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Amir welcomes GCC leaders to summit

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani welcomed the leaders and representatives of the sisterly Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries to their second home, Qatar, to participate in the 44th GCC Summit yesterday. His Highness the Amir said in a post on his official account on X platform: "I welcome my brothers, the leaders and representatives of the sisterly GCC countries to their second home, Qatar, today to participate in the 44th GCC Summit." (QNA) **Page 16**

Amir, Austrian chancellor discuss Gaza situation

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani discussed with Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria Karl Nehammer the latest developments in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories. This came during a phone call received by the Amir yesterday from the Chancellor of Austria. The chancellor expressed his thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir for Qatar's efforts and mediation in the release of hostages. During the call, they also discussed bilateral relations and ways to develop them in various fields. (QNA)

GCC leaders express concern over Israeli aggression in Gaza

The leaders of the GCC countries yesterday expressed their deep concern and great dissatisfaction with the blatant Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and their condemnation of the escalation of indiscriminate bombing carried out by the Israeli forces in Gaza, forced displacement of the civilian population, and destruction of civilian facilities and infrastructure, including residential buildings, schools, health facilities, and places of worship, in clear viola-

tion of international law and international humanitarian law. In the Doha Declaration of the 44th Session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Co-operation Council, held in Doha yesterday, the leaders appreciated the constructive role played by the council in meeting the critical and dangerous challenges facing the region. They expressed their appreciation of joint mediation efforts of Qatar, Egypt and the US, stressing the need for immediately resuming the humanitarian truce in Gaza.

Summit would lead to stronger GCC action: Amir

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani expressed his aspiration that the 44th Session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) will contribute to stronger joint GCC action. In a post on the Amir's official account on social media platform 'X', His Highness the Amir expressed his pleasure to host the 44th GCC Summit and thanked the leaders of the Council for their participation, as well as the summit's guest of honour President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for attending. His Highness the Amir also expressed his hopes that the summit's outcomes will contribute to strengthening joint GCC action for the benefit of the people of GCC. His Highness the Amir added that discussions were also held regarding the Israeli aggression against Gaza and its consequences in light of the failure of the international community and affirmed the adherent support toward the brotherly Palestinian people in establishing their independent state. (QNA)

The 44th session of the Supreme Council of GCC countries was held in Doha yesterday, in the presence of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. **Pages 14, 15, 16**

Amir, Saudi crown prince co-chair Joint Qatari-Saudi Co-ordination Council meeting

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Prince Mohamed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud co-chaired yesterday the 7th meeting of the Joint Qatari-Saudi Co-ordination Council in Doha. **Page 3**

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Amir, Saudi crown prince co-chair joint Qatari-Saudi council meeting

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Prince Mohamed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud yesterday co-chaired the 7th meeting of the Joint Qatari-Saudi Co-ordination Council at the Sheraton Doha Hotel.

During the meeting, the council reviewed the strong fraternal relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them in various fields for the benefit of the two countries and the two fraternal peoples, especially in the political, security, economic, investment, and other fields. The council also discussed a number of regional and international issues of common concern, especially the latest developments, in addition to exchanging views on everything that would achieve stability and security in the region.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Prince Mohamed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud witnessed the exchange of a number of agree-



ment and memorandums of understanding in various fields. The meeting was attended by His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiah, HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa

bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, HE the Head of the State Security Abdullah bin Mohamed al-Khulaifi, HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari, HE the Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti, HE the Minister of Sports and Youth Salah bin Ghanem al-Ali, HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh

Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qasim al-Thani, HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani, HE the Adviser to the Amir on Economic Affairs Ahmed bin Jassim bin Mohamed al-Thani, HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater, and a number of ministers.

On the Saudi side, it was attended by Minister of Energy Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman al-Saud, Minister of State and Mem-

ber of the Cabinet Prince Turki bin Mohamed bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Minister of Sports Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki bin Faisal bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Minister of Interior Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Minister of Defence Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud, Minister of Culture Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan al-Saud, Minister of State, Member of the Cabinet

and National Security Adviser Dr Musaed bin Mohamed al-Aiban, Minister of Commerce Majid bin Abdullah al-Qasabi, Minister of Finance Mohamed bin Abdullah al-Jadaan, Minister of Investment Engineer Khalid bin Abdulaziz al-Falih, Minister of Economy and Planning Faisal bin Fadel al-Ibrahim, Minister of Media Salman bin Yousif al-Dossary, President of General Intelligence Khalid bin Ali al-Humaidan, and a number of members of the accompanying official delegation. (QNA)

Qatar, Saudi Arabia ... deep-rooted ties and a common destiny

Saudi Arabia and Qatar have historical relations based on common perspectives governed by the bonds of brotherhood, kinship and common destiny. They also have many social, cultural, political, security, economic and youth aspects in common.

The Saudi Press Agency (SPA) stressed in a report that the leaders of the two countries are keen to further boost co-operation and exert efforts to ensure regional security and stability, address various challenges, and achieve progress and prosperity, emphasising that the mutual official visits have contributed to increased co-operation between the Kingdom and the State of Qatar in various fields, based on their leaderships' belief in the importance of direct communication, which strengthens cohesion and mutual understanding.

The report mentioned that as part of efforts to further encourage joint action, the Saudi-Qatari Co-ordination Council has contributed to institutionalising and boosting relations, including via co-operation initiatives in various fields and effective mechanisms to follow up on their implementation, based on the Saudi Vision 2030 and the Qatar National Vision 2030, indicating that the two visions provide great opportunities to enhance co-operation and develop bilateral relations between the two countries in all fields because of the common goals they share, which effectively contributed to achieving advanced positions in various international indicators to meet the aspirations of the leadership of the two countries, achieve the interests of the two brotherly peoples, and advance the partnership to broader horizons.

It highlighted the leaderships of the two countries' keenness to strengthen bilateral relations and complement their efforts to help the GCC ensure security and stability in the region, achieve progress and prosperity, address various challenges, and bring co-operation among member states to the highest level.

SPA report also noted that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar have trade relations, as the balance of trade of non-oil goods between the Kingdom and Qatar exceeds SAR1.3bn.

Saudi exports amount to over SAR300mn, which included in plastics and its products, live animals, salts, cement, and vegetables, while re-exported goods amount to more than SAR2.4bn that included ships, boats, floating facilities, cars and its parts, precious metals and gemstones, machinery and

mechanical tools and its parts, and fruits.

The report added that the total value of non-oil imports by Saudi Arabia stands at over SAR1.3bn, which included mineral products, ships, boats, floating facilities, inorganic chemical products, live animals, plastics and its products.

On the cultural aspect, SPA report noted the keenness of the two countries to strengthen their cultural ties, and in support of this, the Kingdom was a guest of honour at the Doha International Book Fair 2023 with the aim of consolidating culture, highlighting heritage, arts and literature, and introducing the cultural and historical heritage, Saudi values, and customs and traditions, where a memorandum of understanding was signed between the ministries of culture in the two brotherly countries, to enhance cooperation in various cultural fields. (QNA)

Qatar, Saudi sign agreements, MoUs

Qatar and Saudi Arabia signed a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs), covering several areas, including investment, trade, industry, banking, digital governance, culture, sports and youth. The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding between the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) and the kingdom's Public Investment Fund (PIF) regarding joint (investment, energy and infrastructure committee), and a memorandum of understanding for co-operation in the field of digital government between the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in the State of Qatar and the Digital Government Authority in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (investment, energy and infrastructure committee), and a memorandum of understanding for co-operation in the field of diplomatic training between the Diplomatic Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Qatar and the Prince Saud Al Faisal Institute for Diplomatic Studies at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Saudi Arabia (the political committee).

The two sides also signed a memorandum of understanding between the Qatar Central Bank (QCB) and the Saudi Central Bank regarding co-operation in the field of central bank work (the committee on economy, commerce and industry), and a memorandum of understanding for co-operation in the field of intellectual property between the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in Qatar and the Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property, and a co-operation agreement in the field of radio and television between the Qatar Media Corporation and the Saudi Broadcasting Authority (the media committee). The two countries also signed a memorandum of understanding for co-operation in the fields of sports and youth between the government of Qatar and Saudi Arabia (sports and youth committee), and a memorandum of understanding for cooperation in the field of competition between the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in Qatar and the General Authority for Competition in Saudi Arabia (committee on economy, trade and industry). (QNA)



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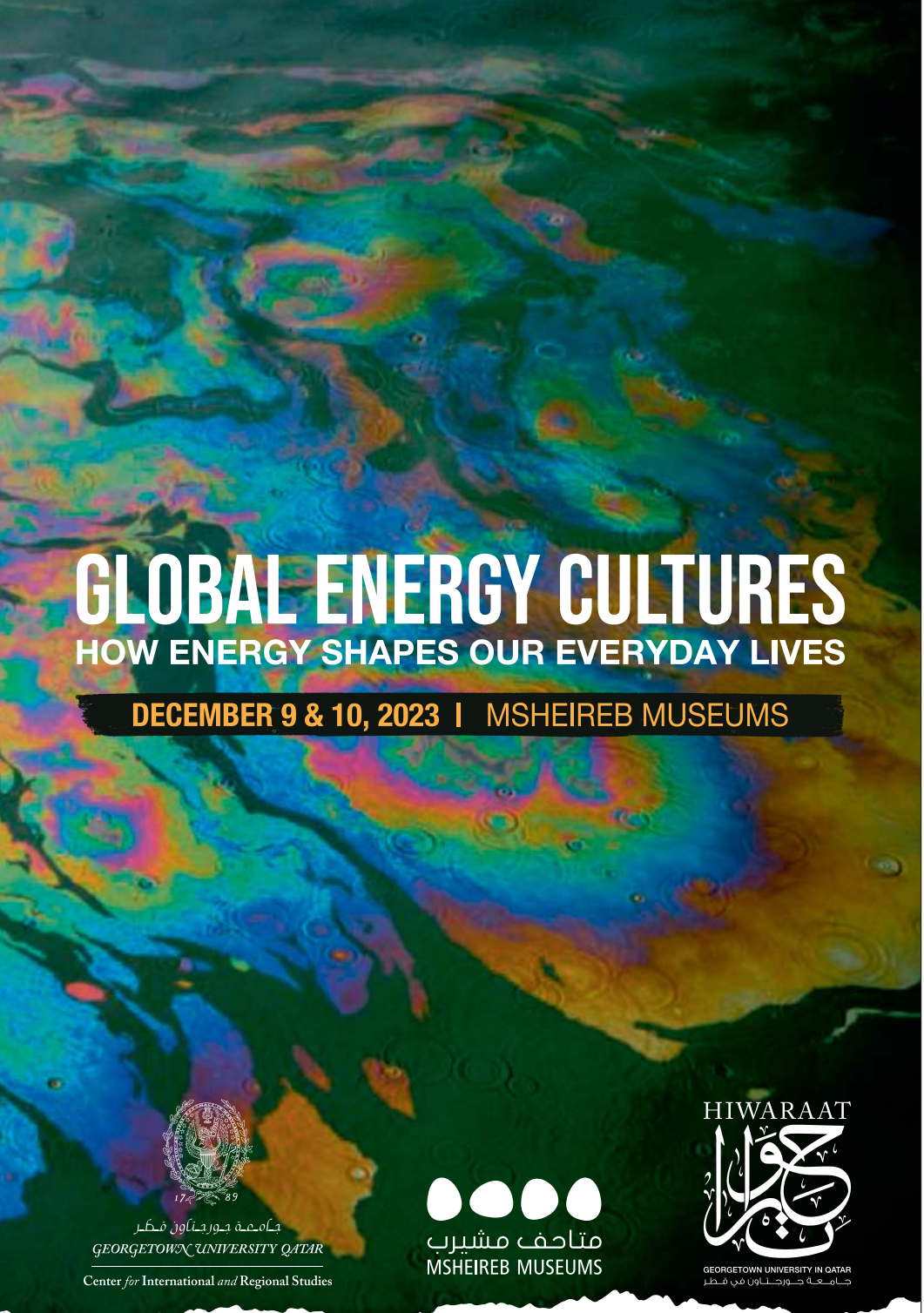


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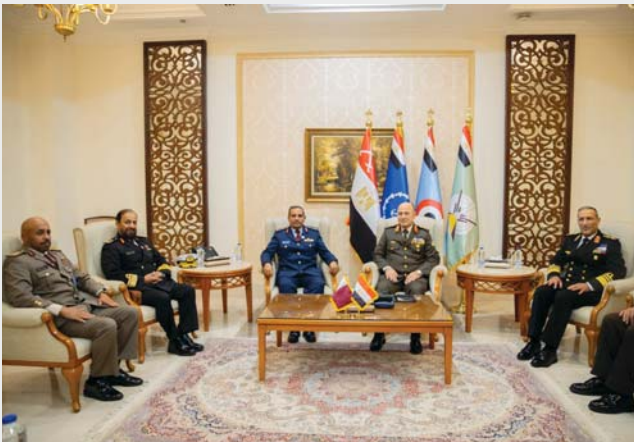
Sheikha Moza meets First Lady of Turkiye

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, and the Education Above All Foundation, met yesterday with Emine Erdogan, Consort of the Turkish president. The meeting discussed the current situation in Gaza and the efforts made to provide support and humanitarian aid to the brotherly Palestinian people. (QNA)

PICTURES: AR al-Baker



Chief of Staff participates in defence industry exhibition ‘EDEX’ inauguration



HE the Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces Staff Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad bin Aqeel al-Nabit participated in the inauguration of the 3rd International Defence Industry Exhibition 'EDEX' in Egypt. On the sidelines of the exhibition, HE al-Nabit met with Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Egypt Lieutenant-General Osama Askar. He also visited Panorama October Museum. The inauguration, the meeting, and the visit were attended by a number of senior officers of the Qatar Armed Forces. (QNA)

Delegation of Milipol Qatar Committee visits EDEX 2023

A delegation from the Milipol Qatar Committee visited the 3rd Egypt Defence Expo (EDEX 2023) organised from Dec 4-7. The visit was part of the preparation and promotion for the Milipol Qatar 2024 exhibition, scheduled for Oct 29-31, 2024. The delegation was briefed on the latest innovations and defence and security systems. The delegation included Chairman of the Committee Major General Nasser bin Fahd al-Thani and Major Khaled Saadoun al-Kuwari, a committee member. (QNA)

Qatar announces success of ongoing efforts to reunify Ukrainian children with families

Qatar announced yesterday the success of the second reunification of Ukrainian children with their families in Ukraine, as part of its ongoing mediation and co-ordination efforts in reunifying families separated by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that Qatar hosted six children with their parents and legal guardians in the Qatari embassy in Moscow, and accompanied them to their destinations ensuring their safety and well-being.

The statement renewed Qatar's sincere gratitude and appreciation to the

authorities of Ukraine and Russia for their co-operation and commitment to the safety and security of these children, and providing the appropriate care for them during the operation and before that.

The ministry also expressed Qatar's thanks to Commissioner for Children's Rights under the President of the Russian Federation Maria Lvova-Belova, Commissioner for Human Rights in the Ukrainian Parliament Dmytro Lubinets for their co-operation in that regard.

Qatar reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the efforts made by both the states of Ukraine and Russia to reunify

separated families and protect the rights and well-being of the children affected by the ongoing conflict, it stressed its commitment to facilitating the reunification of children with their families in a safe and rapid manner in all aspects.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed that the success of this operation reflects Qatar's international credibility with various parties, its permanent commitment to promoting peace, security and stability in the region and the world, and its readiness to play a constructive and effective role in the various crises and conflicts that the world faces today. (QNA)

Qatar, Seychelles sign MoU in aviation



The civil aviation authorities of Qatar and the Seychelles held meetings on the sidelines of the International Conference for Air Services Negotiations (ICAN 2023) in Riyadh in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during which they signed a memorandum of understanding to increase transport rights between the two countries, allowing the operation of 21 A two-way passenger trips, enhancing travel options for passengers. Acting President of the Qatar's General Civil Aviation Authority Mohamed Faleh al-Hajri and the Secretary of Civil Aviation, Ports and Marine in the Republic of Seychelles Alan Renaud. The talks also dealt with a number of issues of joint interest in the field of air transport, enhancing international bilateral relations between the two countries. (QNA)

Qatar, Togo sign up on final air services pact



The final signing ceremony of the air services agreement between the State of Qatar and the Republic of Togo was held yesterday, on the sidelines of the meetings of the International Conference on Air Services Negotiations (ICAN 2023) held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The agreement was signed by Mohamed Faleh al-Hajri, in charge of managing Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), on behalf of the Qatari side and Deputy Director-General of the National Civil Aviation Agency Col Bararmna Boukpepsi Djoguigou, on behalf of the Togo side. Following the signing ceremony, the two sides discussed ways to strengthen and upgrade bilateral relations in civil aviation between the two countries. (QNA)

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Qatar tourism boom boosts investments, efforts for economic diversification

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Qatar's flourishing tourism sector not only brings investment opportunities but also significantly contributes to job creation, marking a shift away from traditional sectors like oil and gas, an industry expert has said.

"It has a ripple effect, creating jobs in related industries such as hospitality, entertainment, retail, construction and other services," Mosaad Moustafa Eleiwa, the founder and managing director of Outing Qatar, told *Gulf Times* as he underlined the transformative impact of the growing tourism industry on Qatar's economy.

He said the burgeoning sector is also stimulating Qatar's real estate market, attracting increased investments in both commercial and residential properties.

Eleiwa cited a recent meeting with a British visitor, who inspired by his experience, rented a luxury car and expressed plans to open a company in Doha. This, he said, underscores the positive impact of tourism on attracting foreign investment and fostering economic diversity.

He said Qatar, to bolster this momentum, implemented a series of initiatives aimed at attracting more visitors and promoting tourism. Key among these strategies, he added, is a substantial investment in infrastructure development, featuring world-class hotels, airports and transportation



Mosaad Moustafa Eleiwa

systems to enhance the overall visitor experience.

