of positive relationships, nurturing affection and a sense of close-



The Akhlaquna Appreciation Award category is dedicated to recognising individuals known for their loyalty and accomplishments in their careers and life journeys.

ness among community members."

"The impact of the Akhlaquna initiative is closely tied to community engagement and the favourable contributions we've observed, including students in schools actively dedicated to instilling good morals among their peers through diverse projects and activities. Former ambassadors continue to inspire others with their positive initiatives."

Al-Malki believes that the launch of the Individual Contributions category for the Arab Gulf countries will have a positive influence on the Gulf community and further promote the initiative.

"This year, our goal was to expand the initiative's reach, ensuring it extends to every home, school, and institution through our various activities.

"We hold high expectations for this cycle, particularly with the addition of new categories. Our aim is to engage a broader group of students who are actively contributing to moral values and making a positive impact."

Al-Malki also hopes that the Akhlaquna initiative will leave a lasting legacy by fostering positive, ethical interactions in society, following the moral values of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and celebrating the impact of project owners as role models for all.

The initiative, which was launched in 2017 by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, celebrates individuals and endeavours that embody noble values such as compassion, tolerance, honesty, and generosity within society.

Sustainability key focus at QU Life Sciences Symposium

The Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences in the College of Arts and Sciences at Qatar University (QU), in collaboration with the Expo 2023 Doha team, hosted the 16th QU Life Sciences Symposium (QULSS 2023) under the theme 'Eco-Friendly Sustainable Solutions for a Green Desert Environment'.

The two-day symposium aimed to achieve three main goals, namely providing a platform for researchers and scientists to meet and exchange scientific and technological developments to ensure a sustainable environment, as well as providing researchers and scientists a platform to talk about scientific and technological developments to produce safe and sustainable food and raise awareness about environmental challenges and possible solutions to protect natural resources and promote sustainable development.

The symposium brought together experts and researchers from prestigious universities, industry, and local partners from various entities and specialisations with diverse experience in multiple fields. The most important of which are modern technological methods for using, purifying, and reusing water for agricultural purposes, modern methods for soil fertilisation, and how to benefit from desert environmental resources to find sustainable solutions that serve modern agriculture as well as the ecosystem through the cultivation of wild plants and desert afforestation.

A number of researchers and scientists from the GCC, as well as from Qatar representing QU, the Ministry of Municipality and Environment, and Public Works Authority (Ashghal), and who are specialised in these fields, attended the symposium.

In addition, the symposium held two workshops for students, one on environmental water quality and another on food systems in agricultural and food education, presented by a team from Ashghal and the American University of Beirut respectively. Students of various graduate and post-graduate degrees participated in the conference by displaying their research projects through posters related



Dr Fatima al-Khayat, Head of the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences at QU.

to the four themes of the forum: advanced technologies for the optimal use of water resources, restoration and enrichment of desert soil, rehabilitation of the national vegetation cover for a sustainable environment, and uses of microbes isolated from halophytic plants in modern agriculture.

Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Dr Fatima al-Kubaisi spoke at the opening ceremony of the symposium and discussed modern and sustainable technologies in the fields of agriculture and breeding, and their importance in Qatar. Recently, the country has witnessed remarkable progress in sustainable agriculture and food security, which enhanced sustainable local food production and had a clear positive impact for its residents.

She noted that the symposium is consistent with the Qatar National Vision 2030 in achieving environmental sustainability, exploring the natural resources of Qatar, and treating its imbalances through developing environmentally friendly and more efficient programs for agriculture and breeding within the state, which confirms the need for sustainable social and economic growth while preserving the environment for future generations.

For her part, Head of the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences at QU Dr Fatima al-Khayat noted that the

chosen theme for the conference, was intended to keep pace with the great progress that has occurred in Qatar in the past five years in multiple fields: Agriculture, improving production, reducing reliance on chemical pest control and replacing it with biological control, with the aim of achieving environmental sustainability concepts and providing the required food security.

She also said the environment in Qatar is very rich in the unique characteristics of its vital resources due to its distinctive genetic capabilities in resisting environmental stresses such as heat, drought and salinity, which makes these resources a national wealth that must be preserved and protected for future generations.

In the same context, Professor Dr Mohamed Abu-Dieyeh, Professor of Plant Science in QUs Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences and Chairman of the Organising Committee for QULSS 2023, noted that despite the harshness of desert ecosystems, these ecosystems are rich in environmental resources, which if properly exploited and evaluated in extensive scientific research, have multiple technological applications that serve both the environment and humans.

In addition to its importance in agriculture and the environment, saline soil represents a huge reservoir of beneficial microbes that will play a major role in modern sustainable agriculture.

In turn, Secretary-General of Expo 2023 Doha Mohammed Ali al-Khoori also noting that facilitating dialogue among diverse speakers and participants at this global gathering was a source of pride. The symposium centres around four pillars that cover environmental, social, economic, and cultural aspects.

The interconnectedness between Expo 2023 Doha and the symposium is rooted in promoting collaborative discussions, innovative solutions, and strategic partnerships to propel sustainability goals globally. He noted that the shared objective is to catalyse positive change, leaving an enduring impact on our planet and shaping a sustainable legacy for future generations. (QNA)



A section of the audience.

Katara honoured as City of the Arab Novel

At a ceremony held in the Tunisian capital yesterday, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (Alecso) honoured Katara - the Culture Village as a City of the Arab Novel.

Katara general manager Prof Khaled bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti, Alecso director general Dr Mohamed Ould Amar, second secretary at Qatar's embassy in Tunisia Fahd bin Khalifa al-Attayah and other dignitaries were present, a Katara statement said.

A documentary on Katara was screened and Prof al-Sulaiti received a certificate designating Katara as a City of the Arab Novel,



alongside the Alecso shield. Katara was designated as a City of the Arab Novel by the Permanent Committee for Arab Culture as part of the celebration of the World Novel Week, endorsed by the Unesco during October 13-20 each year. This de-

cision was based on the request submitted by Katara in 2016 and endorsed by the Arab ministers of culture.

In his address on this occasion, Prof al-Sulaiti expressed his thanks and appreciation to Alecso. He pointed out that the success achieved by the Katara Award for the Arabic Novel, since its inception in 2014, in establishing the presence of distinguished Arabic novels globally and regionally, was directly supervised by the Alecso, which sponsored all editions of the award.

Prof al-Sulaiti affirmed that Katara would remain an open city for all Arab novelists, with its

consistent approach of free, fair, and transparent competition, facilitated by the Katara Award for the Arabic Novel each year. The award selects 14 winners in six categories: Published Novel, Unpublished Novel, Youth Novels, Novel Criticism Studies, Historical Novel, and the Qatari Novel.

He also noted Katara's significant efforts to introduce the world to the authentic Arab literature and culture by publishing the winning novels of each edition, translating them into English and French, and distributing the winning works through the Katara Publishing House at international book fairs.

OFFICIAL

Amir greets Oman Sultan on National Day

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of the sisterly Sultanate of Oman, on the anniversary of his country's National Day. (QNA)

Mena Diabetes Medical Congress 2023 kicks off

The Mena Diabetes Medical Congress 2023, organised by the Qatar Diabetes Association (QDA), began yesterday with the participation of an elite of diabetologists, endocrinologists, diabetes educators, neurologists, general practitioners, cardiologists, and dieticians from Qatar and beyond.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), QDA Executive Director Dr Abdullah al-Hamaq stressed the importance of the two-day conference and the topics to be addressed covering a range of issues related to diabetes prevention, awareness of risks and complications, and the latest treatment methods.

The conference is within the



activities organised by the QDA on the occasion of World Diabetes Day marked on November 14 every



those concerned including topics related to the pre-diabetes stage, the new classification regarding types of diabetes, and its new treatments, especially those related to the technical aspects, as well as new strategies for controlling it and methods of managing it, the latest research on diabetes in children, the new treatments for type 2 diabetes, among other important subjects.

The QDA executive director opened the event with a speech in which he appreciated the broad and significant participation of

doctors and specialists, reviewing all aspects related to this disease in terms of prevention, treatment, and ways to reduce its complications.

Day 1 of the conference focused on new treatments for type 2 diabetes, precise management of this disease, nutritional interventions, the pre-diabetes stage, insulin sensitivity variations among healthy Arab youth, and cardiovascular risk management in diabetic, obesity and its management, and weight management in the treatment of type 2 diabetes.

The International Diabetes Federation estimates that as many as 212mn people, or half of all adults currently living with diabetes, are undiagnosed. Most of these have type 2 diabetes.

From this standpoint, QDA aims to educate and send a message that understanding diabetes is the first step towards managing and preventing it, knowing the risk of having diabetes or the risk of developing complications and what to do is important to support prevention, early diagnosis, and timely treatment. (QNA)

Hundreds show their solidarity with Palestine



Hundreds of faithful gathered outside Doha's Imam Muhammad AbdulWahhab Mosque yesterday, for the sixth consecutive Friday, to 'Stand in Solidarity' with Palestine. PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam





MES students participate in QOSM diabetes awareness drive

A team of 30 scouts and eight band members from MES Indian School participated in a diabetes awareness campaign organised by the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum (QOSM) in co-operation with the Ministry of Health and Qatar Scouts and Guides Association.

The programme provided information on the causes of dia-

betes, scientific reasons behind it, and preventive measures. Dr Sadriya al-Kohji (Ministry of Public Health) talked about the Healthy Cities Programme and its role in promoting health and addressing diabetes.

Dr Ahmad Mohamed Eid (Primary Health Care Corporation) explained in detail about diabetes. Dr Abdulla al-Hamaq (Qatar Diabetes Association) discussed

the role of the organisation in community awareness. Dr Manal Othman (Hamad Medical Corporation) spoke about Diabetes Self-Management Education. Maya Itani (Hamad Medical Corporation) discussed dietary management and the importance of a healthy lifestyle for diabetes management. Earlier, Abdulla al-Mulla, director, QOSM, welcomed the gathering.

