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Egypt to prosecute travel agents over Haj deaths

Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly ordered 16 tourism companies stripped of their licences and referred their managers to the public prosecutor yesterday over illegal pilgrimages to Makkah. The order came after countries whose citizens performed this year's Haj reported more than 1,100 deaths, many attributed to the summer heat in Saudi Arabia. An AFP tally put the toll at 1,126, more than half of them from Egypt. Arab diplomats said that Egyptians accounted for 658 deaths - 630 of them unregistered pilgrims. **Page 6**

Houthi attack claims are false: US officials

A claim by Yemen's Houthi group yesterday that its forces had attacked the US aircraft carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower in the Red Sea is false, two US officials said. "That is incorrect," one of the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity. In more than 70 attacks, the Houthis have sunk two vessels, seized another and killed at least three seafarers. The Houthis also said they attacked a commercial ship, Transworld Navigator, in the Arabian Sea.

3 killed, dozens hurt, as Russia hits Kharkiv

Russia bombed a residential building in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv yesterday, killing three people and wounding almost 40, as it stepped up renewed hostilities. Officials said a guided bomb attack hit Ukraine's second largest city, located close to the Russian border, and President Volodymyr Zelensky posted footage of the torn-off facade of an apartment block and a crater outside. **Page 11**

13 held for causing Greek forest fire

Greek authorities yesterday arrested 13 people after fireworks launched from a yacht set off a new wildfire on an island near Athens as the country confronts a new season of deadly summer fires. The mayor of the island of Hydra expressed "outrage" after the fire was started late Friday and vowed legal action against those responsible. Thirteen people accused of involvement in the fireworks have been arrested and will be presented before a prosecutor today.

Amir starts visit to the Netherlands today

QNA
Doha

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani begins today an official visit to the Netherlands, at the invitation of King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands.

During the visit, His Highness the Amir will discuss with King Willem-Alexander and Prime Minister Mark Rutte and senior officials the strengthening of bilateral co-operation relations between the two countries, in addition to discussing regional and international issues of joint interest.

The two sides are set to sign a number of agreements in various fields.

Relations between Qatar and the Netherlands are entering a new phase, within the framework of efforts to strengthen partnerships and investments between the two countries, and to co-ordinate mutual positions on a number of issues of common interest.

The first official visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Dutch capital, Amsterdam, reflects the

depth of relations between the two countries in various fields.

His Highness the Amir had met with Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte, on Nov 8, 2023, who was on a working visit to the country. The two sides held a session of discussions that touched on developments in the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, the diplomatic efforts of the two countries to push towards stopping the aggression against Gaza urgently, and the opening of safe corridors for international relief efforts to alleviate the humanitarian crisis that the Palestinians are suffering from.

During the visit, the Dutch prime minister, expressed his appreciation to His Highness the Amir for the diplomatic efforts of Qatar regionally and internationally, especially with regard to the situation in Gaza.

Ambassador of Qatar to Netherlands Dr Mutlaq bin Majid al-Qahtani said the visit of His Highness the Amir to the Netherlands comes as a culmination of the significant momentum witnessed in relations between the two countries in recent years.

In an interview with Qatar News

Agency (QNA), he said that the visit receives great attention and keenness from Dutch officials because it will have a positive impact on strengthening the bilateral relations and opening new horizons for joint co-operation.

Ambassador of the Netherlands to Qatar Ferdinand Lahnstein said that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to his country is a significant milestone in the relations between the two countries.

"It highlights the highest level of engagement, reflecting the strong and growing ties between Qatar and the Netherlands," he said adding that the visit underscores the two countries' shared commitment to strengthening the strategic partnership, enhancing political and economic collaboration, and promoting regional and global stability.

In his remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he said that the Netherlands and Qatar have developed strong and diverse relations since they began diplomatic ties in 1972. The Dutch embassy opened in Doha in 2005, initially focusing on trade and investment. However, with fast-changing global dynamics, especially in the



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani

Gulf, the relationship evolved into a strategic partnership. This partnership emphasises safety, security, and regional stability.

He pointed out that the two countries also have distinguished economic and trade relations. Dutch exports to Qatar have grown significantly after the Covid-19 pandemic, rising from 560mn euros in 2020 to 825mn euros in 2022. These exports mainly include

fruit and vegetables, office equipment, data processing and telecom equipment, and dairy products.

The Netherlands imports mostly mineral fuels, metals and chemical products from Qatar. These imports have surged from 223mn euros in 2020 to 1.4bn euros in 2022, largely due to increased LNG deliveries to the Netherlands since the war in Ukraine began. **Page 3, Business Page 1**

London rally calls for 'urgent' climate action



Thousands of protesters from across the UK marched through central London yesterday to call for "urgent political action" on nature. The 'Restore Nature Now' march was joined by some 350 charities ranging from protest groups like Just Stop Oil and Extinction Rebellion to more mainstream organisations like the National Trust and WWF. People came from "all over the UK", according to one protester, with a list of demands including making "polluters pay" and improving support for farmers in an increased "climate-friendly farming budget". **Page 9**

Qatar elected chair of ICAO's Air Transport Committee

Qatar has been elected chair of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)'s Air Transport Committee (ATC).

Essa Abdulla al-Malki, Qatar's Permanent Representative at the ICAO Council, was elected as ATC chairperson. This came during the ICAO Council meeting at the headquarters in Montreal, Canada. HE the Minister of Transport Jassim Saif Ahmed al-Sulaiti said that electing Qatar to this position is a recognition by the international community of Qatar's effective contributions and leading role in finding solutions to the numerous challenges of international civil aviation.

That election, he added, also reflects the faith of the ICAO member states in Qatar's global standing within the civil aviation community, especially since elected as a member of the ICAO Council in 2022. The ATC is a subsidiary body of the ICAO Council responsible for providing assistance and advice on air transport matters as outlined by the Convention on International Civil Aviation. The ATC recommends the adoption of Standards and Recommended Practices related to air transport and provides crucial information to contracting states to aid in the development of international agreements and government policies related to air transport.



42 more Gazans killed in fresh Israeli strikes

Reuters
Cairo

At least 42 people were killed in Israeli attacks on districts of Gaza City in the north of the Palestinian enclave yesterday, the director of the Hamas-run government media office said.

One Israeli strike on houses in Al-Shati, one of the Gaza Strip's eight historic refugee camps, killed 24 people, Ismail al-Thawabta said. Another 18 Palestinians were killed in a strike on houses in the Al-Tuffah neighbourhood.

The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas did not comment on the Israeli claim to have hit its military infrastructure. It said in a statement the attacks targeted the civilian population and vowed in a statement "the occupation and its Nazi leaders will pay the price for



People look for salvageable items following Israeli bombardment at Al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City yesterday.

their violations against our people."

Footage showed dozens of Palestinians rushing out to search for victims amid the destroyed houses.

The footage showed wrecked homes, blasted walls, and debris and dust filling the street in Shati refugee camp.

Genocide toll climbs to 37,551

The number of casualties due to the ongoing Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip since October 7, has risen to 37,551 martyrs in addition to 85,911 injured, Gaza's Ministry of Health said in a statement yesterday. The statement highlighted that the Israeli occupation army committed three pogroms.

More than eight months into the war, Israel's advance is now focused on the two last areas its forces had yet to seize: Rafah on Gaza's southern edge and the area surrounding Deir Al-Balah in the centre.

Residents said Israeli tanks deepened their incursion into

western and northern Rafah areas in recent days. Yesterday Israeli forces bombed several areas from air and the ground, forcing many families living in areas described as humanitarian-designated zones to leave northwards.

On Friday, the Gaza health ministry said at least 25 Palestinians were killed in Mawasi in western Rafah and 50 wounded. Palestinians said a tank shell hit a tent housing displaced families.

Days after Israel announced a daily pause in fighting on a key route to allow more aid into Gaza, chaos in the besieged Palestinian territory has left vital supplies piled up and undistributed in the searing summer heat.

Desperation among Gaza's 2.4mn population has increased as fighting rages, sparking warnings from aid agencies that they are unable to deliver aid including vegetables. **Page 6**



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QNB Group Chief Business Officer Yousef Mahmoud al-Neama with other senior bank executives at 'Premium VIP Lounge' at Printemps, Doha Oasis.

QNB opens 'Premium VIP Lounge' at Printemps Doha Oasis

QNB Group, the largest financial institution in the Middle East and Africa, opened its 'Premium VIP Lounge' at Printemps, Middle East's largest luxury department store at Doha Oasis, providing world-class banking experience for its QNB First Members and Private Banking customers in Qatar.

"QNB continues to lead the way by offering its premium customers exceptional products and services to meet their uniqueness in an exceptional environment, where they will experience a distinct level of service."

Reflecting art de vivre and unique interior design, the new lounge offers an exceptional priority banking experience and a wide range of products, including asset and wealth management, real estate financing, and other services in full privacy and comfort.

QNB Group Chief Business Officer Yousef Mahmoud al-Neama said: "The launch of this Premium Lounge at Printemps Doha Oasis reflects our continued efforts to provide QNB First Members and Private Banking clients with an exclusive experience in luxury premises combining personalised services and products."

"The new Premium Lounge aims to take our customer experience to the next level going beyond their expectations by providing them with access to full range of banking services, in a unique atmosphere, which allows them to discuss their financial goals with dedicated relationship managers."

Victor Agha, chairman, Doha Oasis, said: "As a continuation of our unique partnership with QNB, we are thrilled to celebrate the official launch of the first of its kind QNB VIP lounge in Printemps Doha."



"In our unyielding pursuit to augment the retail experience provided to our customers with added value, privacy and innovation, this dedicated in store QNB VIP lounge will ensure a smooth and ultra-personalised banking service set to enhance the experience of their discerning QNB First Members when shopping and dining at Printemps Doha."

QNB Group currently ranks as the "most valuable bank brand" in the Middle East and Africa. Through its subsidiaries and associate companies, the Group extends to some 28 countries across three continents providing a comprehensive range of advanced products and services. The total number of employees is more than 30,000 operating through more than 900 locations, with an ATM network of 5,000 machines.

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3 rd Prize 25,000 QAR. x 4 Winners = 100,000/- (Vouchers 25,000 x 4 Winners)	9 th Prize 25,000 Loyalty Points (4 Winners)
4 th Prize 10,000 QAR. x 30 Winners = 300,000/- (Vouchers 10,000 x 30 Winners)	10 th Prize 10,000 Loyalty Points (30 Winners)
5 th Prize 5,000 QAR. x 50 Winners = 250,000/- (Vouchers 5,000 x 50 Winners)	11 th Prize 5,000 Loyalty Points (50 Winners)
6 th Prize 2,500 QAR. x 60 Winners = 150,000/- (Vouchers 2,500 x 60 Winners)	12 th Prize 2,500 Loyalty Points (60 Winners)

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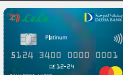


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Qatari-Dutch bonds entering a new era of bilateral and economic co-operation

Relations between Qatar and the Netherlands are entering a new phase, within the framework of efforts to strengthen partnerships and investments between the two countries, and to co-ordinate mutual positions on a number of issues of common interest, thanks to the position that both parties enjoy in international and regional forums.

The first official visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Dutch capital, Amsterdam, reflects the depth of relations between the two countries in various fields. It also culminates an important stage of fruitful co-operation and ways to develop and strengthen bilateral relations.

His Highness the Amir had met with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, on Nov 8, 2023, who was on a working visit to the country. The two sides held a session of discussions that touched on developments in the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, the diplomatic efforts of the two countries to push towards stopping the aggression against Gaza urgently, and the opening of safe corridors for international relief efforts to alleviate the humanitarian crisis that the Palestinians are suffering from.

During the visit, the Dutch PM, expressed his appreciation to the Amir for the diplomatic efforts of Qatar regionally and internationally, especially with regard to the situation in Gaza. He stressed discussions of bilateral relations and ways to strengthen them, besides discussions of developments of topics of common interest, especially those related to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Bilateral relations have recorded clear momentum recently, as the Amir has received phone calls from former Prime Minister Rutte, in April, March and January, besides receiving other three phone calls earlier in December and October, to discuss bilateral relations and current developments in the occupied Palestinian territories.

On Jan 12, 2023, former foreign minister of the Netherlands Wopke Hoekstra visited Doha, where he praised the role of Qatar in European energy security, considering its importance and vitality to the future of energy as being one of the largest suppliers of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the world.

The governments of Qatar and the Netherlands, in co-operation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance the co-operation strategy, especially in ways of resolving dis-

The last rounds of political consultations between the foreign ministries of Qatar and the Netherlands were held in The Hague in January 2024. It reviewed bilateral co-operation relations and ways to support and enhance them

putes, social dialogue, protecting wages, in addition to facilitating the exchange of information.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries began in 1972, while the embassy of the Netherlands was opened in Doha in 2005. However, in the last five years, bilateral relations have witnessed a remarkable development and have received an impetus, thanks to rounds of political consultations agreed upon between officials of the two countries.

The last rounds of political consultations between the foreign ministries of Qatar and the Netherlands were held in The Hague in January 2024. The round of consultations reviewed bilateral co-operation relations and ways to support and enhance them.

The joint statement following the conclusion of the tour confirmed that Qatar and the Netherlands agreed to continue bilateral co-operation and co-ordination, and to strengthen their strategic relationship. Both sides expressed their aspiration to upgrade these consultations into a strategic dialogue. The statement also indicated that the two sides discussed a number of issues of common interest, such as bilateral and economic co-operation, mediation and conflict resolution, in addition to regional and international developments, including the situation in Gaza.

On Feb 18, 2021, the second round of political consultations was held between the foreign ministries of Qatar and the Netherlands via video communication technology, while the first round of political consultations was held in The Hague on April 3, 2019.