According to Eleiwa, the country also positioned itself as a global hub for major international events. Following the success of hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, he said Qatar continues to attract attention with events like the Qatar Open in tennis, the Qatar Masters in golf, the MotoGP Grand Prix, the Asian Cup, and various year-round international events and exhibitions.

He noted that Qatar Airways, the national carrier, plays a key role in connecting the nation to the world. The airline's global network and high-quality services contribute to Qatar's allure as a luxury travel destination, with visa facilitation and stopover op-

tions further enticing travellers, he added. Eleiwa pointed out that a noteworthy focus has been on developing cruise tourism, with investments in Doha's old port facilities and initiatives to position Qatar as a cruise destination. These efforts, he stressed, aim to attract visitors arriving by sea, broadening the spectrum of experiences offered by the country.

"These initiatives collectively contribute to Qatar's efforts to position itself as a leading tourism destination, offering a mix of cultural, sporting, and entertainment experiences for visitors from around the world," he said.

Eleiwa said Qatar Tourism (QT) emerged as a crucial player in these endeavours as it actively participates in international events and exhibitions to showcase the nation's diverse offerings. By collaborating with national and international stakeholders, he said QT aims to improve the overall visitor experience through smart goals and campaigns.

He noted that strategies prioritised by Qatar's tourism sector include ensuring ease of access to the country from land, sea and sky, as well as building networks and collaborating with international tourism organisations, travel agencies and airlines. These partnerships, he added, facilitate joint marketing efforts and help attract tourists from new source markets, ultimately contributing to Qatar's sustainable growth, economic benefits, and overall development.

QIB, Visa launch 'Spend & Score' campaign to celebrate AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023

Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB), in collaboration with Visa, is offering QIB Visa credit cardholders the exclusive opportunity to win 25 packages (two Category 1 tickets per winner) to the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023, taking place in Qatar from January 12 to February 10, 2024.

The 'Spend & Score' campaign will be running until December 31, 2023.

Winners will be awarded two Category 1 tickets each for various matches, including the opening match between Qatar and Lebanon, Saudi Arabia vs Oman, as well as Qatar vs Tajikistan, Qatar vs China and the final match.

To be eligible for the campaign, cardholders spending using their Visa credit cards will earn one chance in the draw to win two Category 1 tickets each for the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 matches with every QR1,000 domestic or international transaction.



Customers who use their Visa credit cards on domestic and international spends for a minimum total of QR15,000 will have a chance in the draw to be one of the ten winners, receiving two Category 1 tickets to attend the final match.

D Anand, QIB general manager – Personal Banking Group, said: "We are pleased to collaborate with Visa, extending the thrill of the highly anticipated football tournament to our customers

who have demonstrated keen interest in previous tournaments." Shashank Singh, Visa vice-president and general manager for Qatar and Kuwait, said: "We are committed to supporting QIB's mission of customer appreciation which aligns with the government's strategic efforts to advance digital commerce in Qatar. We look forward to elevating the experience for our valued customers during this prestigious sporting event."

Closure at Bu Hamour Intersection



The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced an 8-hour closure of traffic signal at the Bu Hamour Intersection on Sabah Al-Ahmad Corridor from 2am to 10am on December 8, while keeping traffic open on the right turns. During the closure in coordination with the General Directorate of Traffic, road users must use the intersections near Bu Hamour Interchange to reach their destinations as shown on the map. Ashghal will install road signs advising motorists of the temporary closure and has requested all to follow them and abide by the speed limit to ensure safety.

Philippine embassy to operate at new location from Dec 10

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The Philippine embassy in Qatar is moving to a new and more accessible location within Onaiza area, and will open its doors for normal operations from December 10.

Located at Building No 6, Street No 549, Zone No 66, the embassy can be reached via the Katara Metro station on the Red Line.

The embassy has provided a QR code for easy access to its new location on Google Maps.

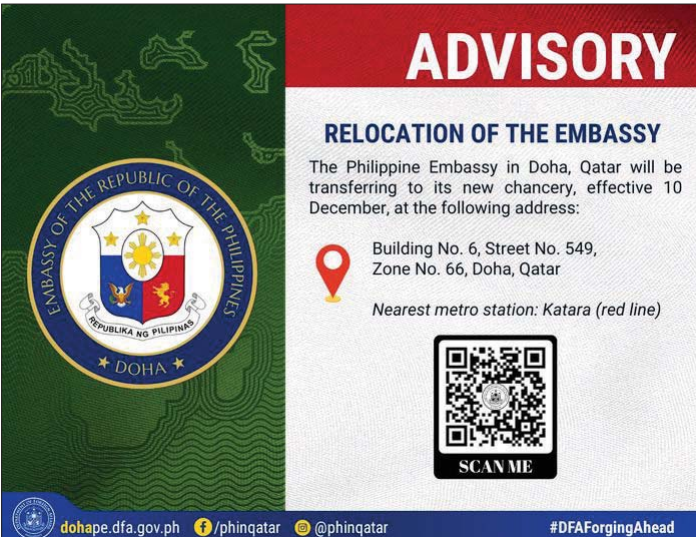
Many Filipino expatriates lauded the embassy's decision to relocate, describing it as a thoughtful gesture that addresses the struggles of commuting.

A Filipino expatriate cited significant savings on transportation costs in visiting the embassy at its new building, noting that she usually pays an average of QR32 for taxis. But with the metro, she said she will be able to save money.

Others took to social media to express their appreciation and excitement to visit the embassy.

Anticipating the move, the embassy encouraged visitors to schedule non-emergency, non-urgent consular services transactions after December 9, 2023, due to ongoing building and system maintenance.

It is learnt that this approach



Many Filipino expatriates lauded the embassy's decision to relocate, describing it as a thoughtful gesture that addresses the struggles of commuting

aims to minimise service disruptions during the transition.

The embassy also announced that it would be closed on December 18, 21, 25, 26 and 31 "in observance of Philippine and Qatari holi-

days", prompting the community to plan their visits accordingly.

Despite the brief closures, the Filipino expatriates expressed gratitude for the embassy's efforts to enhance accessibility.

Interview: Matthew Williams, Counsel, Crowell & Moring Doha on his recent appointment to the Committee Board of the Qatar British Business Forum (QBBF)

We sat down with Matthew Williams, Counsel at Crowell & Moring Doha, a globally-recognized international full-service law firm, to discuss his recent appointment to the Committee Board of the Qatar British Business Forum (QBBF) and the importance of having a legal partner in navigating the intricate terrain of investments and cross-border transactions between Qatar and the UK.

Crowell Doha, actively involved in fostering economic ties between Qatar and the UK, became a member of the QBBF earlier this year, playing a pivotal role in advising clients in both Qatar and the UK on both countries' respective multitude of investment opportunities and business dynamics. **How does Crowell Doha actively contribute to strengthening economic ties and collaboration between Qatar and the UK through its involvement with the QBBF?**

Earlier this year, our firm became a member of the Qatar British Business Forum (QBBF)—an organization founded in 1992 dedicated to promoting trade between Qatar and the UK. With offices in both Doha and London, Crowell plays an active role in contributing to the strong commercial, trade and investment ties between Qatar and the UK. Our relationship with the QBBF enables our team to advise our clients in Qatar on the current business climate in the UK and how the two sides can better align their interests.

While Crowell Doha's focus is Qatar, and has both Qatari government and private clients, it also has a significant number of UK clients. Being a member of the QBBF provides our firm with insights into the dynamics and needs of the British economy, enabling Crowell to better assist client needs in building their business and relationships in Qatar.

What specific responsibilities and obligations are associated with your new position on the Committee Board of the QBBF, and how do they relate to advancing Qatari-British trade and investment relations?

The Committee Board is the decision-making body of the QBBF. As a board member, I regularly attend board meetings, where discussions are held on the best way to further develop UK-Qatar relations.

To this end, and by way of example, at a recent board meeting, it was unanimously decided that we would have six honorary Qatari members from Qatari businesses, providing us with a direct understanding of the country's business needs straight from its key decision-makers. The addition of these Qatari members will allow for new and exciting developments within the QBBF.

In which sectors or industries do you identify the potential for growth in bilateral trade and investment between Qatar and the UK?

Qatar has always been a major investor in the real estate sector, however, the fields of technology, fintech, and life sciences also offer



Matthew Williams

key opportunities. When we speak about the nexus between artificial intelligence (AI) and the fintech sector, we can see a realm of immense potential for both Qatar and the UK. AI applications in fintech are revolutionizing the landscape of financial services, offering opportunities for innovation, efficiency, and enhanced customer experiences.

In addition, as hydrocarbon-dependent economies shift to clean energy, the importance of increasing investments in renewable technologies towards this transformation becomes apparent. A dialogue on green and sustainable financing is very important, and is an area that can be developed.

Crowell Doha has a strong reputation and solid presence in technology, and significant expertise in infrastructure projects and oil and gas. Beyond expertise, its strategic positioning enables seamless collaboration with the Qatari government entities and UK clients it represents, leveraging this rapport to drive progressive initiatives forward.

What strategies and legal expertise is required to navigate regulatory and legal complexities in cross-border business transactions between Qatar and the UK?

As with any cross-border relationship, there are many complexities in setting up a business, regulatory compliance during the term of the business, and inevitably an exit. What Qatar, and the Qatar Financial Centre, have done in recent years is to develop what was a very young and thin legal framework into a legal system that can effectively attract and support foreign investment.

There are still areas that need developing, but in the current year, there have been big strides made in the fintech arena and this is an area in which Crowell Doha is heavily involved. Our firm's proactive engagement in Qatar's evolving legal landscape, particularly in the rapidly developing fintech sector, positions it as a strategic partner for businesses seeking to navigate the intricate terrain of cross-border transactions between Qatar and the UK.

Looking ahead, what is your vision for the future of Qatari-British trade and investment relations, and how do you see the QBBF contributing to that vision in the coming years?

Qatar and the UK have long had a close and strong relationship.

The QBBF provides an opportunity for new investors to gain deeper insight into Qatar, and understand the country's business dynamics reassured by the many positive years of experience and solid track record embedded within the QBBF.

In May 2022, Qatar and the UK signed a Strategic Investment Partnership under which Qatar pledged to invest up to £10 billion in the UK to help create jobs and further economic growth. In that same year, the two countries shared a trade volume of over £12.1 billion. While this denotes significant outward investment, it also sets the stage for further capital inflows into Qatar. Both the QBBF and Crowell Doha stand at the forefront, uniquely positioned to offer instrumental support, leveraging their expertise and networks to facilitate and guide prospective investments into Qatar's evolving market landscape.

About Matthew Williams:

Matthew Williams, a counsel in the Crowell & Moring Doha office, brings nearly a decade's worth of experience in Qatar. His extensive international expertise in construction, project finance, and arbitration, coupled with a profound understanding of the Qatari legal market, enables him to proficiently handle complex matters and offer clients effective solutions.

Diving into construction projects, Matthew routinely guides clients through front-end negotiations, manages contracts during their course, and handles dispute resolution, leveraging his extensive experience with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the London Court of International Arbitration (LCIA), and the Qatar International Center for Conciliation and Arbitration (QICCA).

Simultaneously, he extends his advisory services to large-scale infrastructure projects, providing counsel to lenders and sponsors on project documentation, financing, and security arrangements. Beyond that, Matthew offers expertise in Qatar law for general commercial concerns, spanning data protection, intellectual property, employment, and consumer protection.

Crowell & Moring LLP Qatar is the Middle East & North Africa headquarters of the international, full-service law firm that represents clients in litigation and arbitration, regulatory and policy, and transactional and corporate matters. The firm, which also has offices in the USA, Europe, and Asia, is globally recognized for its representation of Fortune 500 companies in high-stakes litigation and government-facing matters, as well as its ongoing commitment to pro bono service, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

QRCS-organised forum on volunteerism in Gulf ends

The fourth edition of the Gulf Voluntary Work Forum for the Red Crescent Societies and Associations in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries has concluded.

The two-day event, hosted by the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), operated under the theme "Volunteering for a Sustainable Gulf Future" and was chaired by head of the Omani authority for charitable works Saeed bin Hamad al-Maamari.

Vice-Chair of the QRCS Board of Directors Dr Aisha bint Yousuf al-Manaai commended the Qatari humanitarian efforts at the regional and international levels. She acknowledged the exceptional circumstances coinciding with the forum, particularly the challenging humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The primary goal of the forum was to instil a cul-

ture of volunteering among Gulf youth, foster a sense of responsibility, encourage interaction with others, highlight exemplary youth initiatives in volunteering and to facilitate the exchange of experiences and practices in volunteer work among GCC countries.

During the forum, participants presented various working papers showcasing the efforts of different national associations, organisations in the field of volunteer work.

The forum's conclusion coincided with the International Volunteer Day, celebrated on December 5 each year. QRCS, along with its counterparts worldwide, observes this day to promote the value of volunteering in society and to invest in the capabilities of youth and individuals in serving the nation and humanity. (QNA)

WISH announces strategic partnership with WHO

WISH 2024 to take place in Doha on November 13 and 14

The World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH), an initiative of Qatar Foundation (QF) will be entering into a strategic partnership with the World Health Organisation (WHO) in the lead up to WISH 2024, taking place in Doha on November 13 and 14, 2024.

More than 2,000 health policy makers, innovators, entrepreneurs, researchers and practitioners will convene at Qatar National Convention Centre to look for innovative solutions to some of the world's biggest health challenges.

WISH 2024 will be the seventh edition of WISH, an event now established as a vital event on the global health calendar.

Following high-level discussions between QF Chairperson Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser and WHO director general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WISH will be entering into a strategic partnership with the WHO, formalising an ongoing relationship.

Central to the partnership will



Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and Sultana Afdhal sign the partnership agreement as HE the Minister of Public Health Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari and other dignitaries look on.

be three WHO-led collaborative research projects, generating evidence-based reports for in-depth discussion at next November's event. These reports will focus on topics needing the urgent atten-

tion of the global health community, underscoring a joint commitment to improve policy and practice.

Additionally, local and international partners will work with WISH to develop reports for the summit on a range of issues in areas such as health systems, ethics, physical health, and mental health. WISH 2024 will continue to emphasise the need for regional perspectives on global health and the importance of translating research into solutions with real-world impact.

WISH CEO Sultana Afdhal was joined by Dr Tedros at a ceremony in Doha on Monday to sign a collaboration agreement between WISH and WHO.

The ceremony was witnessed by HE the Minister of Public Health Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari, who is the current Chair of WHO Executive Board.

WHO will be joining the Ministry of Public Health as WISH's strategic partners, with the Ministry having supported WISH since the first summit 10 years ago.

Afdhal said: "We are delighted to share that we will be back with WISH 2024 next November; we remain committed to creating a platform where evidence-based research can inform global health practices. It is an honour to welcome Dr Tedros to the WISH 2024 launch, to share news of our strategic partnership, and to share our vision for a healthier, more equitable world."

WISH announced that the three collaborative projects to be undertaken will focus on the elimination of tuberculosis, palliative care, and the protection of health in armed conflict.

Dr Tedros added: "Our expanding collaboration with WISH builds on a track record of impact and will further demonstrate our joint resolve to tackle pressing global health issues, including tuberculosis, palliative care and protecting health in armed conflict. We look forward to contributing to the evidence base and are very much committed to the partnership."

QU organises campaign to support health professionals in Gaza

The Health and Medical Sciences sector at Qatar University (QU Health) recently organised a campaign in support and solidarity for the health professionals in Gaza for their tireless efforts and sacrifices to treat patients.

Jawaher Barka, president of the Interprofessional Education Student Association, said: "We stand in reverence and honour for those who have dedicated their lives to treating the ill and injured, alleviating their pain, and healing their fractures."

Dr Mohamed El-Rayess, QU health director of Basic Research at the Vice President Office for Health and Medical Sciences, said: "The destruc-

tion witnessed during the war has left a permanent scar on the world's conscience. Lives have been lost, dreams shattered, and a future destroyed – a toll that words cannot fully express. This aggression targeted hospitals, a deliberate act aimed at undermining the healthcare system and eradicating the remaining beacons of life for the people of Gaza."

Dr Hamam al-Louh, a nephrologist at Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza, in a message said: "Fourteen years ago, I left my war-torn homeland in search of knowledge across continents and pursued my residency in nephrology. However, the painful cries of my people called me back. I

returned, armed not only with knowledge but also with a strong determination to heal the wounds inflicted upon my homeland. The corridors of Al-Shifa Hospital whisper tales of resilience and despair, and within their echoes, I find my purpose: to be a beacon of hope amidst the shadows of war crimes."

Many students from QU Health and beyond participated in narrating stories of war victims among the health professionals in Gaza, which enriched Gaza's poetry. Additionally, donations for Gaza were collected during the campaign, and a video featuring messages from some health professionals in Gaza was showcased.



QC provides winter assistance in Gaza

Qatar Charity (QC) has provided winter aid to internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and underprivileged families in the Gaza Strip, Palestine. This is part of QC's ongoing assistance to the affected in the Gaza Strip and Palestine through the 'One Heart' campaign.

The aid includes warm clothing for 1,250 families, in addition to 1,000 shelter kits out of a total of 8,000. Currently, the distribution of 5,913 blankets is underway, benefiting 2,000 individuals so far, in addition to providing fuel for hospitals for the benefit of 50,000 people.

As the Palestinians are living in the very

The aid includes warm clothing for 1,250 families, in addition to 1,000 shelter kits out of a total of 8,000. Currently, the distribution of 5,913 blankets is underway, benefiting 2,000 individuals so far, in addition to providing fuel for hospitals for the benefit of 50,000 people

challenging humanitarian situations, which have further worsened with the onset of winter, QC has urged philanthropists in Qatar to double their support for the 'One Heart' campaign to reach the largest possible number of those affected in Palestine.

