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Labour tipped for historic win as UK voters go to polls

Britons were voting yesterday in a parliamentary election that is expected to bring Keir Starmer's Labour Party to power, sweeping away Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives after 14 often turbulent years. Opinion polls put Starmer's centre-left party on course for a landslide victory but also suggest many voters simply want change after a period of infighting and turmoil under the Conservatives that led to five prime ministers in eight years. This means Starmer, a 61-year-old former human rights lawyer, could take office with one of the biggest to-do lists in British history but without a groundswell of support or the financial resources to tackle it.

A person walks past a Palestinian flag outside a polling station in South Tottenham during the general election in London, yesterday.

"Today, Britain can begin a new chapter," Starmer told voters in a statement. "We cannot afford five more years under the Conservatives. But change will only happen if you vote Labour." The country's 40,000 polling stations opened at 0600 GMT. Sunak, 44, voted early with his wife, Akshata Murty, in the electoral district of Richmond in northern England that he represents in parliament. Starmer cast his ballot around 0830 GMT with his wife in his north London constituency. Having called the election months earlier than expected, Sunak has in recent weeks abandoned his call for a fifth consecutive Conservative victory, switching instead to warning of the dangers of an unchallenged Labour Party in parliament. Sunak issued a fresh rallying cry to voters for election day, saying a Labour government would hike taxes, hamper economic recovery. **(Reuters)**

COMMUNITY
See Page: 6

Amir participates in SCO Summit

His Highness the Amir with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in Astana yesterday. **Page 2**

QNA
Astana

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani yesterday took part in Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) Summit, held in the Kazakh capital, Astana, under the theme "Strengthening Multilateral Dialogue – Striving for Sustainable Peace and Development."

A number of heads of State and Government, and delegations, in addition to

representatives of a number of regional and international organisations took part in the summit.

Their Excellencies, members of the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir attended the Summit along with members of the participating delegations, senior officials and guests of the summit.

His Highness the Amir also attended the luncheon banquet hosted by President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in honour of heads of states and governments, and participating delegations.

Qatar attaches special importance to SCO: Amir

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani affirmed that Qatar attaches special importance to the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO). His Highness also confirmed that he discussed with President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev all files related to the two countries' strategic relations. In a post on his official account on the social media platform X, His Highness the Amir said that during his visit to Kazakhstan, he discussed with

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev all files related to the two countries strategic relations that they are keen to constantly consolidate by establishing co-operation that achieves the common interests and aspirations of the two friendly countries. His Highness the Amir added that he also participated in the SCO summit, to which Qatar attaches special importance, to enhance co-operation with its continental surroundings, which contributes to the prosperity and well-being of the region and the world. **(QNA)**

Amir arrives in Warsaw

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani arrived yesterday at Chopin air base in the capital, Warsaw, on an official visit to Poland. His Highness the Amir is accompanied by an official delegation.

Qatar's ambassador to Poland Saud bin Abdullah Zaid al-Mahmoud affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir to Poland, would reflect positively on bilateral relations in light of the two countries' aspiration to consolidate co-operation in several fields.

Ambassador of Poland to Qatar Janusz Janke affirmed that the relations between Poland and Qatar have been developing dynamically in the recent years, as evidenced by numerous contacts at the political level and economic co-operation.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency, the Polish ambassador highlighted that President Andrzej Duda visited Doha this year, pointing out that the official visit of His Highness the Amir to Warsaw will discuss issues of co-operation in trade and investment, energy, education, tourism, in addition to international topics such as the situation in the Gaza Strip and Ukraine.

Amir meets Putin

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday with President of friendly Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on the margin of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The meeting focused on the two countries' relations and ways to promote and develop them in different spheres. The two sides also exchanged viewpoints on matters of mutual interest, especially the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories.

HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani; HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi; and HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi attended the meeting.

On the Russian side, the meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov; Russian Presidential Foreign Policy Adviser Yuri Ushakov and a number of senior officials. **(QNA)**

Amir meets Erdogan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met with President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on the sidelines of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) Summit in the Kazakh capital, Astana.

During the meeting, they discussed the strategic bilateral co-operation relations between the two brotherly countries and ways to enhance them. They also exchanged views on all current regional and international issues, especially the developments in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories. HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Thani, HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi, and a number of members of the official delegation attended the meeting. On the Turkish side, Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan, Minister of Energy Alparslan Bayraktar, Minister of Finance Mehmet Simsek, Minister of Trade Omer Bolat, and a number of senior officials attended the meeting. **(QNA)**

Gaza truce efforts gain momentum

Reuters
Cairo/Gaza/Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told US President Joe Biden yesterday he has decided to send a delegation to resume stalled negotiations on a hostage release deal with Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, their administrations said.

Israel's Channel 12 said the head of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency would lead the Israeli delegation for the talks, though this was not immediately confirmed.

The White House said the two leaders discussed the recent response received from Hamas.

"The president welcomed the prime minister's decision to authorise his negotiators to engage with US, Qatari, and Egyptian mediators in an effort to close out

Palestinians inspect their damaged tents after an airdropped aid parcel fell on them in the Hamad City area in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

the deal," it said in a statement.

Israel received Hamas' response on Wednesday to a proposal made public at the end of May by Biden that would include the release of about 120 hostages

held in Gaza and a ceasefire in the Palestinian enclave.

A Palestinian official close to the mediation effort said that Hamas has shown flexibility over some clauses that would allow

a framework agreement to be reached should Israel approve.

Hamas has said any deal must end the war and bring a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Israel maintains it will accept only temporary pauses in the fighting.

The plan entails the gradual release of Israeli hostages still being held in Gaza and the pullback of Israeli forces over the first two phases, and the freeing of Palestinian prisoners. The third phase involves the reconstruction of the war-shattered territory and return of the remains of deceased hostages.

In Gaza, Palestinians reacted cautiously ahead of Israel's response.

"We hope that this is the end of the war, we are exhausted and we can't stand more setbacks and disappointments," said Youssef, a father-of-two, now displaced in Khan Younis, in the south of the enclave.

Hezbollah launches big attack on Israel

Lebanon's Hezbollah launched a big rocket and drone attack at Israel yesterday and threatened to hit new targets in retaliation for the killing of a top commander, in the latest surge of violence in the steadily worsening conflict across the border.

Sparked by the Gaza war, the conflict between Iran-backed Hezbollah and Israel has been gradually intensifying for months, raising fears of a full-scale war, which both sides have indicated they want to avoid and diplomats are working to prevent.

Israeli jets broke the sound barrier over several areas of the country, Lebanon's National News Agency reported. Hezbollah said it launched more than 200 rockets and a swarm of drones at 10 Israeli military sites in retaliation for Israel's killing of Hezbollah commander Mohamed Nasser in the south on Wednesday.

Amir participates in the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation Summit in Astana



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani with other leaders attending the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) Summit in the Kazakh capital Astana yesterday. The summit is being held under the theme *Strengthening Multilateral Dialogue – Striving for Sustainable Peace and Development*.