Qatar Guides training programme held at BPS

A training programme for Qatar Guides was organised by the Qatar Scouts and Guides Association in collaboration with Birla Public School on October 30 with the participation of 11 schools from Doha.

The aim was to train young girls with essential skills for personal growth and effective leadership. The inaugural session was held in the presence of senior scout activities consultant Yacub al-Tamimi, scout activities consultants Ahmad al-Yousef and Khalid al-Hetmi, first scout activities expert Hezam Mesleh and Muna al-Mansouri, Paramjeet Kaur Buller, BPS acting principal Radhika Rele, vice principal Edna Fernandez, headmaster (activities and discipline) Shijo Pullen along with leaders and guides.

There were stations based on training for guides' promise, oath, law, salute, knots, scarf folding, first aid and camping equipment. Dr Nader Mohamed



Abbarah from the Ministry of Interior spoke to the guides on drug abuse. A team from Naseem Health Care guided them

on oral healthcare. The Yell and Clap competition was one of the highlights. Philippines School Doha students performed a song.

Kerala Day marked at BPS



Keralapiravi Day - 2023 was celebrated at Birla Public School (BPS) with a grand cultural programme. The event began with a prayer by Vyshnavi Suresh and welcome address by Ananya Prajeesh. Acting principal Radhika Rele inaugurated the event in the presence of non-academic head Vinod Kumar, vice principal Edna S Fernandez, other officials and Malayalam Department head Shiju P R. A group song, a welcome dance by students of Grades 6-9, and speeches were among the highlights. Mohamed Razin proposed a vote of thanks.



MES triumphs in Sirat-un-Nabi elocution, Holy Qur'an recitation contests

MES Indian School won the overall championship in the 28th Sirat-un-Nabi Elocution and 25th Holy Qur'an Recitation competitions, organised at the school under the patronage of the Department of Private Education for expatriate schools of the Indian sub-continent in Qatar and as part of promoting national identity and religious values among the students.

A total of 64 students from 16 schools participated.

The winners, in the order of first, second and third prizes, respectively: Recitation - Junior: Mohd Umair Mujeeb (MES), Mohd Talha Shaikh (Mesis), Firas Mahamed (Ideal Indian School).



Senior: Abdul Rahman (MES), Aftab Ahmed (Ideal Indian School), Raed Abdul Nasar (Noble International School).

Elocution - Junior: Aesha Fathima Basheer (MES), Alham Fathima (DPS-MIS), Sahla Fathima (Bhavan's Public School). Senior: Onaisa Rashid (MES), Aysha Siddiqua (Shantiniketan Indian

School), Fathima Ikra Ashkaf (Birla Public School).

Oryx Universal College (Liverpool John Moores University) Qatar president Azmy Ameer was the chief guest. He appreciated the commendable initiatives of the school in inculcating the Islamic values and ideals among the young minds that are the future pillars of



Philippine School's PTA organises sports summit

The Philippine School Doha's (PSD) Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) kicked off its 'Sports Summit 2023-2024' recently, bringing together basketball, volleyball, bowling and badminton players and enthusiasts in a thrilling showcase of passion and sportsmanship.

A colourful parade of school and PTA officers, highlighted by the entrance of players, marked the start of the opening ceremony, in addition to cultural performances. From traditional dances to modern interpretations, the performances enthralled the audience and added an extra layer of excitement to the event.

"The sportsfest is not just about



competition; it's about fostering a sense of community and teamwork. We believe that when parents, teachers and school staff come together, incredible things happen. This year, we aim to make the sportsfest a testament to our collective strength and spirit," PTA-

PSD-Board of Directors president Ismael Benavidez Jr said in a press statement. The vice principal of the Preschool Department, host of the 31st Foundation Celebrations of the school, Dr Nida H Garcia, stressed the importance of sports in education. He said sports teach everyone valuable life skills: teamwork, discipline, perseverance and the ability to handle both victory and defeat gracefully.

According to the organisers, the event witnessed school staff, teachers and parents cheering on their teams, displaying unwavering support and sportsmanship.

DPS-MIS launches 'Seed Bombs' project

A group of Environment Club members from the ninth grade of DPS-Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS) have initiated a project known as 'Seed Bombs' to contribute to reforestation efforts and the promotion of biodiversity locally.

The project involved the creation of small balls made of soil, clay and seeds. These balls were designed to be easily dispersed and grown in various locations, promoting the growth of plants and flowers.

The students selected native plant seeds, considering the local ecosystem's needs.

The seed bombs prepared by the student members of the club, are ready to be distributed to the teachers. A few will also be sown in



the school premises. The initiative not only contributed to the physical act of planting but also raised

awareness about the significance of individual contributions to environmental conservation.

DPS-MIS swimmer claims bronze medal

Abha Vijay Harne, a Grade XII J student of DPS-Modern Indian School has won a bronze medal in the CBSE National Swimming Championship held at Rishikul Vidyapeeth School in Sonipat, Haryana, India. Principal Asna Nafees has congratulated her.



RPS hosts inter-school quiz

Rajagiri Public School (RPS) conducted the 3rd edition of the Inter-School Qatar History Quiz Competition, INSIJAMU 2023, featuring participants from 12 Indian schools in the country. The hosts came first, followed by MES Indian School in the second place and DPS-Modern Indian School was third. RPS academic director Dr Prashant Palakkapillil observed that the competition serves as a platform and a reminder of the importance of promoting intellectual growth and collaborative learning in the educational landscape. Principal Joshy Abraham congratulated the winners.



the modern society. MES principal Dr Hameeda Kadar, in her keynote address, commended the enthusiastic participation of students and highlighted the objectives of the competition in creating religious values among the young generation. O M Siddiq, director, Moral Education & Islamic Affairs, MES Governing Board, was the guest of honour.

The winners were awarded certificates and trophies, and the first prize winners were presented with a special cash award by the chief guest. Students from the school choir presented a delightful 'Na'ith' much to the appreciation of the audience. MES officials Dr Najeeb K P, Ashraf Sharafudheen P T, Faisal Mayan, Mohamed M C,

Mohamed Ali K P, A P Khaleel and members of the school governing body, principals from various schools, parents and teachers were present.

MES teachers Habeebullah and Manasul Ansari trained the students in Holy Qur'an recitation and Rassia Hamza, Rameesh Fathima and Magdalene in elocution.

Earlier, Arabic, Urdu and Islamic Studies Department head and the event's chief coordinator Usman Mayyeri welcomed the gathering and Rassia Hamza proposed a vote of thanks. English teachers Farhana Nazeer and Rizwa Fathima compered the programme.

CHILDREN'S DAY



Diverse activities at MES

Colour and gaiety marked the Children's Day celebrations at MES Indian School.

Special assemblies were conducted in all sections in commemoration of the birth anniversary of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of free India.

Various events marked the occasion. At the KG section, recitation of rhymes, role play, movie time and fun-filled games were conducted for the students. The Junior section students participated in literary activities. Students of Grades I and II recited poems. Grade III students wrote

a paragraph on the life of Chacha Nehru, as he was fondly described, by participating in a handwriting competition. Speeches were delivered by the students of Grade IV on the topic - 'To be successful in life, you need Education!' They also spoke on the importance of education in building character and making the world a better place to live.

The Middle and Senior level students of the Boys' and Girls' sections conducted competitions such as collage making on the title, 'A Tribute to Chacha Nehru' for Grades V and VI, drawing and painting on 'Chachaji and children' for Grades VII and VIII, es-

say writing on 'Children's Day, the Sustainable Developmental Goals' for Grades IX and X, and poem writing on 'Dream of Tomorrow' for Grades XI and XII. Children were gifted with greeting cards as a token of love on the occasion.

Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar urged the students to practise compassion, develop leadership qualities and follow the ideals of Nehru to make the world a place of peace and prosperity. Section co-ordinators Farhana Nazeer, Limia Pressi, Sreejith K N, Rajesh K S, Jency George, Namitha Pradeep Kumar and Gowri Sree Rama Lakshmi Pushyami co-ordinated the event.

High enthusiasm at IIS event



Ideal Indian School (IIS) celebrated Children's Day with immense enthusiasm, marking the 134th birth anniversary of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India. Nehru, a visionary leader, envisioned the future of a sovereign India through the

innocent faces of children. November 14 is a tribute to Nehru's commitment to the welfare, education, and development of children and youth.

During the celebration, teachers and students shared insights into the life and contributions of Jawaharlal Nehru. Principal

Shaik Shamim Saheb emphasised that children represent the most beautiful creations on Earth. He underscored the significance of spreading happiness around them. Teachers entertained students with songs and dances. Various games were also organised for the children.

ICC holds special programme



The Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), under the aegis of the embassy of India, conducted a special programme on account of 'Children's Day' on November 14, to mark India's first prime minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's birthday, and to celebrate his affection for kids.

ICC relaunched the 'ICC Students Forum' on this occasion and the event was conducted by its

managing committee. ICC president A P Manikantan spoke about the impressive response for the Students Forum.

The keynote speaker, Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar assistant professor Dr Adviti Naik, inspired the students with her experiences. Students Dalyn and Farha Naaz spoke about the challenges being faced by their generation while Aadharsha Ilan spoke about life of

Pandit Nehru and the impact he had on the children of India.

ICC vice-president Subramanya Hebbagelu, general secretary Mo-han Kumar, other managing committee members and senior community leaders were present. School activities head Shantanu Deshpande, also in charge of the Students Forum, guided the students. Cultural Activities head Sumaa Mahesh Gowda anchored the event.

Cultural performances held at RPS



Rajagiri Public School (RPS) celebrated Children's Day and Diwali by organising a special assembly that saw teachers and students joining hands in a variety of cultural performances. Vice-principal S Radhakrishnan addressed the gathering, conveying the message of Diwali and reiterated the need for adhering to sustainability in every celebration. Compering was done by teacher-student pair of Sreelekha R and Nanditha Nair.