People can donate through QC's website (<https://qch.qa/oneheart>), in addition to dialling the hotline +974 4429 0000 for donating. Donations can also be made at QC's branches and collection points across the country. Donors can also request for home collectors to receive the donations from their locations.

QatarEnergy LNG hosts 'CEO Forum' for national graduates, trainees

QatarEnergy LNG recently hosted its annual CEO Forum 2023, providing a platform for its Qatari national graduates and trainees to meet with Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa al-Thani, QatarEnergy LNG chief executive officer and engage in discussions related to their individual development plans and the company's Qatarisation programme.

The two-day event, which was held under the theme L.E.A.D – Learn, Engage, Achieve, Do, celebrated the exceptional achievements of 14 national graduates, 14 coaches, one trainee, and eight scholars. These outstanding individuals were honoured with special awards in recognition of their remarkable contributions to the company and their dedication to personal and professional growth.

The annual forum stands as a testament to QatarEnergy LNG's unwavering commitment to fostering the development of its national graduates and trainees. The occasion offered a unique opportunity for these emerging talents to engage in



Local talents with Sheikh Khalid at the annual CEO Forum.

open and insightful discussions with the company's senior executive, providing them with the chance to seek guidance and clarification related to their individual development plans.

Moreover, participants had the opportunity to address any questions concerning their career development within QatarEnergy LNG, further strengthening the bond be-

tween them and the organisation's leadership.

The Learning and Development Department collected and recorded the insights and recommendations shared during the forums.

These feedback mechanisms are instrumental in ensuring that QatarEnergy LNG's national development process remains relevant, responsive, and ultimately successful for all trainees.

The annual CEO Forum symbolises the dedication of QatarEnergy LNG to empowering the next generation of industry leaders and building a high calibre workforce.



Snapshots from the event.

Expo 2023 Doha marks Cote d'Ivoire National Day



The Expo 2023 Doha celebrated the National Day of Cote d'Ivoire in the presence of HE the Minister of Municipality and chairman of the national committee for hosting the Horticultural Expo 2023 Doha, Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, Cote d'Ivoire Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Kobenan Kouassi Adjoumani, officials, members of the embassy, and members of Cote d'Ivoire community in Qatar.

The celebration featured a range of cultural and artistic activities that express the culture of Cote d'Ivoire.

Adjoumani hailed the efforts made by Qatar in hosting the international expo, affirming that Cote d'Ivoire is committed to progress and development through the industrial development of its agricultural sector, as well as leveraging smart technologies to ensure a better life for its people.

He said that there is a strong belief in the fact that participation in this international event will offer a

platform to highlight a model that can be emulated in the rest of the countries of the world.

Adjoumani added that there is hope for further co-operation in a variety of fields, with Cote d'Ivoire working to bolster the bonds of relationship with Qatar.

He outlined that while there is no way for people to reach out to all countries of the world, being at the expo gives people a chance to take a tour around the world in one place.

Following the celebration ceremony, the officials inaugurated the Cote d'Ivoire pavilion in the international zone, which takes visitors on a journey to the heart of the cultures of francophones in West Africa and highlights the latest development activities in the agricultural sector.

Cote d'Ivoire is the world's largest producer and exporter of cocoa beans in the world, and one of the top countries producing and exporting coffee and palm oil. - QNA

Global Carbon Council and GEM to acquire Global Carbon Registry

The Global Carbon Council International - the carbon credit and sustainable development programme - and Global Environmental Markets (GEM) have partnered to acquire a fully integrated carbon registry solution known as the Global Carbon Registry (GCR).

This registry marks a new era in reporting Article 6.2 credits known as Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs), and further develops voluntary carbon market solutions, offering a host of features designed to streamline transactions and provide an unparalleled user experience.

With the Global Carbon Registry, governments and countries can find their home for launching their own National Carbon Registries.

This partnership offers a tailor-made package of service and technology solutions, based on Global Carbon Council's expertise and framework, to meet the diverse needs of countries in setting up their own registry.

The Global Carbon Registry will deliver more efficient transactions, by supporting the entire spectrum of carbon market transactions, including credit issuance, transfers and retirements, enabling a seamless and efficient process for carbon market participants.

Additionally, the registry establishes seamless connections with external exchanges, enhancing accessibility and facilitating a broader market reach, and is equipped with a benchmark public interface that aligns with CORSIA requirements, to ensure regulatory compliance for market participants.

"Today, our collaboration with Global Environmental Markets Group reflects a culminating point in the acquisition of the cutting-edge Global Carbon Registry," said Global Carbon Council founding chairman Dr Yousef Alhorri.

"It represents a significant leap forward in seamlessly integrating carbon credit certifications and insurance," he said. "Our partnership not only revolutionises the issuance of carbon credits but also empowers nations to shape their own registries, influencing the very structure of carbon markets."

"Nations worldwide require a registry, and with the Global Carbon Council boasting one of the best credit standards globally, they needed a sophisticated registry they could own," said Global Environmental Markets Group chief executive and founder Wayne Sharpe. "We've delivered just that through the Global Carbon Registry."

"This advanced technology, coupled



Dr Alhorri and Sharpe announcing the partnership.

with enhancements for world-class credit standard delivery and electronic functionality for global credit trading, positions us as leaders in the marketplace," he said. "This technology aims to assist nations in setting up sub-registries, providing a cost-effective solution."

With over 118 governments pledging to triple renewable energy production by 2030, the Global Carbon Council is also utilising COP28 to advocate for the vital role that carbon markets will have to play in financing the global renewable energy transition.

HEC Paris in Qatar to host masterclass

HEC Paris in Qatar will host a masterclass by Prof Goncalo Pacheco de Almeida on December 13 on cross-cultural negotiation and how it is increasingly common in today's world.

Participants will go through a live negotiation exercise that will then be used to introduce key universal principles in negotiation.

After the negotiation debrief, basic do's and don'ts in cross-cultural negotiation will be discussed - and the intricacies of identifying local versus global rules in deal making.

The challenges of making deals with counterparts from different cultures are not exclusive to international negotiation: even within a country, bargaining often occurs between parties with distinct negotiation styles or coming from diverse subcultures.

Prof de Almeida is the Dieter Schwarz Foundation chaired full professor of strategy and negotiation, the director of the MBA Strategy Specialisation, and the co-chair of the Strategy and Business Policy Department at HEC Paris.

QU opens graduate programmes readmission for Fall 2024

Qatar University (QU) has announced the opening of readmission applications until February 20, 2024, for its diverse array of graduate programmes for the Fall 2024 semester.

The university will release readmission decisions on June 6, 2024.

With a selection of 60 graduate programmes, the QU caters to various fields of study.

They include PhD and Masters programmes in the College of Engineering, College of Sharia and Islamic Studies, and College of Arts and Sciences.

Others are PhD in Health Sciences and Masters in Health Professions Education in QU Health, Masters in Biomedical Sciences, Genetic Counseling, Public Health, and Human Nutrition in the College of Health Sciences; Masters and Doctor of Pharmacy in the College of Pharmacy; MBA, Masters of Accounting, MSc in Finance, MSc in Marketing, and PhD in Business Administration in the College of Business and Economics; Masters and PhD programmes in Law in the College of Law; and a variety of programmes, including Masters and Diplomas, in the College of Education.

Former QU students, falling into three specific categories, are encouraged to apply for re-admission:

- **Long absence:** Students who withdrew from the university and were absent for more than four

consecutive or intermittent semesters without prior approval, excluding students who were granted approval from the vice-president for Student Affairs.

- **Academic dismissal:** Termination of the student's university record due to unsatisfactory academic achievement or failure to meet graduation requirements in accordance with the regulating policies.
- **Withdrawal under academic warning:** A student who withdrew one semester while under academic warning.

International students are also eligible to apply for readmission, provided that they submit a visa application.

Applicants can track their admission status by logging in with their ID and password on the university's official website.

It is crucial to submit all necessary documents and to fill out the online application form, available at www.apply.qu.edu.qa, before the application deadline to ensure a comprehensive review.

The Fall 2024 semester classes are scheduled to start on August 25, 2024.

For further inquiries or detailed information on graduate programme admissions, prospective applicants can reach out to the Student Call Centre at 44034444 or via e-mail at graduate@qu.edu.qa

Tarsheed forum discusses ways to boost awareness of sustainability

The Tarsheed Energy Efficiency Forum discussed yesterday ways to enhance awareness about sustainability while implementing new policies.

In a post on its official X account, the Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa) said that the second day of the two-day conference hosted discussions on sustainability, awareness, governance and legislation.

During the first session on the second day, experts and engineers reviewed topics on sustainability and the circular economy, including Qatar's strategy for renewable energy and multi-use charging stations for electric vehicles to enable transportation sustainability.

The second session was attended by a group of engineers and spe-



cialists who discussed the ways to strengthen awareness, governance and legislation within the framework of Kahramaa's keenness to continue raising awareness of developments and ongoing studies that aim to encourage the adoption of the latest methods in raising energy efficiency and applying rationalisation practices in electricity and water consumption for a sustainable future.

Organised by Kahramaa, the forum acted as a vital platform aimed

at pushing the energy efficiency programme to new heights and exploring its many aspects apart from revealing innovations while enhancing the dialogue related to energy efficiency for sustainable development.

The annual Tarsheed forum also builds a foundation for enhancing co-operation, knowledge exchange, and actionable visions that are essential to accelerating the journey to a green, more prosperous tomorrow.

MDD showcased as exemplary model for sustainable living at COP28



The panel featured key experts from Msheireb Properties.

As part of Qatar's participation in the ongoing COP28 in the UAE, Msheireb Properties (MP) organised a panel to showcase Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD) as a successful framework for sustainable living, emphasising the central principle of living within environmental limits.

The panel, featuring key experts from Msheireb Properties, explored the multifaceted aspects of sustainable development, encompassing environmental responsibility, wellness considerations, sustainable urban design and planning, and commitment to future generations.

Msheireb Properties has taken a holistic approach to sustainable urban development, integrating these principles into the fabric of the MDD.

"Msheireb Properties recognises the urgent need to minimise environmental impact and has

demonstrated this commitment through the development of Msheireb Downtown Doha," chief executive Ali al-Kuwari said on the sidelines of COP28.

The panellists included sustainability manager Fatima Mohamed Fawzy Hassan and assets development acting director engineer Omar Zainal.

They discussed the holistic approach taken by Msheireb Properties in creating a vibrant, eco-friendly community that prioritises the well-being of its residents while minimising its environmental impact.

Hassan highlighted the sustainable features integrated into the development, including energy-efficient buildings, green spaces, and a comprehensive waste management system.

She elaborated on the measures taken to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for the district - every build-

ing in the MDD has secured either the Gold or Platinum standard.

Zainal provided an overview of the ongoing and future projects aimed at expanding the MDD's sustainable footprint, emphasising the continuous commitment to innovation and environmental responsibility.

The panel received significant attention and praise from COP28 attendees, including policymakers, industry experts, and environmental advocates, who recognised the MDD as a pioneering example of sustainable urban living.

A key tenet of sustainable living and urban development is replicability, making insights and lessons learned easily available to others.

A decade-long collaboration between Msheireb Properties and Harvard University produced the "Gulf Sustainable Urbanism Encyclopedia" that will become the reference for future generations.

Campaign to beautify Al Sailiya area launched



The Ministry of Sports and Youth has launched a new edition of ‘We are all responsible’ campaign early this week at Al Sailiya area adopting the motto ‘Our area deserves the best from its residents’.

The campaign was launched in the presence of Central Municipal Council chairman Mohamed bin Ali al-Azba, Ministry of Sports and Youth's Youth Affairs Department director Fawwaz al-Misafri and Youth Centre's head

Mubarak al-Dosari and other officials. Speaking to local Arabic daily *Arrayah*, al-Dosari stressed that this edition of ‘We are all responsible’ campaign is considered exceptional as large num-



bers of young people at Al Sailiya were trained from among those interested in the initiative and willing to serve their community. They were enrolled into a number of training workshops focusing on safety and security

in addition to environmental awareness and given the opportunity to plant a number of Sidra trees in the area. A workshop raised awareness of the participants on the unacceptable phenomenon of graffiti defac-

ing walls and how to cover these with new paintings with murals. Al-Azba appreciated the efforts exerted by the Ministry of Sports and Youth in this campaign and hoped it would cover all areas of Qatar.



The exhibition showcases the work of three talented photographers from Qatar and Indonesia, offering a visual exploration of fading traditions integral to the history and heritage of both nations.

Qatar-Indonesia photo expo explores fading traditions

‘Capturing Echoes: A Photographic Journey’ exhibition unveiled in Jakarta

Celebrating the Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture, the Years of Culture Initiative, in collaboration with the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, opened the “Capturing Echoes: A Photographic Journey” exhibition recently at the Cemara 6 Gallery in Menteng in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The exhibition showcases the work of three talented photographers from Qatar and Indonesia, offering a visual exploration of fading traditions integral to the history and heritage of both nations. The exhibition, open until December 20, is free to the public.

The exhibition is a testament to the power of cultural exchange, as photographers Kafin

Noe'man and Gevi Noviyanti from Indonesia and Reem Al-bader from Qatar embarked on an inquisitive and self-reflective journey to document each other's cultural heritage.

The theme, “The Fading Traditions of Qatar and Indonesia”, provided a poignant lens through which the photographers captured the essence of customs and traditional practices at risk of disappearing.

As a platform for cultural exchange and dialogue, Years of Culture is responsible for protecting and promoting the bridges it builds through exhibitions and public talks.

Several public talks will follow the exhibition opening in Jakarta by the photographers and the mentors covering the experience they had with the photography exchange programme.

Khalifa al-Obaidly, a celebrated Qatari photographer renowned for his expertise in doc-

umenting Qatari heritage, served as a mentor for the Photography Journey.

Speaking about the programme, he said: “Photography is not just about capturing images; it involves storytelling, preserving cultural heritage, and conveying emotions. The Qatar-Indonesia Photography Journey represented a unique opportunity to showcase the shared cultural values between our two nations.

“Through the lens of these talented Qatari and Indonesian photographers, we bear witness to the visual dialogue that transcends borders and fosters a deeper understanding of the beauty and diversity of global cultural heritage.”

Two experienced and award-winning photographers from Indonesia, Ridhwan Siregar and Demitrius Wisnu Widianoro joined al-Obaidly as the co-curators for the exhibition.

GU-Q student receives 2024 Rhodes scholarship

Asma Shakeel, a student at Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q), has won the 2024 Rhodes Scholarship – the third Hoya to win the oldest and most competitive international scholarship this year.

This is the first time in nearly 30 years that three scholars have been selected from Georgetown in the same year. Asma, a senior who researches missionary history in South Asia, is one of five recipients of the Rhodes Scholarship in India. She joins Charlie Wang, a University of Cambridge graduate student, and Thomas Batterman, a war crimes investigator at the Department of Justice, as Georgetown's 2024 Rhodes recipients.

They join the ranks of more than 30 Georgetown students and alumni who have received the scholarship, including 2021 recipient and fellow GU-Q student, Khansa Maria and former US president, Bill Clinton. The scholarship selects promising young people from around the



Asma Shakeel

world who demonstrate integrity, leadership, character, intellect and a commitment to service to study at the University of Oxford.

“This is a wonderful recognition of Asma and her academic contributions. On behalf of our community, I offer my most sincere congratulations on this terrific achievement,” said Georgetown president John J DeGioia. “Asma has shown a deep dedication to the study of history and how it informs our present. She has illuminated new perspectives on the past and ways to

make it more accessible. We look forward to the impact she will have on our global community.”

Asma will pursue her master's in global and imperial history and a PhD in history at the University of Oxford. While there, she hopes to use archives from British missionaries in South Asia to better understand the history of Kashmir, a Himalayan region in the Indian subcontinent where she grew up. Shakeel hopes to create a digital archive that chronicles Kashmir's history, so that generations of Kashmiris can access, contribute to, and understand their history.

Safwan Masri, dean of GU-Q and Distinguished Professor of the Practice in the Walsh School of Foreign Service, said: “Winning the 2024 Rhodes Scholarship is a testimony to her sharp intellect and dedication, while also reflecting positively on the faculty whose wise and sustained mentorship guided Asma in her groundbreaking research on Kashmir's history.”

‘Elegant, intelligent’ LG StanbyME TV unveiled in Qatar



The LG StanbyME, ‘a distinctive, elegant, easily transportable, and intelligent lifestyle TV’ has been launched in Qatar by Jumbo Electronics.

Featuring a versatile 27-inch screen mounted on a wheeled floor stand, this unique TV can seamlessly switch between portrait and landscape orientations, a statement said.

With a battery life of up to three hours, the StanbyME can be effortlessly moved from room to room in home, office or even taken on outdoor camping trips.

Comprising a 15.6-inch wheeled base with five castors, a 42-inch stem, and a 27-inch screen, the TV boasts a sleek off-white colour scheme with a polished metal arm. The adjustable arm allows vertical sliding within a nine-inch slot. The screen attaches to the arm through a circular mount, offering tilt functionality and 90-degree rotation for landscape or portrait viewing.

The TV's front panel has off-white bezels with rounded corners and a light gray fabric on the curved back to complement various interior decors. Wired

connections are discreetly integrated into the TV, with a short power cable hidden behind a circular plastic cover on the metal arm.

The rear panel of the base houses a port for the power adapter, while a small rubber door beneath the rotating mount conceals HDMI and USB ports.

The rear panel also includes power and volume buttons, along with an NFC touch point for phone pairing.

The included remote, features a circular navigation pad, dedicated service buttons for Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, and Netflix, and standard controls for volume, channels, mute, power, and settings. The StanbyME utilises the webOS smart TV platform, customised for its size, touch-screen capabilities, and ability to rotate between portrait and landscape orientations.