At the level of economic relations between the two countries, the Netherlands participated in Web Summit Qatar 2024, which witnessed a huge turnout by experts



and specialists in the field of technology from all over the world. The summit was an opportunity to expand Dutch-Qatari relations in digital economy, innovation, cooperation and protection of digital infrastructure, and cyber information security.

The Netherlands also participated in the Expo 2023 Doha (International Horticultural Exposition), where the Dutch pavilion displayed sustainable solutions and innovations for gardening and landscaping in arid climates, green energy generation mechanisms, renewable energy technology, and uses of mobility and transportation using green hydrogen.

On the other hand, the participation of Qatar in Expo Floriade 2022, which was launched in September 2022 in the city of Almere in the Netherlands, represented an opportunity to promote Expo 2023 Doha, through presenting a variety of interactive

events that inform them of the ambitious vision of the State of Qatar for a greener environment and sustainability.

In this context, Nebras Power entered the Dutch solar energy market by acquiring a 75% stake in a Dutch holding company that owns a portfolio of photovoltaic power stations amounting to approximately 96 megawatts. The Qatari Q Terminals Group also owns a majority stake in the Dutch Kramer Group, a logistics services provider and container port operator in the Rotterdam port area. Additionally, Qatari assets include hotels, banks and air freight companies.

On the other hand, Dutch companies participated in infrastructure projects in Qatar, in addition to the contribution of Dutch architectural engineers in the development of Hamad International Airport, Qatar National Library, and Doha Metro stations. The world's leading Dutch inte-

rior designer, Marcel Wanders, also designed the Mondrian Hotel. Furthermore, the Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB) signed a memorandum of understanding with the Qatar Football Association (QFA).

The Qatar Chamber hosted a Dutch trade delegation on March 31, 2019, which included representatives of 18 companies specialized in sports investment, to discuss co-operation opportunities between Qatari and Dutch companies; in preparation for the holding of the Qatar World Cup 2022.

The Chamber's Board Member, engineer Ali Bin Abdullatif al-Misned, said that the two countries have many common features, whether in terms of geography or economic ambitions, noting the growth of trade exchange between Qatar and the Netherlands by 40% to \$1.3bn in 2019.

The two countries also bring together an old student exchange programme between Qatar University and the Dutch University of Utrecht, which was launched in 2011. In addition fruitful understandings, agreements and co-operation in the fields of agriculture, communications, transportation, infrastructure, museums, energy fields, avoiding double taxation, and monitoring tax evasion. The Netherlands is located in northwestern Europe, it is a constitutional monarchy. It takes Amsterdam as its capital, with a population of about 17mn, according to 2020 data.

The Netherlands constitutes the sixth largest economy in the European Union (EU), and is concerned with many industries, including: petroleum refining, food processing, chemical industry, and various electrical machines. The agricultural sector represents the second largest source of agriculture around the world, as it supports the situation of the entire country, with about 2% of the workforce.

Two-thirds of the Netherlands' economy depends on foreign trade, as it ranks seventh in the world in terms of exports. Regarding monetary policy, the European Central Bank (ECB) is in control, and in 2002, the euro was adopted as the official currency in the country.

Investors in the Netherlands benefit from a skilled and highly educated workforce, along with excellent infrastructure. It also occupies a unique position in the global digital economy in terms of digital infrastructure as one of the main nodes of the Internet in the world. International sea cables land on the coast of the Netherlands, and there are large data centres in the country. (QNA)

Qatar's ambassador: Amir's visit culminates significant momentum in bilateral relations

Qatar's ambassador in Amsterdam Dr Mutlaq bin Majid al-Qahtani has affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Netherlands at the invitation of King Willem-Alexander comes as a culmination of the significant momentum witnessed in relations between the two countries in recent years.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ambassador said that the visit of His Highness the Amir, which is the first of its kind, receives great attention and keenness from Dutch officials because it will have a positive impact on strengthening the bilateral relations and opening new horizons for co-operation. Dr al-Qahtani added that they

noticed this interest from Dutch circles in preparing for the important visit of the Amir, whether at the governmental political level or among the investment and business sector and various other sectors included in the visit. He expected that the visit of the Amir would witness consultations on international issues of joint interest, especially the Palestinian conflict and the mediation efforts undertaken by Qatar to end the war in the Gaza Strip, in addition to other international and regional issues such as the Russian-Ukrainian war in Ukraine, supporting stability in Afghanistan, securing international trade corridors, and energy security. He pointed out that the visit will also address ways to support and

enhance co-operation between the two countries in economy, investment, and scientific research, especially since the Netherlands is one of the leading countries in technology and sustainability, and is an interest by Qatar in opening horizons of co-operation with the Netherlands and benefit from its expertise in the fields of water management, port economics, sustainable agriculture, innovation, education, infrastructure, and other fields. Moreover, there are also mutual investments between the two countries that will be strengthened and developed. Dr al-Qahtani said that the Amir's visit would contribute to strengthening bilateral political co-operation in international forums, especially mutual support

and co-ordination on issues of common interest, in addition to improving co-operation relations in the economic and investment fields and exchanging experiences in the sectors of education, scientific research, innovation, agriculture, and food security. The ambassador called on the private sector to explore the available investment opportunities in the Netherlands, indicating that they are in the process of preparing a round table that will bring together the business sectors of both countries to open avenues for future cooperation between the two sides. He highlighted Qatar's mediation efforts, which played a crucial role in assisting the Netherlands to evacuate its citizens from



Afghanistan in 2021, in addition to Qatar's role in securing the release of a Dutch citizen among the hostages released from Gaza through Qatari mediation, as well as Qatar's contribution in ensuring a long-term gas supply to the

Netherlands following the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine. Ambassador Dr al-Qahtani said that there is continuous co-ordination between the two countries' officials to achieve a ceasefire and end the war in the Gaza Strip.

Amir's visit to Netherlands reflects commitment to strengthening ties

Dutch ambassador to Qatar Ferdinand Lahnstein said that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Netherlands is a significant milestone in the bilateral relations. It highlights the highest level of engagement, reflecting the strong and growing ties between Qatar and the Netherlands.

He added that the visit underscores the two countries' shared commitment to strengthening the strategic partnership, enhancing political and economic collaboration, and promoting regional and global stability. In his remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ambassador added that the Netherlands and Qatar have developed strong and diverse relations since they began diplomatic ties in 1972.

The Dutch embassy opened in Doha in 2005, initially focusing on trade and investment. However, with fast-changing global dynamics, especially in the Gulf, the relationship evolved into a strategic partnership. This partnership emphasizes safety, security, and regional stability. He pointed out that the two countries also have distinguished economic and trade relations.

He said that Dutch exports to Qatar have grown significantly after the Covid-19 pandemic, rising from €560mn in 2020 to €825mn in 2022. These exports mainly include fruit and vegetables, office equipment, data processing and telecom equipment, and dairy products. He added that the Netherlands imports mostly mineral fuels, metals, chemical



products, and telecom equipment from Qatar. These imports have surged from €223mn in 2020 to €1.4bn in 2022, largely due to increased LNG deliveries to the Netherlands since the war in Ukraine began.

The ambassador also pointed out that the Netherlands stands out as a digital economy leader, boasting substantial infrastructure such as major internet nodes and data centres. The WEB Summit in Qatar and Qatar Economic Forum left the Netherlands impressed, highlighting the immense potential for deepening Dutch-Qatari ties in the digital sector. The Netherlands envisions enhanced collaboration in trade, investment, innovation, and R&D, with a particular focus on cybersecurity and protecting digital infrastructure. He noted that Dutch companies have significantly contributed to Qatar's infrastructure, leaving a footprint in numerous sectors. He indicated that the Qatari investments

in the Netherlands total around €7.4bn, involving state companies, private firms, and individuals. Notable investments include QTerminals Group's majority stake in the Kramer Group and their sponsorship of Feyenoord Football Club. Other Qatari-owned assets include the Amstel Hotel, InsingerGilissen Bank, Nedair Freight, and a horse-trading company. He said that foreign investors in the Netherlands receive incentives and support at national and regional levels through the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency (NFIA). NFIA Aids companies worldwide in establishing or expanding operations in the Netherlands. Their free and independent services connect investors with a network of partners and institutions. The ambassador said that the Netherlands values Qatar's role as a mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its humanitarian efforts in Gaza. He added that the leaders of the two countries are in regular contact as the Dutch prime

minister visited Qatar last November. In 2024, there were several visits from Dutch ministers, including the defence minister, as well as high level visits. "We hope Qatar will continue its vital role in mediating, especially as talks for a ceasefire and the release of hostages are crucial. It's essential for the international community to understand the severe consequences of undermining this process, particularly for the Palestinian people. With over 37,000 casualties, mostly women and children, it emphasizes the urgent need to adhere to International Humanitarian Law in protecting civilians and livelihoods," he said. "The Dutch government stands behind a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, with a Palestinian State encompassing Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territories are deemed illegal and obstructive to a sustainable solution," he added. He stressed that both the Netherlands and Qatar are dedicated to providing humanitarian aid to Gaza and other global crises, acknowledging the necessity for closer collaboration. Recently, the Dutch Special Envoy on Humanitarian Affairs in Gaza held extensive discussions with Qatari counterparts regarding air-dropping provisions in Gaza. However, more action is required. Both governments are exploring additional ways to assist more people in need with essential goods. The ambassador of the Netherlands pointed out that Qatar has succeeded in

playing a humanitarian political role in the region and the world due to several key factors. First, Qatar has a strategic location and a deep understanding of regional dynamics, allowing it to act as an effective mediator in conflicts. Second, Qatar's leadership is committed to diplomacy and dialogue, consistently advocating for peaceful solutions and cooperation. Third, Qatar invests significantly in humanitarian aid and development, supporting communities in need and promoting stability. Finally, Qatar's balanced foreign policy and strong international partnerships enhance its credibility and influence on the global stage. These elements together enable Qatar to make a positive humanitarian impact both regionally and globally. Regarding the Qatari-Dutch consensus on current global issues, he asserted that both the Netherlands and Qatar find it important that the international legal order is maintained to ensure a level playing field for the nations. International legal institutions like the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, both based in The Hague, are crucial in enforcing conventions and treaties that have been ratified by the UN and most national states. Regarding the amount of aid provided by the Netherlands to Palestine since the beginning of the war on Gaza, the ambassador said that the Netherlands has supported the Palestinian people with €51mn, mainly through the UN Flash Appeal and partially as a direct contribution to UNRWA.



UK Foreign Office receives copy of credentials of Qatar's ambassador



Director of Protocol of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom Victoria Busby received a copy of credentials of Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohamed bin Saud al-Thani as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the State of Qatar to the United Kingdom. **(QNA)**

Cyprus Speaker meets Qatar envoy



Speaker of the House of Representatives of Cyprus Annita Demetriou met with Qatar's ambassador in Nicosia Ali Yousef Abdulrahman al-Mulla on the occasion of the end of his tenure. The Speaker wished the ambassador success in his new assignments and the bilateral relations more co-operation in wide-ranging fields. **(QNA)**

Qatar, Spain partner for global peace, prosperity

QNA
Madrid

The inaugural Qatar-Spain Strategic Dialogue was held in Madrid on Friday. Following is the text (excerpts) of a joint statement issued on the occasion: Qatar's Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Co-operation Jose Manuel Albares Bueno launched the first annual strategic dialogue to celebrate the deep and growing bilateral relationship.

The dialogue is testament to the strategic partnership agreed upon during His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's first state visit to Spain in May 2022 where the two countries expressed their determination to strengthen their partnership.

These aspirations were later formalised in the memorandum of understanding on the establishment of the Qatar-Spain Strategic Dialogue signed during the visit of Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez Perez-Castejon to Doha, on April 3, 2024 to deepen co-operation in all fields.

Both ministers reviewed areas of collaboration between the two countries and applauded 52 years of strong diplomatic relations. They agreed that the Qatar-Spain relationship has maintained a positive trajectory and committed to further strengthening the partnership. They approved progress in areas of ongoing and regular collaboration through official high-level engagements including; regional security, defence and military co-operation, security, justice and the fight against terrorism, trade and investment, education, culture, and innovation.

They highlighted the strength of the bilateral relations and the opportunities to further deepen mutually-beneficial co-operation in tourism, energy, climate change, environmental issues, among other areas. On the regional and global front, the ministers emphasised the importance of respecting all dimensions of international law. They noted the significant statements of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Spanish King Felipe VI in support of peace in the Middle East, humanity, and conflict resolution across the globe.

Spanish Foreign Minister Albares commended Qatar's efforts to achieve an immediate ceasefire through mediation, in addressing the dire ongoing humanitarian emergency, and its call to resume detainee and prisoner exchanges in the Gaza Strip. HE Sheikh Mohamed praised the Spanish government's



recent decision to formally recognise the State of Palestine and its continuing efforts to encourage other countries to advance in this direction, and to move forward in the implementation of the two-state solution.

The two ministers agreed that the Qatar-Spain strategic partnership is more critical than ever to confront global challenges and in support of a strengthened multilateral system, particularly in contributing to forge a united Euro-Arab voice towards de-escalation in the Middle East.

They assessed bilateral co-operation on a number of regional and global issues including the ongoing war on Gaza, regional escalation in Lebanon, Iraq and Ukraine, the Maghreb, regional security, Latin America. They also discussed Qatar's priorities as it holds the GCC Presidency and underscored the need to further elevate the EU-GCC Partnership through an enhanced co-operation framework. The two sides reiterated their countries' commitment to a just, fair and equitable peace, guaranteeing independent statehood for Palestinians and mutual security with Israel. Peace, they agreed, can now only be achieved through mediated negotiations between the two parties underpinned by global support, and the implementation of the two-state solution.