IIS wins medals in CBSE athletic championship



Ideal Indian School (IIS) team won two individual and one team bronze medals in the All India CBSE National Athletic Championship 2023-24 under-17 category held at N H Goel World School, India. The winners: Discus Throw - Yesyef Halefom, 200m - Ihsan Ismail, 4x100m relay - Ihsan Ismail, Affan Azad, Ashish P Rejy and Muzafar. The athletic team was trained by Pramod Ravi. The principal, staff and students of IIS have congratulated the team.

DGC hosts Staff Appreciation Day event



Doha Golf Club (DGC) ladies division led by their captain Cherehzade Boocho, hosted a Staff Appreciation Day - Texas Scramble event with a total of 48 golfers, a mix of staff and lady members. The event was held to thank and appreciate the DGC staff for their efforts during the recent Qatar Masters. Team Lesley Gibbons, Elizabeth Harris, Chris Corcelles and Chandra Bahadur were first. The second placed team was Hifa Ali, Nada Mir, Om Prasad and Renavith Russell, and the third place went to the team of Colleen Viator, Kati Leppanin, Niroshan Arumugam and Ramesh Maharjan.

Malayalam Toastmasters Club marks anniversary



Doha Malayalam Toastmasters Club celebrated its 9th anniversary, presenting the 5th DMT Literary Award to writer Shamina Hisham. The event featured the launch of the club's magazine *Agnichirakul* and book reviews. Abubakar Siddique and Sunil Kumar Menon stood out in prepared speeches and evaluations, earning top honours. Prominent figures from district 116 of Toastmasters International attended.



Demonstrators in support of Palestinians carry signs during a protest to call for a ceasefire, in Washington, DC, yesterday.



Palestinians take part in Friday Noon prayers in East Jerusalem's neighbourhood of Ras Al-Amud, yesterday, following age restriction by Israeli security to above 50-year-olds for worshippers wanting to access the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.



Palestinian children wounded in Israeli strikes wait in an ambulance outside Al-Aqsa hospital in Deir al-Balah in the centre of the Gaza Strip, as they start the process of being evacuated to the United Arab Emirates in a humanitarian flight from Al Arish, in Egypt, yesterday.

Hamas says 24 die at Gaza hospital as Israeli forces hunt hideouts

AFP
Gaza Strip

The Hamas-controlled health ministry said yesterday that 24 patients at a hospital in war-torn Gaza had died within 48 hours due to power outages, as Israeli forces searched the complex for Hamas hideouts.

The announcement came shortly after Israel agreed to a US request to allow two fuel trucks a day into Gaza, following a UN warning that shortages had halted aid deliveries and put people at risk of starvation.

The situation was dire at the Al-Shifa hospital, the largest in Gaza, which Israel's army said it was searching for a third day for suspected hideouts of fighters from the movement's armed wing.

Hamas rejects an Israeli charge that it has a command centre at the hospital, where thousands of people, including wounded patients and premature babies, are believed to be inside. The hospital also denies the claim.

Israel has vowed to "crush" Hamas in response to the group's October first week storming of the country.

The army's air and ground campaign has killed 12,000 people, including 5,000 children, according to Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since 2007.

"Twenty-four patients...have died over the last 48 hours" at Al-Shifa hospital "as vital medical equipment has stopped functioning because of the power outage", Gaza health ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said.

In response to a US request, Is-



A picture shows the damage at the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

rael's cabinet unanimously agreed to "provide two tankers of fuel a day to run the wastewater treatment facilities...which are facing collapse due to the lack of electricity", national security adviser Tzachi Hanegbi said.

"We took that decision to prevent the spread of epidemics. We don't need epidemics that will harm civilians or our fighters. If there are epidemics, the fighting will stop," he said.

A senior US official said Washington had exerted huge pressure

on Israel for weeks to allow fuel in through the Rafah crossing from Egypt, with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken making clear Israel needed to act immediately to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said 70% of people have no access to clean water in south Gaza, where raw sewage had started to flow on the streets.

Under the deal, which is to start today, 140,000 litres of fuel will be allowed in every 48 hours, of

which 20,000 litres will be purely to power communications generators, the US official said.

It comes after aid trucks were unable to enter Gaza from Egypt for two straight days due to the lack of fuel and a near-total communications blackout.

Israel has defended its Al-Shifa operation, with the military claiming it found rifles, ammunition, explosives and the entrance to a tunnel shaft at the hospital complex. Israel said its forces were searching Al-Shifa

"one building at a time" STARVATION FEARS

Israel has come under increasing pressure to back up its allegations that Hamas is using hospitals as command centres.

The US has stood behind its ally, however, with President Joe Biden this week saying he had asked Israel to be "incredibly careful" in its military moves around Gaza hospitals. More than half of Gaza's hospitals are no longer functional due to combat, damage or shortages, and Israel's raid on Al-Shifa left extensive damage to the radiology, burns and dialysis units, Hamas said.

"The situation in Al-Shifa is catastrophic" for patients, displaced people and health workers who are crammed inside without electricity, water and food, the hospital's director, Mohamed Abu Salmiya, told AFP.

AFPTV video showed Palestinian children waiting in ambulances at Deir al-Balah for evacuation to the United Arab Emirates via the Rafah crossing to Egypt.

"In the beginning they told (us) she would be martyred. She has fractures in her skull, pelvis and the thigh," said Adam al-Madhoun, father of four-year-old Kenza who already had her right hand amputated after an attack on the Jabalia refugee camp.

Conditions for Palestinian civilians are rapidly deteriorating, the UN warned.

More than 1.5mn people have been internally displaced, and

Israel's blockade of the territory means "civilians are facing the immediate possibility of starvation", World Food Programme head Cindy McCain said.

WEST BANK VIOLENCE

Israel's ground operation has so far focused on north Gaza, where it has announced the seizure of key buildings and a port. It says 51 of its troops have been killed. Alongside the war in Gaza, there is growing concern about violence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians have surged. Raids by Israel's military have also multiplied and the Palestinian death toll has soared.

The Israeli army said yesterday it had killed at least seven fighters in two separate confrontations in the West Bank.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has urged Israel to take "urgent" action to "de-escalate tensions in the West Bank, including by confronting rising levels of settler extremist violence", the State Department said. The group of independent global leaders known as The Elders called on Biden to embrace a "historic opportunity" and deliver a peace plan between the Israelis and Palestinians.

"As polarisation increases, the world needs you to set out a vision for peace," they said in an open letter, stressing the plan "must recognise the equal rights of Palestinians and Israelis".

HEALTH Zimbabwe's capital declares state of emergency over cholera

Zimbabwe has declared a state of emergency in the capital, Harare, over a cholera outbreak that has claimed dozens of lives across the country, the city's mayor said yesterday, AFP reported from Harare. Harare, a city of 1.5mn people, has been badly hit by an outbreak of the disease that has affected all provinces of the southern African nation. "We have declared a state of emergency because the situation is now very bad," Harare Mayor Ian Makone said. "The disease is spreading across the city." Zimbabwe has recorded more than 7,000 suspected cholera cases and almost 150 deaths, of which 51 have been confirmed by laboratory tests, since the outbreak was reported in February. At least 12 people have died in Harare. Cholera outbreaks occur regularly in Zimbabwean cities where supplies of drinking water and sanitation facilities are erratic and infrastructure has collapsed due to years of neglect. The disease is contracted from a bacterium that is generally transmitted through contaminated food or water. "People have dug wells close to pit latrines, especially in mushrooming settlements and other suburbs which do not have running water. This means their drinking water is contaminated," Makone said.

DISTRESS Rains cause floods in Kenya's Mombasa

Heavy rains pounded the streets of Kenyan coastal city of Mombasa, with some passengers evacuated from a flooded bus by holding on to a rope amid chest-high water. Reuters reported from Mombasa. Others stood on top of the bus with umbrellas and raincoats as they waited for their turn to pull themselves to safety in Kisauni district, nearly 500km from the capital Nairobi. At least 46 people have died in flood-related incidents in Kenya since the rainy season began less than a month ago, according to aid group Save the Children. The toll is expected to rise. Heavy rains followed by flash floods have submerged towns across East Africa, rendering hundreds of thousands of people homeless. With their homes submerged, residents of Bamburi town held the government responsible for failing to unblock and repair drains.

POLL Liberian challenger close to win over Weah

Political veteran Joseph Boakai was marginally ahead of incumbent George Weah in the race for the Liberian presidency, with over 99% of polling stations reporting, results published yesterday showed. Former vice-president Boakai had garnered 50.89% of votes cast, with Weah on 49.11% after over 99.5% of the polling stations had been tallied, said electoral commission president Davidetta Browne Lansanah, AFP reported from Monrovia. Final results from 25 polling stations were suspended, meaning an unknown number of votes still have to be counted. But political expert Abdullah Kiatamba said it looked almost impossible for former football great Weah to make up the gap.

Flour shortage worries Gazans

AFP
Khan Yunis

One of the last grain warehouses in the Gaza Strip has been damaged by Israeli strikes and a key flour mill in Khan Yunis — where hundreds of thousands have fled — has stopped working for lack of fuel.

The store, also in Khan Yunis in the south of the territory and with room for 3,000 tonnes of wheat, was hit by an air strike overnight Wednesday-Thursday. AFP was unable to ascertain what happened to its reserves.

"If the Red Cross does not get the authorisation from the Israelis so we can do the repairs needed, we will have to stop working," said the head of the Gazan bakers' association, Abdunnasser al-Ajami.

Further north in the centre of the Gaza Strip, another mill, Al-Salam, at Deir Al Balah, was destroyed the day before, according to the UN humanitarian agency OCHA.