The webOS interface presents apps and features in rounded icons similar to smartphones, spread across the screen. Big tiles manage device connections (AirPlay, HDMI, and USB). While LG's Home Dashboard caters to ThinQ smart home

devices, the primary focus is on app icons. Rotating the screen to portrait orientation enhances the smartphone-like interface, although some apps may remain in horizontal orientation.

WebOS supports major streaming services, Apple AirPlay streaming, a web browser, and sports alerts for favourite teams.

The standout feature in vertical view is Apple AirPlay connectivity, allowing the user interface of a connected iPhone to display without letterboxing, providing an optimal experience for viewing content like TikTok and Instagram Reels.

Director and CEO C V Rappai, said: “Jumbo provides an impressive selection of premium, high-quality products and strives to keep pace with the rising aspirations of the people of Qatar and serve them with enthusiasm. We are committed to provide all our customers a world-class shopping experience.”

StanbyME is available across all leading hypermarkets and Jumbo retail stores across Qatar. Product can also be bought from www.jumbosouq.com



Peter Sanders speaks at VCUarts Qatar.

VCUarts Qatar hosts talk by top British photographer

Renowned British photographer Peter Sanders made a presentation at Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) recently.

Sharing photos, anecdotes and techniques that spanned five decades of professional work, and personal discovery, Sanders transported his audience back in time as he described the processes, places and people that influenced his work and subsequently made him famous.

The audience stepped into the

buzz of the 1960s as they viewed photos he took of some of London's leading rock and roll stars and gypsy communities.

They listened, captivated, as he explained how it took him two weeks to prepare for the now-famous shot of the hall in the Hassan II Mosque in Morocco, and how it took five years to obtain permission to take the picture of the Green Dome of the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, from the vantage point he wanted – the mosque's minaret.

During the question-and-

answer session that followed, Sanders spoke about how he transitioned from photographing rock and roll stars of the 60s to contemplating spirituality through photography.

“There was this constant search for peace. Countries are much like families. The more you talk the more you have a chance to resolve differences. I guess that's how I was drawn to spirituality. I was always oriented towards peace. I became a Muslim due to my yearning for peace and serenity,” added Sanders.



Jordan's King Abdullah II and Crown Prince Hussein pose for a picture with Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides, in Amman, in this handout picture released yesterday.

Jordan's King Abdullah says world should condemn any attempt to expel Palestinians forcibly

Reuters
Amman

Jordan's King Abdullah said yesterday the world should condemn any attempt by Israel to create conditions that would forcibly displace Palestinians within the war-devastated Gaza Strip or outside its borders.

In remarks carried by state media after a meeting with the Cypriot president in Amman, the monarch again called for an immediate ceasefire and warned that Israel's relentless bombing campaign was leading to a "dangerous deterioration" in the situation.

Talks with Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides focused on the need to increase efforts to deliver humanitarian aid and relief to the embattled civilians living in Gaza.

Abdullah has lobbied Western leaders to pile pressure on Israel to allow an uninterrupted flow of aid and open crossings it controls to bring in sufficient level of aid needed.

Israel now controls the volume and nature of aid entering to over 2.3mn inhabitants under siege, according to UN officials and humanitarian workers.

UNRWA officials say only a trickle of the aid the enclave needs is getting through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt which NGOs and officials say can only handle a fraction of the needs.

Israel started its campaign in

retribution for a October first week storming into the country by Hamas fighters.

Israeli bombardments have killed nearly 16,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health ministry figures, and driven 80% of the population from their homes.

King Abdullah told Christodoulides there would be dangerous consequences from any attempt to forcibly push Palestinians en masse from their land while it maintained security control, officials said.

Officials also fear wider violence in the West Bank, which Jordan borders, as settler attacks on Palestinian civilians, confiscation of land and Israeli military raids mount.

It could create circumstances that could encourage Israel to forcibly push tens of thousands of Palestinians across the Jordan River.

Officials say the forcible expulsion of Palestinians would amount to a declaration of war.

Yesterday, Amman condemned Israel's move to build new settlements in Arab East Jerusalem, the part of the contested city that was seized along with the West Bank in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the UN considers occupied territory..

"Israel's expansion of Jewish settlement building on land it occupied and the confiscation of territory are a flagrant violation of international law" and dimmed any prospects of peace, said Sufain Qudah, spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry.

Gaza families flee again to overcrowded pocket of land

Reuters
Khan Yunis

Fearful of being killed in an Israeli bombardment, families in Gaza were packing up and fleeing yesterday, heading for a pocket of land further south already crammed with displaced people without enough food, water or toilets.

Some were fleeing for the third or fourth time in less than two months.

Most of the Gaza Strip's 2.3 mn people have been made homeless by the war between Israel and Hamas, and the new phase of displacement since a week-long truce ended on Dec 1 is worsening an already catastrophic humanitarian situation.

In Khan Yunis in southern Gaza, where Israel was launching a long-awaited assault, Palestinians who had sought protection from air strikes by camping in the grounds of the city's Nasser Hospital were rolling up their tents and loading cars or donkey carts with piles of mats and blankets.

"We are getting ready to leave Khan Yunis, heading to Rafah. We have been here for about 50 days," said Abu Omar, a middle-aged man who left his home in the eastern part of the city and had been sheltering at the hospital camp with his family.

Rafah, further south on the border with Egypt, is one of the last remaining areas where the Israeli military has said civilians could go to escape the fighting, although it has been hit by many air strikes.

"There is no safe place... but at the end, we head to wherever we think there might be a bit of safety," said Abu Omar, standing by a car whose roof was piled high with possessions. But in Rafah, displaced people said their living conditions were horrible. "There are no bathrooms. We cannot even wash if we want to pray. There is no place for us to wash or pray. If we want to wash our kids' hands there is no place for that. There is not even a place where you can bake or get bread," said Enas Mosleh, sitting with her children in a shelter made out of wooden slats and transparent plastic sheets.

"We spend all night hearing rockets and bombing. We are living between life and death. We may die at any moment," she said, her face streaked with tears.

Khan Yunis was home to 381,000 people before the war.



Palestinians fleeing Khan Yunis arrive in Rafah further south near the Gaza Strip's border with Egypt, yesterday.

Another 245,000 people displaced by Israel's bombardment of the northern part of Gaza have been sheltering there, in 71 different locations, a UN spokesperson said.

The Israeli army has called for residents to evacuate to three designated areas in the Rafah governorate. Those areas are already packed with 280,000 residents and 470,000 displaced people who arrived after the war started in the first week of October.

"The relocation directive would effectively bring the number of people in Rafah to 1.35mn, driving an additional 600,000 people from Khan Yunis to an area with an existing population of 750,000 where the ability of the UN and partners to provide assistance is already critically challenged," the UN spokesperson said.

Hamas fighters stormed into southern Israel in the first week of October. Hassan al-Basouny's home was in Beit Hanoun, a town in north-eastern Gaza where 52,000 people used to live but was so heavily bombarded that there is barely an inhabitable building still standing.

He said he and his family first moved to a shelter elsewhere in northern Gaza, then to the Nasser Hospital camp in Khan Yunis, and now they were going to Rafah – their third displacement in less than two months.

"Safety can only be provided by God. Whatever God has willed will happen," he said.



Relatives of Mohamed and Anas al-Froukh, who were shot during a raid by Israeli troops the previous night on Sair, east of Hebron, mourn during their funeral in the southern West Bank village, yesterday.



Smoke rises above buildings in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, as battles between Israel and Hamas fighters continued, yesterday.

West Bank family sees no hope of justice in settler killings

AFP
As Sawiyah

Moussa is eight years old and really likes marbles. But for the past month, this Palestinian boy, living in the occupied West Bank, has a new game: "Pretend daddy isn't dead."

He calls his dad, imagines what he did with his day, and acts like he's suddenly going to run into him.

But his father, Bilal Saleh, was killed on October 28.

The 40-year-old was shot in the chest while picking olives with his family near his home in the village of As-Sawiyah.

Saleh is one of more than 250 Palestinians killed by Israeli soldiers and settlers in the West Bank, according to a Palestinian government tally, since Hamas' storming of Israel in the first week of October.

"He was a simple man, attached to his land," says his widow, Ikhlās, showing images on her phone of Saleh in the fields, reciting the Qur'an with Moussa and at a wedding. She struggles



Ikhlās, the widow of Bilal Saleh, poses with her children as they hold a picture of their late father at the village of As-Sawiyah, south of Nablus in the occupied West Bank.

to even look at them, let alone tell the story of what happened.

The children pressed around her to fill in the details.

Videos from the scene show four men wearing the knitted yarmulkes that are popular among Israeli settlers, shouting towards the family as they are harvesting.

One is armed with an automatic rifle.

The family flees, but Saleh has

forgotten his phone and runs back to fetch it. A few minutes later, a gunshot rings out. The family rushes back to find Saleh bleeding from the chest.

He was taken to a hospital about 10 kilometres away but declared dead soon after.

The family says Ikhlās' brother and father saw on social media that a man had been arrested for the shooting but released a few

hours later. The police and Cogat, an Israeli defence ministry body overseeing civilian activities in the Palestinian territories, did not respond to multiple requests for comment from AFP.

A few days later, without knowing why, Ikhlās was called to a police station in Ariel, a neighbouring Israeli settlement, where police asked her to explain what she saw. "At the entrance, while a guard was checking my identity papers, a settler drove by. He saw that I was veiled and he rolled down his window to spit on me," she said. "After that, I don't see what kind of justice they could give us," she added.

Israeli human rights group Yesh Din convinced her to file a complaint anyway, though it says a study of settler violence cases between 2005 and 2021 showed 92% were dismissed by the Israeli authorities.

"For the past 10 years, it has been getting more and more serious," said Hazem Saleh, Bilal's brother-in-law. "We are being attacked, our land is being taken from us, settlements are being built. They have the power, they can do what they want."

But it has been "even worse", he said, since Hamas fighters from Gaza stormed southern Israel.

In retaliation, Israel declared war on Hamas and launched a large-scale military offensive in Gaza, which has killed nearly 15,900 people, two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Hamas authorities.

Israel has also relaxed laws on access to weapons, promising to arm Israeli civilians in at least 1,000 localities, including settlements. On Saturday, settlers opened fire on a 38-year-old Palestinian in the village of Qarawat Bani Hassan, according to the Palestinian Wafa news agency.

The As-Sawiyah residents' WhatsApp group is a litany of fear and violence.

Mouna Saleh, 56, Bilal's mother-in-law, fears for the children, especially Moussa and Mayce "who are so small – what can we explain to them?"

"How can you kill a man in a few seconds, in front of children? What is this world?" she said.

"We're not calling for violence or revenge. We call for peace, justice, mercy," said Hazem.

Dozens killed after army drone strike hits villagers

AFP
Lagos

A Nigerian army drone targeting armed groups killed at least 85 civilians by mistake in northwest Kaduna State, causing outrage over one of the country's deadliest military bombing accidents.

Calling the incident "disturbing", President Bola Ahmed Tinubu yesterday ordered an investigation after the army acknowledged one of its drones mistakenly struck the village of Tudun Biri on Sunday as residents celebrated a religious festival.

The army did not give any casualty figures, but emergency officials and residents had said 85 people, many of them women and children, were killed.

"The Northwest Zonal Office has received details from the local authorities that 85 dead bodies have so far been buried while the search is still ongoing," National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) said in a statement.

NEMA said another 66 people were being treated at hospital. Many of the victims were women, children and elderly who had been celebrating the religious festival.

"I was inside the house when the first bomb was dropped... We rushed to the scene to help those affected and then a second bomb was dropped," resident Idris Dahiru said. "My aunt, my brother's wife and her six children, wives of my four brothers were among the dead. My elder brother's family are all dead, except his infant child who survived." Nigeria's armed forces often rely on air strikes in their battle against bandit militias in the northwest and northeast.

Hamas officials join Mandela family for anniversary tributes

AFP
Pretoria

Senior Hamas officials yesterday joined the family of Nelson Mandela to mark the 10th anniversary of his death and cast the spotlight on the bitter conflict in Gaza.

South Africa has strongly condemned Israel's response to the unprecedented storming of the country by Hamas fighters. Mandela, who died aged 95 in 2013, made a Palestinian state one of his main international causes when he became

South Africa's first black president.

And Hamas representatives were among Palestinians who laid a wreath when the Mandela family paid tribute at a giant statue of the anti-apartheid icon, .

Mandela's grandson, national assembly member Mandla Mandela, helped organise a two-day conference on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict before the wreath-laying at the Union Buildings.

Basem Naim, a former Hamas health minister in Gaza, and Khaled Qaddoumi, the fighter group's representative in Iran, were among Palestinians to visit for the conference and anniversary. "We were

waiting to gain first-hand experience of the daily atrocities that are being carried out in Gaza," Mandla Mandela told national broadcaster SABC. "It was a real experience for them to be in South Africa and learn from our experience as we had to face one of the most brutal apartheid regimes on the continent and we were able to defeat it."

He said his grandfather considered a Palestinian state "the great moral issue of our time" and added: "We are carrying on where he left off."

Mandla Mandela is part of the ruling African National Congress which last

month backed a national assembly motion calling for the closure of the Israeli embassy and for a suspension of diplomatic ties in protest at the war.

South Africa has also officially called on the International Criminal Court to investigate what President Cyril Ramaphosa has called Israel's "war crimes" in Gaza. The Hamas government says nearly 16,000 people have died in Israel's military assault on Gaza since.

Israel, which has rejected comparisons between its conflict and apartheid, did not send a senior leader to Mandela's funeral in 2013.

Meta, IBM launch alliance to keep future of artificial intelligence open

AFP
Washington

Meta, IBM and dozens of startups and researchers have launched an alliance defending a more open and collaborative method to develop artificial intelligence (AI), setting up a clash with OpenAI and Google over the technology's future.

The philosophical debate has become the central battleground for AI's future,

with increasing concern that Microsoft-backed OpenAI and Google will alone underpin a technology that could become increasingly crucial to our everyday lives.

"This is a pivotal moment in defining the future of AI," said IBM chief executive Arvind Krishna in the statement announcing the AI Alliance yesterday.

ChatGPT creator OpenAI as well as Google defend a closed system for the large language models that have wowed the world by churning out human-quality images and text from simple prompts.

They view themselves as an AI adult in the room, with total control on the technology to ensure that it is deployed ethically and responsibly – and stays out of the hands of bad actors.

Open source advocates argue that sharing AI technology can spur innovation as well ensure that not one company or actor gets dangerously ahead.

Their position was given more ammunition earlier this month when a boardroom civil war at OpenAI saw Microsoft's role strengthened and deepened misgivings

about one company playing such an out-size role in providing AI.

"Pursuing open innovation levels the playing field, allowing everyone to share in the benefits of generative AI," said Jennifer Chayes, dean of UC Berkeley's College of Computing, Data Science, and Society.

Facebook parent company Meta is a major believer in the open-source model and argues against keeping AI's future holed up in the secretive labs of a few tech giants.

Unlike OpenAI's GPT-4, the model behind ChatGPT, Meta has made its LLaMA

models easily available for researchers and startups to tinker with and perfect.

"We believe it's better when AI is developed openly – more people can access the benefits, build innovative products and work on safety," said Nick Clegg, president of global affairs at Meta.

IBM and Meta are joined by about 50 companies and organisations including Intel and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa).

OpenAI and Google are not among the founding members.

US awards \$110mn to reduce wildlife car collisions

Reuters
Washington

The US Transportation Department is awarding \$110mn to fund 19 projects in 17 states to help reduce car collisions with wildlife and help animals safely cross roadways.

There are more than 1mn wildlife vehicle collisions in the United States with large animals like deer that cost more than \$8bn annually.

Wildlife-vehicle collisions result in about 200 deaths and 26,000 injuries to drivers and passengers annually, federal officials say.

Federal Highway Administrator Shailen Bhatt said the wildlife crossing funding is "targeted at a very real safety concern".

One project in Arizona is using GPS data to track where elk are moving, he said. "We can get smart about how we use technology to reduce these collisions."

The awards are the first under a five-year \$350mn programme funded by the \$1tn 2021 infrastructure law.

The federal government received applications seeking \$550mn in funding.

Arizona is getting \$24mn

to build nearly 17 miles of new wildlife fencing connecting existing culverts, escape ramps and double cattle guards along busy Interstate-17 while increasing habitat connectivity for elk and mule deer.

Wyoming will receive \$24.4mn to build an overpass, several underpasses and wildlife fencing along 30 miles of US 189.

Between 2017 and 2021 crashes involving wildlife accounted for nearly 20% of all traffic crashes there, the state said.

Colorado won \$22mn to build an overpass on I-25 between Denver and Colorado Springs, the state's two largest cities.

Colorado's Greenland Wildlife Overpass will be one of the largest overpass structures in North America, spanning six lanes of highway to help reduce vehicle collisions with elk and mule deer.

Vermont is getting \$1.6mn to design a wildlife underpass crossing in the Green Mountains to provide safe crossing for large animals such as black bears and moose.

Since the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, US traffic deaths have spiked.

Road deaths jumped 10.5% in 2021 to 42,915, the highest number killed on American roads in a single year since 2005.

Senate panel urged to renew US global surveillance power

Reuters
Washington

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray pressed a Senate committee yesterday to renew the authority of the US government to conduct warrantless surveillance outside the United States, arguing that failing to do so would be "devastating" to law enforcement's ability to counter cyber and terrorism threats.

Wray said that the sweeping surveillance powers authorised under Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which is set to expire at the end of this month, are vital to US national security.

"The expiration of our 702 authorities would be devastating to the FBI's ability to protect Americans from those threats," Wray said at a hearing of the Democratic-led Senate Judiciary Committee.

"Stripping the FBI of its 702 authorities would be a form of unilateral disarmament," Wray said, citing threats from Iran and China.