The ministers reinforced their call for an immediate, lasting and sustainable ceasefire in the Gaza Strip that allows for the unimpeded delivery of urgent humanitarian aid throughout the Gaza Strip and the liberation of hostages. They also called on all parties to ensure the right measures to enforce the ICJ ruling on Rafah made on May 24, 2024.

In this regard, Qatar welcomed Spain's efforts to end the war on Gaza and to initiate a permanent and just peace process towards the implementation of the two-state solution, including Spain's proposal for an International Middle East Peace Conference with the parties.

Qatar and Spain welcomed the recent collaboration on Regional Security be-

tween the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) and European Union (EU) and the Joint Council and Ministerial Meetings, held earlier this year, and the fruitful progress in the strategic partnership between the GCC and the EU in view of the forthcoming EU-GCC Summit. They stressed the importance of continuing to strengthen relations and working together.

Spain noted progress on common issues of peace, stability and prosperity under Qatar's current GCC presidency. A dynamic and positive discussion on bilateral co-operation between Spain and Qatar on Latin America was also held.

Qatar and Spain will continue their partnership on promoting global conflict resolution efforts. Both Ministers also re-emphasised the commitment of their countries to support the sovereignty of Ukraine, and Spain welcomed Qatar's "exemplary" mediation in Gaza, Ukraine, Venezuela, Chad, Rwanda, DR Congo, Afghanistan, as well as Iran.

Qatar and Spain share an important and growing economic, trade and investment co-operation, with a total trade of more than €1.4bn in the past year, contributing to a notable surge in exports, supporting jobs, innovation, and economic development in both countries.

Qatar and Spain explored ways of broadening their co-operation into the ICT sector, particularly in the areas of digital economy, digital transformation, research and innovation, Smart Cities, national digital policies and strategies, electronic services, cloud computing, AI, and supporting startups. The importance of the defence partnership was also reaffirmed. The two sides underscored their commitment to the values of peace, coexistence and respect amongst peoples. In addressing both regional and global threats, both sides discussed vital ongoing activities aimed at the strategic goal of de-escalation.

Both sides acknowledged and pledged to work together on common threats including freedom of navigation.



Doha Bank unveils Qatar's biggest grand prize, more exclusive benefits

Doha Bank has announced the launch of the Al Dana Savings Scheme 2024, designed to offer great benefits and opportunities for their customers. Al Dana continues to offer the biggest grand prize of QR2.024mn in Qatar. Every month, 45 lucky winners will be selected. One winner will receive QR450,000 and 44 winners will receive QR4,500 each. The excitement escalates with more winners during September and December, reaching a total of 364 prizes by the year end.

Exciting additions to Al Dana this

year include the elite Ghina and the kid-friendly Ajyal programmes. Ghina, tailored for high-value customers, provides an opportunity to win substantial cash prizes while earning guaranteed interest returns on their savings. The Ajyal programme, designed especially for minor customers, offers more chances of winning, encouraging them to save from a young age. On Qatar National Day, Ajyal customers can participate in an exclusive draw to win 18 prizes of QR18,000 each.

For the past 20 years, Doha Bank has

proudly cultivated a savings-centric culture. Al Dana Savings Scheme 2024 is committed to rewarding customers with life-changing prizes and multiple opportunities to win throughout the year. To open an Al Dana account, customers can visit the nearest Doha Bank branch, send an SMS to 92610 with the message "AL DANA" or complete a simple form on Doha Bank website. Existing Doha Bank customers can simply open an account through the new mobile banking app and earn extra chances of winning.

Qatar makes voluntary contribution for OPCW



Qatar made a voluntary contribution to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to support the organisations project on artificial intelligence. This contribution comes within the framework of Qatar's continued commitment to support the organisation's activities. Qatar's ambassador to the Netherlands Dr Mutlaq bin Majid al-Qahtani, who is Qatar's Permanent Representative to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, stressed the interest of Qatar in artificial intelligence and the development of innovative technologies that can help achieve the noble goals of the organisation. **(QNA)**

WAREHOUSE FOR RENT

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



6672 2989





Safari Hypermarket Group holds handover ceremony for ‘Win 25 MG Car’ promo

Leading Doha hypermarket chain Safari conducted a key-handing ceremony for the winners of the first draw of its “Win 25 MG Car” promotion.

The ceremony took place at 4pm on June 20 at Safari Mall, Abu Hamour, where representatives from Safari management handed over the cars to the winners.

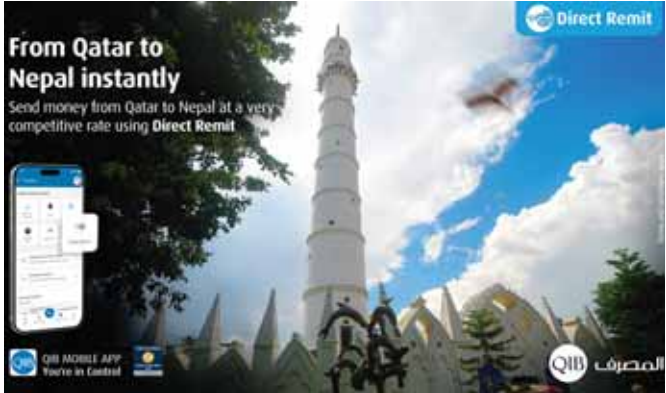
The first prize, an MG RX 8 – 2024 model, was awarded to Zayed al-Jedaia (coupon no SND101090945).

The second prize winners, Shahbaz Khan (coupon no SND100581445) and Noushad Chalil (coupon no SND100512084), each received an MG 5 – 2024 model car, and Mohamed Rishafi (coupon no SND100911666) won an MG 5 car.

The first draw of the “Shop and Drive, Win 25 MG Car” promotion was held on June 9 at Safari Mall.

The second draw is scheduled for July 24, 2024, at the Safari outlet on Salwa Road.

Customers can participate in the promotion by purchasing a raffle coupon for just QR50 from any Safari outlet.



QIB’s ‘Direct Remit’ now includes Nepal for instant money transfers via mobile apps

Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB) has announced the addition of Nepal to its “Direct Remit” service on its mobile app and Lite app.

This strategic move signifies QIB’s dedication to elevating and expanding its suite of money transfer options, designed to meet the evolving needs of its diversified customers, as part of its efforts in fostering financial inclusion in Qatar and in line with the Qatar Central Bank (QCB)’s third financial sector strategic plan.

Following the successful launch of the Direct Remit service in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Jordan, the Philippines, Egypt, and the UK, QIB has forged a strategic alliance with Nepal’s Nabil Bank to include Nepal in the Direct Remit service.

This collaborative effort amplifies the reach of QIB’s Direct Remit network to encompass eight nations and sets the stage for expansive growth into new territories on the horizon.

Empowering customers with seamless and instantaneous account-to-account transfers, QIB’s mobile app and the newly introduced QIB Lite app serve as the channels for real-time transactions, offering competitive exchange rates and unparalleled convenience round the clock.

With a user-friendly interface, customers can effortlessly add beneficiaries, select destinations, and execute transfers with utmost efficiency.

Transactions are processed promptly, with funds reach-

ing the beneficiary bank within minutes. This service operates 24/7 and is accessible from anywhere, ensuring unparalleled accessibility and ease of use.

Customers can monitor their transactions in real-time and receive instant SMS updates regarding transaction status.

“As we persistently strive to enhance our Direct Remit offerings through our mobile apps, we are pleased to expand our services to Nepal,” said QIB general manager (Personal Banking Group) D Anand said. “This expansion is a testament to our dedication to providing a banking experience that is seamless, secure, and efficient, tailored to the diverse needs of our customers.”

“Offering our customers an additional avenue for sending money to Nepal, conveniently and competitively, underscores our commitment to innovation and customer-centricity, further solidifying our position as front-runners in the realm of digital banking,” he said.

Available on the App Store, Google Play, and Huawei AppGallery, customers can download the QIB mobile app and the Lite app and easily self-register using their active ATM/Debit Card number and PIN.

The apps offer customers the ability to have full control of their accounts, cards, and transactions, enabling them to fulfil all their banking requirements remotely.

For more information, visit www.qib.com.qa/en-directremit

QNL summer camp for children kicks off today

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Qatar National Library (QNL) launches today the 5th edition of its summer camp for children.

Scheduled to run until August 29, the camp offers educational, cultural and entertaining activities in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, literature, besides introducing the prophets.

In science, the camp is offering three courses on electrical circuits (today), programming (tomorrow), and sensory games (on July 7).

The camp will include a set of workshops that

will be held under the title “Create with Me” in an atmosphere filled with fun and creativity, and will be held on July 2 and 4.

The “Summer Story Time” event for children will be held weekly during July and August.

It targets children from ages 7-12 during their summer vacation to enjoy story time, starting at 4pm for half an hour, where stories and tales will be narrated in an attractive and entertaining way, with examples and adventures.

The “Najm Suhail” book club in the Arabic language will plant the seed of love for reading in children and develop it from an early age.

Three sessions will be held next month, one session each week, with one book discussed in each session.

This will take children on an exciting journey of reading, imagination and exploration to achieve maximum benefit and provide an interesting and enjoyable educational atmosphere for them.

In the “Little Storyteller” event, children will have the opportunity to learn how to read a story expressively at the hands of a professional storyteller.

Participating children are encouraged to bring the book they would like to practice reading out and to wear clothes inspired by the story if possible.

In the stories of the Prophets sessions, a prophet will be identified, and his journey in calling his people and the challenges he faced.

GCC tourists prefer Doha for a holiday

In spite of the hot weather conditions, a considerable number of GCC families have preferred to spend the holidays in Doha, preferring Qatar over other destinations.

Speaking to local Arabic daily *Arrayyah*, they said that Doha has a unique tourist atmosphere that never fails to amaze them as it blends traditional heritage with modern sophisticated facilities, reflecting its original GCC identity while enjoying the best of modern life.

They also stressed that the country is an ideal destination for families, giving them the desired level of privacy and providing children with various facilities and places to explore.

Further, they pointed out that they feel at home in Qatar, and that the entry and exit processes in and out of the country are hassle-free.

Saudi tourist Mohamed al-Afari said that this is his first time in Doha, and expressed his amazement at the sophistication and development he has seen in the country.

“The country is welcoming and well-organised,” he said. “The transportation system is more than excellent in Doha at very reasonable rates.”

Bahraini tourist Ali Marhoun said that he has visited Doha several times with his friends.

This time, he came with his family to spend the Eid holidays.

Marhoun said that every time he comes to Doha he discovers new places of interest.

Saudi tourist Sultan al-Qahtani said that this is his first time in Doha but he feels right at home.

He said that the overall atmosphere of the country very welcoming.



De’Longhi and Modern Home launch the new Eletta Explore coffee machine with cold brew

De’Longhi, a global leader in home coffee machines known for distinctive Italian design and technology, and Modern Home, a forefront distributor of technology solutions in Qatar, have presented the new Eletta Explore.

The innovative bean-to-cup coffee machine is designed to accompany consumers on an exploration of endless varieties of hot, cold and cold brew coffee drinks at home.

With the ground-breaking cold extraction technology, this bean-to-cup coffee machine can make fresh cold brew in less than five minutes – instead of the traditional 15-to-24-hour process.

This machine represents a new trend, bringing the possibility of preparing cold brewed coffee to people’s homes.

The Eletta Explore is available at Fnac in Lagoona Mall, Doha Festival City, Place Vendôme, and online through the Fnac.qa website and the Fnac Qatar app.

The new Eletta Explore continues the success of the current Brand story – focused on the transformation of fresh coffee beans into the most pleasurable coffee experience at home – that saw Hollywood actor Brad Pitt become the De’Longhi Global Brand Ambassador in 2021, adding a new chapter that opens up the world of dairy milk or plant-based drinks, made even more unforgettable through the addition of cold brew preparation, making it easy to prepare delicious cold coffee recipes at home.

Eletta Explore offers more than 50 one-touch drinks out of the box – in-



cluding hot, cold and cold brew coffee and milk-based recipes to enjoy at home, or with the To Go function that allows consumers to enjoy their favourite drink varieties outside of the home using the Mug to Go accessory or in their preferred travel mug.

Eletta Explore comes with proprietary technologies designed to satisfy every coffee lover’s particular needs.

Starting with LatteCrema Hot Technology for perfect hot and creamy milk foam that transforms a coffee moment into a barista experience, Eletta Explore also caters to those who prefer cold coffee adventures with LatteCrema Cool Technology, a new milk frothing system that delivers a sweet and velvety milk foam at the ideal temperature for cold


drinks and recipes.

Fully compatible with the Coffee Link app, Eletta Explore also gives users instant access to more than one hundred hot and cold creative coffee and milk recipes, as well as opening the door to Coffee Lounge for an even richer coffee experience.

The technologies, design and ease of use of Eletta Explore takes the users’ coffee experiences to new heights, satisfying the most demanding tastes and every possible desire.

To learn more about De’Longhi’s global campaign and premium coffee and espresso machines, visit <https://www.delonghi.com/en>

View the campaign video on De’Longhi’s YouTube channel.