Of the five flour mills in the densely populated Palestinian territory, at least two have been hit since the war began on October 7, triggered by an unprecedented Hamas storming over the border into Israel.

Israel has vowed to destroy the fighter group, launching a relentless bombing and ground campaign in Gaza. Hamas officials say the Israeli attacks have killed some 11,500 people, mostly civilians.

The few big bags of flour to be found in Gaza now sell at astronomical prices of up to the equivalent of \$200.

Civilians in Gaza faced "the immediate possibility of starvation" as food and water have become scarce, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) warned on Thursday.

A trickle of humanitarian aid arriving via Egypt has done little to remedy the shortages, made worse by power cuts and a lack of fuel for generators.

Some 1,100 trucks have been allowed into Gaza so far, around 450 of them carrying food, enough to cover only "7% of the people's daily



Palestinians queue as they wait to buy bread from a bakery, amid shortages of food supplies and fuel, as the conflict continues, in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

minimum caloric needs", the WFP said.

There are just 2,000 tonnes of wheat remaining in Gaza, according to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA). This is the equivalent of 370 tonnes of flour, or five-to-six days' supply.

UNRWA said it works with 80 bakeries across the territory. In the north, where the fighting has been most intense, all of them are closed.

Just 63 bakeries in central and southern Gaza are still making bread, but with difficulty because fuel is so scarce.

The largest bakery, in Gaza City, shut on Tuesday after the solar panels which powered it were hit in an Israeli strike. Afterwards, hungry residents looted the remaining flour.

Since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war, residents have queued outside bakeries at dawn in the faint hope of getting enough to feed a family.

But anyone waiting their turn — which takes five hours on average — is exposed to the threat

of new air strikes. US aid agency Mercy Corps said its staff on the ground in Gaza have sometimes had to pay \$30 for five pieces of bread.

In Gaza's shops, the shelves are usually empty and signs in the windows say "No more bread" or "No more yeast". Together with the WFP, UNRWA distributes bread produced at its 154 shelters, which now host 813,000 people. But the trucks that deliver the bread are often short of fuel.

Many Gazans have resorted to making their own bread.

In the south, where most of the around 1.6mn people who have been displaced by the war stay, the glow of makeshift ovens outside houses or tents pays testament to their efforts.

But the flour, water and salt needed to make the bread are almost impossible to find in large parts of the Gaza Strip, according to OCHA.

Hungry Gazans were "skipping or reducing meals", it said, and sometimes eating "raw onion and uncooked eggplant".



COMMENT

Marcos, Xi ‘to discuss’ South China Sea tensions

Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr yesterday said he will meet with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping at the sidelines of the APEC Summit in San Francisco to discuss tensions and formulate ways forward in the South China Sea. “We will get the view of the Chinese president on what we can do to bring down the temperature, to not escalate the situation in the West Philippine Sea,” Marcos said in a video message. “We will put together the ways forward because we are continuously trying to maintain the peace,” Marcos said. Marcos said he also discussed South China Sea issues with US Vice President Kamala Harris.

PEOPLE

Australian telecoms boss apologises for mass outage

The head of Australian telecoms firm Optus yesterday said she was “deeply sorry” for an outage that cut mobile and internet services to more than 10mn people. A technical glitch in the early hours of November 8 crashed Optus systems for nearly 12 hours. “It is indisputable that on that day our performance was not acceptable. We let you down and for that I am deeply sorry,” Optus chief executive Kelly Bayer Rosmarin told a senate committee hearing into the outage. Unable to pinpoint the exact cause more than six hours after the outage began, Optus had to perform a hard reset of its system, she said.

DECISION

Australia charges bouncy castle firm over child deaths

Australian authorities charged a bouncy castle operator yesterday over a 2021 disaster in which six children were killed after strong winds lifted one of the inflatable play structures into the air. The company, Taz-Zorb, has been charged with breaching health and safety legislation, said Robyn Pearce, the work health and safety regulator in the state of Tasmania, where the tragedy occurred. Strong winds blew a large inflatable castle into the air at an end-of-term school party in December, 2021, killing six children aged between 11 and 12. Authorities at the time said the children were thrown from a height of about 33 feet, citing initial witness reports.

CLAIM

Vietnam ramps up South China Sea island expansion

Vietnam has been ramping up its dredging and landfill work in the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, creating another 330 acres of land since December last year, a US think tank said in a report. The expansion, much larger than 120 acres it had created between 2012 and 2022, made Vietnam second only to China in terms of island buildup in the Spratly Islands, Washington’s Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) said in the report this week, citing satellite imagery. China claims sovereignty over vast swathes of the South China Sea, including the areas where Vietnam has been building up islands.

Maldives will have no foreign military presence: new president



Maldives’ president Mohamed Muizzu leaves after his inauguration ceremony in Male yesterday. The new president said Maldives will use diplomacy to ensure there is no foreign military presence on its soil.

China, Japan reaffirm ‘strategic relationship’ in rare leader talks

Reuters
San Francisco

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said they would pursue mutually beneficial relations in their first face-to-face talks in a year, putting emphasis on shared economic interests amid a series of diplomatic disputes.

The leaders of Asia’s two largest economies discussed thorny issues such as China’s ban on Japanese seafood and the case of a Japanese businessman detained in China on suspicion of espionage during hour-long talks at a hotel in San

Francisco. They also pledged to hold high-level dialogue on economic issues and welcomed the launch of a framework to discuss export controls as they met on the sidelines of an Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation summit.

Their countries should “focus on common interests” and reaffirm a “strategic relationship of mutual benefit and give it new meaning”, Xi told Kishida as they sat opposite one another at a long table flanked by their delegations.

In a joint statement in 2008, Japan and China agreed to pursue a “mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests” designed to ensure frequent leadership exchanges

on issues such as security and economic co-operation. But the phrasing has been used less frequently in recent years as the historic rivals clashed over issues such as territorial claims, trade tensions and Taiwan.

Most recently, ties have been tested by a Chinese ban on Japan’s seafood following its decision in August to begin releasing treated water from its crippled Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea.

In comments to media after the talks, Kishida said he had strongly urged Xi to drop the ban and also sought the swift release of the detained business executive, an issue that has dealt a blow to their trade ties.

Two dead as quake shakes Philippines

AFP
Manila

A strong magnitude 6.7 earthquake shook the southern Philippines yesterday, killing a married couple as people fled buildings and part of a shopping mall ceiling collapsed.

No tsunami threat was issued after the quake struck off Sarangani province on the main southern island of Mindanao at a depth of 78km at 4.14pm (0814GMT), the US Geological Service said in a statement.

A man and his wife were found crushed to death beneath a concrete wall outside a wood factory near General Santos City where the couple worked, city police said.

“The wall fell on them” during the quake, corporal Christopher Larano said.

The quake was felt across a wide area of the mountainous island.

“I think it was the strongest earthquake I’ve ever experienced,” Keeshia Leyran, 27, said from Davao City, about 200km from the epicentre, where she was attending a conference.

“People around me were panicking and running to go outside.”

A photo shared on Facebook and verified showed a collapsed ceiling inside a shopping mall in General Santos, less than 100km from the epicentre.

A video showed terrified shop-



The ceiling of a shopping mall in General Santos City in South Cotabato was damaged after a strong earthquake shook southern Philippines yesterday.

pers in another mall in the same city hiding under fast-food restaurant tables and screaming as the building shook and pieces of the ceiling fell.

“We were on the second floor so there was nothing we could do but duck under the tables,” said Gregorio Narajos, 34, who shot the video.

“Power went out two or three

seconds into the quake. It came back after a while,” Narajos said.

“I saw stuff falling from the ceiling. When we got out we saw cracks and debris outside.”

About 30 students at a nearby high school were treated for breathing difficulties due to panic following the quake, said Adrian Imbong, an emergency medical services worker in General Santos.

US, Philippines sign landmark nuclear deal

The US and the Philippines yesterday signed a landmark deal that would allow Washington to export nuclear technology and material to Manila, which is exploring the use of nuclear power to decarbonise and boost energy independence. “The US will be able to share equipment and material with the Philippines as they work to develop small modular reactors and other civilian nuclear energy infrastructure,” US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. Negotiations for the 123 Agreement started in November, 2022. “We see nuclear energy becoming a part of the Philippines’ energy mix by 2032 and we are more than happy to pursue this path with the US,” President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said in a speech. “Nuclear energy is one area where we can show the Philippines-US alliance and partnership truly works.”

Seoul rally in solidarity with Palestinians



Activists in Seoul, South Korea, hold signs during a rally in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, yesterday.

Samsung boss denies fraud claims over mergers

Reuters
Seoul

Samsung Electronics chairman Jay Y Lee yesterday denied wrongdoing after South Korean prosecutors called for him to be jailed for five years on charges of accounting fraud and stock price manipulation involving a \$8bn merger of Samsung affiliates in 2015.

The hearing is the final lower court session before a ruling, scheduled for January 26, ending a trial that has lasted three years.

The case is the last against Lee, who was pardoned for an earlier, separate conviction and last year cemented his leadership position of Samsung as executive chairman.

During yesterday’s hearing at Seoul Central District Court,

prosecutors accused Lee, 55, and other former executives of violating the Capital Markets Act to make possible the 2015 merger that helped Lee assume greater control of the group’s flagship Samsung Electronics.

Prosecutors called for Lee to be jailed for five years for his alleged involvement in the merger of group affiliates Samsung C&T and Cheil Industries, suspecting stock price manipulation and other wrongdoings that helped the defendants gain at the expense of minority investors.

“The defendants undermined the foundation of the capital market to ease the leader’s succession,” the prosecution said.

“They abused the authority granted by the company and shareholders for the private interests of the group leader and abused extreme imbalance of information.”

250 Rohingya refugees in Indonesia sent back to sea

AFP
Jakarta

About 250 Rohingya refugees crammed onto a wooden boat have been turned away from western Indonesia and sent back to sea, residents said yesterday.