Official

Amir, Deputy Amir, PM congratulate US president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to US President Joe Biden on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent cables of congratulations to Biden on the occasion. - QNA

PM congratulates Egyptian counterpart

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Dr Mustafa Madbouly on the latter's taking the constitutional oath as prime minister of Egypt, wishing him success and relations between the countries, further development and growth. - QNA



Qatar chairs 33rd annual meeting of GCC civil defence chiefs

Qatar chaired the 33rd annual meeting of the directors-general of civil defence of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states, which was held in the Saudi capital Riyadh. The meeting chaired by Civil Defence Director-General Major-General Hamad Othman al-Duhaimi discussed ways to benefit from the experiences of member states in operating private firefighting teams, as well as the latest equipment and technologies used in high-rise building fires, the risks associated with climate change, and other topics on the agenda. - QNA

Qatar chairs 11th Conference for Arab Tourism Security Officials

Qatar chaired the 11th Arab Conference of Tourism Security Officials, which was held over two days at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers in Tunis. Chaired by the director of the Preventive Security Department at the Ministry of Interior, Brigadier Majid Sherida al-Rumaihi, various topics were discussed, including the experiences of member states in the field of tourism security, the developed Arab model strategy in



this field, and public safety procedures to protect tourist groups from natural disasters. The conference recommendations are scheduled to be submitted to the next session of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers. - QNA

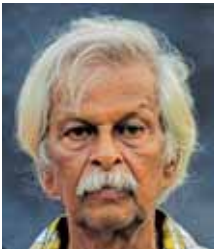
Shura Council heads the 8th meeting of Gulf-European Parliamentary Committee



The Shura Council chaired the 8th meeting of the Gulf-European Parliamentary Committee, organised by the General Secretariat of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), via videoconferencing yesterday. Shura Council members Nasser bin Mohamed al-Nuaimi and Abdullah bin Nasser bin Turki al-Subaie represented the council at the meeting. The meeting discussed ways to enhance relations between the councils and parliaments of the GCC countries and the European Parliament and addressed several axes pertaining to strengthening these relations. - QNA

27th Pravasi Doha Basheer Award to be conferred on Kanayi Kunhiraman

The 27th Pravasi Doha Basheer Award will be bestowed on renowned sculptor Kanayi Kunhiraman, the organisers of the forum said in a statement yesterday. The honour, in memory of legendary Malayalam writer Vaikom Mohamed Basheer, was instituted by Doha-based Kerala literary forum Pravasi three decades ago. The award is being given by the Pravasi Trust, with M T Vasudevan Nair and the late M N Vijayan as patrons and Babu Mather as managing trustee. The honour comprises of Rs50,000 and a gramophone sculpture designed by famous artist Namboothiri. A scholarship of Rs15,000 is also presented to a



student selected by the awardee from his village. The seven-member jury led by chairman M T Vasudevan Nair includes Babu Mather, M A Rahman, P Shamsudeen and K K Sudhakaran, C V Rappai, and Jagadeepan. The award will be presented at a function at Tirur Thunjan Parambu according to the awardee's convenience. The award was announced at a press conference in Kozhikode, Kerala, in the presence of Basheer's children, Anees and Shahina, literary figures Venkatachalam, Balachandran Puthukkudi, and Pravasi Doha representative Jaleel, the statement added.



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V	Commercial (G+5)	8 Marla	15,000/-	*60.0 Million	*66.0 Million	*16.5 Million
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Qatar and Poland share long-standing friendship

Qatar and Poland share a long-standing friendship based on mutual respect and common interests.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has embarked on an official visit to Poland, during which he will meet Polish President Andrzej Duda to discuss the bilateral relations between Doha and Warsaw and explore ways to enhance them for the mutual benefit of both nations and their people.

His Highness the Amir's visit and talks are expected to mark a new phase of co-operation and co-ordination between the two countries, opening up new avenues for joint partnerships and investments.

Qatar and Poland enjoy strong relations in politics, economy, and various sectors.

These relations are deeply rooted, despite the establishment of the embassies of the two countries being relatively recent.

Poland was one of the first countries to recognise Qatar after its independence in 1971, and supported its bid to join the United Nations.

In September 1989, their official diplomatic relations were officially established.

Diplomatic exchanges began in 2000, with Qatar being represented by its ambassador to Russia, who also served as a non-resident ambassador to Poland.

Poland established its embassy in Qatar on September 1, 2006, with an official

opening on April 28, 2007.

In reciprocity, Qatar opened its embassy in Poland in June 2007, starting operations on April 17, 2008, and appointing a chargé d'affaires on October 4, 2008.

In 2009, Hadi Nasser Mansour al-Hajri was appointed as Qatar's first ambassador to Poland, followed by Ahmed bin Saif al-Maadadi in 2015, and Abdullah bin Abdulrahman Fakhroo in 2020.

The current Polish ambassador to Qatar is Janusz Janke.

The two nations have previously exchanged high-level visits.

His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani visited Poland in June 2002, followed by a visit from then-Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski to Doha in December 2013.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim visited Poland in May 2017, and Duda visited Doha in May 2021.

During the president's visit, His Highness the Amir held a round of official talks at the Amiri Diwan to discuss bilateral relations and ways to enhance them, particularly in the fields of economy, energy, culture, and sports and exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest.

A significant milestone in Qatar-Poland trade relations was in 2016 when Qatar began delivering liquefied natural gas (LNG)

Amir's visit to Poland reflects well on bilateral ties: envoy

Qatar's ambassador to Poland Saud bin Abdullah Zaid al-Mahmoud has affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Poland would reflect positively on bilateral relations in light of the two countries' aspiration to consolidate co-operation in various fields.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), the envoy said that Qatar is working to consolidate relations with Poland in various fields, including political and economic.

In return, Poland is hoping that the visit of His Highness the Amir will enhance relations between the two countries and raise them to the highest levels, he added.

Al-Mahmoud said that the most prominent topics for discussion during the visit include areas of co-operation in sectors such as energy, elaborating that Poland views the issue of importing liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar as a matter of national security, especially in light of the current conditions in the region.

The discussions also cover opportunities for co-operation in the field of joint investment, he added, noting that there are several Qatar companies investing in Poland, as well as several Polish companies operating in Qatar.

The envoy said that the two sides will also work to stimulate the tourism field as well, as Qatar has become one of the tourist destinations for Polish citizens, especially after Qatar's hosting of the 2022 World Cup.

He pointed out the increasing number of Arab tourists, including Qataris, to the Polish city of Zakopane.

Al-Mahmoud also noted that there are consultations currently taking place between Krakow Airport in southern Poland and Qatar Airways to operate direct flights between Doha and Krakow.

He described the relations between Qatar and Poland as remarkable, adding that Polish officials mentioned that the two countries share views on several international issues.



The envoy said that Poland appreciates Qatar's efforts on the international arena, especially its role in resolving Arab and regional conflicts.

Warsaw appreciates Qatar's humanitarian role, and Polish circles greatly acknowledged the aid provided by Qatar to Ukraine, he said, adding that Polish media commended Qatar's role in reuniting Ukrainian children from Russia with their families.

Al-Mahmoud said that Doha and Warsaw have many agreements and memoranda of understanding in the military, cultural, economic, commercial and tourism fields.

He said that the volume of trade exchange between the two countries in 2023 reached about QR4.8bn, with Qatari exports to Poland amounting to about QR3.9bn, the most important of which is LNG, while the value of Polish exports to Qatar amounted to about QR897mn. - **QNA**

Qatar-Poland ties dynamically evolving with constant engagement

Polish ambassador to Qatar Janusz Janke has affirmed that the relations between Poland and Qatar have been developing dynamically in the recent years, as evidenced by numerous contacts at the political level and economic co-operation.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), he highlighted that Polish President Andrzej Duda visited Doha this year, and that the official visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Warsaw will cover discussions on issues of bilateral co-operation in trade and investment, energy, education, tourism, in addition to international topics such as the situation in the Gaza Strip and Ukraine.

The envoy commended the co-operation between the two countries in energy, affirming that Qatar is an important supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Poland, helping to stabilize Poland's energy diversification policy.

He added that many Polish companies are interested in establishing their presence in the Qatar market, but also more broadly



in the market of the Arabian Gulf.

Janke underlined that economy has the biggest potential for co-operation with Qatar, and for this reason Poland is planning to organise the fifth edition of the Qatar-Poland New Tech Forum during His Highness the Amir's visit to Warsaw.