**The Transport Company
MOWASALAT (KARWA)**


Mowasalat (Karwa) announces the following tender:

Tender Ref. No.	Tender Title	Tender Fee	Electronic Tender Fee Payment Dates	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
TC-017-MTS-2024	Supply of School Buses - Diesel	QAR 2,000	23 June to 27 June 2024	QAR 480,000	25 July 2024

CONDITIONS:




- Interested bidder shall pay the tender fee to Mowasalat Bank Account details as shown:
- Bidder must submit proof of tender fee payment (Bank Deposit Slip + a Signed & Stamped Expression of Interest (indicating Tender Ref. No. and Title / Company Name and details of nominated contact person i.e., Tel. No., Fax No., and Email address) + Copy of valid Commercial Registration to Mowasalat Secretary - Tender Committee at email: tenders@mowasalat.com
- Tender documents will be released via email on the next working day after the tender fee payment date to all bidders who have submitted the bank deposit slip and other documents requested (i.e., 30 June 2024)
- Bonds: Tender Bond & Performance Bond:** Bids must be accompanied by Bonds issued by a local bank operating in the State of Qatar as per the Qatar Central Bank template. Further details of bonds can be found in the tender documents. *Bids without Tender Bond shall not be considered.*
- Tender validity:** Bid validity period shall be 180 days from the bid closing date.
- Tender documents submission:** Bids must be submitted in 3 separate sealed (IN RED WAX) envelopes addressed to **Secretary - Tender Committee** clearly highlighting the Tender Ref. No. & Tender Title:
 - Envelope 1# must** include the Technical Bid submission (1 Original + 1 non-Editable copy in a USB)
 - Envelope 2# must** include Commercial Bid submission (1 Original + 1 Editable MS Excel spreadsheet copied in a USB)
 - Envelope 3# must** include the Tender Bond (1 Original)
- Bid Closing Date:** Bid submission deadline is **12.00 noon Doha Local Time** as on the Bid closing date shown above. The 3 envelopes must be handed over to the Office of The Secretary - Tender Committee, located at Mowasalat Head Office, Industrial Area. Any tender submitted after the deadline will not be considered.







Tel.: 4458 8724

Fax: 4458 8850



A woman looks for salvageable items following Israeli bombardment at Al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City, yesterday, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Food piles up at Gaza crossing as aid agencies say unable to work

AFP
Jerusalem

Days after Israel announced a daily pause in fighting on a key route to allow more aid into Gaza, chaos in the besieged Palestinian territory has left vital supplies piled up and undistributed in the searing summer heat.

More than eight months of war, sparked by Hamas' unprecedented October first week storming of Israel, have led to dire humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip and repeated UN warnings of famine.

Desperation among Gaza's 2.4mn population has increased as fighting rages, sparking warnings from agencies that they are unable to deliver aid.

Israel says it has let supplies in and called on agencies to step up deliveries. "The breakdown of public order and safety is increasingly endangering humanitarian workers and operations in Gaza," the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA, said in a briefing late Friday.

"Alongside the fighting, criminal activities and the risk of theft and robbery has effectively prevented humanitarian access to critical locations." But Israel says it has allowed hundreds of trucks of aid into southern Gaza, trading blame with the UN over why the aid is stacking up.

It shared aerial footage of containers lined up on the Gazan side of the Kerem Shalom crossing and more trucks arriving to add to the stockpile.

Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza has killed at least 37,551 people, also mostly civilians, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory.

With civil order breaking down in Gaza, the UN says it has been unable to pick up any sup-



A Palestinian youth poses for a picture with a food ration he managed to get from a distribution spot in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas movement.

plies from Kerem Shalom since Tuesday, leaving crucial aid in limbo. A deputy UN spokesman this week said the crossing "is operating with limited functionality, including because of fighting in the area".

William Schomburg, International Committee of the Red Cross chief in Rafah, said arranging lorries from the Egyptian side in particular was complicated.

"It's not just a question of civil order, but also the fact that you often have to cross battlefields," he said in an online briefing, adding that the area near Kerem Shalom had been hostile.

"There were even rockets fired nearby. So this whole area is particularly complicated to navigate for reasons linked to the hostilities and for reasons linked to general security." Israel's co-ordinator for civilian affairs in the Palestinian territories, known as Cogat, said Thursday "the content of 1,200 aid trucks awaits collection by UN aid agencies", saying a lack of distribution was responsible.

Earlier in the week, Cogat spokesman Shimon Freedman told reporters at the crossing the daily pause on a southern road into Gaza was designed to allow the UN "to collect and distribute more aid" alongside an Israeli

military presence. He said most of the aid had not moved because "organisations have not taken sufficient steps to improve their distribution capacity".

Aid agencies have instead pointed to Israel's offensive on the southern city of Rafah, which pushed out more than a million people and closed a border crossing with Egypt, as a deepening humanitarian crisis hampered relief efforts.

Schomburg described Rafah City as a "deserted town".

"It is a deserted town in the sense that you see very few people, high levels of destruction, and really just another symbol of the unfolding tragedy that has become Gaza over the last nine months," he said.

The UN food agency has said its aid convoys have been looted inside Gaza by "desperate people".

As both sides stall, it is the civilians in Gaza who are paying the price. "We don't see any aid. Everything we get to eat comes from our own money and it's all very expensive," said Umm Mohamed Zamlat, 66, from northern Gaza but now living in Khan Yunis in the south.

"Even agencies specialised in aid deliveries are not able to provide anything to us," she added.

Troops strap wounded Palestinian to jeep during raid

Israeli army forces strapped a wounded Palestinian man to the hood of the military jeep during an arrest raid in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin yesterday, Reuters reported from Jerusalem. A video circulating on social media and verified by Reuters showed a Palestinian resident of Jenin, Mujahed Azmi, on the jeep that passes through two ambulances. The Israeli military in a statement said Israeli forces were fired at and exchanged fire, wounding a suspect and apprehending him. Soldiers then violated military protocol, the statement said. "The suspect was taken by the forces while tied on top of a vehicle," it said. The military said the "conduct of the forces in the video of the incident does not conform to the values" of the Israeli military and that the incident will be

investigated and dealt with. The individual was transferred to medics for treatment, the military said. Reuters was able to match the location from corroborating and verified footage shared on social media that shows a vehicle transporting an individual tied on top of a vehicle in Jenin. The date was confirmed by an eyewitness interviewed by Reuters. According to the family of Azmi, there was an arrest raid, and he was injured during the raid, and when the family asked for an ambulance, the army took Mujahed, strapped him on the hood and drove off. Violence in the West Bank, already on the rise before the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, has escalated since then with frequent army raids on fighter groups, rampages by Jewish settlers in Palestinian villages, and deadly Palestinian street attacks.

Red Cross chief in Rafah recounts shelling horror

AFP
Geneva

A senior Red Cross official in Gaza yesterday told reporters of the horrific scenes after an Israeli strike in the Gaza Strip.

It was around 3:30pm when three explosions rocked the walls of the Red Cross compound in Gaza on Friday, William Schomburg, the local chief for the ICRC told reporters in Geneva via video link.

Then came the "flood of wounded people" seeking help, said the international charity's chief in Rafah.

"There were piles of dead bodies, blood everywhere," he added.

Twenty-two people were killed in shelling that lightly damaged the outside walls of the compound where the Red Cross has been operating.

It is located just south of a humanitarian zone identified by the Israeli army in the Palestinian territory.

"All of our buildings are very well known to all parties to the conflict," Schomburg said.

Refusing to speculate on the source of the shelling, he said: "We're not here to lay blame.

"But of course, this incident is one of several near misses that we have had...and we as the ICRC cannot operate like this."

Many of the wounded were taken by ambulance to a nearby Red Cross field hospital for operations. Some did not survive.

No Red Cross employees were killed, Schomburg said, but two children of staff members required treatment for injuries sustained in the blasts.

It is not the first time Red Cross facilities have been damaged during the more than eight months of



A man walks across fallen tents the day after a strike on the Al-Mawasi area, northwest of the Palestinian city of Rafah, yesterday, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Hamas group.

fighting between Israel and Hamas fighters who control the Gaza Strip.

Schomburg said that recovering from the trauma of Friday's strike would not be easy.

"Around the compound on the street, there were pools of blood, there were bodies strewn across the ground," he said.

"We literally found body parts scattered in different areas, including within the compound.

"Frankly, it's like nothing I've ever seen before. The scale of the suffering in such a short period of time was really very shocking for the team."

The shelling came as Israel has stepped up its strikes in the Gaza Strip since war broke out after the October first week storming of Israel by Hamas.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 37,551 people, also mostly civilians, Gaza's health ministry said yesterday.

An Israel Defence Forces statement yesterday said an initial inquiry found "there was no direct attack carried out by the IDF against a Red Cross facility".

But the incident was still under review and "findings will be presented to our international partners".

The Red Cross office is surrounded by a camp where several families of ICRC staff members live in tents. Schomburg said it was a "miracle" that none were severely injured.

Nonetheless "there was an overwhelming sense of fear amongst people that were clearly panicked and very desperate with nowhere to go", he added.

Thousands of displaced Palestinians have been sheltering in tents in the coastal Al-Mawasi area since the outbreak of the fighting, prompting the recognition of the humanitarian zone by Israeli authorities.

"Our office here in Rafah, like all of our buildings and facilities, are all marked with the Red Cross emblem and are known by all parties," Schomburg said.

"So how to explain the strikes we experienced yesterday? I think you will have to ask the parties involved in this conflict, and not us."

Egypt cracks down on tourism companies after Haj deaths

Reuters
Cairo

Egypt withdrew the operating licences of 16 tourism companies and referred them to the public prosecutor, accusing them of being responsible for the deaths of Egyptian pilgrims in Makkah, a crisis unit tasked with addressing the situation said yesterday.

Medical and security sources say at least 530 Egyptians died during this year's Haj pilgrimage to Makkah, while the statement from the unit, formed on Thursday and headed by prime minister Mostafa Madbouly, said 31 deaths were confirmed as a result of chronic illness. The tourism companies which facilitated the travel of those who died did not provide

them with services of any kind, including medical, the statement said without naming the companies involved. The agencies are being blamed for sending pilgrims to Saudi on personal visit visas, rather than Haj visas that allow access to Makkah where Haj rituals take place. Medical services offered by Saudi authorities to alleviate the hardships of the pilgrimage are not offered to those travelling with a personal visa.

Egyptian authorities also say those travel agencies did not provide the pilgrims with "appropriate accommodation" adding that this caused pilgrims' "exhaustion due to the high temperatures." Egyptian authorities also documented 31 deaths among registered Egyptian pilgrims, citing "chronic diseases" as the cause of deaths. Most of those who died were unregistered, the statement said.

Election fervour in Iran

Female supporters attend an election campaign rally by Iranian presidential candidate and conservative former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, at Sharif University in Tehran, yesterday.



ANNOUNCEMENT

I, SARA ABDULGOFRAN

holder of

PAKISTAN Passport No. AY5941852
QID No. 29958600040

hereby change my name

from

SARA ABDULGOFRAN

to

SARAH MUHAMMAD SHAH

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, ROSEMOL CHACKO
PALATHINKAL CHACKO

holder of

INDIAN Passport No. R8062758
QID No. 29535619148

hereby change my name

from

ROSEMOL CHACKO
PALATHINKAL CHACKO

to

ROSE CHACKO

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, RENALYN HIDALGO PAJIMOLA

holder of

PHILIPPINE Passport No. P5802227C
QID No.28860801134

hereby change my name

from

RENALYN HIDALGO PAJIMOLA

to

RENALYN PAJIMOLA HUFANO

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
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CASUALTY

Israeli strike on vehicle kills Lebanese group leader

A security source said a leader of the Lebanese group Jamaa Islamiya, an ally of Hamas, was killed yesterday in an Israeli strike on a vehicle in eastern Lebanon, AFP reported from Beirut. Since the Israel-Hamas war broke out in the first week of October, Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah movement and other groups allied with the Palestinian fighters have traded near-daily fire with Israel across the southern border. "A leader of the Al-Fajr Forces of the Jamaa Islamiya, Ayman Ghotmeh, was killed in an Israeli strike in Khiaara in the western Bekaa," 10 kilometres from the border with Syria, the source told AFP on condition of anonymity. The Fajr Forces, Jamaa Islamiya's armed wing, was established in 1982 to fight the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The group has claimed responsibility for multiple attacks against Israel, including joint operations with Hamas in Lebanon. It is estimated to number around 500 men. Lebanon's state-run ANI news agency reported one person killed when a car was targeted in Khiaara, and that the victim was from the nearby village of Lala, without giving further details. Israel's military said an aircraft carried out a "precise strike in the Beqaa area in Lebanon in order to eliminate the fighter" Ayman Ghotmeh, who they said supplied weapons to Hamas and Jamaa Islamiya in Lebanon.



Militia kills at least 23 in eastern Congo village attacks

Reuters
Butembo

A militia killed at least 23 people in attacks on several villages in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo's Ituri province in recent days, local authorities said yesterday.

The Co-operative for the Development of the Congo (Codeco) group, one of many armed groups operating in the conflict-ridden east, carried out the killings in Djugu territory on Thursday and Friday, two local community leaders told Reuters.

"Most of the victims were killed with machetes, but those who tried to flee were shot. In all these villages, people's belongings were taken, houses were burnt down," said Vital Tungulo, president of Djugu's Nyali-Kilo community.

The motive for the attacks was not clear but militia violence in Congo is linked to long-running

competition for influence and the region's rich mineral resources.

The human rights situation in Ituri has deteriorated since the beginning of the year as Codeco carries out more attacks, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) said in a report published in March.

The army spokesperson in Ituri, Jules Ngongo Tshikudi, confirmed the attacks, describing them as unacceptable. Codeco and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), another militia, are responsible for most civilian killings in eastern DRC, according to a report by the UN peacekeeping mission released in March.

It was not possible to reach Codeco for comment on the latest attacks.

Local resident and community leader Daniel Anikumu said they had started burying those killed, including the burial of 11 people in a mass grave in the village of Gangala.

Two dead in Kenya youth protests

AFP
Nairobi

A 21-year-old man has died after being hit by a tear gas canister during protests in Kenya this week, a human rights official and the victim's relative said yesterday, in the second fatality resulting from the youth-led demonstrations.

Led largely by Gen-Z Kenyans who have livestreamed the demonstrations against tax hikes, the protests have been galvanised by widespread anger over President William Ruto's economic policies.