The group from the persecuted Myanmar minority arrived off the coast of Aceh province on Thursday but locals told them not to land. Some refugees swam ashore and collapsed on the beach before being pushed back onto their overcrowded boat. After it was prevented from landing, the decrepit boat travelled dozens of kilometres farther east to

North Aceh. But locals again sent them back to sea late Thursday.

Yesterday, the vessel, which some on board said had sailed from Bangladesh about three weeks ago, was no longer visible from where it had landed in North Aceh, residents said.

Thousands from the mostly Muslim Rohingya minority risk their lives each year on long and treacherous sea journeys, often in flimsy boats, to try to reach Malaysia or Indonesia.

“We’re fed up with their presence because when they arrived on land, sometimes many of them ran away. There are some kinds of agents that picked them up. It’s human trafficking,” Saiful Afwadi, a community

leader in North Aceh, said yesterday.

Chris Lewa, director of Rohingya rights organisation the Arakan Project, said the villagers’ rejection seemed to be related to a lack of local government resources to accommodate the refugees and a feeling that people smugglers were using Indonesia as a transit point to Malaysia.

“It is sad and disappointing that the villagers’ anger is against the Rohingya boat people who are themselves victims of those smugglers and traffickers,” Lewa said yesterday. She said she was trying to find out where the boat went after being turned away but “no one seems to know”. The UN refugee agency said in a statement yesterday that

the boat was “off the coast of Aceh” and gave a lower passenger count of around 200 people. It called on Indonesia to facilitate the landing and provide life-saving assistance to the refugees.

The statement cited a report that said at least one other boat was still at sea, adding that more vessels could soon depart from Myanmar or Bangladesh.

“The Rohingya refugees are once again risking their lives in search for a solution,” said Ann Maymann, UNHCR’s head of representatives in Indonesia.

A 2020 investigation revealed a multimillion-dollar, constantly evolving people-smuggling opera-

tion stretching from a massive refugee camp in Bangladesh to Indonesia and Malaysia, in which members of the stateless Rohingya community play a key role in trafficking their own people.

Locals in neighbouring Ulee Madon and Cot Trueng villages gave the refugees supplies, including food, clothing and gasoline, before turning their boat around on Thursday, North Aceh’s Afwadi said.

To encourage their departure, locals also repaired the boat after Rohingya on board tried to sink it, he said.

Afwadi was among the locals who escorted the vessel away from shore, ensuring it left the area.

A village leader from Ulee Madon said residents did not have the resources to accommodate more refugees.

“We don’t have any proper place to house them,” Rahmat Kartolo said. “It’s not that we don’t care about humanity, but these people sometimes run away.”

Nearly 600 Rohingya refugees have reached western Indonesia this week, according to local authorities, with 196 arriving on Tuesday and 147 on Wednesday.

More than 2,000 Rohingya are believed to have attempted the risky journey to southeast Asian countries in 2022, according to the UN agency.

POLITICS

Scottish govt outlines plans to rejoin EU after independence

An independent Scotland would move quickly to rejoin the European Union, the Scottish government said as it laid out its plans for getting back into the bloc. The administration led by the Scottish National Party said that Scotland would “apply to rejoin the EU as soon as possible” after independence, although that is not currently on the horizon. The government of the devolved parliament in Edinburgh made the comments in a paper that sought to lay out the benefits of EU membership. “Given the position of the main parties at Westminster, the only route back to the EU for Scotland is by becoming an independent country,” it said.

CRITICISM

UK taking ‘leisurely’ approach to tackling obesity: lawmakers

Britain’s government is taking a “leisurely” approach to tackling unhealthy eating habits and needs to do more to make sure people can get hold of good, affordable food, lawmakers said yesterday. The members of a cross-party committee said they were particularly disappointed by the government’s refusal to commit to commissioning a report looking into the possibility of taxing food with high levels of sugar and salt. The lawmakers from the lower house of parliament’s environment, food and rural affairs committee criticised much of the government’s response to a report on food security and obesity they had published in July.

LAW AND ORDER

British man avoids extradition to US

A British man accused of conspiring to launder money from a £4bn cryptocurrency scam won a high court bid to avoid being extradited to the US. Christopher Hamilton, 64, challenged an August 2022 ruling that he could be sent to the US, where he faces charges linking him to a Ponzi scheme that allegedly defrauded 3.5mn victims. The high court concluded “he should be answerable to the law in the UK rather than the US”. US authorities requested Hamilton’s extradition so that he could be prosecuted for conspiracy to commit money laundering and conspiracy to commit wire fraud after an investigation into the cryptocurrency OneCoin.

MILITANCY

Eight suspected rebels killed in Kashmir

Eight suspected rebels have been killed in Kashmir in a series of separate clashes with soldiers over the past two days, police said yesterday. Shooting broke out when Indian soldiers launched a search for reported militants in the southern Kulgam area, with five men killed yesterday, police said. The five were all local men affiliated with the Lashkar-e-Taiba militant group, according to police. In a separate clash, Indian security forces killed two militants near the border with Pakistan. Another fighter was killed on in the Rajouri area during a shootout with soldiers, a police statement said, reporting a “huge” stash of arms had been seized.

Madhya Pradesh voters cast ballot



People wait in queues to cast their votes at a polling station during the Madhya Pradesh state assembly election in Indore, India, yesterday.

Freeing workers trapped in tunnel to take time: India

AFP
Dehradun

Indian rescuers yesterday said they had drilled less than halfway through the debris to reach 40 men trapped in a collapsed tunnel for nearly a week. A second heavy drill is to be airlifted into the northern state of Uttarakhand after the existing giant machine - itself flown in as a replacement by the air force on Wednesday - hit a boulder, officials said. Excavators have been removing debris since Sunday morning to create an escape route

for the workers after a portion of the tunnel they were building collapsed in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. Rescue efforts have been slowed by debris that has continued to fall. Engineers are trying to drive a steel pipe about 90cms wide through the debris - wide enough for the trapped men to squeeze through. “Drilling has been done up to 78 feet for safe extraction,” Anshu Manish Khalko, director of the government’s highways and infrastructure corporation told reporters yesterday. But he said around 118 feet of pipe still needed to be laid to

reach the workers. “That may take time”, he said, without giving further details. After the first earth-boring drill developed problems, the air force on Wednesday flew in a second machine on a C-130 Hercules military plane. The giant drill bit stretched much of the length of the aircraft’s cargo hold. As rescuers race to save the men, India has sought advice from the Thai company that rescued children from a flooded cave in 2018, as well as engineering experts in soil and rock mechanics at the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute.

India seeks UK carbon tax clauses in planned FTA deal

Reuters
New Delhi

India is worried about Britain’s possible tax on imports of high-carbon goods like steel and wants a mechanism in their planned free-trade agreement (FTA) to address issues arising from such a measure, three Indian sources said. Earlier this year, Britain initiated consultations with domestic stakeholders on measures such as a potential carbon border tax, which could mimic the European Union’s carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM). Now, India wants clauses included in the planned FTA that would commit Britain to holding bilateral consultations with New Delhi in case a CBAM-like measure is introduced, Indian officials said. “The idea is to ensure the India-UK deal is future-proof, and something like CBAM can act as a new tariff barrier in the future,” one of the officials said.

According to two officials the UK side regards this request as “unfair” as no decision has been taken on whether to introduce such a measure. The EU’s CBAM, the world’s first tariff regime on cheaper imports of foreign polluting products, entered its first phase in October, causing disquiet among trading partners like India, which plans to challenge it in the World Trade Organisation. The three Indian government sources did not want to be named as discussions over the trade pact with the UK are confidential. India’s trade ministry did not respond to an emailed request for comment. The British Department for Business and Trade said “the UK and India continue to work towards an ambitious trade deal that works for both countries. We have always been clear we will only sign a deal that is fair, balanced and ultimately in the best interests of the British people and the economy”

Prince visits Moss Side youth projects



Britain’s Prince William, Prince of Wales, poses for pictures with Barbara Reid (right) mother of Jessie James, a teenager shot dead in 2006 in a park in Moss Side, and other relatives, during a visit of the Millennium Powerhouse, a multi-service youth hub which works with a wide range of local organisations with a mission to create brighter futures for young people, in Moss Side neighbourhood, in Manchester, yesterday.

UK government in bid to revive onshore wind projects

AFP
London

When yet another winter storm hits Britain, Ellis Jacklin is happier than most, as he gets his energy at up to half the usual unit price. The mechanical projects engineer is part of a local green energy “fan club” run by his electricity provider which taps an onshore wind turbine near his home in East Yorkshire, northern England, to provide discounted power. Enrolled households get 20% off their bills when the turbine is spinning and they are using electricity,

rising to 50% in especially windy conditions. “Everyone else is like ‘batten down the hatches’ and I’m like, ‘keep it windy!’” Jacklin, 30, said. He has saved nearly £400 (\$500) since signing up to the Octopus Energy Generation scheme last year, one of three onshore wind fan clubs it currently runs in England and Wales. The savings come as UK energy bills have surged in that time, contributing to the worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation. “It’s fairly substantial,” Jacklin added. “I was never expecting to get the amount of money I’ve got back from it. Every person I’ve

spoken to is jealous of me having it.” That envy is unsurprising given the lack of new onshore wind across England, limiting the number of such schemes on offer. Despite being a global leader in more costly offshore wind production, the number of new turbines going up in the English countryside has been at a virtual standstill for nearly a decade. The UK government imposed a de facto ban on new onshore English sites in 2015, amid a perceived backlash at their unsightliness among rural communities - a key voting block for the ruling Conservatives. Critics argue the planning sys-

tem obstacles newly placed on the sector were overzealous - allowing just one local resident to scupper a new site - and will hinder Britain’s goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by mid-century. Despite sustained criticism and calls from environmentalists and others for wholesale reform, many industry figures say recent tweaks to the rules were insufficient. “The very slight amendments announced...mean that barely anything has actually changed,” Robert Norris, of trade association RenewableUK, said. Only two onshore wind turbines went up in England last year,

less than in war-torn Ukraine, the group said. Norris noted an “infamous” footnote in a national planning framework governing installing new turbines - and blamed for the de facto ban - remains despite “repeated requests for it to be removed”. “It is still the main barrier to onshore wind development in England,” he said. Even offshore wind has shown signs of stalling. A government auction of permits to build farms in British waters failed to find any bidders in September. In order to spur interest in the next sale, ministers decided this

week to allow new offshore turbine developers to hike the price they charge to supply electricity to households. Octopus Energy Generation CEO Zoisa North-Bond said the recent onshore rules changes had meant it was now “a more positive landscape” to build new English wind farms. The company also launched its fan club model this year in Germany and the US, and is aiming to have 2,000 local clubs globally by 2030. The firm says it has received over 20,000 requests from UK communities for turbines and discounted energy through the scheme.