Poland is a great choice for foreign businesses, the envoy said, due to its sound public finance and the opportunity for long-term investment planning, thanks to the country's economic stability and predictability.

He highlighted Poland's investment potential due to its strategic location in the heart of Europe, free flow of trade and investment across European Union, experienced diverse human capital, and innovation-driven economy with capacity for growth.

He said that the most promising sectors for bilateral trade and investments include energy, hi-tech, tourism, green technologies, health and rehabilitation, beauty and spa, and export of consumer goods such as luxury yachts, amber products, food and fashion. - **QNA**

'Qatar is a reliable mediator on regional and global issues'

Iran's ambassador to Qatar Ali Salehabadi has affirmed that Qatar has become a reliable mediator to resolve various regional and international conflicts, adding that the country plays a major positive role in resolving challenging issues around the globe.

He told the Qatar News Agency (QNA) that in the last decade, Qatar has taken major steps to strengthen its position regionally and internationally through the implementation of a diplomatic policy, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

In addition to using the negotiation technique in face-to-face political meetings, Qatar hosts various summits and conferences on current world issues that have attracted the attention of thinkers and researchers along with politicians, he added.

Salehabadi said that Qatar and Iran have had deep-rooted friendly relations for many years, indicating that, in recent years, these relations have reached the peak of strength in various fields, such as political, economic and cultural fields.

The two countries continue to strengthen efforts to enhance and develop bilateral relations, he added, expressing his hope to witness a jump in the level of existing trade exchanges in the near future, especially in the field of economic relations. - **QNA**

Diplomatic Institute director meets Iraqi ministry official



Diplomatic Institute director Dr Abdulaziz bin Mohamed al-Horr held a meeting with Iraq foreign ministry undersecretary for political planning Dr Hisham al-Alawi. The meeting in Doha discussed ways to enhance joint co-operation in the fields of diplomacy and political planning, the exchange of experiences, and continuous co-ordination to develop diplomatic competencies in the two countries. - **QNA**

Qatar participates in 5th meeting of Euro-Arab Working Group on border security in Tunis

Qatar participated in the 5th meeting of the Euro-Arab Working Group on Border Security Co-operation, which was held at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers in Tunis. Major (Navy) Jassim Saeed al-Mohannadi from the General Department of Coasts and Borders Security at the Ministry of Interior led Qatar's delegation to the meeting. The meeting discussed topics pertaining to the exchange of expertise and enhancing joint co-operation in the field of border security, in addition to discussing arrangements for the preparation of the second Euro-Arab Border Security Conference, slated for October 16-17 in Lisbon. - **QNA**



Diplomatic Institute holds panel discussion for Oxford students

The Diplomatic Institute at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has organised a panel discussion with the participation of 18 students from Oxford University's Diplomatic Studies Programme (DSP) during their visit to the country.

Moderated by Diplomatic Institute director Dr Abdulaziz bin Mohamed al-Horr, the panel

discussed current challenges facing global diplomacy, the importance of international dialogue and co-operation, and Qatar's role in promoting peace and stability in the region.

At the end of the panel discussion, the students were provided the opportunity to ask questions and participate in constructive discussions.

The students expressed their hopes for further academic co-operation and field visits that enhance their diplomatic skills and knowledge.

This visit comes as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen academic and diplomatic relations between Qatar and the world's leading educational institutions. - **QNA**

Qatar re-elected as member of Arab Civil Aviation Organisation Executive Council



Qatar has obtained membership in the Executive Council of the Arab Civil Aviation Organisation, after the General Assembly agreed to re-elect the entire Executive Council. This came during the 28th regular session of the General Assembly of the Arab Civil Aviation Organisation held on Wednesday in the Moroccan capital, Rabat. Qatar, represented by the General Authority of Civil Aviation, participated in the work of the General Assembly of the organisation with a delegation headed by Mohamed bin Faleh al-Hajri, who is in charge of managing the work of the General Authority of Civil Aviation. Mohamed bin Faleh al-Hajri expressed his pleasure at the re-election of Qatar as a member of the organisation's Executive Council, noting that this confirms the extent of member states confidence in Qatar's pioneering role in developing the aviation industry in the Arab world, and its prominent efforts in the areas of joint Arab action to develop this vital sector. The work of the General Assembly of the Arab Civil Aviation Organisation included discussions on many topics and axes related to the fields of navigation, air safety and aviation security. (QNA)

AlKhater meets Turkiye's Deputy Foreign Minister



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met yesterday with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkiye, Yasin Ekrem Serim, during his visit to the country. They discussed bilateral co-operation and ways to support and enhance them, especially in the field of development projects in various countries of the world, and developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, especially the latest developments in the joint mediation to end the war on the Strip. They also tackled a number of topics of common interest. The two sides expressed their deep concern over the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip, and stressed the need to double regional and international efforts to address them. They pointed to the growing co-operation in various fields, especially humanitarian ones, and drew attention in this context to the Qatari-Turkish aid ship that carried about 1,900 tonnes to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip in May. (QNA)

Qatar hosts 32nd meeting of ACTA



Represented by the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority (ACTA), Qatar hosted the 32nd meeting of the anti-corruption experts committee of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries. During the two-day meeting, several topics related to the fields of integrity and anti-corruption were discussed. (QNA)

Qatar hails accountability efforts on excesses against Syrian people

Qatar has welcomed all efforts made to cease the state of impunity and ensure accountability of all those responsible for the violations committed against the Syrian people. This came in Qatar's statement delivered by First Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) Abdullah al-Suwaidi during the Interactive Dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, within the framework of the 56th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Al-Suwaidi said that crimes, grave violations of human rights, and the major deterioration of the humanitarian, social and economic conditions that the Syrian people have been exposed to since 2011 will not change unless by stopping the conflict on the basis of "no victor and no vanquished", and by showing political will and exerting more efforts and pressure to reach a political solution based on the Geneva Statement and Security Council Resolution 2254 to meet



Syrians' legitimate aspirations who have struggled and sacrificed a lot to reach them and preserve Syria's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity. He emphasised the importance of resuming the Constitutional Committee's work and pressuring the Syrian regime to participate effectively and positively, as well as the importance of making progress regarding the file of missing persons, detainees, arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared persons for its great priority and importance in reaching a sustainable political solution and achieving justice and fairness for all victims of these violations. (QNA)

Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, UNHCR hold discussion on innovative support of refugees

The Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, in collaboration with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), organised a panel discussion on innovative approaches to support refugees, to mark World Refugee Day on June 20. The event aimed to explore innovative and sustainable approaches to supplement and enhance traditional solutions, addressing their shortcomings and providing new ways to effectively support refugees. In the session, moderated by Dr Mohamed al-Sousi from the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, speakers emphasised that the refugee crisis poses a significant challenge to the traditional solutions pursued by the UN and UNHCR, as well as other international entities. Significant obstacles hinder the resettlement of refugees, local integration, and voluntary repatriation, affecting the principle of international



protection both conceptually and practically. Speakers cited statistics indicating that there are over 120mn forcibly displaced persons worldwide, with expectations that this number will increase to 130mn by the end of the year due to ongoing crises and wars in Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza, and other countries. Over 50% of these displaced per-

sons come from countries within the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation. They pointed out various challenges faced by host countries, including economic strain, the large influx of refugees in short periods, legal and administrative issues related to registering and accommodating refugees in hostels and schools, and integrat-

ing them into local communities. Language and cultural barriers, as well as local communities' resistance due to perceived competition for jobs and resources, also pose significant challenges. The speakers called for co-operation and coordination among countries, governments, regional and international organisations, and civil society institutions to develop a comprehensive strategy to manage refugee situations as wars and conflicts and the resulting displacement are ongoing phenomena. UNHCR representative in Qatar Ahmed Mohsen discussed the increasing number of refugees worldwide and the scarcity of funding to support them. He noted that over 85% of host countries are among the poorest nations and stressed the need to raise international awareness about the importance of voluntary contributions. (QNA)