Thursday's demonstrations in the capital Nairobi were mostly peaceful, but officers fired tear gas and water cannon throughout the day in an attempt to disperse protesters near parliament.

According to a Kenya Human Rights Commission official, 21-year-old Evans Kiratu was "hit by a tear gas canister" during the demonstrations.

"He was rushed to hospital around 6:00pm (1500 GMT) on Thursday...and died there," Ernest Cornel, a spokesman at the Kenya Human Rights Commission, told AFP.

"It is tragic that a young person can lose his life simply for agitating against the high cost of living." The victim's aunt told national broadcaster Citizen TV that her nephew had died in hospital before she was able to see him.

"We are demanding justice for my nephew," she said.

The rallies began in Nairobi on Tuesday before spreading across the country, with protesters calling for a national strike on June 25.

Kiratu's death comes on the heels of another fatality reported on Friday, when a police watchdog said it was investigating allegations that a 29-year-old man was shot by officers in Nairobi after the demonstrations.

The Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) said it had "documented the death...allegedly as a result of police shooting" on Thursday.

According to a police report seen by AFP, a 29-year-old man was taken to hospital in Nairobi at around 7:00pm (1600 GMT) on Thursday "unconscious with a thigh injury" before "succumbing" to his injuries, without giving further details.

Several organisations, including Amnesty International Kenya, said that at least 200 people were injured in Nairobi after Thursday's protests, which saw thousands of people take to the streets across the country.

Following smaller-scale demonstrations in Nairobi earlier in the week, the cash-strapped government agreed to roll back several tax hikes laid out in a new bill.

But Ruto's administration still intends to increase some taxes, defending the proposed levies as necessary for filling its coffers and cutting reliance on external borrowing.

The tax hikes will pile further pressure on Kenyans, with many already struggling to survive as the cost of living surges and well-paid jobs remain out of reach for young people.

Organised largely through social media, the protests have caught the government by surprise, with demonstrators now calling for a nationwide shutdown.

"Tuesday 25th June: #OccupyParliament and Total Shutdown Kenya. A national strike," read a poster shared widely online, adding that "Gen Z are granting all hard working Kenyans a day off. Parents keep your children at home in solidarity." After the government agreed to scrap levies on bread purchases, car ownership as well as financial and mobile services, the treasury warned of a 200bn-shilling (\$1.5bn) shortfall.



Rwandan President Paul Kagame waves at supporters during a Rwanda Patriotic Front kick-off rally, in Musanze, yesterday.

Kagame defends Rwandan democracy as election campaign kicks off

AFP
Kigali

Rwanda's President Paul Kagame defended his country's democratic credentials as campaigning opened yesterday for the July 15 presidential election, with the incumbent widely expected to extend his 24-year rule over the Great Lakes nation.

Nine million Rwandans are registered to vote in the poll to be held concurrently with legislative elections – a first in the country.

Kagame has been Rwanda's de facto ruler since the end of the 1994 genocide which claimed some 800,000 lives, mostly Tutsis but also moderate Hutus.

President since 2000, the 66-year-old will face the same rivals as he did in 2017: the leader of the opposition Democratic Green Party, Frank Habineza, and former journalist, Philippe Mpayimana, who is running as an independent.

Rwandan courts rejected appeals from prominent opposition figures Bernard Ntaganda and Victoire Ingabire to remove previous convictions that effectively barred them from contesting.

The election commission also barred Kagame critic Diane Rwigara, saying she had failed to provide a criminal record statement as required, and had not met the threshold of acquiring 600 supporting signatures from citizens.



Rwanda Patriotic Front supporters gather during a kick-off rally to support Rwandan President Paul Kagame, in Musanze.

The daughter of industrialist Assinapol Rwigara, a former major donor to Kagame's Rwanda Patriotic Front party who fell out with its leaders, the 42-year-old was arrested and disqualified from running in 2017 over allegations of forgery before being acquitted.

Speaking at a rally attended by thousands of supporters, many of whom were ferried by bus to the venue, Kagame defended Rwanda's record on democracy in an apparent swipe at allegations of stifling opposition.

"People usually disagree on democracy or understand it differently. But for us, we have our own understanding of it. Democracy means choice, choosing what is good for you and what you want," he told a cheering crowd in

the northern town of Musanze.

"Nothing is better than being Rwandan, but even better, nothing is better than being your leader... I came here to thank you, not to ask for your votes."

Elected by parliament in 2000 after the resignation of former president Pasteur Bizimungu, Kagame has won three elections with more than 90% of the ballot in 2003, 2010 and 2017, taking home nearly 99% of votes in the most recent poll.

He has been praised for Rwanda's economic recovery after the genocide but faces criticism over rights abuses and political repression.

In a statement published last week, Human Rights Watch accused the government of a long-running crackdown on the op-

position, media and civil society.

"The threat of physical harm, arbitrary judicial proceedings, and long prison sentences, which can often lead to torture, have effectively deterred many Rwandans from engaging in opposition activities and demanding accountability from their political leaders," said Clementine de Montjoye, senior Africa researcher at HRW.

In 2015, Kagame presided over controversial constitution amendments allowing him to potentially rule until 2034.

These shortened presidential terms from seven to five years and reset the clock for Kagame, allowing him to rule in a transitional capacity from 2017-2024 and then for two five-year terms until 2034.

The legislative elections will feature more than 500 candidates, with voters electing 53 out of 80 lawmakers.

The 27 remaining seats in the parliament are reserved for independent candidates including 24 women, two young representatives and one disabled person.

Currently Kagame's party and its allies hold 49 of the 53 seats in the lower house. Opposition challenger Habineza's Democratic Green Party has two seats, as does the Social Party Imberakuri. The women lawmakers are elected by municipal and regional councillors, the youth representatives by the National Youth Council and the disabled candidate chosen by the Federation of Associations of the Disabled.

Niger confirms sabotage of oil pipeline by rebels

AFP
Niamey

Niger's military rulers have confirmed the sabotage of an oil pipeline carrying crude oil to neighbouring Benin after a rebel movement seeking the release of the country's president claimed responsibility for the attack.

On the night of June 16-17, "malicious individuals sabotaged part of the pipeline in the Tesker department," public television Tele Sahel reported Friday evening.

"We have already gathered information and clues on the alleged perpetrators" and "all those who contributed will be arrested and judged in accordance with their terrorist act," said the governor of Zinder region, Colonel Issoufou Labo, who went to the scene of the

attack. "We know which group is the author of the act (which it has also) claimed," said public prosecutor Ousmane Baydo.

On Monday, the rebel Patriotic Liberation Front (FPL), which is fighting for the release of president Mohamed Bazoum, said it had targeted the pipeline as a message to Niger's military generals.

The FPL was created in August 2023 after the overthrow of Bazoum in a military coup on July 26. Since then, he has been imprisoned at the presidential palace in the capital Niamey.

FPL leader Mahamoud Sallah has demanded the release of the democratically-elected president and threatened to attack oil installations.

He has also called on the Chinese company Wapco and the state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation, which

run the pipeline, to halt their funding to Niger's army regime. The attack had damaged the pipeline and led to a crude oil leak, Tele Sahel said, with images showing an oil spill stretching more than 370 metres (1,200 feet) in the bush. Landlocked Niger needs the pipeline to export its crude from Benin's Atlantic port of Seme-Kpodji.

Besides the rebels, the pipeline is also at risk from other violent groups.

On June 12, six Nigerien soldiers providing a security detail were killed in the first-ever attack on the pipeline by "armed bandits" in the south, according to the army.

Vital to both the Nigerien and Beninese economies, the 2,000-kilometre-long pipeline has also become the subject of a diplomatic spat between the two West African neighbours, whose relations have been tense since the coup.

Mauritanian president calls on West African states to ally against militancy

AFP
Atar

Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani called on West African countries to come together to confront militancy, in an interview with AFP ahead of the country's presidential vote.

"The region must generate a common political will to be able to fight against insecurity," Ghazouani said on Friday, on the campaign trail ahead of an election on June 29.

"I am not one of those who think today that countries can face a threat like terrorism individually." The 67-year-old former army chief and defence minister is tipped for a second term as head



Mohamed Ould El Ghazouani, President of Mauritania, addresses his supporters during a political rally in Atar.

of the country of 4.5mn that lies strategically between north and sub-Saharan Africa.

He told AFP that the "security situation in the sub-region is not at all good" and has become "worse".

The military has seized power by force in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in recent years, heightening uncertainty in the region.

Ghazouani's huge desert nation has a frontier of more than 2,000 kilometres with Mali.

While militancy has spread in the Sahel, particularly in Mali, Mauritania has not seen an attack since 2011. "We need to form a coalition," Ghazouani said, urging the countries of the region to "come together".

He spoke to AFP in Atar, some 450 kilometres northeast of the capital Nouakchott, where he launched his re-election campaign last week.

Ghazouani called for a possible replacement to the G5 Sahel alliance, which was created in 2014 by Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad, with the support of Western countries, to confront militancy.

The military leaders in Mali, Burkina and Niger have all withdrawn from the G5 alliance in recent years. "If the G5 Sahel is not

the right one, we must find another G-something," he said.

The three countries, which have broken militarily and politically with the former French colonial power, have pivoted closer to Russia under their new military rulers.

They have also pulled out of the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) and created their own alliance of Sahel states. Ghazouani said Mauritania did not seek any role in the internal affairs of the other Sahel countries.

"We respect their sovereignty in their decisions. We want these countries to move as fast as possible towards elections," he said.

Despite the military-led trio of neighbours having left the regional alliance, Ghazouani said he hoped a way could be found for

relations to be maintained, be that via "a meeting, (or) a discussion".

He said that with some reflection the states would "find the format which best suits us".

Mauritania, which is rich in natural resources but still has a low gross domestic product, was hit by a series of coups from 1978-2008, before the 2019 election marked the first transition between two elected presidents.

The president said that stability has been maintained by being aware of the militant threat as well as "enormous efforts" made in education and health provision.

Ghazouani has pledged to "step up" his social welfare policy for the poor if re-elected, claiming more than 1.5mn people had benefited already from housing and financial help during his first term.



Boeing Starliner’s return is delayed again

AFP/Reuters
Washington

Nasa said on Friday that the Boeing Starliner’s return to Earth from the International Space Station (ISS), which was scheduled for next week, has been delayed again.

It did not set a new date, raising questions about the timing of the return of the two astronauts on Boeing’s first crewed mission, which had initially been set for June 26, itself a pushback from the first potential date of June 14.

The delay of the rescheduled June 26 return will allow more time for the review of the thruster malfunctions and helium leaks that caused the first delay, it said.

Starliner’s first crewed mission to the ISS, which had initially been scheduled to last about eight days.

The spaceship blasted off from Florida atop a United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket on June 5 following years of delays and safety scares, as well as two aborted launch attempts that came as astronauts were strapped in and ready to go.

“Nasa and Boeing leadership are ad-

Nasa faces \$80,000 compensation claim after space debris smashes through roof of family home

An American family is claiming more than \$80,000 from Nasa after a small piece of debris fell from space and smashed through the roof of their Florida home, a law firm said on Friday.

The problem of space trash has risen in tandem with increased spatial traffic, and Nasa’s response could set a precedent for how future claims are handled, law firm Cranfill Sumner said in a statement.

On March 8, the object weighing just 700g hit Alejandro Otero’s home in Naples, Florida, making a hole in the roof.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) later confirmed that it was part of a cargo pallet of used batteries that was released from the International Space Station (ISS) as waste in 2021.

Instead of fully disintegrating before falling to Earth, a section

remained intact when it re-entered the atmosphere, the US space agency said.

Otero’s son was at the house at the moment of impact, according to the law firm, which said that Nasa has six months to respond to its claim.

“My clients are seeking adequate compensation to account for the stress and impact that this event had on their lives,” said lawyer Mica Nguyen Worthly.

“They are grateful that no one sustained physical injuries from this incident, but a ‘near miss’ situation such as this could have been catastrophic,” the lawyer said. “There could have been serious injury or a fatality.”

Nasa did not immediately respond to AFP’s request for a comment. **-AFP**

It was known there was one helium leak affecting Starliner before the launch.

While non-combustible, helium provides pressure to the spacecraft’s propulsion system.

However, other leaks emerged during the flight.

The crewed test of the spacecraft, test-flown to space two times since 2019 without humans on board, has encountered five failures of its 28 manoeuvring thrusters, five leaks of helium gas meant to pressurise those thrusters, and a slow-moving propellant valve that signalled unfixed past issues.

The issues and the additional tests run by Nasa and Boeing call into question when exactly Starliner’s crew will be able to make the roughly six-hour return journey home, and add to the programme’s broader problems.

Boeing has spent \$1.5bn in cost overruns beyond its \$4.5bn Nasa development contract.

Nasa wants Starliner to become a second US spacecraft capable of ferrying astronauts with the space station, alongside SpaceX’s Crew Dragon, its primary ride since 2020.

Arab-American mayor warns Biden hasn’t ‘earned my vote’

By Issam Ahmed
AFP

Abdullah Hammoud’s election as the first Muslim mayor of Dearborn was a watershed moment for this city, an automaking hub home to the highest concentration of Arab-Americans in the United States.

However, while his early focus was on upgrading sewer infrastructure and investing in parks, he has now been thrust into the national spotlight for his outspoken criticism of fellow Democrat Joe Biden, over the president’s support for Israel’s military offensive in Gaza.

“I’ll be the first to say that we don’t want to see (Donald) Trump re-elected to the White House,” Hammoud told AFP in an interview. “But people want to be inspired to come out.”

Dearborn, a suburb of Detroit famous as the birthplace of Henry Ford and home of the Ford Motor Company’s headquarters, has a population of around 110,000 residents, of whom 55% claim Middle Eastern or North African heritage.