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GULF TIMES

US watchdog hands Wall St rare win with Big Tech crackdown

The US consumer watchdog, not usually known to side with Wall Street lenders, has handed them a rare win by cracking down on Big Tech companies that are increasingly encroaching on banking turf.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) last week proposed regulating payments and smartphone wallets provided by tech leaders like Apple and Google, arguing they now rival traditional bank services in scale and scope and should be subject to the same consumer safeguards.

The long-anticipated move by CFPB Director Rohit Chopra, who built his career targeting Big Tech over privacy and competition issues, gives a competitive boost to lenders grappling with an onslaught of new rules from capital hikes and caps on debit and credit cards fees to tougher fair lending standards.

“The banks are under almost a bunker mentality right now. They are getting hit from a lot of different places,” said Todd Phillips, a professor at Georgia State University. “So when a regulator basically says, we are going to start treating your competition a lot like the way we treat you, that is good news.” US oversight of Big Tech financial services is fragmented. Companies must apply to each state for money transmitter licenses, and are subject to oversight by various regulators.

The CFPB rule would toughen up supervision, requiring Big Tech to comply with its rules on privacy protections, executives’ conduct and unfair and deceptive practices.

“The banks are under almost a bunker mentality right now. They are getting hit from a lot of different places”

Seventeen companies would be affected including Apple, Google, PayPal and Block’s CashApp, which together facilitated roughly \$1.7tn worth of payments in 2021, the CFPB said. The value of all non-cash payments – excluding wire transfers primarily used for large transfers – was \$128.51tn in 2021, Federal Reserve data shows.

The CFPB already supervises PayPal and CashApp under its international money transfer rules, but Apple and Google would be subject to CFPB oversight for the first time. Google declined to comment and Apple did not respond to a request for comment.

“Silicon Valley is already a major part of the financial marketplace,” the CFPB said in a statement. Subjecting large tech companies in the payments market to similar oversight as banks will increase competition, the agency said.

While tech giants rely on banks to process payments via bank-issued credit and debit cards, some – like Apple – charge lenders a fee for those transactions. The CFPB has also expressed concern that tech companies could be monetizing customer data and compromising user privacy.

According to McKinsey research cited by the CFPB, big tech companies, by some measures, have surpassed regional and community banks in terms of consumer trust related to digital payments. Without regulatory scrutiny, they could leverage their growing dominance of consumer payments to capture other services like lending and card issuing, analysts said.

Worried by this trend, the banking industry has been lobbying financial regulators to crack down on tech giants, arguing in public letters, blogs and congressional testimony that they are putting consumers’ privacy at risk.

They called for the CFPB to invoke its authority under the 2010 Dodd-Frank law to designate “larger participants” in the nonbank market for consumer financial products. Washington trade group the Bank Policy Institute is among those leading that campaign.

“It’s just not necessarily always clear to your average consumer what the differences are between a regulated and insured bank versus a totally unregulated tech company,” said Paige Pidano Paridon, senior associate general counsel at BPI.

While Big Tech companies have deep pockets and plenty of resources to handle the new scrutiny, the rule could limit how they use and protect consumer data. – Reuters

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America after peak cars and snacks

By Todd G Buchholz

San Diego

Tom Cruise’s sports-agent character in the 1996 film *Jerry Maguire* spoke one of Hollywood’s great catchphrases: “Show me the money.” But the smarter lines come from the wife of Maguire’s sole client, Rod Tidwell. When the best Maguire can offer Tidwell is a gig endorsing waterbeds, the savvy spouse exclaims: “He deserves the big four: shoe, car, clothing line, soft drink. The four jewels of the celebrity endorsement dollar.” Today, two of those four jewels are cracking, and the fissures will remake the US economy.

Ask a European to describe Americans, and you’ll likely hear two things: big people and big cars. Sure, it’s a stereotype, but on average Americans do weigh 20% more than their transatlantic neighbours and drive 32% bigger cars. This is not just a matter of pounds and inches. Food (including soft drinks) and cars are key drivers of the US economy, employing 16mn and 4.4mn people, respectively. But these two sectors may soon begin to shrink, upending a 70-year trend that began after World War II and literally shaped American life.

Why, after so many generations raised on Twinkies and V8 engines, are American consumers’ tastes changing? Blame kids and chemists.

Kids these days don’t care much about cars. In the 1980s, 80% of US high schoolers earned their drivers’ license; that figure has since dropped by 40%. Like audiences for symphony orchestras, the average age of an American driver has climbed, so that a 70-year-old is now more likely to drive than a 20-year-old. What a change since the 1960s, when the Beach Boys sang about a girl who “makes the Indy 500 look like a Roman chariot race” and will have “fun, fun, fun ‘til her daddy takes her T-Bird away.”

Back then, cars were more stylish, with jet-age fins and two-tone paint jobs. Carmakers used to hide their new designs from car-magazine paparazzi,

who would chase prototypes through Detroit’s back streets. CEOs would host televised unveilings of new models. Today, Bill Ford doesn’t hear oohs and aahs; Tim Cook from Apple does. And why not? Uber, Lyft, and Zipcar rides are just a few touchscreen swipes away.

The downward shift in Americans’ interest in cars seems to be on autopilot – a fitting state of affairs, since self-driving cars are just around the corner (mostly figuratively, but if you live in Austin, also literally). Headlines blare whenever a self-driving car bends a fender or slams into a pedestrian, but these cars are getting smarter. Before long, auto-insurance companies may begin to retreat from covering human drivers. And then there are electric vehicles (EVs), which contain 90% fewer parts and require 30% fewer workers to build than gasoline-powered cars do.

Squeezed by all these pressures, it’s hard to see how autos will dominate future economic headlines, unless someday robots go on strike. Tellingly, NBC recently cancelled American Auto, its sitcom series about a struggling car company.

The second jewel of the Jerry Maguire quartet, soft drinks, is vulnerable not because of the changing tastes of kids, but because of the changing tastes of overweight people. Today, half of American adults – over 135mn people – are either diabetic or pre-diabetic. But in the past six months, share prices of snack companies like Hershey and Mondelez have fallen about 30%.

Investors and food executives worry about the increasing use of appetite-suppressing drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy. A 2021 study shows that people who take such medicines for a year cut their calorie intake and lose about 15% of their body weight. Morgan Stanley reports that 65% of obesity-drug patients drank fewer sugary carbonated drinks, and Walmart’s CEO says that the grocery basket has already shrunk, with “less units, less calories.” America’s food bill could dip by several percentage points.

Of course, these new drugs do face obstacles.

Long-term use may reveal risky side effects or evidence that their appetite-suppressing effect wears off. It’s also possible that users become depressed when they lose their lust for Krispy Kreme donuts and 32-ounce Big Gulps of Mountain Dew.

Meanwhile, insurance companies struggle to decide which medications they should cover and for whom. The drugs are pricey, but if customers lose weight, they are less likely to suffer heart attacks, require expensive knee-replacement surgery, or depend on electric scooters to get around in shopping malls.

If Americans spend less on cars and consume less food, where will that money go? These trends should free up more dollars for entertainment experiences, whether streaming subscriptions, concert tours, video games, or family vacations.

Disney might find that more fans show up at its theme parks but spend less at Minnie’s Bake Shop. Mark Zuckerberg’s Metaverse or Google’s Starline could start to seem more affordable to potential users. Taylor Swift might be able to raise her concert prices even higher or create doppelganger avatars to perform her songs simultaneously in stadiums around the world. Cruise lines could earn higher profits by not piling food so high at on-board buffets.

When Jerry Maguire premiered, we had no iPhones, no streaming platforms, and no EVs. The term 5G sounded like a spot in a parking garage, and “the cloud” was only in the sky. Cars and sugary drinks seemed like permanent fixtures of American life. But soon we may see them in the rearview mirror. – Project Syndicate

● Todd G Buchholz, a former White House director of economic policy under President George H W Bush and managing director of the Tiger hedge fund, is a recipient of the Allyn Young Teaching Prize at Harvard, the author of *New Ideas from Dead Economists* (Plume, 2021) and *The Price of Prosperity* (Harper, 2016), and a co-author of the musical *Glory Ride*.



Electric vehicles: American consumers’ tastes changing.

Rebuilding trust in expertise

By Diane Coyle

Cambridge

The handmaiden to populism’s rise across the West has been distrust of experts, particularly those in positions of power who believe their specialised knowledge entitles them to make decisions that affect millions of people. Populist leaders routinely rebuke such experts, disparaging them as entrenched, out-of-touch political operatives inhabiting the “swamp,” the “blob,” or the “deep state.”