The surveillance power of the US government has come under scrutiny from US lawmakers on both the right and left in recent years, particularly the ability of federal law enforcement to search for data on US citizens picked up as part of surveillance of foreign targets.



FBI Director Christopher Wray testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

A bipartisan team of US lawmakers introduced legislation last month to impose new limits on searches of Americans' communications and prohibit so-called "backdoor" searches which invoke foreign intelligence justifications to spy on Americans.

US officials have opposed new warrant requirements, arguing that information collected under the law has been vital to countering cyber threats and thwarting foreign intelligence operations directed against the United States.

Wray told the Senate panel that the FBI will be "good stewards of our authorities", citing re-

forms that he said the FBI has already made in response to criticism of law enforcement's use of the law.

Republican Senator Mike Lee accused the FBI of ignoring existing warrant requirements under the law and expressed skepticism about the FBI's internal reforms.

"It's never different," Lee said. "You haven't changed."

During the hearing, Wray confirmed that the FBI involved the Justice Department's internal watchdog in its review of a former senior counterintelligence agent who has pleaded guilty to working for a sanctioned Russian oligarch.

The agent, Charles McGonigal, is scheduled to be sentenced this month.

A spokesperson for the Justice Department's inspector-general did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Wray, an appointee of Republican former president Donald Trump, faced questions from several Republican senators over the continuing investigation of President Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden.

Republicans, citing testimony from Internal Revenue Service (IRS) whistleblowers who worked on the probe, accused Wray of permitting political bias.

"Not that I have experienced," Wray said when asked if there had been political interference in the investigation.

Police probe after blast razes house near US capital

AFP
Washington

US police were investigating yesterday after a major explosion tore through a home in the Washington suburbs a day earlier, authorities said, with social media footage showing a powerful blast that reduced the building to rubble.

A suspect inside the building at the time of the blast had fired a flare gun "30-40 times from inside his resident into the surrounding neighbourhood", police in Arlington, Virginia, across the river from the US capital, said in a statement released early yesterday.

Law enforcement were dispatched after receiving a report of the shots, and "attempted to make contact with the suspect over the telephone and through loudspeakers", the statement said.

However, the suspect did not respond and remained barricaded inside the home, it said.

"As officers were attempting to execute the search warrant, the suspect discharged several rounds, from what is believed to be a fire-arm, inside the home," the statement said. "Subsequently, at approximately 8.25pm, an explosion occurred at the residence."

The investigation into what caused the blast is "ongoing", the statement said, without making reference to the fate of the suspect.

Three police officers reported minor injuries, and the fire was brought under control within two hours, it continued.

"I think it blew up the entire duplex," a neighbour told local media outlet ARLnow. "I'm sure the family next door was evacuated before it blew up, but they lost their home."

Residents in Arlington, in the



Workers look at the home that exploded in Arlington, Virginia.

state of Virginia across the Potomac River from Washington, were told to shelter in place by the local government.

"This is very, very scary, and my profound thanks go out to first responders working to secure the area and keep everyone safe," Congressman Don Beyer, who represents the district, tweeted.

Colombia, ELN rebels start fifth round of peace talks

The Colombian government and rebels from the National Liberation Army (ELN) started a fifth round of peace talks in Mexico City, the Mexican ministry of foreign affairs said on Monday.

The negotiations, hoping to put to rest six decades of fighting between Bogota and the left-wing insurgency, come after the recent kidnapping of the father of Liverpool footballer Luis Diaz, which had threatened to upend a delicate ceasefire.

The agenda for the meetings – continuing on from talks started more than a year ago – was not disclosed.

"We trust that, with the willingness of both parties and the support of the international community, this new round of negotiations in our country will open the way to reaching a definitive and lasting solution to the conflict," the Mexican foreign ministry said in a statement.

Diaz's father, Luis Manuel Diaz, was released on November 9 after being kidnapped for 12 days.

The ELN, which along with the Colombian government is party to a six-month ceasefire that entered into force in August, described the kidnapping by one of its units as a "mistake".

Luis Manuel Diaz and his wife Cilenis Marulanda had been abducted by armed men on motorcycles at a gas station in their home town of Barrancas near the Venezuelan border on October 28.

Marulanda was rescued hours later, before a massive search operation by ground and air was launched for her husband.

However, the incident put both the peace talks and the cease-fire in peril, with President Gustavo Petro saying that it led to a loss of trust between the government and the rebels, whose 5,800 fighters constitute the oldest guerrilla group still operating in Latin America after the Marxist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc) surrendered their weapons in 2016.

Previous rounds of talks have been held in Venezuela and Cuba.

Petro took office last 16 months ago with the stated goal of achieving "total peace" in a country ravaged by decades of fighting between the security forces, leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries and drug gangs. – **AFP**

Women Dressing Women



A person is seen at a media preview of the Costume Institute's 'Women Dressing Women' exhibit, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Paraguay, Brazil launch crackdown on arms trafficking

Paraguay and Brazil launched dozens of raids across the two countries yesterday to seize weapons sent from Europe to be sold to Brazil's largest criminal groups.

An investigation uncovered "a complex and multi-million-dollar illicit fire-arms trafficking network from Europe to South America", Brazil's federal police said.

According to officials in Paraguay, a

business there was responsible for importing the weapons from Croatia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic.

Through connections with Paraguay's military weapons directorate DIMABEL, the company would receive speedy authorisations to move the arms, Paraguay's National Anti-Drug Secretariat said.

Authorities raided the DIMABEL headquarters yesterday and arrested its

former director, a high-ranking military official.

The former head of Paraguay's Air Force was also detained.

Investigators allege both were in direct contact with the arms traffickers.

The company moved an estimated 43,000 weapons to Paraguay worth around 1.2bn reais (\$242.1mn) over three years, Brazil's federal police said. – **Reuters**

Hollywood braces for actors' vote on deal ending strike

AFP
Los Angeles

Hollywood anxiously waited yesterday to learn if actors have approved their union's hard-fought deal with studios, or if an entertainment industry still reeling from months-long strikes could be plunged back into turmoil.

While the Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) deal is widely expected to pass, criticism – mainly over its perceived lack of protection against artificial intelligence – has swelled in recent weeks, raising jitters about a potential, if unlikely, return to picket lines.

Members have until 5pm Pacific Time (0100 Wednesday GMT) to cast their votes, with a simple majority required to finally seal the agreement.

Jonathan Handel, an entertainment lawyer and analyst, said that an approval figure between 75-85% is "a realistic expectation".

However, should ratification fail, SAG-AFTRA would likely need to reopen talks with studios – who could themselves withdraw the terms previously offered – and a return to industrial action could beckon.

"The contract is (expensive)," said actor Michael Vaccaro, one of dozens of performers to speak out publicly against the terms.

"I voted no. And I'm fully prepared to go back on strike. Absolutely 100%," he told AFP. "By signing this thing, we gain nothing. By going back out on strike, there's the possibility to gain quite a bit."

The tentative deal between SAG-AFTRA and Hollywood studios to end the actors' 118-day strike was agreed last month.

It contained higher pay, better bonuses

for starring in hit shows or films, and the first-ever protections against the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to replace human actors.

It was ratified by the union's leadership two days later, though not unanimously.

Union leaders have since held meetings and sent out e-mails and social media posts to members, strongly urging them to approve the deal.

"It is the most lucrative, innovative and protective contract in entertainment union history," said SAG-AFTRA president Fran Drescher in a recent Instagram post.

However, as details of the agreement emerged, warnings began to circulate online about its shortcomings, particularly over the issue of AI.

Performers fear that they could soon be replaced by entirely synthetic "actors" generated by AI using the body parts of many different humans, whose likenesses have been scraped from film archives.

The deal does not prevent studios from using generative AI, but it has a clause requiring them to inform the union each time the technology is used.

SAG-AFTRA would then have the right to bargain for compensation on behalf of the actors involved – though critics say that it would be hard to identify who these are.

Actors also say that the massive number of viewers a show or film needs to attract in order to trigger bonuses for its performers is too high for all but the very top echelon of hit shows.

"Because of the opposition, people naturally wonder 'will it pass?' and that leads to some nervousness and concern," Handel told AFP. "But I think it's highly likely that this will pass. It would be very startling if it didn't."

TRAGEDY

Thai bus accident kills 14, more than 20 injured

A bus lost control and crashed into a tree in Thailand, killing 14 passengers and injuring more than 20, the state-owned Transport Company said in a statement yesterday. The accident occurred in country's western province of Prachuap Khiri Khan at half past midnight, the statement disclosed. The bus's front was split in half after the crash, according to state broadcaster ThaiPBS. Rescuers were seen pulling passengers out from the wreckage. "All of those injured are being treated at a hospital," the statement said, adding that an investigation on the causes of the accident was being carried out.

APPEAL

Nepal urges Russia not to recruit citizens into army

Nepal said it has asked Moscow not to recruit its citizens into the Russian army and immediately send back any Nepali soldier commissioned there back to the country after revealing six soldiers serving Russia's military had been killed. Nepali soldiers, called Gurkhas, are known for their bravery and fighting skills. The Nepal government said in a statement that six of its nationals, who had been serving the Russian army, were killed, without providing any details. Diplomatic efforts were underway to get one Nepali citizen serving the Russian army and captured by Ukraine released, the statement added.

PEOPLE

Philippines' Marcos tests positive for Covid

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has tested positive for Covid-19, but remains healthy enough to hold online meetings, his office said yesterday. The presidential communications office said on its Facebook page Marcos will isolate for five days. The statement did not indicate when he tested positive for the virus. "The president remains fit to carry out his duties and will be continuing his scheduled meetings via teleconference," the statement read. Marcos, who is 66, was last seen in public on Saturday, attending a family day event inside presidential palace grounds. He has cancelled his events yesterday.

CRIME

Japan taxi driver arrested for running over pigeon

A Tokyo taxi driver was arrested for deliberately driving into a flock of pigeons and killing one, police said yesterday, reportedly because he was angry that the birds were on the road. Atsushi Ozawa, 50, "used his car to kill a common pigeon, which is not a game animal", in the Japanese capital last month, and was arrested on Sunday for violating wildlife protection laws, a Tokyo police spokesman said. Ozawa sped off from a traffic light when it turned green, ploughing his taxi into the bevy of birds at a speed of 60kms per hour, local media said. The sound of the engine reportedly prompted a surprised passer-by to report the incident.

Indonesia's Marapi volcano eruption toll climbs to 22

Reuters
Jakarta

The death toll from Indonesia's Marapi volcano eruption jumped to 22 yesterday as rescuers found more climbers who had perished near the crater, the head of the West Sumatra rescue agency said yesterday, up from 13 earlier in the day. About 200 rescuers will resume search operations today for one further missing climber. The 2,891-metre high volcano in West Sumatra erupted on Sunday, spewing gray clouds of ash as high as 3kms into the sky. "We are now evacuating the dead bodies from the peak of the volcano," said the head of the search and rescue team, Abdul Malik. Marapi is one of the most active volcanoes on Sumatra island and last erupted in January and February this year. Since 2011, Indonesia's volcanology agency has urged a local conservation agency and the environment ministry in monthly letters to close an area within 3kms' radius of the summit to climbers, agency head Hendra Gunawan said. Still, there were 75 climbers on the volcano when it erupted, rescuers said. Ahmad Basuki, another official at the volcanology agency, said

the body could only issue safety warnings, and that it was up to the environment ministry and local authorities to enforce them. The environment ministry did not immediately respond to questions. The conservation agency, which is under the ministry, said permits to climb were given after getting the green light from several local agencies, including the West Sumatra provincial government and national disaster agency, as well the Padang search and rescue agency. The search and rescue agency declined to comment. The national disaster agency did not immediately respond to a request for comment. West Sumatra's provincial government was not immediately reachable for comment. Sunday's eruption of Mt. Marapi was the deadliest since 1979, when an eruption killed 60 people. The volcano's eruptions have been relatively infrequent over the past decade, making it challenging to analyse, said Ahmad of the volcanology agency. "Because we cannot record any seismic activity, the volcano gives no clear sign if it is going to erupt," he said. "The character of this volcano is dangerous." Indonesia, which straddles the so-called "Ring of Fire", is home to more than 100 active volcanoes.

Netherlands returns colonial-era artefacts to Sri Lanka



People view colonial-era artefacts that have been returned from the Netherlands, at the main Museum in Colombo, Sri Lanka, yesterday. The six artefacts included a cannon, a ceremonial sword and two guns taken from Sri Lanka more than 250 years ago. The artefacts were returned yesterday as part of efforts by the former colonial power to redress historical wrongs, officials said.

Philippines hunts four suspects linked to blast

AFP
Manila

Police in the Philippines are chasing four men, including two linked to a local militant group, in connection with the deadly bombing of a Catholic service in the restive south, authorities said yesterday. A manhunt was underway after Sunday's attack inside a university gymnasium in Marawi, the country's largest Muslim city, which was besieged by militants in 2017.

Four people were killed and 50 were wounded in the bombing that was later claimed by the Islamic State group. President Ferdinand Marcos blamed "foreign terrorists" for the assault. Police have identified two Filipino men - both with criminal records that include murder - who were seen by witnesses inside the gym before the blast. "Their actions were very suspicious. That led to the suspicion that they might be involved in the explosion," spokeswoman Colonel Jean Fajardo told reporters.

"There's an ongoing pursuit operation," she said. Police had not yet identified the other two men or a motive for the attack. Fajardo said the two Filipino suspects belonged to a militant group "previously involved in bombing incidents in Mindanao", but she declined to release its name. Army chief General Romeo Brawner said previously that the attack may have been revenge for recent military operations against three militant groups - Dawlah Islamiyah-Philippines, Abu Sayyaf and Maute.

New Zealanders protest over new govt's policies

Thousands of protesters took to the streets across New Zealand yesterday to criticise the newly-elected conservative government for its policies toward the Indigenous Maori population. The country's Te Pati Maori party backed the demonstrations in Auckland, Wellington and several other cities that snarled commuter traffic and provided an early leadership test for Prime Minister Christopher Luxon. Maori leaders accuse Luxon's conservative coalition of racist policies, including undermining a treaty that protects Indigenous rights. The coalition government, sworn in last Monday, also wants to switch the names of some departments from Maori to English and close the Maori Health Authority, Te Aka Whai Ora. Police estimate around 300 vehicles took part in protests in New Zealand's largest city Auckland, where two arrests were made.



Students evacuate following an earthquake, in Manila, Philippines, yesterday.

Magnitude 5.7 quake shakes Philippine capital

AFP
Manila

A magnitude 5.7 earthquake shook the Philippine capital Manila yesterday, the US Geological Survey said, sending people rushing out of buildings and briefly halting train services in the city. The strong quake struck off the country's main island of Luzon at 4.23pm (0823GMT) at a depth of 77kms, about 94kms southwest of Manila, the USGS said. Videos shared on social media showed commuters sitting squashed together on a train platform and people in the senate exiting the building after the tremor stopped. Patrolman Mark Dacayanan said his police station on Luzon island, less than 50kms

southwest of the epicentre, shook for about 10 seconds. "The police officers went outside, we didn't know if the shaking would become stronger," Dacayanan said. "So far there are no damages or casualties." It comes after a series of powerful earthquakes and aftershocks off the country's southern island of Mindanao following a magnitude 7.6 quake late Saturday that briefly triggered a tsunami warning. At least three people were killed and 17 were injured after the quake hit, with thousands still in evacuation centres. Earthquakes are a daily occurrence in the Philippines, which sits along the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic and volcanic activity that stretches from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin.

Papua New Guinea to recruit Australia police in security deal

Reuters
Sydney

Papua New Guinea will recruit Australian police officers for key positions in its national police force under a wide-ranging security deal to be signed this week that also covers defence and biosecurity, Papua New Guinea's minister of state said. Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape will travel to Canberra tomorrow to sign the security agreement, his office said. "The security arrangement is in the best interest of Papua New Guinea and also for Australia and its

regional security interests," Marape said in a statement yesterday. The Australian security agreement was delayed after backlash from some opposition PNG politicians to a defence deal with the US in May that they said infringed on PNG sovereignty by giving access to ports and airports, and could embroil the Pacific Islands' largest nation in strategic competition between the US and China. China formed security and policing ties with the neighbouring Solomon Islands last year. PNG, a few kilometres to Australia's north, is also being courted by China amid rising tensions between the two major powers.

"This shows our commitment to Australia as one of our traditional security partners now and into the future," Minister of State Justin Tkatchenko told Reuters in a telephone interview. Defence and internal policing are a major part of the security agreement with Australia, while respecting PNG sovereignty, along with assisting farmers to meet Australia's stringent biosecurity rules and boosting biometric technology for airports, Tkatchenko said. "Respecting each other is the big thing," he added. The Australian Federal Police and the defence minister's office did not immediately respond to a

request for comment on the security agreement. PNG police have this year struggled with a surge in violent crime, and Marape has pointed to law-and-order concerns and said boosting security would help to attract foreign investment in PNG's burgeoning resources sector. "It's a big issue and Australia can help us out considerably," said Tkatchenko, who began negotiations with Australia on the deal last year. The agreement includes an option for Australian police to work directly for the PNG Royal Constabulary on contract, he said. "The positions will be advertised for expatriate or qualified interna-

tional police officers to fill about 50 positions throughout the country, from police station commanders to heading the CID (criminal investigation department) or fraud squad and so on," he said. In 2005, a PNG court ruled that Australian Federal Police deployed to PNG should not have the powers of local police, or immunity from prosecution, and since then Australian police have only deployed in unarmed advisory roles. "These officers will wear PNG uniform. They will be contracted officers reporting directly to the police commissioner of Papua New Guinea and they will be under all the laws of PNG. That was always

the sticking point," he said. Australia will also boost training for PNG police. The security negotiations recognised PNG's sovereignty as a nation that won independence from Australia 48 years ago, while appreciating Australia's role as the region's largest economy, he said. "What we want is economic independence, where we can rely on ourselves into the future," he added. Help to meet Australia's strict biosecurity guidelines will open new export markets for PNG, which produces coffee and other agricultural products as "the oldest living gardeners or agriculturalists in the world".