In 2020, Dearborn voters overwhelmingly supported Biden and their ballots could tip the scales in Michigan – a crucial swing state that may ultimately decide the White House winner in November’s election.

Hammoud’s profile surged in January after he declined an invitation to meet Biden campaign officials seeking to shore up the Muslim vote.

Since then, he helped galvanise a movement that saw more than 100,000 voters mark “uncommitted” in Michigan’s Democratic primary in protest against Biden’s policy on Israel, and was asked by Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein if he would be her running mate.

Hammoud, who won’t meet the Constitutional requirement of being 35 until next March, was too young to accept the role, though he said the offer was “very humbling”.

Besides, he remains unsure about how he’ll cast his ballot.

“I would say that no presidential candidate



Dearborn Mayor Abdullah H Hammoud speaks during an interview at his office in Dearborn, Michigan. **-AFP**

has earned my vote,” said the father-of-two, urging both parties to pay attention to increasing public disapproval of Israel’s actions. “If you look at all the polling data that’s emerging across the country, from coast to coast, the issues that we have been advocating for, fighting for...are issues that have popular support.”

These demands include a permanent ceasefire as the pathway to provide safe harbour for all hostages and prisoners, unfettered access to humanitarian aid, and ending the supply of weapons to Israel.

The son of Lebanese immigrants, Hammoud grew up in a “working poor” blue collar family.

His father drove a truck while his mother’s father worked on an auto factory assembly line.

He was drawn towards the Democratic Party for its support of the labour movement, and equally repelled by Republicans, whom he says have a history of “demonising Arab Americans, Muslim Americans and other people of colour”.

Hammoud’s first dream was to become a physician, but he wasn’t able to get the grades.

He instead trained as an epidemiologist and began climbing the corporate ladder as a healthcare executive.

However, the sudden death of his elder brother – Hammoud was the second of five children –

made him re-evaluate his priorities, and in 2016 he won election to the state legislature.

In 2022, he became the second in a trio of new Muslim mayors in the southeast Michigan cities of Dearborn, Dearborn Heights and Hamtramck.

Hammoud immediately set to work righting historical wrongs.

For decades, the city had been marred by a reputation for racism, exemplified by the openly segregationist policies of former mayor Orville Hubbard.

Hammoud appointed the city’s first Arab-American police chief, which led to a drastic drop in tickets issued to black drivers within a year, according to his spokesman.

Until the war in Gaza, triggered by the events on October 7, Hammoud considered Biden a “transformative” president, but now believes “the genocide outweighs the impact of that domestic policy”.

Hammoud sidesteps the question of whether he could ultimately endorse Biden under the right circumstances, emphasising that whatever he might say, it’s too late for some of his constituents who have lost dozens of relatives to Israeli bombs.

He has no doubt that Trump, who imposed a Muslim travel ban during his tenure, would be an utter disaster – citing the Republican’s arming of Saudi Arabia against Yemen, backing of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and shifting the US embassy to Jerusalem.

However, Hammoud recoils at suggestions that members of his community would be to blame for potentially paving the way for Trump’s return by withholding their support for Biden.

Asked how he would respond to this criticism, Hammoud said: “The question should be asked of President Joe Biden – what will he do to prevent Trump being re-elected come this November? What will he do to help prevent the unravelling of American democracy and the fabric of our society?”



Trump speaks at the Faith and Freedom Coalition’s ‘Road to Majority’ policy conference in Washington. **-Reuters**

Trump courts Christian group, then woos black vote in Philadelphia

Reuters
Philadelphia

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump spoke to an influential group of conservative Christian activists, before heading to Philadelphia for a rally aimed at courting black voters.

The former president gave the keynote speech at an event organised by the Faith & Freedom Coalition, a group overseen by long-time Trump ally Ralph Reed, in Washington.

The gathering highlighted issues important to conservative Christian voters ahead of the November 5 election, and participants will likely be eager to hear more about Trump’s stance on abortion.

Trump has tried to carve out a political middle ground on the subject.

He has claimed credit for appointing three right-wing justices to the Supreme Court who helped overturn the Roe v. Wade decision two years ago, eliminating a nationwide right to abortion in a moment of triumph for conservatives.

Trump has recently said he would not support a federal ban on abortion, preferring to leave the issue to individual states.

Later in the day, Trump will hold a campaign rally at Temple University in a historically black area of Philadelphia, long a stronghold for Democrats.

Trump won just 5% of the vote in precincts within a half-mile radius of Temple’s main campus, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

The Trump campaign has made courting black and Hispanic voters, who make up more than half of Philadelphia’s population, a priority this cycle, encouraged by some opinion polls

that indicate he made be gaining ground with these voters.

While Trump has little chance of winning the city – President Joe Biden, a Democrat, won 81.4% of the votes in Philadelphia County in 2020 – Trump could still boost his chances by narrowing the margin in Philadelphia and surrounding counties so critical to the overall tally in Pennsylvania, a battleground state.

William Rosenberg, a political science professor at Drexel University, said he believed Trump’s main goal was projecting his outreach to black voters nationally, similar to the rally he held in the Bronx borough of New York City last month.

“It’s a play to get on national TV to say you are in Philadelphia to make the case that this is a black community,” Rosenberg said. “Then perhaps you convince some swing voters that Donald Trump is not so bad.”

Democrats have set up posters, billboards and kiosks in Philadelphia and on the Temple campus to promote Biden’s policies, including his efforts to forgive student debt, as well as to criticise Trump’s record with the black community.

State lawmaker Malcolm Kenyatta, a Democrat, said black voters remember Trump’s history promoting the bigoted conspiracy theory that questioned whether Barack Obama, the country’s first African American president, was born in the US, and policies that he pursued that hurt the black working class.

“Donald Trump is in a black place, but Donald Trump does not give a (expletive) about black people,” Kenyatta said at a press event at a Biden campaign office in Philadelphia, adding that Trump would “get the type of welcome he deserves” from the city.

Extreme heat is the new danger stalking US-bound migrants

AFP
Ciudad Juarez

In the Mexican desert near the US border, security forces are on alert after a man was found dead from heatstroke on the journey to what he hoped would be a better life in North America.

The 45-year-old Mexican man’s body was found buried among sand and bushes under the merciless sun, a week after a woman died from dehydration in the northern state of Chihuahua, where temperatures are over 40° Celsius (104° Fahrenheit).

Migrants from Latin America already face risky river crossings, wild animals and violent criminal gangs that extort, kidnap and abuse them on their path to the United States.

The heat is proving a new enemy for migrants exposed to the elements.

On Thursday the Mexican government reported 155 deaths associated with high temperatures, with 30 in the past week alone.

“It’s too hot, I am a little dehydrated since the temperature doesn’t go down and it’s 43C-45C,” said Dioner Jose Romero, a 25-year-old Venezuelan migrant.

His compatriot Nelson Ramos, at a Catholic Church shelter in border city Ciudad Juarez, said he was used to high temperatures, but “the sun is too strong...I feel a little suffocated”.

The US Border Patrol says that since October it has recorded the deaths of 77 people in the El Paso sector close to Ciudad Juarez, which extends to other parts of Texas and New Mexico.

The main causes of death are heatstroke, drowning, and falls from the border wall – sections of which are up to 9m high.

Mauricio Rodriguez, the director of emergency management



Empty plastic bottles are seen near where authorities found the body of a migrant who lost their life attempting to cross into the United States from Mexico on a day of high temperatures, in a desert area of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. **-Reuters**

services in Ciudad Juarez, told AFP that people were being urged not to travel to the border “because of the high temperatures”.

“I understand that people are forced to do so, but we recommend they don’t do it. The heat can lead to death,” he said.

The deceased man had initially been abandoned by the trafficker who was taking him to the US, but he returned to bury him.

The trafficker later agreed to re-

veal the location of the body at the request of the migrant’s family, according to emergency services.

During the search, Mexican authorities found six other undocumented immigrants, one with symptoms of dehydration.

Nearly 1.3mn irregular migrants passed through Mexican territory between January and May of this year alone, according to figures from Mexico’s National Institute of Migration (INM).

US offers \$850mn in grants to clean up oil sector methane emissions

The US government has opened up competitive bidding that will close on August 26 for \$850mn in grants to help small oil and gas producers monitor and reduce methane from their operations, a major part of the Biden administration’s plan to crack down on leaks of the potent greenhouse gas.

The funding, made available through the administration’s signature climate law called the Inflation Reduction Act, will specifically help small oil and natural gas operators reduce methane emissions and gain access to methane detection and reduction technologies.

It will be open to industry, academia, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Native American tribes, and state and local governments.

Some smaller, independent US oil and gas operators had strongly opposed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)’s new methane standards that target hundreds of thousands of existing sources nationwide because they

would place a financial burden on low-producing wells, as well as the agency’s proposed methane fee on producers.

“These investments from President Biden’s Investing in America agenda will drive the deployment of available and advanced technologies to better understand where methane emissions are coming from. That will help us more effectively reduce harmful pollution, tackle the climate crisis, and create good-paying jobs,” EPA Administrator Michael Regan said.

Oil and gas production is the source of around a third of the nation’s methane emissions and is a key target for the Biden administration as it seeks to combat climate change.

The United States is among more than 100 countries that have pledged to cut their methane emissions 30% by 2030 from 2020 levels.

Low-producing oil and gas wells that account for just 6% of total US production account for half of the methane emitted from all US well sites, a 2022 report found. **-Reuters**

Haiti PM touts new police chief in fight against gangs

Haiti’s Prime Minister Garry Conille said on Thursday that a decision to replace the national police chief was motivated by a need to give security forces a “new lease on life” against gangs terrorising the population.

Rameau Normil was appointed director-general of the troubled Caribbean nation’s police force on Wednesday, replacing Frantz Elbe.

“We took steps to make a change at the head of the police because we felt the time was right to give the institution a new lease of life, a new energy,” Conille said at a press conference.

“Confronting the challenges of insecurity is a collective responsibility. The population must feel involved in the process of restoring security,” he said, promising improved communication between citizens and police.

Conille also said that he had spoken with Kenyan authorities and that they were eager to work together, referring to a UN-backed security mission from Nairobi designed to bolster Haiti’s police, which has not yet materialised.

He also said he would create a national anti-corruption strategy, noting that “up to 30% of state employees receive salaries while being absent, we must immediately remedy this”.

Gang violence has long wracked Haiti, but the situation worsened in late February when armed groups launched attacks in capital Port-au-Prince, calling for the overthrow of unelected and unpopular prime minister Ariel Henry.

About 580,000 Haitians have now fled their homes due to gang violence. **-AFP**

Outrage as UK hard-right leader says West provoked Ukraine war

AFP
London

Nigel Farage, leader of Britain's anti-immigration Reform UK party, faced strong criticism yesterday after saying that the West provoked Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In an interview with the BBC on Friday, Farage said "we've provoked this war", while adding that "of course" it was Russian president Vladimir Putin's "fault".

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak told reporters that Farage's claim was "completely wrong and only plays into Putin's hands", likening the comments to "appeasement".

Labour leader Keir Starmer, who looks set to take Sunak's job after an election next month, said Farage's comments were "disgraceful". "Anyone who is standing for parliament ought to be really clear that Russia is the aggressor", he told

reporters on the campaign trail. Farage — a former European Union parliamentarian who has tried and failed to run for the UK parliament seven times — is seeking a seat from Clacton in east England in a general election next month.

His party is polling third behind the ruling Conservatives and opposition Labour parties, and is predicted to pick up a few seats. A surge of popularity for Reform UK since Farage took over as leader this month risks drawing away votes that the Conservatives sorely need to win a fifth term in power.

Farage's comments met with outrage across political parties on Saturday. Interior minister James Cleverly criticised Farage for "echoing Putin's vile justification for the brutal invasion of Ukraine".

Former Conservative defence minister Tobias Ellwood called the comments "shocking" in the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper, adding that British wartime leader Winston



Leader of Reform UK Nigel Farage delivers a speech at a hotel in Blackpool, northwestern England.

Churchill "will be turning in his grave". Labour's defence spokesman John Healey called the comments "disgraceful" and said his stance made him "unfit for any political office in our country".

The opposition Liberal Democrat party leader Ed Davey adding that he did not "share any values" with Farage. Probed on his views on Putin in the interview, Farage said that he "disliked him as a per-

son" but "admired him as a political operator because he's managed to take control of running Russia".

Russian media, however, was more enthusiastic about Farage's interview. A newsreader on the Channel One Russian state media said on broadcast that Farage was "an experienced politician who follows the moods of the electorate". The channel added on Twitter that he was among the European politicians "showing enlightenment and sanity".

Kremlin propagandist and show host Olga Skabeyeva wrote on Telegram: "we provoked the war in Ukraine" - the leader of the Reform UK is trying to win the votes of those English people who do not want to go to war with Ukraine". UK party leaders have largely maintained a united stance on the Ukraine war, condemning Russia as the aggressor and backing Nato's response. In his rebuke, Starmer added that "parliament

has spoken with one voice on this since the beginning of the conflict." A former Brexit figurehead, Farage is close to former US president Donald Trump, who has said he gets along with Putin "great". Farage also stood by claims that Sunak, the first UK prime minister of colour, does not "understand our culture", in response to Sunak leaving D-Day commemorations in France early.

He clarified in the interview that he meant Sunak was "too upper class". Farage's comments on Sunak — first made in a political debate — had previously drawn criticism, with one Tory minister saying they made him "very uncomfortable". Farage has already spoken about his intention to run for prime minister in 2029 during the campaign. His Reform UK party briefly overtook the Tories in a YouGov poll last week before returning to third place, with both parties trailing Labour.

Thousands march in London to call for 'urgent' climate action



A girl holds placards as she joins the protest.