Police Academy celebrates graduation of 'police of tomorrow' groups

The Police Academy yesterday celebrated the graduation of the first and second groups of the police of tomorrow in its 5th edition (Summer 2024), in the presence of Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Abdullah bin Khalaf bin Hattab al-Kaabi, and a number of Academy's senior officers. The graduation ceremony, which was held in the Academy's sports hall, witnessed performances by graduates that highlighted the skills they acquired during the two-week programme, including self-defence and air shooting skills, as well as various sports skills appropriate to age groups. The ceremony also featured screening of a film the police of tomorrow programme in its 5th edition, and another about the importance of awareness of the dangers of cybercrime and cybersecurity and how the competent authorities deal with them, in addition to a direct live show explaining the role of security personnel in combating drugs and following up and monitoring narcotic smugglers by sea. In its 5th edition, the programme targeted students born in (2012-2013-2014-2015) where they were divided into six groups. More than 900 students graduated in the first and second groups, after the training period that began on June 2, whereas the rest of the groups will be graduated over the next few weeks. The police of tomorrow programme includes military and sports training. Military activities include infantry and air shooting, while sports activities include competitions, swimming, and self-defence, in addition to cultural and awareness activities and field visits in collaboration with a number of entities in the country. The programme aims to deepen national identity and the spirit of loyalty and belonging in the souls of young people, promote noble values and assume responsibility, contribute to community service and consolidate the authentic Islamic and Arab values, develop leadership skills, and enhance self-confidence, in addition to developing their skills and physical strength through military activities and sports. (QNA)



IIEE Qatar Chapter hosts 11th Foreign Regional Conference

The Institute of Integrated Electrical Engineers of the Philippines, Inc (IIEE) recently concluded its 11th Foreign Regional Conference recently in Doha.

The event brought together more than 200 delegates and 200 online participants from various chapters worldwide. The conference, organised annually by the IIEE Foreign Region, rotates hosting duties among its 12 chapters.

This year, the IIEE-State of Qatar Chapter (SQC) took the honour, featuring two days of intensive technical sessions, professional networking, a fellowship night, and a sports event.

Rudilyn Reyes, IIEE-SQC 2021 president, chaired the event while key attendees included Philippine ambassador Lillibeth V Pono, who served as the keynote speaker.

Distinguished guests such as Francis V Mapile (Acpe Orientation), Jaime V Mendoza, Cpss For Level 8 (Advance Pee With Certificates Of Speciality Equivalent To Phd In Electrical Engineering), Dr Florigo C. Varona (IIEE National Update And Technical Topic: Apec Engineering Assessment Process), Lyndon R Bague (Revealing Career Growth And Success By Embracing Continuous Engineering Professional Development), Adrian L Rey (How To Build Your First Microgrid

Pasilan, Edgar B Bernardino, Lyn-don R Bague.

Regional governors: Edgar B. Bernardino (2024 foreign region governor), Reinerio C Supsup (2023 foreign region governor), Jerene B Talam (2022 foreign region governor), Orlando T Villapafia (2021 foreign region governor), Dene S Horneja (2020 Middle East region governor), Victorino S Abejero (2019 Middle East region governor), Robert U Mabulay (founding governor, 2016-2018 Middle East region governor).

Chapter presidents: Edison Pedro A Sabado - President (62) Eastern Region, Saudi Arabia; Gamajel T Apilado - President

(63) Western Region, Saudi Arabia; Ezekiel V Mendiola - President (69) Central Region, Saudi Arabia; Enrique I Flores - President (80) Qatar; Melanie B Rances - President (82) UAE; Virgilio V Abanilla, Jr - President (84) Bahrain; Eric Christian O. Baldoza - President (86) Singapore; Walter O Baga - President (90) Kuwait; Ely C Ganancial - President (91) North Western Region, Saudi Arabia; Jonathan L Santiago - President (92) Abu Dhabi; Edwin J Tisel - President (93) Oman; Michael D. Bascos - President (104) Cayman Islands.

The conference showcased a series of technical presentations



The IIEE-State of Qatar Chapter hosts the Foreign Regional Conference this year.

covering a range of topics crucial for the advancement of the electrical engineering profession: Francis V Mapile (Acpe Orientation), Jaime V Mendoza, Cpss For Level 8 (Advance Pee With Certificates Of Speciality Equivalent To Phd In Electrical Engineering), Dr Florigo C. Varona (IIEE National Update And Technical Topic: Apec Engineering Assessment Process), Lyndon R Bague (Revealing Career Growth And Success By Embracing Continuous Engineering Professional Development), Adrian L Rey (How To Build Your First Microgrid

System In The Philippines), Edgar B Bernardino (Advance Level Engineers Forms and Guidelines), Robert U Mabulay (Opportunities For Career Advancement), Jeffrey Z. Zablan (Power Distribution System For Metro Railways), Glenn M Babiera (Power Distribution System Protection and Stability Analysis), Enrique I Flores (Gas Turbine and Generator Monitoring and Protection), Efren L Balajadia (Electrical Innovations For Sustainability and Decarbonisation: Driving The Future), Edwin C Mejia (Electrical Safety: Circuit Protection).



The recently held IIEE's 11th Foreign Regional Conference in Doha brought together participants from various chapters worldwide.




'Bagless Day' at MES

To provide students with a refreshing break from their academic routines and foster holistic development through a variety of engaging activities, the junior section of MES Indian School organised a 'Bagless Day' event over two days. Students explored their creativity through a plethora of activities including craft projects, handwriting and calligraphy segments, multilingual storytelling sessions, 2D design segments, booklet, poster making, friendship band crafting and sessions on healthy lifestyles. Mini-mart role play and speaking activities aimed at promoting moral values were also featured, providing practical life scenarios



and ethical learning. The event was designed to integrate intellectual stimulation with creative fun. Crossword puzzles challenged students' minds, fostering their problem-solving abilities. Dedicated library time allowed students to immerse themselves in the world of books, encouraging a love for reading.

IIS girls excel in CBSE TT



In the CBSE Qatar Cluster Table Tennis tournament, Ideal Indian School won a silver in the U-19 category and a bronze in the U-14 category. The U-19 team comprised Ruqaya, Amna Sharin, Saidha Nada and Manahil Baber and the U-14 team had Haya Nijas, Aliza Faiyaz Desai, Azza Hijaz and Catherine Hepsiba. Suman Panwar was the coach and Ajanya S manager. Principal Shaik Shamim Saheb congratulated the teams.

Sports Fiesta poster launched



Indian Pharmacists Association Qatar (Ipaq) has released its six-month long Sports Fiesta 2024 poster. President Shajeer, general secretary Shanavas, event co-ordinator Abdul Rahman Eriyal, advisory board member Ameer Ali and executive member Sajeena were among those present.

School parliament election conducted at Ideal Indian School



The Social Science Department at Ideal Indian School conducted the School Parliament Election to provide students with a practical learning experience about the democratic process. This exercise involved mock elections where students could nominate candidates, run campaigns, and cast their votes in a simulated environment.

Three parties were formed: Democratic, Republic, and Justices.

This initiative aimed to help students understand the importance of informed voting, the role of candidates, and the mechanics of elections, including ballots and vote counting.

A polling booth was set up to give students first-hand voting experience. The principal and heads of departments also participated in the voting process. The voters for this election were

from classes IX and X. The Social Science Department integrated this practice into the social studies or civic education curriculum, enhancing students' awareness of their civic responsibilities and the workings of government. By engaging in this process, students gained practical insights into democratic principles and developed skills for active citizenship in school.