CONTROVERSY

News Corp’s papers settle phone-hacking claims

News Corporation’s British newspaper group settled a series of claims of phone-hacking brought by celebrities and other individuals, including a “Spice Girl” and a ex-minister. News Group Newspapers (NGN), the publisher of the *Sun* daily and the now defunct News of the World which former chief Rupert Murdoch closed over its involvement in hacking, had given public apologies and paid out “substantial damages” to the claimants, according to their lawyers. Those involved included Melanie Chisholm, or “Sporty Spice” from the well-known girl band, actor Keith Allen, and Shane Lynch from the band “Boyzone”.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Junior doctors in England to strike again

Junior doctors in England will take further strike action later this month and in January, their trade union said yesterday, after weeks of talks with the government failed to end a long-running dispute over pay. The British Medical Association, which represents nearly 200,000 doctors in Britain, said junior doctors would walk out from 0700GMT on December 20 until 0700GMT on December 23, and then again from 0700GMT on January 3 until 0700 GMT on January 9. The BMA said the government had offered an additional 3%, unevenly spread across doctors’ grades, which it argued would still amount to pay cuts for many doctors this year.

OFFICIAL

Cameron, Yi hold talks for ‘constructive relationship’

British Foreign Secretary David Cameron said he had spoken to his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi yesterday and the pair discussed their “intention to have a constructive relationship”. “The UK will continue to engage with China where it furthers our interests,” Cameron said in a post on X. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s appointment of Cameron as foreign minister last month caused concern among some lawmakers in his Conservative Party about what it would mean for the government’s approach to China. As prime minister, Cameron heralded a “golden era” in relations with China in 2015, something Sunak has said is over.

ENTERTAINMENT

Tom Hanks brings love of space to new immersive show

Archive footage of space rockets taking off beam across giant walls in a new immersive show in London, as Hollywood actor Tom Hanks narrates the story of human voyages to the moon. *The Moonwalkers: A Journey With Tom Hanks* looks at the first moon landings of the Apollo missions from 1969 to 1972 and their successor, Nasa’s human spaceflight programme, Artemis. “This show is about the wonder of the moon and the amazing creatures that have made it possible for members of their race to walk upon it,” Oscar-winner Hanks said. *The Moonwalkers: A Journey With Tom Hanks* runs December 6-April 21, 2024.

UK enters into migration treaty with Rwanda

AFP
Kigali

Britain and Rwanda signed a new treaty yesterday in a bid to revive a controversial proposal by London to transfer migrants to the East African country. The agreement was signed by Rwandan Foreign Minister Vincent Biruta and British Interior Minister James Cleverly, who travelled to Kigali to salvage London’s stalled bid to send migrants to Rwanda after the UK Supreme Court blocked an earlier arrangement as unlawful. The judges sided with a lower court decision that the policy was incompatible with Britain’s international obligations because Kigali could forcibly return migrants to places where they could face persecution. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak had vowed to persevere with the contentious project by securing the new treaty, vowing to “address concerns” raised in the Supreme Court’s ruling last month. “There is a lot of desire to continue to improve the process. The UK and Rwanda are working on this because it is important,” Cleverly said at a joint press briefing in Kigali. “Rwanda is very committed to this partnership and that is why we worked with the UK government to address the concerns raised by the Supreme Court”, Biruta added. “We do not have plans to withdraw from this partnership.” Alain Mukuralinda, deputy spokesman for Rwanda’s government, said the two countries would “set up a joint tribunal with both Rwandan and UK judges in Kigali... to make sure that none of the immi-

grants sent to Rwanda is deported to their country.” “This tribunal will have to be approved and voted (on) by parliaments from both countries,” he added. Further details of the new agreement were not available but British media reports said it would include commitments by Rwanda regarding the treatment of asylum-seekers and other migrants sent there. The UK Supreme Court decision last month was a major setback for Sunak, who also plans to pass “emergency legislation” in parliament to designate Rwanda a safe country to end the “merry-go-round” of legal challenges. “I’m fed up with our Rwanda policy being blocked,” Sunak wrote in *The Sun* tabloid yesterday. “I’ve got the government working on emergency laws to end the merry-go-round so that we can fix this problem once and for all – and stop the boats.” A UK-Rwanda migration “partnership” agreed in April last year envisaged sending to Kigali anyone who has made what London calls “dangerous or illegal journeys” to Britain on small boats from Europe or hidden in lorries. The first deportees were aboard a plane to fly there in June 2022 when a last-minute European Court of Human Rights injunction prevented any deportations, prompting the further legal challenges. The plan has also come under fire from activists, with Yasmine Ahmed, UK director at Human Rights Watch, urging the British government yesterday to “open its eyes to Rwanda’s track record of human rights violations, including against refugees and asylum seekers”.



People wade along a flooded street in Chennai yesterday, following intense rains after Cyclone Michaung made a landfall.

13 killed in floods, rain as cyclone hits south India

Reuters
Bhubaneswar, India

Cyclone Michaung barreled into the southern Indian coast yesterday with intense winds, its arrival preceded by torrential rains and flooding that killed at least 13 people, as officials assessed the damage. Tall waves crashed into southern coastal towns over the last two days as the cyclone approached, submerging entire villages and halting all transportation as more than 390,000 people felt its impact, authorities said. Michaung made landfall near the beach town of Bapatla in Andhra Pradesh state with winds of up to 70mph that later dropped slightly as the ‘severe’ category cyclone weakened, the Indian weather office said. Further weakening is forecast. Trees were uprooted and at least 25 villages inundated as the cyclone traversed northwards and authorities evacuated more than 15,000 people to safety ahead of landfall, the Andhra Pradesh government said. “We have taken all measures and have all the equipment. We have also broadcast precautions to the public,” Zahid Khan, a National Disaster Response Force official, told ANI news agency, adding the force had multiple teams deployed on ground. The 13 people killed include a four-year-old boy who died after a wall collapsed, authorities said. More than 140 trains and 40 flights were cancelled in the state. Up to eight inches of rain is expected in the state over the next 24 hours, the weather office said. In neighbouring Tamil Nadu state capital Chennai, a major electronics and manufacturing hub, residents waded through waist-

deep floodwaters that also swept away cars. The floods triggered memories of similar rains in Chennai eight years ago which killed 290 people, as some activists questioned whether the city’s infrastructure could handle extreme weather events. On attempts to improve stormwater drainage systems in the city, Raj Bhagat P, a civil engineer and geo-analystics expert said: “Their solutions would have helped a lot in moderate and heavy rainfall, but not in very heavy and extremely heavy rains.” The Chennai airport – one of the busiest in the country – was closed on Monday after a runway was submerged and reopened at 9am yesterday, a spokesperson for the federal civil aviation ministry said. Taiwan’s Foxconn and Pegatron had halted Apple iPhone production at their facilities near Chennai due to the rains on Monday, sources said. Foxconn resumed operations yesterday.

Nasa to train Indian astronaut for ISS voyage

Nasa will train an Indian astronaut for a voyage to the International Space Station as early as next year, Nasa administrator Bill Nelson said, amid deepening space ties between India and the US. “There is an opportunity to share science,” Nelson said in Bengaluru, where he inspected the NISAR satellite. Nasa-ISRO SAR (NISAR) is a low-earth orbit observatory system jointly developed by Nasa and ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation). Roughly the size of an SUV, the satellite is set to be launched from India in the first quarter of next year, with a target launch set for January. NISAR will map the entire planet once every 12 days, providing data for understanding changes in ecosystems, ice mass, vegetation biomass, sea level rise, ground water and natural hazards including earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes and landslides.

Princess opens hospital unit



Britain’s Catherine, Princess of Wales, in her role as Patron of Evelina London, opens the new children’s day surgery unit at the centre at St Thomas’ Hospital in London yesterday. Evelina London cares for around 104,000 children and young people each year across its dedicated children’s services, in hospital and in the community.

US official in India, discusses alleged plot to kill separatist

Reuters
Washington

White House deputy national security adviser Jon Finer led a US delegation to New Delhi on Monday where he noted the formation of an investigative panel by India to probe an unsuccessful plot to assassinate a Sikh separatist on US soil. “Finer acknowledged India’s establishment of a Committee of Enquiry to investigate lethal plotting in the US and the importance of holding accountable anyone found responsible,” the White House said. Finer also met Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar and national security adviser Ajit Doval. They also discussed developments in the Middle East, the White House said. Last week, the US justice department alleged that an Indian government official directed

an unsuccessful plot to assassinate a Sikh separatist on US soil, while it announced charges against a man accused of orchestrating the attempted murder. US officials have named the target of the attempted murder as Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a Sikh separatist and dual citizen of the US and Canada. In response, India expressed concern about one of its government officials being linked to the plot, from which it dissociated itself, as being against government policy. India said last week it would formally investigate the concerns aired by the US, and take “necessary follow-up action” on the findings of a panel set up on November 18. The issue is highly delicate for both India and the Biden administration as they try to build closer ties in the face of an ascendant China perceived as a threat for both democracies.

Harry challenges ‘unfair treatment’ over UK security in court

Reuters
London

Prince Harry has been subjected to unlawful, unfair and unjustifiable treatment by the British government over the decision to take away his police protection when he is in Britain, his lawyer told London’s High Court yesterday. Harry, along with other senior royals, had received full publicly-funded security protection provided by the state before he decided to step back from his royal duties and move to California with his American wife Meghan in 2020.

But the Home Office – the ministry responsible for policing, immigration and security – decided in February that year that Harry would cease to automatically receive personal police security while in Britain, even if he were to cover the cost himself. Harry, who is the younger son of King Charles and who has the title the Duke of Sussex, was given permission last year to challenge that decision. Harry was not in court yesterday but his lawyer, Shaheed Fatima, said the decision was “unlawful and unfair.” “This case is about the right to security and safety of a person,” she said. “There cannot be a right

of greater importance to any of us.” She said the Executive Committee for the Protection of Royalty and Public Figures, known as RAVEC, had deviated from its own written policy for the first time, and had not provided a reason why it had singled Harry out in this way. It had also failed to tell him why it had made its decision. Harry’s “consistent position has been – and remains – that he should be given state security in light of the threats/risks he faces,” she said in her written submission, adding he had “unjustifiably, been treated less favourably” than others. The government’s lawyer, James

Eadie, said the change in protection resulted from Harry’s change of status to a non-working royal. RAVEC had not decided Harry should not receive protection, but that he should not have it on the same basis. Harry would be treated in a “be-spoke” manner, and “occasionally” be included within the cohort of individuals receiving publicly-funded protection, Eadie said. The prince has often spoken out about his fears for the safety of his family, and has regularly hit out at press intrusion – which he blames for the death of his mother Princess Diana, who was killed when her chauffeur-driven car crashed

as it sped away from chasing paparazzi in Paris in 1997. Last year, Britain’s former counter-terrorism police chief said there had been credible threats made against Harry and Meghan by far-right extremists. Eadie said in his written submissions said the committee was aware of “the wider ‘impact’ following the tragic death of (Harry’s) mother.” The judge, Peter Lane, has ruled that only the opening statements in the case could be held in public, with the vast bulk of the hearings over the coming two-and-a-half days held in private to prevent security measures being compromised. In her heavily redacted

written submission, Fatima said there had been “a recent heightened threat” in June this year when Harry gave evidence at the High Court in a privacy case against Mirror Group Newspapers. In May, the high court ruled against Harry after he challenged the government’s refusal to allow to him pay for his own police protection instead. Lawyers for the police and the government successfully argued it would be wrong to allow the fifth-in-line to the throne to pay, as it would mean wealthy individuals were able to “buy” specially trained serving officers to act as private bodyguards.

Role in student’s death ‘unforgivable’: killer’s wife

AFP
Nanterre (France)

The widow of a French serial killer known as the “Ogre of the Ardennes” yesterday admitted she played an “unforgivable” role in the 1990 rape and murder of British student Joanna Parrish by her former husband.

Confronted with images of Parrish's swollen face after her body was pulled from the river Yonne, Monique Olivier said that “it’s because of me she’s gone, it’s unforgivable”.

She remained silent in the glass-screened dock for long moments as she looked at the pictures, before pushing them away with a trembling hand.

Olivier is on trial for her role in three kidnappings and murders by her late husband Michel Fourniret and her role in rapes and attempted rape in two of the cases.

On “hunts” with her husband, Olivier said during cross-examination that “I

was the dog, I was never anything but the dog that must obey” its master.

Now aged 75 and serving a life sentence issued in 2008, she is on trial for her part in the abduction, rape and murder of 20-year-old Joanna in 1990 and 18-year-old Marie-Ange Domece in 1988.

Fourniret himself, who died in 2021 before any trial for the three killings, said of Domece and Parrish in 2018 that “I am the only one responsible for their fates... If those people had not crossed my path, they would still be alive.”

Olivier is also charged with complicity in the disappearance of nine-year-old Estelle Mouzin in 2003, whose body has never been found two decades on despite intensive searches.

Domece's remains have also never been found, while Parrish's naked body was recovered from the Yonne in the French department of the same name.

Olivier recounted how she remained in the front seat of the couple's car when Fourniret climbed into the back to kill and rape Parrish in May 1990.



CONTRITE: Monique Olivier

“Like a coward, I do nothing, I hear her scream a little but I don’t intervene. It’s fear, panic, (I am) unable to do anything at all,” she said.

“You don’t tell him, ‘no, don’t get in’? You don’t leave the car? You know she’s going to die, and you let him get in?” asked Didier Seban, a lawyer for the Parrish and Mouzin families. Olivier remained silent.

The Parrish family had left the courtroom yesterday when Joanna’s murder was discussed, staying away during Olivier’s questioning.

Olivier had mostly responded with “I don’t remember” or “I can’t recall” in between long silences and sighs during questioning from judge Didier Safar.

Wearing the same white sweater as throughout the hearings so far, she said that “I can’t manage to remember all of the details. I mix them up with other” killings.

Fourniret is believed to have answered a classified ad Parrish bought in a local paper offering English lessons – hoping to earn money to visit her boyfriend in Czechoslovakia.

Parrish’s family, then-boyfriend and their lawyer had on Monday pressed the idea that the young woman would never have got into a car alone with a strange man to highlight Olivier’s vital role.

“I was bait,” Olivier acknowledged.

The accused said that Fourniret’s string of rapes and murders were “just the way

things were” between them and never discussed directly, as she attempted to explain her inability to locate Domece’s remains.

“He didn’t tell me where he left her, for every victim he said, ‘we won’t talk any more about it, we’ll go and do something else.’ That’s the way he was, we weren’t supposed to discuss it again,” Olivier said.

Lawyer Seban said during a break in the hearing that the gaps in Olivier’s memory were “obviously not credible”.

“These are noteworthy events after all, the deaths of young women, the deaths of children,” he added.

Seban also complained that “the judge’s questioning isn’t insistent enough, not sustained enough to push Olivier forward” with her admissions.

Olivier remained silent for a long time when confronted with a picture of Domece.

“What does this face mean to you?” Seban asked.

“That it should never have passed away,” she finally said.

Dispute settled with US over spying claim, says Spain

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said yesterday that a dispute with Washington sparked by the arrest of two Spanish intelligence officers for allegedly working for the United States has been settled.

The El Confidencial news site said on Monday that two agents of Spain’s National Intelligence Centre (CNI) were suspected of sharing information with the United States, and had been arrested at the request of an investigative magistrate.

The report was then confirmed by Defence Minister Margarita Robles and two other cabinet members, who did not give further details.

The news raised eyebrows as both Spain and the United States are members of Nato and the two countries have good ties even though Sanchez, a Socialist, governs in a coalition with hard-left parties often critical of Washington’s foreign policy.

During an informal talk with foreign journalists at his official residence, Sanchez avoided criticising the United States over the alleged spying.

He acknowledged that the case had caused unease in Madrid, but said the situation had been overcome, without giving details.

Asked about the case at a press conference yesterday, government spokeswoman Pilar Alegria said only that it was Spain’s national intelligence agency that reported the officers to prosecutors.

She said the government would ensure “maximum cooperation” with the investigation into the affair.

The case reportedly came to light because the CNI noticed that two of its agents were consulting information that was not related to their assigned tasks.

It is not known what information may have been passed to the United States. So far US authorities have made no comments on the case.

France moves to ban disposable e-cigarettes

French parliament has backed a proposal to ban single-use electronic cigarettes, considered to be gateways to tobacco addiction for teenagers and harmful to the environment.

The lower house National Assembly late Monday voted unanimously for the move, which still needs backing from France’s upper house Senate and clearance from the EU Commission.

Pre-filled disposable e-cigarettes, known as “puffs”, are popular with young people, can have a high nicotine content, come in many flavours and are cheap.

“They open a pathway to serious addiction,” Health Minister Aurelien Rousseau said.

“They’re ridiculously cheap, the fruity and sugary flavours are attractive, and their small size makes them easy to hide from parents,” said deputy Francesca Pasquini, who submitted the draft law in November last year.

Co-sponsor Michel Lauzzana said that France’s National Academy of Medicine qualifies puffs as “a sneaky trap especially for children and teenagers”.

The motion, which got the vote of all the 104 members of parliament present, has the backing of Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne, who had in September called for a ban on the single-use vaping devices.



Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai delivers the 21st Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture at the Johannesburg Theatre in Johannesburg yesterday. **(AFP)**

Malala: Taliban rule ‘made girlhood illegal’

AFP
Johannesburg

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai said yesterday that Taliban rule in Afghanistan has made “girlhood illegal”, as she called for gender apartheid to be made a crime against humanity.