AFP
London

Thousands of protesters from across the UK marched through central London yesterday to call for "urgent political action" on nature. The 'Restore Nature Now' march was joined by some 350 charities ranging from protest groups like Just Stop Oil and Extinction Rebellion to more mainstream organisations like the National Trust and WWF.

People came from "all over the UK", according to one protester, with a list of demands including making "polluters pay" and improving support for farmers in an increased "climate-friendly farming budget". The march also called for an Environmental Rights Bill to establish the right to a healthy environment in the next parliament following a general election next month.

Protesters weaved down one side of Hyde park in the British capital, marching past Downing street to Parliament square dressed in wildlife-themed costumes and donning quirky headgear and masks. Accompanied by songs, chants of "restore nature now" and more than one drum circle, protesters called for climate change and nature to be prioritised in the election campaign and by the next government.

British actor Emma Thompson led the march, saying that her message was for the government

to "stop being so deeply irresponsible". Thompson told AFP at the march that she couldn't believe the "lack of engagement" of political parties during the ongoing election campaign. "We're in the eye of the storm... Everyone cares about the beauty of our islands and we are losing it so fast", she added.

She was joined at the front of the procession by wildlife TV presenter and activist Chris Packham, who criticised politicians for "not taking the action that they need to rapidly enough and broadly enough", adding that he was "not terribly impressed" with parties' election manifestos. "So we have to stand up and make sure that they understand that we're going to hold them to account", he told AFP.

One protester wanted to see water companies nationalised by the next government.

Carrying cut-outs of fish, Frances Dismore from a river restoration group said, "all these cardboard critters that we're carrying today, we've met in person on our river, so we're very much concerned about safeguarding them". Dismore added that the river that she was campaigning for, the River Lea in north-east London and east England, was "impacted by all the issues that all other rivers in England are impacted by".

River and water cleanliness has been a hot topic this election, with several sewage spill scandals over the last few years drawing the ire of climate ac-



British actress Emma Thompson, British environmentalist Chris Packham and British green energy entrepreneur Dale Vince lead demonstrators during the "Restore Nature Now" protest supported by Extinction Rebellion (XR), National Trust and WWF in London yesterday.

tivists. Earlier on the campaign trail, leader of the smaller Liberal Democrats party fell off a paddleboard into a lake to demonstrate the severity of England's sewage crisis.

The opposition Labour party, which looks poised to win power this election, has pledged to end new oil and gas exploration licences in the North Sea and create a publicly owned clean energy company called Great British Energy. However, Labour leader Keir Starmer was previously criticised for ditching a pledge to spend £28bn a year on green infrastructure.

The Conservatives' have watered down commitments on how they would reach the UK's 2050 net-zero target through pushing back a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030-2050. For Jane Price, who came down with Extinction Rebellion from Stratford-upon-Avon, the timing of the march was a way to tell political parties "we will vote for you if the climate and the ecology is on your agenda." "Everywhere you look", she added "there's not enough being done".



A demonstrator with an ocean-themed outfit takes part in the "Restore Nature Now" protest.

US aircraft carrier arrives in South Korea for military drills

Reuters
Seoul

A nuclear-powered US aircraft carrier, the Theodore Roosevelt, arrived in the South Korean port city of Busan yesterday to take part in joint military exercises later this month with the host nation and Japan, naval officials said.

The leaders of the three countries agreed at a summit last August to hold annual military training drills as they sought to project unity in the face of China's growing power and nuclear threats from North Korea. This month's drills, called "Freedom Edge", will involve the three countries' navies and include maritime, anti-submarine warfare exercises and air defence exercises, said US Rear Admiral Christopher Alexander, commander of the Carrier Strike Group Nine.

"The intent is to improve the interoperability between our navies and ensure that we are ready to respond to any crisis or contingency," he told a press conference, saying the Theodore Roosevelt would serve as the command ship for the drills. Last year, the three countries also staged joint naval missile defence and anti-submarine exercises to improve responses to North Korean threats.

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited North Korea this week for the first time in 24 years and signed a deal with leader Kim Jong-un that included a mutual defence pledge.

It was one of Russia's most significant moves in Asia for years, which Kim described as amounting to an alliance.

The visit comes seven months after a South Korea trip by another U.S. aircraft carrier, the Carl Vinson, in a show of extended deterrence against the North's nuclear and missile programmes.

Japanese Emperor Naruhito finally begins delayed UK state visit

Reuters
London

Emperor Naruhito and his wife began a week long trip to Britain yesterday, during which they will visit Oxford University where they both studied and attend a banquet with King Charles, but no formal meeting with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is scheduled.

Naruhito and his wife, Empress Masako, had been due to make the visit in 2020 when Queen Elizabeth was still alive but it was postponed because of the Covid pandemic.

Their first overseas trip together after Naruhito's enthronement was to Elizabeth's funeral in 2022. Ahead of this state visit the 64-year-old emperor spoke of the kindness the British royals showed him when he arrived in



Japanese ambassador to Britain Hajime Hayashi walks in front of Japan's Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako as they arrive on a state visit to Britain, at Stansted Airport near London, Britain.

Britain to study in the early 1980s.

He recalled how the late queen had invited him to Buckingham Palace for tea, which she made herself. "I have fond memories

of the heartwarming hospitality I received from her majesty the queen and the royal family, making me feel like I was part of their family," he told a news conference

in Tokyo. Naruhito was greeted by officials on his arrival at London's Stansted airport on Saturday afternoon. The emperor's trip is the third state visit of Charles' reign, and the first since it was revealed earlier this year that the British monarch had been diagnosed with cancer.

Ahead of the visit, Naruhito said he was grateful the king would host them despite his illness, and he also sent good wishes to Charles' daughter-in-law Kate, wife of heir Prince William, who is having preventative chemotherapy treatment for cancer.

"I understand that they are both going through a hard time, but I pray that their treatment will go smoothly and that they will have a speedy recovery," he said.

The official reason for the trip is to celebrate the long ties between the two royal families, and to demonstrate the deep relation-

ship between the two countries. The Japanese royals are also using it as a chance to return to Oxford where they both studied at separate times, while Naruhito will visit the River Thames flood barrier which he researched while at university.

The visit clashes with campaigning for the British election on July 4, and a Japanese foreign ministry official said there were no plans for a meeting with the prime minister.

The official state elements of the trip begin on Tuesday when Prince William will formally greet the emperor, before a grand carriage procession along The Mall to Buckingham Palace where there will be a state banquet.

During the trip Naruhito will also privately visit St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle to lay a wreath at the tomb of Queen Elizabeth.

Death toll rises to 54 in India liquor tragedy

The death toll has climbed to 54 from consumption of tainted liquor in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu, with more than 100 people still in hospital, a government official said yesterday.

Nearly 200 people have been treated since Wednesday for vomiting, stomach aches and diarrhoea, after drinking liquor spiked with methanol in the district of Kallakurichi, about 250km from Chennai, the state capital.

Law enforcement officials investigating the incident have arrested seven people, said M S Prasanth, a senior district official. — Reuters

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GULF TIMES

Growing global uncertainties muddle energy transition path

Recent years have witnessed an increase in global uncertainties, driven by economic, political and technological shifts, adding complexity to the environment in which countries operate and their energy transition trajectory.

Geopolitical tensions pose risks to energy security and hinder international co-operation, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF). Ongoing conflicts in the Middle East risk exacerbating volatility in oil markets, potentially resulting in an oil price spike.

Despite a moderation in energy prices, regional disparities persist, constraining economic growth, imposing financial burdens on households and businesses, and hindering efforts to enhance electricity access.

This situation, WEF noted, could have been much worse if not for the mild weather conditions globally.

However, there have been instances of accelerated change, notably in Europe, where there has been a rapid reduction in dependence on Russian natural gas and significant improvements in energy efficiency.

Global investments in efficiency increased by 45% since 2020, with countries representing three-quarters of global energy demand strengthening energy efficiency policies or implementing new ones in the past year.

In 2023, clean energy sources faced challenges, including uncertainties in subsidies and supply chains, coupled with high interest rates and significant cost increases

high interest rates and capital costs remain significant obstacles in the energy transition, particularly for emerging and developing economies. This directly impacts the ability of firms and countries to finance the upfront investments to meet energy demand and decarbonise the energy system.

Despite lower operational costs, capital-intensive clean energy solutions remain disproportionately affected due to high upfront capital investment requirements.

In 2023, clean energy sources faced challenges, including uncertainties in subsidies and supply chains, coupled with high interest rates and significant cost increases.

Trade patterns in the energy sector have shifted significantly as governments focus on enhancing supply chain resilience and strengthening energy security.

This shift has coincided with accelerated momentum towards cleaner energy sources, including the rapid expansion of renewable power capacity and increased adoption of technologies such as electric vehicles (EVs) and heat pumps, driven partly by supportive government policies.

Despite these positive trends, growing trade protectionism and costs create headwinds, especially for developing nations.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) data indicates a \$1tn contraction in global trade in 2023. Geopolitical tensions have continued to impact bilateral trade flows, evidenced by shifts such as the European Union (EU) reducing its trade dependence on Russia and decreasing trade interdependence between China and the US.

However, certain industries, such as motor vehicles, saw growth in trade value, driven by growing demand for EVs. This, coupled with an improved global economic outlook, could bolster trade resilience in the coming year.

Uncertainties remain regarding geopolitical tensions and potential future disruptions to global supply chains, underscoring the need for adaptive strategies.

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Why harnessing AI for the common good is essential

Globally, roughly \$50bn in venture capital has been invested in the sector just in the past year

By Lenny Mendonca
Berkeley

Much of the media coverage of artificial intelligence (AI) has focused on its potential negative impact. Science-fiction scenarios like the human-robot wars of the Terminator franchise and real-world controversies, such as the proliferation of deep fakes and OpenAI's unauthorised use of Scarlett Johansson's voice for its new digital assistant, have captured the public imagination, stoking fears of a dystopian future.

Fortunately, both the AI industry and US President Joe Biden's administration seem to be taking these concerns seriously. Biden's October 2023 executive order on AI, in particular, has been rightly praised for focusing on responsible innovation. By facilitating the development of crucial standards, tools, tests, and transparency requirements, it could help establish accountability, discourage illegal and dangerous applications, and guard against disinformation, privacy violations, and intellectual-property theft.

As a transformative general-purpose technology, AI is likely to have a far-reaching impact on society and the labour market. Consequently, the US government must study the technology's labour implications and act rapidly and decisively to protect workers against potential disruptions.

But, in addition to protecting workers and consumers against potential risks, the government should also play a more active role in promoting the development of AI applications that serve the public good. To achieve this, the United States could leverage its significant and growing

technological lead.

Globally, roughly \$50bn in venture capital has been invested in the sector just in the past year. Consequently, the AI boom is projected to boost productivity by as much as 0.6% annually, enabling the global economy to grow despite slower workforce growth.

The US has more AI-related startups than the rest of the world combined, and the current US stock-market rally can be at least partly attributed to optimistic predictions about AI's future. With a market capitalisation of \$3.3tn, chipmaker Nvidia alone is worth more than the entire German stock market. Meanwhile, as companies like Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Apple, Tesla, and IBM spend billions of dollars integrating AI into their existing products and services, the Boston Consulting Group projects that this technological boom will account for 20% of its revenues in 2024. Even the electricity sector is growing rapidly, fuelled by the enormous power needs of large language models.

AI has also made significant inroads into numerous non-technology sectors. In the health-care industry, it is used for diagnostics, personalised medicine, patient management, administrative tasks, and pharmaceutical research. The financial sector employs AI technologies for fraud detection, risk management, and personalised services. In manufacturing, these technologies enhance supply-chain optimisation, equipment maintenance, and quality control, while agriculture companies integrate AI into precision farming, crop monitoring, pest control, and predictive analytics. And law firms increasingly rely on AI

for document review, research, contract analysis, and compliance management.

Driven primarily by market forces with minimal government intervention, these sectors are beginning to harness AI's potential to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and deliver better products. But the government still plays a crucial role in advancing the integration of AI into essential public services like health care, transportation, and education.

While some public-policy applications will resemble private-sector uses like fraud detection, procurement, risk management, logistics, traffic management, and software development, others will require careful adaptation to meet government agencies' specific needs. These include data analytics and visualisation, customer service and support, and community input, all of which necessitate greater public-private co-operation and a massive effort to recruit and train AI talent.

As is often the case in new technological arenas, California is at the forefront of global efforts to promote AI for the common good. In May, the state hosted a joint AI conference with Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley, and launched a six-month pilot program that aims to evaluate the suitability of generative AI tools for services like customer support, highway traffic management, and public safety.

Governments can also play an important role in facilitating research and development. The US already spends \$95bn annually on defence and national-security R&D and \$61bn on health-related research – two areas that will be dramatically affected by AI. Notably, the government has vast amounts of data, both public and private, that could be harnessed

for open-source applications aimed at improving traffic monitoring, weather analytics, disaster prevention and response, economic statistics, and public health.

Of course, policymakers must ensure that these data are accurate, unbiased, and used responsibly. While this will not be easy, as evidenced by the bungled rollout of the new student financial-aid forms (FAFSA), it is conceivable that individuals' information soon will be pre-filled into government forms, automatically enrolling them in certain public programmes and allowing them to opt out.

Perhaps the most promising public-policy option is integration of AI into training and education programmes. Recent innovations in generative AI have made personalised, one-on-one tutoring scalable and accessible, with studies showing that these tools could help bridge the gap between low- and high-skilled workers. The Khan Academy's Khanmigo, a tutoring bot for schools, is a prime example of AI's potential educational benefits.

To be sure, like most other technological advances, AI can have both positive and negative effects. Given the right policies and talent, it could fuel innovation, enhance competitiveness, boost productivity, and improve public-sector efficiency. But to unlock its full potential, the US government must ensure that AI is used to serve the common good. States like California are already leading the way. – Project Syndicate

Lenny Mendonca, Senior Partner Emeritus at McKinsey & Company, is a former chief economic and business adviser to Governor Gavin Newsom of California and chair of the California High-Speed Rail Authority.