New committee for Doha Toastmasters



Doha Toastmasters club (DTC), the first club of Qatar, installed its new executive committee at meeting number 631. Immediate past president Nagaraja S Mannem conducted the installation. Kesavaraj Sampath Kumar took the presidential oath and announced the slogan for the year 'Together We Educate, Empower and Elevate'. The other officials are: vice presidents - Unaise Eranju, Aymen Kharal, Harini Mahesh; secretary - Shivani Gaur; treasurer - Priyanka

Singh; sergeant at arms - Prashanth S Krishnamoorthy; immediate past president - Namrata Tawde. Badges were pinned by incoming Area 1 director Atul Hardas, Nagaraja S Mannem, Sunil Kumar Menon, Jayakumar Menon, Suresh Kumar Kalathil, Khalid Abu Hammad and Mohamed Zubair. Toastmaster of the day, Sundaravadeivel Anbazhagan spoke on the theme legacy. Vaishali Mehra was the general evaluator and Milton Swaminathan, table topic master.

ACCIDENT

39 fall ill in gas leak at Malaysia airport facility

A gas leak yesterday at an engineering section of Kuala Lumpur's international airport saw 39 people fall ill, a Malaysian emergency services official said. "A total of 39 victims suffered from dizziness and nausea," local rescue officer Mohamed Nur Khairi Samsumin said in a statement. He added that 24 victims were discharged, 14 others were at the Air Disaster Unit receiving care and one was hospitalised. All of those affected work for three companies operating at the facility. Mohamed Nur said the leaked gas was identified as methyl mercaptan, and the source was an "unused tank" at the facility.

DEFENCE

US mid-range missile system to be pulled out: Philippines

A US mid-range missile system deployed in the Philippines for annual joint military exercises – to the annoyance of China – will be pulled out of the country, a Philippine army spokesman said yesterday. The US army said in April it had deployed the Mid-Range Capability missile system which can fire the Standard Missile 6 (SM-6) and the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile in the northern Philippines. Philippine troops have been taught how to use and maintain the Typhoon missile system, but it was not used in live-fire exercises, Colonel Louie Dema-ala said. "As per plan... it will be shipped out of the country in September or even earlier," Dema-ala said.

APPEAL

S Korean patients urge doctors to end walkout

Hundreds of South Korean patient rights advocates yesterday gathered to urge physicians to halt a prolonged strike. Thousands of trainee doctors stopped working in February, protesting against government plans to increase medical school quotas which they say will affect the quality of specialist education. The strike has caused disruptions in hospitals and forced delays or cancellations of key treatments. Around 300 protesters gathered in the capital to call for the strike to end. In May, the government finalised an admission quota hike of around 1,500 for medical schools for 2025, which it says will tackle shortages of doctors and a rapidly ageing population.

TRAGEDY

Remains of missing Australian child found

Australian police yesterday said it had located the remains believed to be that of a missing 12-year-old child reportedly attacked by a crocodile in the country's north. The child was reported missing on Tuesday evening after swimming in a creek near Palumpa, a remote town of around 350 people seven hours by road from Darwin, the capital of Australia's Northern Territory. There are more than 100,000 crocodiles in the Northern Territory though fatal attacks are relatively rare. The child and family had visited the creek for holidays, and it was reported that a black crocodile was seen in the immediate area, police told ABC Radio.

Firms weigh removing Taiwan employees from China after death penalty threat

Reuters
Beijing

Some foreign companies are considering moving Taiwanese employees out of China after Beijing said it could impose the death penalty on "diehard" Taiwan independence separatists, said four people familiar with the matter.

The new guidelines have caused some Taiwanese expatriates and foreign multinationals operating in China to scramble to assess their legal risks and exposure, said the people, who include a lawyer and two executives with direct knowledge of the discussions.

"Several companies have come to us to assess the risks to their personnel," said the lawyer, James Zimmerman, a Beijing-based partner at the Perkins Coie law firm. He declined to identify the companies or industries for confidentiality reasons.

"The companies are still concerned that there may be some grey areas such as whether a benign social media post or voting for a particular political party or candidate in Taiwan elections could be interpreted as engaging in pro-independence activities," Zimmerman said.

Reuters has previously consulted Perkins Coie on unrelated matters in China.

Some 177,000 Taiwanese were working in China as of 2022, according to the most recent Taiwan government survey. Taiwanese staff

are employed by many multinationals in China, given their linguistic abilities and cultural familiarity with the country.

Many more work for the myriad Taiwanese firms that operate in China and have, by the Taiwan government's estimate, invested more than \$200bn since 1991, helping fuel China's growth to become the world's second-biggest economy.

Some foreign corporations operating in China have held meetings with employees on safety, said the two executives, who asked not to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

Another source, who was briefed on the matter, said some Taiwanese staff in China have received and accepted the option to leave the country.

China views Taiwan as its own territory. Taiwan President Lai Ching-te rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only Taiwan's people can decide their future. He has denounced China's new guidelines. The June 21 guidelines criminalise promoting Taiwan's entry to international organisations where statehood is a condition, having external official exchanges and suppressing parties, groups and people that promote "reunification".

Also illegal are "other acts that seek to separate Taiwan from China" – phrasing that allows Beijing to interpret the rules broadly, according to legal experts.

Among "the ringleaders or

those who have committed serious crimes", the guidelines say, "if the harm to the country and the people is particularly serious and the circumstances are particularly bad, they may be sentenced to death."

The regulations do not further specify who might be subject to the death penalty.

Asked for comment on how companies and Taiwanese employees are reacting to the guidelines, China's foreign ministry said in a statement: "Using criminal law measures to punish criminal separatist elements and uphold the country's core interests is a common practice for all countries."

"It needs to be emphasised that the relevant legislative document targets the extreme minority of diehard 'Taiwan independence' elements and their separatist activities, and does not implicate the vast majority of Taiwan compatriots," the ministry said.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not respond to a request for comment. Last week it said the vast majority of Taiwanese have nothing to worry about and can come "in high spirits".

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, which oversees relations with Beijing, said in a statement: "The government reminds Taiwanese business people and Taiwanese employees in mainland China that they must pay more attention to their personal safety now. The risk is indeed increasing."

Pro-Palestine protest in Australia



Pro-Palestinian protesters hang banners from the top of Parliament House in Canberra, Australia, yesterday. One of the protesters gave a speech using a megaphone accusing the Israeli government of war crimes. "We will not forget, we will not forgive and we will continue to resist," the protester said.

Tokyo, Manila defence pact talks 'nearing conclusion'

Reuters
Manila

Negotiations between Japan and the Philippines for a Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) on defence and security are close to conclusion, Tokyo's ambassador to Manila said yesterday.

The role of the Philippines in maintaining regional stability and security was undoubtedly important, ambassador Kazuya Endo said in a speech.

A significant development can

be expected on defence equipment transfer, he said.

Japanese Defence Minister Minoru Kihara and Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa are set to meet their Philippine counterparts in Manila on Monday for talks that could include a breakthrough defence pact that would allow their military forces to visit each other's soil.

The Philippines has been ramping up its ties with neighbours and other countries to counter what it describes as China's growing aggression in the South China Sea.

Maintaining peace and stability

in the Taiwan Strait is critical for the Indo Pacific region, Endo said.

"We are hoping that during that meeting, the RAA will be signed," Philippines military chief general Romeo Brawner told reporters.

"RAA is important because it will allow Japanese forces, Japanese troops to come into our country to conduct training with us. It will also allow our troops to go to Japan to train with them."

The accord would create the legal basis for the countries to send defence personnel to each other's territory for training and other operations.

Lanka bond holders agree to take 28% haircut, says govt

Sri Lanka's private creditors have accepted a 28% haircut on \$12.5bn in sovereign bonds, the government announced yesterday, meeting a key condition of an IMF bailout.