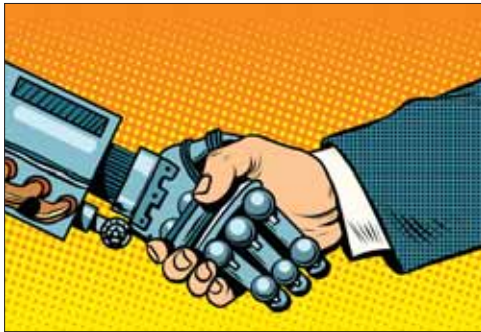
This sentiment stems, in part, from the economic shocks that followed the 2008 financial crisis, which culminated in today’s high inflation and stagnant productivity. As middle-class parents faced the prospect that their children might not be better off than them, they were bound to look for someone to blame. In an atmosphere of widespread public discontent, the technocratic elite emerged as a convenient scapegoat.

To be sure, independent expertise has failed to prevent crises such as the near-collapse of the global financial system or the Covid-19 pandemic. At times, experts have even made things worse. For example, central banks were far too slow to recognise the readily apparent fact that massive quantitative easing would boost asset prices, thus disproportionately benefiting those who already owned assets and contributing to rising inequality.

The concept of independent central banks setting monetary policy, insulated from the short-term pressures of electoral cycles, seemed self-evident during the stable years between the 1990s and the mid-2000s. In retrospect, however, the macroeconomic stability of the “Great Moderation” likely owed as much to factors like the integration of China into the global economy, and even sheer luck, as it did to sound policymaking.

But the growing public distrust of experts is not merely the result of widespread economic distress or the proliferation of conspiracy theories on social media. At the heart of the backlash against expertise are profound technological and economic shifts that call for more than just specialised know-how; they require value judgments.

Nowhere is the transition from a relatively



stable (albeit complex) decision-making environment to one of radical uncertainty more apparent than in competition policy. Technological advances in artificial intelligence and decarbonisation, together with escalating geopolitical tensions and a worldwide revival of industrial policy, have led to a departure from the principles that have long underpinned global antitrust enforcement.

The so-called Chicago School approach, which focuses on consumer prices within specific markets and maintains a sceptical view of state intervention in markets and mergers, has dominated antitrust enforcement in the US and elsewhere since the 1970s. This analytical framework required complex legal and economic analyses by antitrust experts and often resulted in competition authorities being granted independent decision-making powers – an arrangement that was viewed as an effective defence against industry lobbying. If there was an objectively “correct” course of action in any given merger case, the thinking went, government interference could only make things worse.

In recent years, however, the case for expert-guided decision-making has begun to unravel. US antitrust enforcers, led by Federal Trade Commission Chair Lina Khan and Jonathan Kanter, head of the Justice Department’s antitrust division, have focused their attention on reducing the structural market power of large companies, signalling a return to a traditional, “pre-expert” understanding of how markets function.

The resurgence of industrial policies, driven by geopolitical considerations and the strategic need to

maintain a dominant position on the technological frontier in key areas like batteries and advanced semiconductors, has far-reaching implications for competition analysis. After all, there are no definitive analytical answers to questions such as whether the state should subsidise domestic firms in emerging high-tech sectors or level the competitive playing field for foreign suppliers. These questions require a careful evaluation of the inherent uncertainties, the political environment, and the potential winners and losers. These are not issues that technocrats can resolve on their own, although their expertise remains vital to devising effective policies.

Despite the populist backlash, the world still needs technocrats. In his 1973 book *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, the sociologist Daniel Bell anticipated the tension between the expertise necessary to run a complex modern society and the appeal of populist ideologies. To maintain the authority of scientific and technical expertise, he wrote, we must rethink how experts interact with the public.

Better communication is essential, starting with what is often called “communicating with the ears” – that is, experts genuinely listening to people instead of lecturing them. By embracing more deliberative and participatory methods, experts could facilitate a two-way flow of information and foster trust. But in the current climate of rampant misinformation and suspicion, such incremental measures may not yield dramatic results.

Restoring confidence in expertise will not be quick or easy, and it would be foolish to expect more thoughtful leadership from populist politicians. Instead of merely hoping for the best, researchers could help rebuild trust by reassessing and updating our existing institutional frameworks to keep pace with today’s fast-changing global environment. As the boundaries between value-based decisions and independent expertise become increasingly blurred, we must ensure that we do not throw the baby out with the bathwater. – Project Syndicate

● Diane Coyle, Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge, is the author, most recently, of *Cogs and Monsters: What Economics Is, and What It Should Be* (Princeton University Press, 2021).

Trump lashes out at judge, court clerk after gag order is temporarily lifted

Reuters/AFP
New York

Donald Trump wasted little time at attacking a New York judge's top clerk on Thursday after an appeals court paused a gag order barring the former US president from speaking publicly about court staff amid his civil fraud trial.

Judge David Friedman issued the interim stay of the gag order imposed by another judge, who is presiding over the business fraud trial of the former president.

Trump's attorneys appealed the gag order claiming that it violated his right to free speech and Friedman ordered it lifted pending a hearing.

"Considering the constitutional and statutory rights at issue an interim stay is granted," the appellate judge wrote.

Trump, the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, took to his Truth Social platform hours after the gag order by Justice Arthur Engoron was paused to call his "Trump hating" top clerk "politically biased and out of control".

Engoron had imposed the order in October after Trump shared a photo of his top clerk on social media.

He has fined Trump a total of \$15,000 for twice violating it and warned of more serious consequences for future breaches, including imprisonment.

Trump, his two adult sons and 10 of his companies are accused in the lawsuit by

New York Attorney-General Letitia James of inflating his net worth by as much as \$2.2bn to secure better deals from lenders and insurers.

Trump has denied wrongdoing and accused James, an elected Democrat, and Engoron of political bias and "election interference".

Engoron has already ruled that Trump engaged in fraud, and the trial largely concerns damages.

James is seeking at least \$250mn in fines and a New York commercial real estate ban against Trump and his sons Donald Jr and Eric Trump.

The trial, which is expected to continue into mid-December, is part of a maelstrom of legal troubles Trump faces as he cam-

paigns to challenge Democratic President Joe Biden in the November 2024 election.

Those include four criminal cases, two of which concern his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Biden.

Trump nonetheless holds a commanding lead over his Republican rivals, opinion polls show.

The federal judge set to preside over Trump's March trial in Washington for conspiring to overturn the 2020 presidential election also imposed a partial gag order on the brash billionaire but that order has also been frozen pending an appeals court hearing to take place on Monday.

US District Judge Tanya Chutkan ordered Trump last month not to publicly attack prosecutors, court staff or potential

witnesses ahead of his trial.

Chutkan's ruling came after special counsel Jack Smith, a frequent target of Trump's vitriol, filed a motion claiming that the real estate tycoon's inflammatory rhetoric threatened to undermine his trial for election subversion.

Trump was indicted in Washington for allegedly seeking to upend the results of the 2020 election in a concerted effort that led to the violent January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol by his supporters.

Trump also faces federal charges for alleged mishandling of top secret documents after he left the White House, and has been indicted for racketeering in Georgia on accusations that he tried to overturn the 2020 election results in the southern state.

Thousands strike over Italy budget

AFP/Reuters
Rome

Tens of thousands of people took to the streets in support of a national day of strike action in Italy yesterday, which has pitched trade unions against the government over its 2024 budget.

Teachers, healthcare staff, taxi drivers and postal workers were among those called out in the strike organised by two of the country's largest unions, the CGIL and UIL.

They say that Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's tax-cutting budget woefully underfunds key sectors such as health, education and industry.

Critics accuse the government of chasing votes ahead of next year's European Parliament elections at the expense of workers and pensioners.

"Meloni, the people are hungry", read one banner held aloft by protesters gathered in Rome's historic Piazza del Popolo, while thousands of demonstrators marched in Genoa and Milan.

Unions reported high turnout for the strike at schools and universities, post offices and ports, as well as private firms, including steelworkers and food industry workers.

However, the far-right League party of Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini contested this, saying that there was "little support for the strike", particularly on the railways.

Salvini, who is also transport minister, imposed restrictions on the strike to reduce the disruption, to the outrage of union leaders.

In what he described as a compromise based on "common sense", he halved the

duration of the transport workers and firefighters strike to four hours during the morning, while air travel was not included at all.

CGIL general secretary Maurizio Landini accused the minister of an "attack on the right to strike".

The unions had sought to have their walkout defined as a general strike, which would have been allowed to last 24 hours.

However, the watchdog that arbitrates strikes in Italy said it did not meet the criteria, as several sectors were excluded from the action, which is also being spread out over five days.

UIL leader Pierpaolo Bombardieri called for an increase in wages, better job security and fiscal reforms, "for a fairer society, with less inequality".

Commuters in Rome, such as Clarissa Giovannini, who lives on the outskirts of the

city, had an early start to avoid the strike: "I headed out much earlier than usual, luckily I caught the train."

Tickets for trains leaving in the hours before the strike were mostly sold out, with fares of those left selling for above average prices.

Meloni has tried to avoid being drawn into the debate.

When asked yesterday, on a trip to Croatia, the premier said she had "great respect for the rights of workers, for strikes" - but suggested this one was politically motivated.

"It was launched long before we wrote the budget," she said.

Italy's government last month approved a budget for next year with measures worth around €24bn (\$26bn) in tax cuts and increased spending, despite market concerns over the country's strained public finances.

Argentina faces nail-biter election

Argentines head to the polls tomorrow in a down-to-the-wire race between two wildly different presidential candidates, with many frozen by indecision over which choice will rescue them from triple-digit inflation.

One candidate is Economy Minister Sergio Massa, 51, who has overseen annual inflation of 143% and record poverty levels.

His rival is a complete outsider, the libertarian and self-described "anarcho-capitalist" Javier Milei, who has vowed to halt Argentina's unbridled spending, ditch the peso for the US dollar, and "dynamite" the central bank.

Polls have the candidates neck-and-neck, with Milei at a very slight advantage.

The stakes are enormous for Latin America's third-biggest economy, which has struggled with decades of fiscal woes.