PERSPECTIVE: With a market capitalisation of \$3.3tn, chipmaker Nvidia alone is worth more than the entire German stock market!

3 killed, dozens hurt as Russia hits Kharkiv

Russia bombed a residential building in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv yesterday, killing three people and wounding almost 40, as it stepped up renewed hostilities.

Officials said a guided bomb attack hit Ukraine's second largest city, located close to the Russian border, and President Volodymyr Zelensky posted footage of the torn-off facade of an apartment block and a crater outside.

"Russian terrorists have again hit Kharkiv with guided bombs," he wrote on Telegram, announcing three dead while rescuers still searched the rubble.

Regional governor Oleg Syneghubov said there were 37 injured. "Doctors are fighting for the lives of 4 patients – two women and two men, who are in serious condition."

He posted photos of blown-out windows and cars and a minibus damaged by the blast, which tore through the walls of flats, leaving tangled wreckage and rubble. Rescuers worked with dogs, cutting through doors and spraying water at a fire in the flats near the city's central bus station. Bodies in bags were laid on the ground outside, an AFP journalist saw.

One dead woman lay at a bus stop, wearing bright sandals, her bag by her side.

An elderly woman with blood running down her face and legs was helped onto a stretcher as she protested she did not want to go to hospital.

Prosecutors said Russia used its new UMPB D-30 SN guided bombs, launched from the Belgorod region bordering Ukraine.

Russia's *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* newspaper wrote this month that the weapons are now being used in the Ukraine war.

They can be fired from the ground at long range as well as from planes, it wrote, which means "it is almost impossible to anticipate" an attack.

China, France launch satellite to better understand the universe



A Long March 2-C rocket carrying a satellite jointly developed by China and France dubbed the Space Variable Objects Monitor, lifts off from a space base in Xichang, in China's southwestern Sichuan province yesterday. **Right:** French ambassador to China Bertrand Lortholary (**front centre**) and National Centre for Space Studies President Philippe Baptiste (**back centre**) applaud following the launch. **(AFP)**

AFP
Xichang (China)

A French-Chinese satellite blasted off yesterday on a hunt for the mightiest explosions in the universe, in a notable example of co-operation between a Western power and the Asian giant.

Developed by engineers from both countries, the Space Variable Objects Monitor (SVOM) is carrying four instruments – two French, two Chinese – that will seek out gamma-ray bursts, the light from which has travelled billions of light years to reach Earth.

The 930kg satellite "successfully" took off around 3pm aboard a Chinese Long March 2-C rocket from a space base in Xichang, in southwestern Sichuan province, China's National Space Administration said.

Gamma-ray bursts generally occur after the explosion of huge stars – those more than 20 times as big as the sun – or the fusion of compact stars.

The extremely bright cosmic beams can give off a blast of energy equivalent to more than a billion billion suns.

Observing them is like "looking back in time, as the light from these objects takes a long time to reach us", Ore Gottlieb, an astrophysicist at the Flatiron Institute's Center for Astrophysics in New York, told AFP.

The rays carry traces of the gas clouds and galaxies they pass through on their journey through space – valuable data for better understanding the history and evolution of the universe.

"SVOM has the potential to unravel several mysteries in the field of (gamma-ray bursts), including detecting the most dis-

tant GRBs in the universe, which correspond to the earliest GRBs," Gottlieb said. The most distant bursts identified to date were produced just 630mn years after the Big Bang – when the universe was in its infancy.

"We are...interested in gamma-ray bursts for their own sake because they are very extreme cosmic explosions which allow us to better understand the death of certain stars," said Frederic Daigne, an astrophysicist at the Paris Institute of Astrophysics.

"All of this data makes it possible to test the laws of physics with phenomena that are impossible to reproduce in the laboratory on Earth."

Once analysed, the data could help to improve understanding of the composition of space, and the dynamics of gas clouds or other galaxies. The project stems from a partnership between the French

and Chinese space agencies as well as other scientific and technical groups from both nations.

"It's a great success. We've managed to work well with our Chinese colleagues," Philippe Baptiste, CEO of France's CNES space agency, told AFP after the launch.

Space co-operation at this level between the West and China is fairly uncommon, especially since the United States banned all collaboration between Nasa and Beijing in 2011.

"US concerns on technology transfer have inhibited US allies from collaborating with the Chinese very much, but it does happen occasionally," said Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in the United States.

In 2018, China and France jointly launched CFOSAT, an oceanographic satellite mainly

used in marine meteorology.

Several European countries have also taken part in China's Chang'e lunar exploration programme.

So while SVOM is "by no means unique", it remains "significant" in the context of space collaboration between China and the West, said McDowell. Once in orbit 625km above the Earth, the satellite will send its data back to observatories.

The main challenge is that gamma-ray bursts are extremely brief, leaving scientists in a race against time to gather information. Once it detects a burst, SVOM will send an alert to a team on duty around the clock.

Within five minutes, they will have to rev up a network of telescopes on the ground that will align precisely with the axis of the burst's source to make more detailed observations.

Prigozhin remembered one year after failed mutiny

Almost a year since Yevgeny Prigozhin (**pictured**) sent his Wagner mercenaries marching towards Moscow in a rebellion against Russia's military leadership, residents in the capital spoke of respect and admiration for the late renegade.

The mercenary chief died in a mysterious aeroplane crash two months after ordering the short-lived mutiny on June 23-24 2023. But despite mounting the biggest ever challenge to President Vladimir Putin's near quarter of a century in power, Prigozhin and his Wagner Group continue to command respect.

"He did a lot for Russia at a difficult moment," said 60-year-old caretaker Alexander Ulyanov, calling the late mercenary boss a "great man".

Wagner spearheaded some of the Kremlin's longest and bloodiest military campaigns in Ukraine, including the fight for the mostly destroyed city of Bakhmut in the east.

"The organisation he created has an iron discipline," Ulyanov said. Prigozhin is alive "in our hearts," he added, comparing him to historical generals like Mikhail Kutuzov, who led Russian soldiers

during the Napoleonic Wars.

"If people remember him, he's alive," Ulyanov said of Prigozhin. A former hotdog seller and convicted criminal, Prigozhin became acquainted with Putin in the 1990s, later running catering businesses that served the Kremlin.

Nicknamed "Putin's chef", his influence quickly grew as he won government contracts, eventually founding the Wagner Group in 2014 to support Russian paramilitaries in east Ukraine. After his death, for which the Kremlin categorically denied responsibility, Putin praised Prigozhin as a "talented businessman" who made "serious mistakes".

In their quest to unseat Moscow's military top brass, Prigozhin's fighters seized Russia's army headquarters in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don and shot down military aircraft.

They managed to march roughly halfway to the capital Moscow before Belarus ordered a deal to end the near 24-hour uprising.

"It was so scary," said Svetlana, a 42-year-old English teacher who was in Rostov at the time. "I didn't know where it would lead to."



"He was probably right about something. But...the fact that during the special military operation, when hostilities were going on, he deployed and moved some troops to Rostov in particular – that was wrong," she said.

But "Teddy Boy", a 41-year-old American citizen from Los Angeles and member of the "Espanola" battalion fighting for Russia in Ukraine, praised the mercenary boss.

"I'm not 100 percent with him, but if I had met him, I would have shook his hand," said Teddy Boy, who wore a military uniform and sported tattoos of pro-Russian army symbols. "He spoke (about) a lot of things that people are thinking, that they're too scared to say. That's the problem. And I think that's why a lot of people supported him."

Water-stressed Capri relents on tourist ban

Tourists who have booked a hotel on Capri will be allowed back onto the Italian island as the local administration works to secure water supplies after damage to the aqueduct on the mainland deprived it of running water.

"We're preparing a less restrictive new order to allow back residents, people who own second homes, which often have their own water tank, and

tourists with a hotel booking. It will be the hotels' responsibility to ensure they have water," Capri mayor Paolo Falco told Italian news programme *TGCOM24*.

Earlier yesterday Falco had issued an order that halted tourist arrivals after some pipes that burst in the coastal town of Castellammare di Stabia left Capri residents without water.

Macron ascendancy over: Hollande

AFP
Ussel (France)

French President Emmanuel Macron's ascendancy is "over", former head of state Francois Hollande told AFP yesterday, after his former protégé called a snap election likely to hand massive gains to the far-right.

"I have no scores to settle at all. That's all in the past," Hollande said on the campaign trail in his native Correze department in central France, where he is standing to be an MP.

Suffering at the time from abysmal poll ratings, Socialist Hollande did not himself stand for a second term at the 2017 election.

Running as a pro-business centrist, his former economy minister Macron pulled off a surprise win that shattered traditional governing parties on the left and the right.

Now just two years into the younger man's second term, "Macronism is over, if indeed it ever existed. But it's over, I say it with no special hostility," Hollande said.

"I don't mean that his presidential term is coming to an end, that's something different. But what he may have represented for a time is over," he added.

Re-elected in 2022 for a second five-year term, Macron lost his absolute majority in parliament in legislative polls the same year.

His party has limped on in minority government, passing hard-fought and controversial reforms including raising the pension age



Former French president Francois Hollande (**third left**), flanked by his wife actress Julie Gayet (**second left**), talks to local residents during a campaign visit at a local market, ahead of the upcoming legislative elections, in Tulle, central France, yesterday. **(AFP)**

and toughening immigration law.

But a heavy defeat at June 9's European Parliament election prompted Macron to dissolve parliament in hopes of breaking the deadlock.

A new chamber will be elected on June 30 and July 7 with the far-right National Rally (RN) looking set to win the most seats.

France's two-round electoral system makes predicting outcomes tricky, but it is highly unlikely that Macron's gamble will pay off by winning a new majority.

Instead, he could find himself presiding over a government run by an ideological opponent.

Macron's rule has "had a heavy political cost," Hollande said.

"The parties were heavily damaged and public morale was too. The far-right has never been so

strong," Hollande's Socialist party has formed an electoral alliance with other left parties including Greens, Communists and hard-left France Unbowed (LFI).

Their New Popular Front (NFP) is currently running second to the RN in the polls, both well ahead of Macron's Renaissance outfit.

"It's time for a political realignment," Hollande said.

"I didn't plan to stand for any election in my position, something very serious had to happen" in the shape of the RN's more than 31% in the European election, he added.

Some Socialist voters have struggled with the idea of backing an alliance with LFI and its fiery leader Jean-Luc Melenchon, with some party figures accused of anti-Semitism and a history of Eurosceptic statements.

Prominent designer Van Noten bids farewell at Paris Fashion Week

There was a surprising lack of leather at Hermes, a restrained but celeb-packed Loewe show, and a farewell for fashion great Dries Van Noten (**pictured**) at Paris Fashion Week yesterday.

Hermes, known worldwide for its homemade leather bags and accessories, presented a show full of cotton and linen whites and blues for its spring-summer 2025 collection. It was a collection "grazed by a gentle breeze... Clothing casts reflections into the transparency of water," designer Veronique Nichean said in her press release.

Sandals and a sleeveless bomber-style jacket were among the few signs of leather among the docker hats, trench coats and drawstring trousers.

Meanwhile, Loewe, the rising Spanish star in the LVMH conglomerate, put on

a minimalist show – "the radical act of restraint", as Northern Irish creative director JW Anderson put it.

On the front row were Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodovar, US actor Jeff Goldblum and singer of the moment Sabrina Carpenter.

The minimalism still carried the sort of strange and ornate touches that Anderson loves, such as long exotic or golden feathers swooping down from headbands and weird angular collars jutting out from T-shirts.

The brand's signature cargo pants came with an Ottoman harem twist.

"I don't think they were clothes for me, but I loved it," Almodovar told AFP afterwards.

"Coming here is like going to a show, to the cinema, to the opera, to the theatre: each character has to be dressed in a

certain way, a lot of emotion is created that way," he added. Meanwhile, fashion fans were awaiting the last-ever show by Dries Van Noten later yesterday as he heads into retirement.

Van Noten is not a household name but he is lauded in fashion circles for a 40-year career in which he combined audacity, sophistication and poetry.

Few designers retire, healthy and successful, at 66, so news of his departure earlier this year came as a shock. He told *The New York Times* it was time to give up the "addiction" of fashion. "Everything's too intense. I can't come down anymore," he told the newspaper.

Van Noten is known for exquisite tailoring and subtle avant-garde styling with bursting clashes of colour.

"I'm a gardener, so flowers automatically

come up everywhere," he once told AFP.

"The starting point for a collection can be very literal or very abstract: a painting, a colour, someone's thoughts, anything at all."

His staff will take over collections starting with the womenswear show in September, with the only condition that they remain in Antwerp, away from the Paris fashion glitz.

The Puig Group, which acquired a majority stake in the label in 2018, agreed to Van Noten's request.

"After the men's show, I'm going to have another email address," he told *The New York Times*. "I'm not going to be @driesvannoten any more. I have to find an Instagram name now, because my Instagram is Dries Van Noten, and that is the brand. It's strange. That I didn't see coming."





Old Doha Port events draw huge crowds

In celebration of Eid al-Adha, Old Doha Port hosted exciting activations. Activities included a traditional maritime band, open days for kayaking and stand-up paddle, and fun-filled carnival style kids game booths. In addition to the activations, Old Doha Port recently announced new developments for a smoother summer. Vehicles now have full access to the port's Mina District road, golf cart availability for pick-up and drop-off all along the port, and free utilisation of the Fishermen's Slipway for owners of maritime vessels. Eid activities at Old Doha Port attracted a large number of visitors and tourists over the Eid break. Follow Old Doha Port on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok for more information.



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