In a speech marking the 10th anniversary of the death of South Africa’s Nelson Mandela, the Pakistani activist said: “The Taliban have made girlhood illegal, and it is taking a toll.”

She highlighted how Afghan girls frozen out of school are “experiencing depression”, “turning to narcotics” and “attempting suicide”.

Malala was the keynote speaker at an annual event held by the Mandela Foundation to commemorate the anti-

apartheid icon and fellow Nobel Peace Prize winner.

After slamming what she called the “unjust bombardment of Gaza” by Israel since the unprecedented October 7 attacks by Hamas, she said crises in Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan had diverted attention from the treatment of women and girls in Afghanistan.

“Our first imperative is to call the regime in Afghanistan what it really is. It is a gender apartheid,” said Malala who was 15 when a Pakistani group shot her in the head over her campaign for girls’ education.

Access to education and work for girls and women has been severely restricted since the Taliban leaders took back power in August 2021.

Teenage girls and women are barred from schools and universities. Thousands of women have lost their gov-

ernment jobs - or are being paid to stay home.

Girls and women are also prohibited from entering parks, funfairs or gyms.

“South Africans fought for racial apartheid to be recognised and criminalised at the international level. In the process, they drew more of the world’s attention to the horrors of apartheid,” Malala told a packed Johannesburg theatre. “But gender apartheid has not been explicitly codified yet,” she said.

“We have an opportunity to do that right now,” she added, calling for the definition to be inserted in a new UN treaty that is currently being debated.

Malala, former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton and other leading activists are campaigning for UN member states to amend a draft crimes against humanity treaty to include gender apartheid.

US issues fresh Russia sanctions

Reuters
Washington

The United States imposed fresh Russia-related sanctions yesterday, targeting a defence procurement network consisting of people and entities in Belgium, Sweden and Hong Kong, among other places, as Washington cracks down on Moscow’s evasion of Western sanctions imposed over the war in Ukraine.

The US Treasury Department said in a statement the network, led by Belgium-based Hans De Geetere, is involved in procuring electronics with military applications for Russian end users. It said the network consists of nine entities and five people based in Russia, Belgium, Cyprus, Sweden, Hong Kong and the Netherlands.

The US Department of Justice also unsealed two separate indictments against De Geetere related to his scheme to export sensitive, military-grade technology from the United States to end users located in China and Russia, while the Department of Commerce added De Geetere and five entities to its entity list.

“The United States and our allies remain focused on disrupting any attempts by Russia or its trusted agents to gain access to the critical inputs and technologies necessary to support Moscow’s defence industry and facilitate its brutal war in Ukraine,” Treasury’s under secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, Brian Nelson, said in the statement.

Russia’s embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment. De Geetere could not immediately be reached for comment. Belgian media previously quoted De Geetere as denying allegations of sanctions evasion, and said he stated: “We exported trinkets, not top technology.”

Washington accused the Belgian businessman of being a long-time procurement agent for Russia who serves as the director of several companies in Belgium, Cyprus and the Netherlands.

De Geetere has coordinated the procurement of electronics for Russian customers, including high priority semiconductor devices sought by Russia for its weapons programmes and drone engines, among other items, Treasury said.

Switzerland returns marble head to Libya

Switzerland has returned a 2,000-year-old marble sculpture of a young woman’s head to Libya, 10 years after it was found in a Geneva warehouse, Swiss authorities said yesterday.

The 19-centimetre-tall Hellenistic sculpture dates from between the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD, and because of its red patina most likely comes from the archaeological site of Cyrene in eastern Libya, the Swiss federal culture ministry said in a statement.

It was handed over yesterday by the head of federal culture office to the Libyan embassy in Bern.

“This culturally significant archaeological find had been confiscated during criminal proceedings in the canton of Geneva,” the statement said. “It is tangible evidence of Greek expansion in North Africa.”

The sculpture was found during a customs inspection in 2013, and prosecutors opened a criminal case three years later, leading to the confiscation of the statue because of “sufficient reason to believe that it had been acquired as part of an illegal excavation”.

The investigation was unable to determine where exactly the object had been found or how it ended up in Switzerland. “Libya and its Unesco World Heritage Sites such as Cyrene are heavily threatened by looting and destruction,” the statement said.

Switzerland and Libya, which has been racked by instability since the 2011 overthrow of dictator Moammer Gaddafi, are both parties to a 1970 Unesco convention on preventing illegal trade in cultural artifacts.



This handout photo released by the Swiss Federal Office of Cultural Affairs shows a marble statue of a woman's head from the Hellenistic period.

Putin to visit Saudi Aabia, UAE today

AFP
Moscow

President Vladimir Putin will visit Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates today, the Kremlin has announced, as Moscow courts allies abroad despite being isolated by the West over the Ukraine conflict.

Putin has limited his international travel since deploying troops to Ukraine and the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for him, accusing the Russian leader of deporting Ukrainian children.

“President Putin will go on a working visit to the UAE and Saudi Arabia tomorrow,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday.

In Saudi Arabia, Putin will discuss trade, international politics and humanitarian aid with Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman, the Kremlin announced.

He will meet his counterpart Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan in the UAE for talks on trade, energy, tourism and education, it added.

The Gaza war is on the agenda of both meetings, the Kremlin said.

The United Arab Emirates is hosting the COP28 UN climate talks, but the Kremlin did not specify whether Putin would attend any related events.

Putin has missed several high-level gatherings abroad since Moscow launched large-scale hostilities in Ukraine in February 2022.

Putin skipped the Brics summit in South Africa in August to avoid causing a “political show”.

He also missed the in-person flagship G20 summit in September – although he attended a virtual G20 meeting in November.

Since March, Putin has been wanted by the ICC, and member states are expected to make good on the warrant if the Russian leader enters their country.

Neither the UAE nor Saudi Arabia have signed the ICC’s founding treaty, which means they would not have to arrest him.

Putin visited China in October, his first visit outside the former Soviet Union this year.

Several days earlier, he travelled to ex-Soviet Kyrgyzstan in his first foreign visit since the ICC issued its warrant.

After Putin’s trip this week, he is expected to host Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi tomorrow.

Russia is strengthening its economic and military ties with Iran, which has also been targeted by Western sanctions.

Western countries have accused Tehran of supporting Russia’s offensive in Ukraine by providing it with large quantities of drones and other weaponry.

Putin visited Iran in July last year and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov travelled to Tehran in October for talks with regional counterparts. Iran’s official news agency Irna said Raisi would be travelling to Moscow following an invitation from Putin.

“Bilateral issues, including economic interactions, as well as discussions about regional and international issues, especially the situation in Gaza, will be high on the agenda of the one-day trip,” it reported.

5 hurt in Pak blast

Reuters
Peshawar

Four children, aged 7-10, and an adult were injured in an explosion in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar early yesterday, hospital and rescue officials said.

Bilal Ahmad Faizi, the spokesman for emergency rescue services, said an improvised explosive device (IED) went off on a busy road in Peshawar at 9:10am. He said five people, including four children, were injured.

Two of the children were in critical condition, Mohamed Asim, a spokesman for the Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar, said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

Peshawar’s police chief, Mohamed Ashfaq Anwar, told Reuters that there was no indication school children were the target of the attack.

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GULF TIMES

Consistently weaker yen keeps Japanese policymakers on guard

With the yen trending down most of the year - as the US continues to maintain high policy rates while Japan has kept them low - Japanese authorities are facing renewed pressure to combat a sustained depreciation in the currency.

The down trend persists even as the pace of inflation is now about the same in Japan as in the US. That's partly because the Bank of Japan still thinks price growth has yet to get settled in the minds of consumers and businesses.

The yen has been the worst performer this year among major currencies against the US dollar, falling about 11%. That's mainly because Japanese interest rates remain low to nurture inflation while the US and others have hiked them to cool price growth, making dollar-denominated assets more attractive for investors.

The Bank of Japan (BoJ) has loosened its grip on Japan's 10-year government bond yields, but it keeps rates low to support the economy, which has contracted in the quarter through September. Yields on Treasuries remain relatively high as the Federal Reserve stands ready to hike rates more if needed to cool inflation and the economy.

BoJ Governor Kazuo Ueda has yet to become confident that inflation will be anchored beyond the bank's 2% goal in the long term while being accompanied by sufficient wage gains, and so far the government hasn't declared an end to its long fight against deflation.

The yen's decline has both benefited and harmed the economy, businesses and consumers.

The currency's fall to 24-year lows has repercussions for the domestic economy as yen-based import prices are surging at a record annual pace, heaping pressure on household balance sheets.

The yen has been the worst performer this year among major currencies against the US dollar, falling about 11%

paychecks are not keeping up with the rise in living costs. Their ongoing angst has weakened public support for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

The premier has put together another economic stimulus package to ease the pain of inflation, which in return prolongs the BoJ's efforts to nurture inflation. This sets Japan apart from other major economies that have focused on monetary policy to curb price gains.

Policymakers remain on guard to see if they need to curb its decline through currency intervention as they did in 2022. Last year, they intervened multiple times to support the yen.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said this year that any intervention by Japan to prop up the yen would be understandable if it were aimed at smoothing out volatility - not at affecting the level of the exchange rate.

While Japan holds nearly \$1.3tn in foreign reserves, these could be substantially eroded if Tokyo intervened heavily repeatedly, leaving authorities constrained over how long they can defend the yen.

Japanese authorities also consider it important to seek the support of Group of Seven partners, notably the United States if the intervention involves the dollar.

Can the yen fall further?
It largely depends on whether the interest rate gap between Japan and the US widens or narrows. A bigger gap means more downward pressure on the yen. A smaller gap would support the yen.

The yen has long been the currency of choice for investors undertaking carry trades, which involve borrowing in a low-yielding currency like the yen to invest in higher yielding counterparts like the US, or Canadian dollars.

But the yen's enduring volatility and weakness could undermine its appeal as a funding currency.

Amir urges UNSC 'to act to end this barbaric war'

Full text of His Highness's speech at the 44th session of GCC leaders summit

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani bestowed his generous patronage on the inauguration of the 44th session of the Supreme Council of Their Majesties, Their Highnesses leaders and heads of delegations of GCC countries, which took place at the Sheraton Doha Hotel yesterday.

His Highness the Amir, Chair of the session, gave a speech. Here is its transcript:

"In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, my fellow brothers Your Majesties and Highnesses, Your Excellencies, may God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you.

I offer you a sincere fraternal greeting and welcome you, dear brothers, to your second country, Qatar, among your kinfolk.

Allow me to express my deepest thanks to my brother, HM Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, of the sisterly Sultanate of Oman, for the appreciated efforts that he made during his presidency of the previous session of the Supreme Council and his keenness to strengthen the unity of the Co-operation Council and its accomplishments.

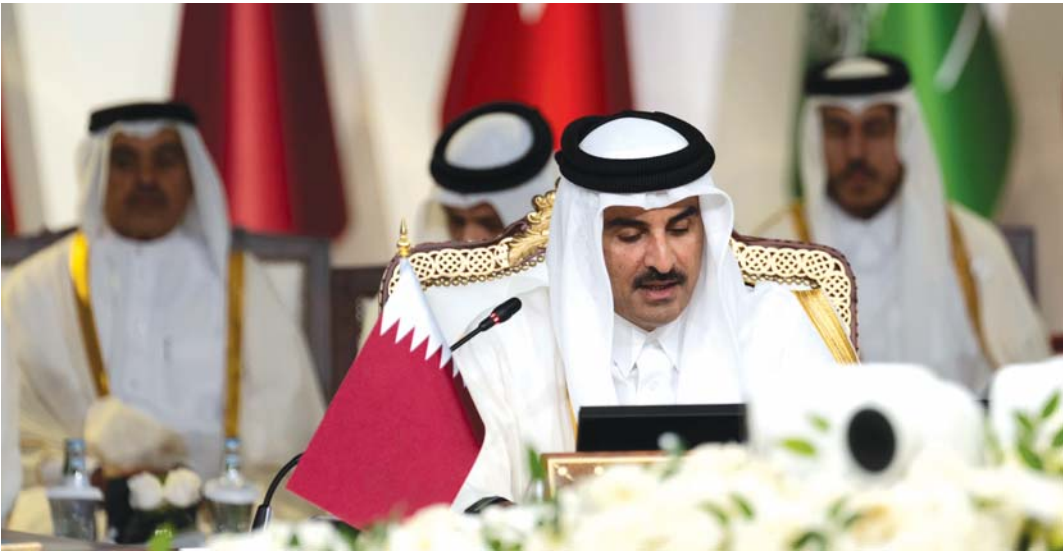
I also thank HE the secretary-general of the Gulf Co-operation Council, the assistant secretaries-general and the General Secretariat staff for their efforts in following up on the implementation of the decisions of the previous session and the good preparation for this summit.

We meet today, hoping that communication and understanding among the leaders will contribute to the development and reinforcement of joint Gulf action in a way that will achieve the interests of our countries and the aspirations of our peoples, underpin the regional and international status of the Gulf Co-operation Council, provide greater opportunities for growth and prosperity, and contribute to consolidating security and stability in the region and the world.

The accelerating international and regional variables necessitate persistent consultation and co-ordination between us in order to address them, avoid their consequences, and support our council's accomplishments in various economic, security, social, and other fields. I am confident that the GCC countries are capable of reaching understanding and co-operation that can also contribute to resolving some regional issues.

Your Majesties and Highnesses, our summit convenes against the backdrop of unabated grave tragedy and unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe caused by the aggression against the brotherly Palestinian people, particularly our kinfolk in the Gaza Strip. All religious, moral and humanitarian standards and values have been violated in occupied Palestine by means of the crimes against humanity perpetrated by the occupation forces.

It is unfortunate that, despite the disclosure of the scale of the crime, and the outbreak of public protests that took to the streets



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani addressing the leaders of the GCC summit in Doha yesterday.

all over the world, some official circles still see the Palestinian people as ineligible for demanding a ceasefire.

It is disgraceful for the international community to allow this heinous crime to go on for nearly two months, during which a systematic and deliberate killing of innocent defenceless civilians, including women and children, continued. Entire families were removed from the civil registry. An already fragile infrastructure was targeted, cutting off supplies of electricity, water, food, fuel and medicine, and destroying hospitals, worship places, schools and vital facilities.

All of this is carried out under the pretext of self-defence, even though self-defence is inapplicable to the occupation under international law, yet this does not sanction the genocide crimes committed by Israel.

The massacres perpetrated by the occupation authorities against our brothers in the Gaza Strip deepen the feeling of injustice and impotence of international legitimacy. But, on the other side, this tragedy reflects the steadfastness of the Palestinian people, their insistence on obtaining all their legitimate rights, and the centrality of the Palestine cause.

All these tragedies could have been spared if Israel and its supporters had come to realise the fact that the cause of the Palestinian people cannot be marginalised, besides that the age of colonialism has come to an end, security is unattainable without lasting peace, and that both security and peace are unachievable without a just solution to this cause.

People all over the world wonder about the feasibility of the international community, and whether such an entity really exists. Why did it abandon the Palestinian children? Expressions such as double standards and two sets of rules have gone viral. This means that international legitimacy might have been victimised by this barbaric war.

We reiterate our condemnation of all forms of targeting civilians regardless of their nationalities,

citizenships and religions, and we stress the need to provide them with protection in accordance with the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law. We call on the UN to necessarily conduct an international investigation into the massacres committed by the Israeli occupation authorities against the Palestinian people.

Your Majesties and Highnesses, based on our firm belief in humanitarian action, resolving disputes through peaceful means, as well as our duty towards our Ummah, and by the grace and aid of God Almighty, the mediation efforts of the State of Qatar have culminated in concluding a pause in the Gaza Strip, releasing some prisoners and detainees from both the Palestinian and Israeli sides, and delivering urgent humanitarian aid. We continue to work on extending or renewing it, to alleviate the burden on our kinfolk in the Gaza Strip. But pauses cannot replace a comprehensive ceasefire.

I reiterate my thanks here to the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt and the United States of America for their close co-operation with us to reach and implement these pauses. We will make every effort, in co-operation with our international and regional partners, to convert them into a comprehensive cessation of Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people all over the Palestinian territories.

Your Majesties and Highnesses, the conflict in Palestine is neither a religious nor an issue of terrorism or war on terror, but rather, fundamentally, a national issue, an issue of conflict between the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian people who are reeling under occupation. It is an issue of settler colonialism that refuses to integrate into the region by reaching a compromise solution - a relatively fair solution with the indigenous people.

Therefore, the challenge does not lie in resolving the "Gaza issue," as if it is a separate issue, or an Israeli security issue requiring security arrangements subjugating the Gaza Strip to its imperatives, but rather lies in ending the occupation and resolving the issue

of the Palestinian people.

From this standpoint, we call on the Security Council, especially its permanent members, to assume its legal responsibility and act to end this barbaric war, and compel Israel to return to credible negotiations to achieve a just solution to the Palestinian issue in accordance with the resolutions of legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative through the two-state solution, which is the solution that has been accepted by the Palestinians and Arabs and agreed upon by the international community.

However, resorting to disinformation and deception in negotiations without an agreed-upon basis just to maintain an open-ended and infinite process will no longer deceive anyone. Because in the course of that process there was an expansion in terms of settlement and Judaisation of Jerusalem, tightening of Gaza siege.

Your Majesties and Highnesses, the continued crises facing some sisterly countries such as Libya, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and Sudan pose a threat to social peace and the unity of these countries and their peoples. Once again, we call on all conflicting parties in these countries to prioritise national interests over factionalism in all its forms, recognise the states monopoly on legitimate violence, spare peoples from violence and fighting, and resort to dialogue to resolve differences and achieve the aspirations of their peoples for security, stability and development.

There are matters pertaining to citizen-state relations that have been historically settled in all parts of the world, and there are some functions such as legislation, the judiciary, and the monopoly of the legitimate violence, which are reserved to the state, and any attempt to usurp them from the state would only lead to sedition, chaos and civil wars.