After two days of talks in Paris with most international sovereign bond (ISB) holders, Colombo clinched the final step in restructuring private, bilateral and domestic debt. The country defaulted on its external debt in April 2022 after running out of foreign exchange, and the unprecedented economic crisis forced then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down. Last week, Sri Lanka announced rescheduling loans from its key bilateral creditor China and other nations, covering up to \$10bn in official loans. Debt restructuring is a critical step towards recovery after the 2022 financial crisis and the maintenance of a \$2.9bn International Monetary Fund bailout loan, spread over four years.

Film promo



(Left to right) Australian actor Hugh Jackman, US-Canadian actor and producer Ryan Reynolds and Canadian director Shawn Levy attend a red carpet event to promote their new film *Deadpool & Wolverine* in Seoul, South Korea, yesterday.

Myanmar faces genocidal violence, warns UN expert

AFP
Geneva

Myanmar's Rakhine State is facing a terrifying situation similar to the run up to "genocidal violence" eight years ago against the persecuted Rohingya minority, a UN expert warned yesterday.

Speaking at the United Nations Human Rights Council, Thomas Andrews, the special rapporteur on the situation in Myanmar, voiced deep alarm at recent events in the western region.

"The situation in Rakhine state, where the junta is rapidly losing territory to the Arakan Army, is terrifying," Andrews said.

"For Rohingya people – oppressed, scapegoated, exploited, and stuck between warring parties – the situation carries echoes of the lead-up to genocidal violence in 2016 and 2017"

Clashes have rocked Rakhine state since the Arakan Army (AA) attacked security forces in November. That ended a ceasefire that had largely held since a military coup in 2021 after a short-lived experiment with democracy. AA fighters have seized swathes of territory, piling pressure on the junta as it battles opponents elsewhere.

Andrews, an independent expert appointed by the rights council who does not speak on behalf of the UN, said the military had been conscripting "thousands of Rohingya youth and mobilising them against the Arakan Army".

"Even though many Rohingya young men have been taken to the front lines of the conflict against their will, the potential for retaliation by members of the Arakan community, and a downward spiral of violence, is enormous," he cautioned.

China warns of longer heatwaves as climate change intensifies

Reuters
Beijing/Singapore

China is facing hotter and longer heatwaves and more frequent and unpredictable heavy rain as a result of climate change, the weather bureau warned yesterday, as the world's second-biggest economy braces for another scorching summer.

In its annual climate "Blue Book", the China Meteorological Administration (CMA) warned that maximum temperatures across the country could rise by 1.7-2.8 degrees Celsius within 30 years, with eastern China and the

northwestern region of Xinjiang set to suffer the most.

Last year, average national temperatures hit a new high, leading to record levels of glacial retreat and melting permafrost in the northwest, the Blue Book said.

China describes itself as one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, and it is coming under increasing pressure to adapt to rapidly changing weather patterns and sea levels that are rising faster than the global average.

"China is a region that is sensitive to global climate change, a region where the impact will be

significant," said Yuan Jiahuang, vice-director of the CMA's National Climate Centre, at a briefing.

She warned that if emissions remained high, extreme heat events expected to occur once every 50 years in China could happen every other year by the end of the century, and rainfall could double and become more unpredictable.

The weather bureau said yesterday that it expects temperatures in most areas across China to be relatively high over the next few months, signalling a second consecutive summer of extreme heat.

"The weather is going to be different from previous years and there is more extreme weather now," said Chen Yuhan, a resident of China's commercial hub Shanghai, which saw above-38 Celsius (100.4 Fahrenheit) temperatures yesterday.

"It surprises me every time I go out."

Torrential rains and floods are already battering the south and temperatures have broken records in several parts of north and central China, threatening crops and putting pressure on electricity grids.

Average temperatures from March to May hit their highest

since records began in 1961, according to official data.

Record-breaking temperatures last month broiled key grain producing provinces in the northwest and east, forcing corn farmers to delay planting, while torrential rain in other regions flooded soybean and rice fields.

"It is necessary to guard against the risk of yield reduction of cotton, early rice and late rice caused by high temperature and heat damage," Jia Xiaolong, CMA's deputy director, said at the briefing.

Summer temperatures in regions including Zhejiang,

Jiangxi, Hunan, Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Gansu and Ningxia are expected to be 1 to 2 degrees Celsius above normal, CMA said.

The weather bureau also said that two typhoons could make landfall in mainland China in July. The typhoons are expected to move in a westward or north-westward direction, authorities said.

Last year, two powerful typhoons – Doksuri and Haikui – made landfall, causing massive rains that broke records in some areas, unleashed flooding and prompted widespread evacuations.



Indian prime minister to visit Russia next week

AFP
Moscow

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Russia on July 8 and 9, the Kremlin said yesterday, in his first trip to the country since Moscow launched its military offensive in Ukraine.

That campaign has tested relations between Moscow and New Delhi, even though India has ramped up its purchases of Russian oil and not joined Western sanctions. Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin will discuss “prospects for further development of traditionally friendly Russian-In-

dian relations, as well as relevant issues on the international and regional agenda,” the Kremlin said in a statement. Putin sees Modi as a key potential diplomatic and economic ally, with Russia isolated in the West. But Ukraine has complicated ties. In a September 2022 meeting between Putin and Modi at a regional summit in Uzbekistan, the

Russian president told Modi he understood he had “concerns” about the conflict and that Modi wanted it to end “as soon as possible.” Earlier this year, India said it was pushing Russia to release some of its citizens who had signed up for “support jobs” with the Russian army, following reports some were stranded in Russian border towns

and forced to fight in Ukraine. India urged its citizens to “stay away from this conflict.” New Delhi has not been a staunch backer of Kyiv, notably declining to sign a joint statement at a peace summit in Switzerland last month that called for Ukraine’s territorial integrity to be respected in any peace agreement.

India has also become a major buyer of Russian oil, providing a much needed export market for Russia after it was cut off from traditional markets in the West. But there have been reports of payments problems and Russian exporters not being able to repatriate earnings due to India’s capital controls.

Labour hopes for historic win as UK voters cast ballots

AFP
London

Britain yesterday voted in a general election that polls predict will hand the opposition Labour party a landslide win and end nearly a decade-and-a-half of Conservative rule. The first national ballot since Boris Johnson won the Tories a decisive victory in 2019 follows Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s surprise call to hold an election six months earlier than required. His gamble looks set to backfire spectacularly, with polls throughout the six-week campaign – and for the last two years – pointing to a heavy defeat for his right-wing party. That would almost certainly put Labour leader Keir Starmer, 61, in Downing Street, as leader of the largest party in parliament. Centre-left Labour is projected to win its first general election since 2005 by historic proportions, with a flurry of election-eve polls all forecasting its biggest-ever victory. But Starmer was taking nothing for granted as he urged voters not to stay at home. “Britain’s future is on the ballot,” he said. “But change will only happen if you vote for it.” Voting began at 7am (0600 GMT) in more than 40,000 polling stations across the country, from church halls, community centres and schools to more unusual venues such as pubs and even a ship. Sunak was among the early birds, casting his ballot at his Richmond and Northallerton constituency

in Yorkshire, northern England. Starmer voted around two hours later in his north London seat, shortly before Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey. Hannah Tinsley, 26, a trainee lawyer who was voting in south London, said it was “important” for young people to cast their ballots. “The voter turnout for young people compared to older people is really low and obviously, it’s going to affect us in the long term,” she added. In Saint Albans, north of London, 22-year-old student Judith said: “I don’t really trust any of them but will vote. A lot of my friends feel the same.” Voting closed at 10pm (2100 GMT). Broadcasters then announced exit polls, which typically provide an accurate picture of how the main parties have performed. Results from the UK’s 650 constituencies trickled in overnight, with the winning party expected to hit 326 seats – the threshold for a parliamentary majority – as dawn breaks today. Polls suggest voters will punish the Tories after 14 years of often chaotic rule and could oust a string of government ministers, with talk that even Sunak himself might not be safe. That would make him the first sitting prime minister not to retain his seat in a general election. “I appreciate people have frustrations with our party,” he conceded on Wednesday. “But tomorrow’s vote... is a vote about the future.” Sunak, 44, is widely seen as having run a dismal campaign, with an-