With over \$400bn in public debt, central bank reserves in the red, and no credit line, the next government "will be digging Argentina out of an unbelievably deep hole with very few resources to do so", said Benjamin Gedan, director of the Argentina Project at the Washington-based Wilson Centre.

Despite heavy government subsidies of fuel, transport and electricity, and millions receiving social welfare, poverty levels stand at over 40%.

Milei, a 53-year-old Buenos Aires lawmaker with wild hair and a rock-star persona has gripped a disillusioned public with his fiery outbursts against a "thieving and useless political class".

While Milei had led the polls before the first round, it was Massa who confounded expectations by scoring the most votes in the October election, leading by seven points.

This has led Milei to tone down his rhetoric in a bid to appeal to more moderate voters.

Massa, meanwhile, has worked hard to distance himself from the more controversial members of his unpopular ruling Peronist coalition. - **AFP**

Afghans driven from Pakistan rebuilding lives from 'zero'

AFP/Reuters
Torkham/Islamabad

Rocked gently on his mother's knees, a fly on his nose, a baby sleeps fitfully in a tent in a barren border camp as his family prepares to leave the waypoint to rebuild their lives in Afghanistan.

In the transit camp at Torkham, where returnees driven out of Pakistan sweat in burning heat during the day and shiver through the night, many of the blue tents at the foot of rocky mountains standing stark against a cloudless sky have already emptied.

Trucks overloaded with several families, carrying cushions, brightly coloured blankets and kitchen utensils, are readied to set off.

Border officials say that at least 210,000 Afghans, including many who have lived decades, if not their whole lives, outside their country, have passed through the Torkham border point since Pakistan ordered those without documents to leave.

From the reception camp, they have dispersed to various Afghan provinces with a handout of around 15,000 afghanis (\$205) - just enough to support a family for a month.

For many, nothing, and no one, awaits them.

"We have nowhere to go, we don't have a house, or land, I don't have any work," said Sher Aga, a former security guard in Pakistan.

He bundled his nine children and all the family's belongings into a truck to head north, to Kunduz province, where he was born.

However, the 43-year-old has no memory of his homeland, having left Afghanistan when he was five.

"I don't have any family there anymore," he told AFP. "My children ask me, 'What country are we going to?'"

In a tent that she, her husband and their 10 children are sheltering in, 40-year-old Amina hides her face behind a red headscarf.

They are destined for Jalalabad, capital of Nangarhar province where Torkham is located, and where she has "many brothers".

"I asked my family to find us a house" to rent, she said, "but they say there are none".

"No one has called us or come to see us," she added.

In Pakistan, her sons worked selling vegetables or driving rickshaws to pull in enough money to sustain the family, but Amina fears for their prospects in Afghanistan, wracked by economic crisis and unemployment.

"If the boys don't work, we're not going to make it."

Another nearby tent is crammed with the 16 members of Gul Pari's family, who have been sleeping on cardboard boxes without blankets since arriving at the transit camp.

Her voice is drowned out by the honking of tanker trucks delivering much-needed water to the camp, with clusters of laughing,

Taliban minister raises return of deported Afghans' assets in Pakistan visit



Police personnel test the biometrics of Afghans during a search operation to identify alleged illegal immigrants, on the outskirts of Karachi.



Right: A girl peeps out during a search operation to identify alleged illegal immigrants, on the outskirts of Karachi.



A woman sits with a girl as they beg for alms along a street in the Fayzabad district of Afghanistan's Badakhshan province.



In this photograph taken on November 12, a mother of three children holds an infant while on a truck to Jalalabad from a makeshift camp near the Afghanistan-Pakistan Torkham border in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, days after their deportation.

Ukrainian teens win prize for refugee apps

Three Ukrainian teenagers who developed apps to support refugee children fleeing war in their home country and abroad were awarded yesterday the 2023 KidsRights International Children's Prize.

Sofia Tereshchenko, 18, and Anastasiia Feskova and Anastasiia Demchenko, both 17, follow in the footsteps of environmental activist Greta Thunberg and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai in claiming the prestigious children's award.

Tunisian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ouided Bouchamaoui presented the trio with the prize at a ceremony in London.

Half of the €100,000 (\$108,000) prize will go to the winner's subject, and the other half will be invested by KidsRights, the Dutch children's rights organisation behind the initiative, in other projects.

Tereshchenko, Feskova and Demchenko were developing a mobile app together when their country was invaded by Russia in 2022.

Shocked by stories of refugee children arriving in foreign countries without a parent to rely on, they began making apps to help them.

The first, "Referee", gives children aged 1-11 information on how to find safety, food and shelter when they arrive in a new country.

The second, "SVITY", connects refugees aged 16 and above with children from host communities to help them settle in.

The prize was created in 2005 during the World Summit of Nobel Peace laureates in Rome, and has been presented by a Nobel Peace Prize laureate every year since. - **AFP**

barefoot children clinging to the back.

The 46-year-old grandmother, her grandchild's rail-thin body cradled in her lap, said that in five days they will leave for Kunduz to start a new life in a country that she hasn't seen in four decades.

Life was precarious for the family collecting scraps in Pakistan, but in Afghanistan, "we have nothing", she said.

"We fear starvation. But if we find work, it'll be OK. We will be happy in our homeland. In Pakistan, we were being harassed."

Most of those returning fled an Afghanistan ravaged for decades by deadly conflict, but the end to fighting since the Taliban's return to power in 2021 has encouraged some to come back.

On the road to Jalalabad, Shazia and 20 other women and children piled into a small truck that leaned

precariouly as it veered around bends in the road, whipping the women's blue burqas around a teetering mound of bundles.

Of the Afghans returning from Pakistan, she is luckier than most: her husband went ahead of them to Jalalabad and found a four-room house to rent for four families.

"The rent is expensive," said the 22-year-old mother-of-three, her youngest child only two months old. "But tonight we will be able to sleep."

The Taliban's acting commerce minister has said that he had asked Pakistan to help return the assets of expelled Afghans and discussed ways to overcome Afghanistan's stalled banking sector transactions during a four-day visit to Islamabad this week.

Acting minister Nooruddin Azizi's arrival in the Pakistani

capital marked the first public visit by a senior Taliban official since Pakistan announced its policy to deport thousands of undocumented Afghans and other foreign citizens after November 1.

It comes just a week after Pakistan's caretaker prime minister said its expulsion plan was a response to the unwillingness of the Taliban-led administration to act against militants using Afghanistan to carry out attacks in Pakistan.

The Taliban have said the security issues are a domestic matter for Islamabad and called on Pakistan to stop deportations.

Azizi said in an interview with Reuters on Thursday night that the negotiations had mainly focused on trade issues and had been "friendly".

He said that Pakistan officials had raised counter-terrorism is-

sues and he had reiterated the Taliban's policy that Afghan soil would not be used against other nations.

Azizi said a major focus of the visit had been raising the problem of Afghan deportees being unable to return their assets from Pakistan.

He said that the Afghan embassy's charge d'affaires in Islamabad and Pakistan's foreign office would work on a "detailed roadmap" on how the assets could be returned but said it would take time.

"This is not a matter of 10 people or 100 people, this is a matter of 1.7mn people," Azizi said.

Afghan citizens returning to Afghanistan have said there are restrictions on the transfer of cash and property from Pakistan, where many had built businesses and homes for decades.



With the beginning of the cruise season, ships with tourists have started arriving at the Old Doha Port cruise terminal. A cruise ship and a traditional dhow are seen yesterday afternoon.
PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

Left: Picnickers enjoying the good weather at a green area of Old Doha Port yesterday.

Right: A busy Mina District yesterday afternoon.

Old Doha Port: a hub of many attractions



By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Developing world-class marinas such as the Old Doha Port is a strategic move for Qatar to enhance its tourism appeal, attracting yacht owners and promoting water sports activities, an industry expert has said.

“The Old Doha Port’s proximity to numerous 5-star hotels, and cultural and historical hubs such as the Museum of Islamic Art and Souq Waqif, among others, adds to its appeal as a favourite tourism destination,” Outing Qatar founder and managing director Mosaad Moustafa Eleiwa told *Gulf Times*.

He said that the transformation of the Old Doha Port into an international cruise gateway has been a game-changer.

Implementing seamless immigration and customs processes has resulted in thousands of visitors accessing the port.

This influx enhances exposure to various water sports activities and contributes to the overall pleasant sea experience.

“The availability of a day-use experience for locals, visitors, and residents at the port, featuring attractions such as an aquarium and five-star cafes and restaurants along its boardwalk, enhances the probability of booking yachts and

participating in water sports activities,” Eleiwa said. “The port serves as a venue for relaxation, dining, and exploring the vibrancy of Doha from a fresh perspective”

The Old Doha Port marina has been host to unique sea and water sports experiences, including a first-of-its-kind Jetski competition held recently.

Year-round activities, including an international boat show and different business and touristic exhibitions, are planned to further increase foot traffic at the marina.

Eleiwa expressed confidence that focusing on understanding the preferences and motivations of visitors, along with identifying the reasons for choosing the Old Doha Port and developing distinctive, tangible, and exclusive must-see/visit experiences, will contribute to boosting customer influx, increasing revenues, and fostering additional business opportunities at the marina.

As the colder months set in, Qatar is witnessing a surge in visitors to public parks and other outdoor destinations, particularly the Old Doha Port.

The Mina District, Box Park, and cruise terminal, in addition to the lush greenery within the area, have been attracting many families who often spend their weekends and afternoons in picnics and other recreational activities.



Mosaad Moustafa Eleiwa

Local Arabic daily *Arrayah* earlier reported that plans to open a beach at the port’s western side is expected to further boost its allure.

This development would provide visitors with the opportunity to engage in water activities, including swimming while enjoying a scenic view of the Dafna Towers.



The Old Doha Port is witnessing an increasing number of water activities, especially jetskiing.

Left: The Box Park is an attractive destination for many.



Sunset at Old Doha Port yesterday.