I reiterate my welcome to all of you to your second country, and I pray to God Almighty to guide our steps and to help us all in achieving the goals of our summit for the benefit of our peoples.

May God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you!" (QNA)



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GCC leaders, ministers leave after attending the summit



UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifah of Bahrain, Omani Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs Fahd bin Mahmoud al-Said and Representative of Kuwaiti Amir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah and Foreign Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Salem Abdullah al-Jaber al-Sabah left Doha yesterday after participating in the 44th GCC summit. They were seen off at Hamad International Airport, among others, by HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi.

Doha Declaration expresses concern over Israeli actions

Their Majesties and Highnesses, the leaders of the GCC countries, stressed the critical and dangerous challenges facing the region, especially the Israeli aggression against Gaza, expressing their deep concern and great dissatisfaction with the blatant Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, and their condemnation of the escalation of violence and indiscriminate bombing carried out by the Israeli forces in Gaza, forced displacement of the civilian population, and destruction of civilian facilities and infrastructure, including residential buildings, schools, health facilities, and places of worship, in clear violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

Their Majesties and Highnesses, the leaders of the GCC countries said in the Doha Declaration of the 44th Session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Co-operation Council, held in Doha on Tuesday, December 5 of 2023, that based on the noble goals on which the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) has been based since its founding in 1981, including supporting just Arab and Islamic causes, Their Majesties and Highnesses the leaders of the Co-operation Council countries discussed the critical and dangerous challenges facing the region, especially the Israeli aggression against Gaza and Israeli attacks in the West Bank, including the city of Jerusalem and Islamic and Christian holy sites. They expressed their appreciation of joint mediation efforts of the State of Qatar, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the United States of America, which resulted in reaching an agreement for a humanitarian pause in the Gaza Strip, stressing the necessity of immediately resuming this humanitarian truce, in order to achieve a complete and sustainable ceasefire, and to ensure the arrival of all humanitarian and relief aid and basic needs, the resumption of the work of electricity and water lines, and the entry of fuel, food and medicine for the residents of Gaza.

The summit affirmed that the Co-operation Council stands by the brotherly Palestinian people and its continued support to alleviate the suffering of the residents of the Gaza Strip, and to extend a helping hand to rebuild what the Israeli war machine destroyed in its attacks on the Strip during the past years. In 2009, the GCC countries established the Co-operation Council Programme for the Reconstruction of Gaza, and pledged within the framework of this programme an amount of \$1.646bn, in addition to direct bilateral aid, both in kind and financial, and unofficial aid. The most recent of which was the pledge in October of an additional amount of \$100mn for hu-

manitarian efforts, in addition to popular campaigns that mobilised hundreds of millions of US dollars to support the steadfastness of the brotherly Palestinian people.

The leaders of the GCC countries warned of the dangers of expanding confrontations and the spread of the conflict to other regions in the Middle East, unless the Israeli aggression stops, which will lead to dire consequences for the peoples of the region and for international peace and security. The leaders of the Co-operation Council countries called on the international community to intervene to establish a ceasefire and protect Palestinian civilians, and take the necessary measures within international law to respond to Israeli practices and its policy of collective punishment against the defenceless residents of Gaza.

The Supreme Council reaffirmed its firm stance on the Palestinian issue, demanding an end to the occupation and supporting the sovereignty of the Palestinian people over all the occupied Palestinian territories since June 1967. It also emphasised the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, guaranteeing the rights of refugees according to the Arab Peace Initiative and international legitimacy resolutions. The council stressed the need to double the efforts of the international community to resolve the conflict in a way that fulfils all the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. In that regard, the council commended the ongoing efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its initiative in partnership with the Arab League, the European Union (EU), the Arab Republic of Egypt, and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to revive the peace process in accordance with international law, UN resolutions, and the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002.

The leaders welcomed the extraordinary Arab-Islamic summit hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on November 11, 2023, to discuss the dire situation in Gaza and its serious security and political implications. They also praised the efforts of the ministerial committee formed by the summit, chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the aim of "formulating an international movement to stop the war on Gaza and exert pressure for a genuine and serious political process to achieve permanent and comprehensive peace, in accordance with the recognised international references."

The leaders welcomed the participation of President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as a guest at the 44th session of the Supreme Council, which witnessed discussions on ways

to enhance co-operation between the two sides and addressed issues of common interest, particularly the Palestinian issue and the Israeli aggression on Gaza. The Supreme Council of the GCC commended the role of His Excellency, the Turkish government, and the dear Turkish people for their support for the Palestinian cause and the resilience of the Palestinian people in their land.

The council expressed concern about the escalating manifestations of racism and hatred against Arabs and Muslims in several countries, as well as the alarming spread of anti-Islamic discourse, which has created a negative political climate in international relations. They condemned the burning of the Holy Qur'an and the increasing attacks on Arabs and Muslims, targeting them deliberately.

The council emphasised the importance of concerted efforts to confront this phenomenon politically and diplomatically, strengthening international efforts to combat racism against Arabs and Muslims, supporting relevant regional and international frameworks to address this issue, and working on a new approach to collective co-operation to confront and counter misconceptions and misleading information in the media, as well as anti-Islamic social attitudes.

The summit praised the growing role of the council's member states in addressing political, security, and economic challenges in this region and beyond, and their contribution to resolving issues that threaten peace, security, and stability. It highlighted the hosting of major international events, including Expo 2023 Doha in October which was hosted under the theme of "Green Desert, Green Tomorrow", the Fifth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) hosted by Qatar from March 5-9, 2023 at the level of heads of states and governments, the hosting of Expo 2030 by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in addition to winning the rights to host the FIFA World Cup in 2034, the inauguration of COP28 in Dubai on December 1, and the meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain in March 2023 under the theme "Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Inclusive Societies: Fighting intolerance."

The leaders affirmed that the success of these international events is an achievement for all the Council's countries and peoples, as organising major events enhances international dialogue and communication between the peoples of the world, strengthens the region's position as an international centre for business and economy, and promotes efforts to develop renewable energy sources and deal with climate change. (QNA)



GCC Secretary-General Jasem Mohamed al-Budaiwi speaking at the summit.

GCC chief hails council's 'successful journey'

Secretary-General of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Jasem Mohamed al-Budaiwi said that the 44th GCC summit in Doha solidifies the council and its successful journey, which adopts consultation, co-ordination, interconnection, and integration as a path towards unity, stemming from a spirit of sincere brotherhood, belief in a common destiny, and the deep-rooted bonds among the peoples of the Gulf region. In his speech at the summit's opening session, he thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani for hosting the summit.

He also thanked Sultan Haitham bin Tarik of Oman for the remarkable work done and the tangible results achieved during his presidency of the GCC Supreme Council this year. The GCC secretary-general said that since its establishment, the council's journey went from success to success, praising the efforts of the leaders of the GCC states in leading this great council in a spirit of co-operation in facing challenges.

He added that the region is surrounded by severe hardships, especially in relation to the grave bloody crimes committed against the Palestinian people in Gaza, praising in this context the GCC states' firm and steadfast position in supporting the Palestinian people and alleviating their suffering, something that is a norm for GCC states.

Al-Budaiwi recalled the GCC Supreme Council's first final statement delivered in Abu Dhabi on May 26, 1981, which emphasised that ensuring stability in the Gulf region is linked to achieving peace in the Middle East, stressing the need to arrive at a just solution to the issue of Palestine, one that guarantees the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to return to their homeland and establish their independent state, ensuring the Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, most notably Jerusalem.

He warned against maintaining the occupation intact, depriving the Palestinian people their legitimate rights, and repeating systematic provocations against their sanctities, calling on the international community to assume its responsibilities and to first work on ensuring an immediate ceasefire, facilitating the entry

of humanitarian aid into Gaza, and setting in motion a credible peace process leading to a two-state solution, in a way that achieves security and peace in the region and protects civilians.

The GCC secretary-general noted the continuous high-level co-ordination among the members of the Ministerial Council in this regard, with their distinguished efforts resulting with the mobilisation of regional and international support for the Palestinian people and alleviating their suffering.

Al-Budaiwi touched on GCC accomplishments, attributing them to member states' wise and balanced policies, stressing that the council has become a facilitator for countries and organisations wishing to consolidate relations and establish strategic partnerships with GCC member states.

He explained that the GCC Secretariat General is working diligently in co-ordination with GCC states to achieve their goals and interests of strengthening partnerships with countries as well as regional and international organisations.

He also expressed his aspiration for even more co-operation arrangements and to consolidate the GCC's prestigious position.

He pointed out that this session will discuss various important dossiers related to strengthening joint GCC projects, localising Gulf capital, integrating Gulf industries, enhancing GCC water, food, and energy security projects, dealing with environmental challenges, and activating the role of the private sector in the GCC states. He added that the session's agenda also includes advancing digital transformation and artificial intelligence, as well as enhancing political, economic, developmental, security, and military cooperation and coordination priorities.

Al-Budaiwi concluded his speech by congratulating the United Arab Emirates on the success of the 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP28), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on winning the bid to host Riyadh Expo 2030, and the State of Qatar on hosting Expo 2023 Doha, commenting that these achievements will go onto GCC countries' record of pivotal regional and international events they hosted. (QNA)



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani with Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohamed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud.

Left: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim with Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah al-Jaber al-Sabah, who is representing Amir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah for the GCC meeting in Doha.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim with Oman Deputy Prime Minister Fahd bin Mahmoud al-Said, who is in Doha on behalf of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani with Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifah.

Amir leads farewell of Saudi crown prince



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani led the farewell yesterday afternoon of Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohamed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud and the accompanying delegation upon their departure from Doha International Airport. Prince Mohamed presided over the Saudi delegation to the 44th GCC Summit and the 7th meeting of the Joint Qatari-Saudi Co-ordination Council in Doha. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani, HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Qatar's ambassador to Saudi Arabia Bandar bin Mohamed al-Attiyah, and Saudi ambassador to Qatar Prince Mansour bin Khalid bin Farhan al-Saud were present at the airport. - QNA

Amir leads welcome ceremony for GCC leaders and representatives

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani led well-wishers to welcome Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) leaders upon their arrival yesterday at the Hamad International Airport Amiri Terminal at the head of delegations to the 44th Summit of the GCC Supreme Council, which was hosted by Doha. Also present were His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Personal Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani, HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiyah, HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed al-Budaiwi, Qatar's ambassadors to the respective GCC nations and their counterparts in Doha, and a number of officials. - QNA



GCC indispensable to serve region's interests

His Highness the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani has asserted that Qatar is determined to steadfastly exert all efforts, co-ordination, and co-operation for the success of the 44th session of the Supreme Council of the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) states to accomplish its intended objectives for the service and benefit of the peoples of GCC states.

In a joint press conference with GCC Secretary-General Jassim Mohamed al-Budaiwi, HE Sheikh Mohamed said that Qatar's hosting of this session stems from its unwavering approach and keenness to support the council's achievements and preserve the unity and cohesion of the Gulf house.

He stressed that the GCC is an indispensable, solid and integrated system to serve joint interests and address the challenges facing the region.

HE Sheikh Mohamed added that Qatar is honoured to host the summit, which is complementary to the process of the joint fraternal action among the GCC states.

He outlined that the summit touched upon the means of promoting the co-operation level among GCC states in political, security, military, economic, and investment areas, as well as other sectors of priority that Qatar strives to achieve based on the directives of the leaders of GCC states.

Sheikh Mohamed affirmed that the summit focused on the significance of strengthening the distinguished role and position of the GCC states at the regional and international levels in the current age, which is replete with joint challenges and opportunities.

He added that this is in addition to contributing to peacefully resolving conflicts, mediation and enhancing security and stability in the region and the world, as well as supporting the just strategic Arab causes, stemming from the noble goals upon which GCC has been based since its founding in 1981.

HE the Prime Minister said that the leaders discussed a range of current regional and international issues, with the war on Gaza and crimes perpetrated by the occupation forces at the forefront, which are in gross violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

He indicated that the leaders underscored, in this context, the importance of moving forward with the mediation efforts to ultimately attain full and sustainable ceasefire, ensure opening safe crossings and corridors to secure the delivery of relief and humanitarian assistance, along with the basic needs of the population in Gaza.

Sheikh Mohamed added that the leaders also stressed the need for a political process that culminates in a comprehensive, just and enduring peace for the brotherly Palestinian people with their legitimate rights, in accordance with the



international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative based on the two-state solution, to establish the independent Palestinian State on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and ensuring that the Palestinian people regain their full rights.

He noted that, during their summit, the leaders welcomed the outcomes of the strategic partnerships with states and other groups, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), European Union and the US, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the UK and Japan.

Sheikh Mohamed pointed out that the summit witnessed the participation of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as a guest of

honour in an embodiment of co-operation between GCC states and Turkiye to achieve joint objectives.

HE the Prime Minister expressed his thanks to Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi for his efforts during the Sultanate's presidency of the 43rd session of the GCC Supreme Council, along with the achieved productive outcomes in the GCC's activities.

Regarding the developments in Gaza, HE Sheikh Mohamed affirmed that Qatar is continuing its efforts to revive and implement the pause, release hostages and prisoners, and exchange prisoners, endeavours that were ongoing over the past week.

He expressed regret that these

efforts face challenges that led to the cessation of the pause.

Sheikh Mohamed highlighted the continued efforts and co-ordination with partners in Egypt and the US as complementary to all diplomatic efforts that mainly aspire to bring the war to an end.

Prioritising the humanitarian pause and the release of prisoners and hostages, HE the Prime Minister hailed the importance of sustaining the cessation of war in order to reach a political solution.

On about the circumstances the region is going through, he said that the summit gained further importance as it coincided with a pivotal regional stage, especially with regard to the recent aggression on the Gaza Strip, giving an opportunity for leaders to discuss and exchange viewpoints on enhancing co-operation and integration in work at all levels.

HE Sheikh Mohamed added that the GCC leaders stressed during their summit the need for continued co-ordination between the relevant authorities in the member states, whether at the political, security and military levels, and affirmed the importance of supporting and strengthening the work of the ministerial committee assigned by the extraordinary Riyadh-hosted joint Arab-Islamic summit.

HE the Prime Minister added that the summit also dealt with topics in the interest of joint Gulf action, especially co-operation and achieving economic integra-

tion and the vision of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in this regard.

GCC Secretary-General al-Budaiwi appreciated the efforts by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the Qatar government and people to host this summit.

He expressed his sincere thanks to Oman for its efforts during its presidency of the last session.

Al-Budaiwi also expressed the appreciation of the GCC countries for the participation of the Turkish president in the summit, pointing to the close relations between the GCC countries and Turkiye.

He highlighted the summit's three basic achievements:

○ Affirming the GCC countries' clear position on what is happening in the Gaza Strip

○ Emphasising the GCC countries' prestigious position and great credibility, both regionally and internationally, thanks to their great efforts, the most prominent of which was Qatar's endeavours to help the Palestinian people in Gaza

○ Discussing and approving many decisions and recommendations towards joint Gulf action at all levels, the most important of which are those aimed at achieving economic integration in the GCC countries.

Commenting on the plan drawn up to deliver humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, al-Budaiwi said that there is a GCC General Secretariat committee to co-ordinate aid. - QNA

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has affirmed the continuous development of relations between his country and the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries and stressed the importance of strengthening these relations at various levels.

In a speech during his attendance at the closing session of the 44th GCC Summit, he said that Turkiye's participation in the summit is a reflection of the common desire to further develop relations and expressed his belief that relations and co-operation can be strengthened.

Erdogan stressed the great interest that Turkiye holds in strengthening co-operation with the GCC countries, expanding business and establishing partnerships in various fields, as well as opening new horizons and opportunities for co-operation.

The president pointed out that the volume of trade exchange between his coun-

Erdogan hails strong Turkiye-GCC ties

try and the GCC countries has witnessed significant growth over the last two decades, reaching \$23bn.

He also stressed the importance of implementing the free trade agreement between Turkiye and the GCC countries as well as the importance of co-operation in the tourism sector.

Five ministerial strategic dialogue meetings between Turkiye and the GCC have been held, while Turkiye will be hosting the sixth one during the first quarter of 2024, he stated.

Turkiye attaches great importance to projects related to transportation routes linking the GCC countries to Europe, as well as co-operation projects in the field of energy, especially considering that Turkiye has maintained its position as a safe haven for international investors and



Erdogan speaking at the 44th GCC Summit in Doha yesterday.

continues readiness to provide all types of support to investors that trust the Turkish economy, he added.

Erdogan also noted the importance of co-operation in defence industries, as its importance has been proven amidst the

recent developments.

Additionally, he expressed the need to strengthen efforts to diversify the areas of joint co-operation between Turkiye and the GCC countries.

He referred to the Extraordinary Summit that was held in Riyadh to discuss developments in the war on Gaza, as it has shown the importance of solidarity.

He also called for the necessity of following up on the decisions made.

Erdogan highly appreciated the efforts made by Qatar to achieve a ceasefire and a humanitarian pause in the Gaza Strip.

He stated in this context that there was hope that the pause would be permanent, but unfortunately, this has not been achieved since Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insists on risking the future of the region as a whole for the sake

of his internal political agenda.

Erdogan said that the killing of women and children, and the loss of the lives of about 17,000 Palestinians is a war and humanitarian crimes for which Israel must be held accountable.

In this regard, he noted the aid provided by Turkiye to the Gaza Strip, as well as having a number of patients from the Strip receive treatment in his country.

Erdogan stressed that the main goal lies in achieving a permanent humanitarian truce and ceasefire and establishing the independent State of Palestine on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Regarding the crisis in Syria, the president affirmed his country's aim to find a political solution based on the UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and stressed the importance of finding a solid base regarding this co-operation and achieving the return of Syrians to their country. - QNA