ger over his decision to leave D-Day commemorations in France early the standout moment. In new blows on Wednesday, *The Sun* newspaper switched allegiance to Labour – a key endorsement given the tabloid has backed the winner at every election for several decades. It follows the *Financial Times*, the *Economist* and *The Sunday Times* as well as traditionally left-leaning papers *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mirror*, also endorsing the party. Meanwhile, three large-scale surveys indicated Labour was on the brink of a record victory, with the Tories set for their worst-ever result and the centrist Liberal Democrats resurgent in third. YouGov, Focaldata and More in Common all projected Labour would secure at least 430 seats, topping the 418 under Tony Blair in 1997. The Conservatives could plunge to a record low of less than 127, the trio predicted. The LibDems were tipped to scoop dozens of seats – up from their current tally of 15 – while Nigel Farage’s anti-immigrant Reform UK party was set to win a handful. YouGov and More in Common both forecast the Brexit figurehead would finally become an MP at the eighth time of asking. If the predictions are accurate, Sunak will today visit head of state King Charles III to tender his resignation as prime minister. Starmer will meet the monarch shortly after to take up his invitation to head the next government – and become prime minister.

India’s World Cup winners meet PM Modi



India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi (centre) poses with the Indian cricket team in New Delhi, after India won the ICC men’s Twenty20 World Cup 2024 in Barbados. India’s T20 World Cup winners returned home to a heroes’ welcome yesterday, greeted by euphoric fans in New Delhi before skipper Rohit Sharma led them to a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. **Sports Page 2**

India, China agree to work on border issues

Reuters
New Delhi/Beijing

India’s Foreign Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Kazakhstan yesterday where the two agreed to step up talks to resolve issues along their border, New Delhi said in a statement. India and China share a long Himalayan border, much of it poorly demarcated, and relations between the two countries have been sour since a military standoff in July 2020 when at least 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese troops were killed. India said Jaishankar met Wang on the sidelines of the Shanghai

Co-operation Organisation summit in Astana where they agreed that “prolongation of the current situation in the border areas is not in the interest of either side.” The two agreed to enhance meetings between their diplomatic and military officials “to resolve the remaining issues at the earliest,” the Indian foreign ministry said in a statement. China and India should properly handle their differences and ensure relations advance on a stable track, a Chinese foreign ministry statement quoted Wang as saying during the talks. “We must maintain a positive mindset, properly handle and control the situation in the border areas on the one hand, and actively

resume normal exchanges on the other hand,” Wang said. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who began his third straight term last month, said in April that the two countries should urgently address the “prolonged situation” on their border. Both countries have fortified positions and deployed extra troops and equipment along the border since 2020. The two nations have been uneasy neighbours for decades after a bloody border war in 1962. “He (Jaishankar) reaffirmed the importance of fully abiding by relevant bilateral agreements, protocols, and understandings reached between the two governments in the past,” New Delhi’s statement said.

Air pollution drives 7% of deaths in big Indian cities: study

More than seven percent of all deaths in 10 of India’s biggest cities are linked to air pollution, a large study said yesterday, leading researchers to call for action to save tens of thousands of lives a year. Smog-filled Indian cities including the capital Delhi suffer from some of the world’s worst air pollution, choking the lungs of residents and posing a rising threat to health still being revealed by researchers. For the new study, an Indian-led team looked at the levels of cancer-causing microparticles known as PM2.5 pollutants in the cities of Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune, Shimla and Varanasi. From 2008 to 2019, more than 33,000 deaths a year could be attributed to PM2.5 exposure above the World Health Organisation’s recommendation of 15 micrograms per cubic metre, the study said.

Cooling off



A boy plunges into the Dal lake for a swim on a hot summer day in Srinagar, Kashmir, India.

Six arrested over India stampede tragedy

Reuters
New Delhi

Indian police yesterday said they had arrested six people over a stampede at a religious event in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh this week in which 121 people were killed. The incident occurred on Tuesday in the village of Phulrai Mughal Garhi in Hathras district where about 250,000 people had gathered to listen to preacher Suraj Pal Singh. Organisers of the event had obtained permission for a gathering of only 80,000 people, an initial police report said. Baba blamed the stampede on “anti-social elements”, but did not elaborate. The four men and two women arrested were aides to Singh who were involved in organising the

event but fled when the stampede broke out, police said. Asked about Singh’s role, a senior police officer said the man was not named in the case they had registered. “If there is a need, we will question (him) ... It is too early to say whether he had a role,” Uttar Pradesh police inspector-general Shalabh Mathur said. The preacher’s lawyer said he would also represent the six people who were arrested. “Police are doing their job but the people they have arrested are people whose family members are victims of the stampede,” the lawyer said. “Those who actually caused the stampede have run away.” The stampede broke out on Tuesday afternoon when attendees were exiting the canopied ground by a highway where the event was held, police said.

India asks utilities to order \$33bn in equipment this year

Reuters
New Delhi

India has asked power companies to order equipment worth \$33bn this year to fast track capacity additions of coal-fired power in the years ahead, as the country struggles to meet booming electricity demand, two government officials said. The unprecedented move by the government, which would result in record tendering in a year for the equipment by major power firms such as state-run NTPC and SJVN as well as by private companies Adani Power and Essar Power,

will help add 31 gigawatts (GW) in the next five-six years, the sources said. Normally, the government leaves the tendering timing to the companies themselves. Expediting equipment orders for new coal-fired plants was discussed at a meeting held by Power Minister Manohar Lal, soon after the formation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s federal cabinet early last month, the sources said. The targets are ambitious given the country has ordered equipment for about 2-3GW capacity annually in prior years, barring last year’s orders for 10GW.

India is rushing to add fresh coal-fired plants as it is barely able to meet high power demand with the existing fleet in non-solar hours. “The last large orders for power equipment were placed for about 20GW around 2009-10 when Chinese companies bagged a major pie” Post pandemic, the country’s power demand scaled new records on the back of the fastest rate of economic growth among major economies and increased instances of heatwaves.

India saw its biggest power shortfall in 14 years in June, and had to race to avoid night time outages by deferring planned plant maintenance, and invoking an emergency clause to mandate companies to run plants based on imported coal and power. State-run Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) which bagged all power equipment contracts in auctions in the last year, is likely to get most of the contracts for the new equipment, the sources said. Larsen & Toubro, the only other power equipment producer in the market, had not participated in most of last year’s bids, they said. The power ministry, BHEL,

Adani, NTPC, SJVN and L&T did not immediately respond to emails sent by Reuters. The sources did not want to be named because they were not authorised to talk to media. “The last large orders for power equipment were placed for about 20GW around 2009-10 when Chinese companies bagged a major pie,” one of the sources said. Policy flip-flops and lack of orders for coal-based plants over the past several years forced other equipment suppliers such as Thermax-Babcock, BGR-Hitachi and South Korea’s Doosan to shut their manufacturing units in India.

The country, since 2020, discourages contracts with companies in countries sharing a land border such as China by mandating regulatory approvals. Since late last year, India has fast tracked coal-fired power plants to meet its power needs, threatening to undermine progress made by the world’s No.3 greenhouse gas emitter in weaning its economy off carbon. In March Reuters reported private Indian firms have expressed interest in building at least 10GW of coal-fired power capacity over a decade, ending a six-year drought in significant private involvement in the sector.

Americans take a break to celebrate Independence Day

Millions of Americans took a welcome Fourth of July break yesterday, flocking to parades, fireworks shows and barbecues for a brief respite from the daily drumbeat of unsettling news at home and abroad. The holiday, which marks the July 4 signing of the Declaration of Independence from Britain in 1776, is a day when Americans traditionally celebrate with proud displays of old-fashioned patriotism. This year, with the country's drift toward hyper-partisanship and an election battle underway between President Joe Biden and challenger Donald Trump, it was a chance for Americans to come together for a day and forget about their differences. "It seems to me that the country is much more divided than it ever has been," said Dwight Kinsey, 69, a New York City resident enjoying the sun on the Coney Island beach on Wednesday. "Then again, you come out here, it's a beautiful day, the beach is clean and nice and, you know, life goes on." With red, white and blue flags and bunting decorating homes and shops from New England to Hawaii, Independence Day was, as usual, was mostly about family, food and summer fun. In New York, the annual Nathan's



People participate in the annual Independence Day Parade yesterday in Southport, North Carolina; and Washington DC, right. (AFP)



Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest usually sets the tone for a day of over-indulgence. After dark, it was to end with a bang along the Hudson River, where the Macy's fireworks display will light up the sky against the backdrop of Manhattan's skyline. Even though 16-time champ Joey Chestnut was a persona non grata at Nathan's contest this year, the man known as Jaws still loomed large at the annual feeding frenzy at Coney Island. Chestnut, who cruised to top

honours last July 4 by wolfing down 62 franks and buns in 10 minutes, was disinvited this year because he signed a deal with a rival company that makes veggie dogs. Instead, the champ was to live-stream his own July 4 hot dog event from a Texas military base. In his absence, a field of 15 lesser-knowns were to battle for the vacated "Mustard Belt" that goes to the winner. Later in the day, the Macy's department store chain was

staging its 48th annual Fourth of July fireworks show along the Hudson for the first time in a decade. In recent years, the spectacle was staged along the East River. Launched from barges moored in the river, some 60,000 shells were to travel about 1,000 feet high before exploding into dozens of colours and special effects sure to delight tens of thousands of spectators who will line both sides of the Hudson, which separates Manhattan from

New Jersey. Across the country, other cities are hosting fireworks shows, road races, baseball games and other events that will give people the chance to forget their troubles and relax. In Southern California, Huntington Beach will hold what it has branded as "the largest Independence Day celebration west of the Mississippi." The city, which began hosting 4th of July events in 1904, now attracts more than 500,000 people, according to organisers.

The festival begins in the morning with a 5K run, followed by a parade and a nighttime fireworks show over the Pacific Ocean. The fun continues today with a block party and rodeo. In Alaska, where the sun barely sets in summertime, the holiday got off to an early start with a midnight fireworks show in the port city of Seward. It was the first event in a three-day Fourth of July Festival that also features a gruelling 5K road race on Mount Marathon and a boat parade.

Putin says Trump sincere about ending Ukraine war, but still prefers Biden

Russian President Vladimir Putin said yesterday he believed Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump was sincere about wanting to end the war in Ukraine, but that he did not know how Trump planned to do so if elected. Putin, speaking at a news conference in Kazakhstan at the end of a regional security conference, commented after being asked about Trump's statements that he could end the Ukraine war swiftly if he won the White House race on November 5. "The fact that Mr Trump, as a presidential candidate, declares that he is ready and wants to stop the war in Ukraine, we take this completely seriously," Putin said. "I am not, of course, familiar with possible proposals for how he plans to do this. This is the key question. But I have no doubt that he means it sincerely, and we support it (the idea of ending the war)." *The Washington Post* reported in April that Trump had privately spoken about the option of allowing Putin to keep Crimea, which Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014, and the Donbas area — which Russian forces partially control — in return for peace, something Trump's campaign has not confirmed. Two key advisers to Trump presented him with a plan to end the war that involves telling Ukraine it will only get more US weapons if it enters peace talks, Reuters reported last month. Putin

said last month that Russia would end the war only if Kyiv agreed to drop its Nato ambitions and hand over the entirety of four provinces claimed by Moscow, demands Kyiv swiftly rejected as tantamount to surrender. Putin said constructive dialogue between Moscow and Washington was impossible during a heated US presidential election campaign and that Moscow would wait for the result and see what the new leadership does. Asked what he made of the first televised debate between Trump and President Joe Biden, Putin said he had seen fragments. Putin has said several times said that he feels Biden is preferable as the future US president to Trump for Russia, even after Biden unflattering remarks about the Kremlin chief. Asked yesterday if his publicly stated preference for Biden had changed after the debate, Putin said: "Nothing has changed. Did we not know what could come? We knew." "I saw some fragments," Putin said. "But I have enough to do." Biden, 81, put in a stumbling performance during the debate, which brought questions about his age and mental fitness to the forefront of the campaign. Putin said that he paid little attention to partial media reports about the debate though he could not ignore it as the United States remained a great power.



Russian President Vladimir Putin during a press conference following Shanghai Co-operation Organisation summit in Astana, Kazakhstan. (Reuters)

Putin, Xi urge resistance at SCO summit

AFP
Astana

The leaders of China and Russia yesterday urged their allies and partners to resist malign external influence, advancing their shared anti-Western agenda at a regional summit in Central Asia. Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping were in the Kazakh capital of Astana for a gathering of leaders from the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO), a regional bloc that Moscow and Beijing see as a counterweight to US "hegemony" on the world stage. Xi called on the countries to "resist external interference" while Putin claimed "new centres" of political and economic might were on the rise. "We should join hands to resist external interference, firmly support each other, take care of each other's concerns... and firmly control the future and destiny of our countries and regional peace and development in our own hands," Xi told the summit.

"It is of vital importance to the world that the SCO be on the right side of history and on the side of fairness and justice," he added. In a joint declaration, published by the Kremlin, the group noted "tectonic shifts in global politics" and called for the bloc to play an enhanced role in global and regional security. "The use of force is increasing, the norms of international law are systemically being violated, geopolitical confrontation and conflicts are growing, and risks to stability in the world and the SCO region are multiplying," it stated. It did not refer to Russia's invasion of Ukraine or China's dispute with Taiwan but said the group had "mutual respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states." "The multipolar world has become a reality," Putin said in remarks at the summit. He also hailed the accession of Russia's close ally Belarus to the bloc, becoming its tenth member. "The circle of states that stand for a just world order and are ready to resolutely defend their legitimate rights and protect traditional values is expanding," Putin said. "New centres

of power and economic growth are strengthening," he added. Western-sanctioned Iran joined as a full member last year. The SCO was founded in 2001 but has come to prominence in recent years. Alongside China, Russia and Belarus, its full members are: India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan. It is intended to be a platform for co-operation in competition with the West, with a focus on security and economics and Central Asia in particular, and claims to represent 40% of the global population and about 30% of its GDP. But it is a disparate group with many internal disagreements, including territorial disputes. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has further increased major powers' interest in Central Asia, where Moscow is seeking to maintain its traditional sway but where China now has strong ties through its flagship Belt and Road infrastructure project. The West is also vying for influence in the strategically important region, rich in oil and gas and a crucial transport route between Asia and Europe.

Biden admits 'bad night' but vows to carry on

■ Trump falsely claims having driven him out of race

AFP
Washington

US President Joe Biden took to the airwaves on July 4 fighting to show he is fit to run for reelection and serve another term, trying to douse Democratic panic triggered by his disastrous debate with Donald Trump. As Americans gathered for their Independence Day holiday, concern has swelled over the 81-year-old incumbent's mental acuity, with rumblings within his party about finding a replacement candidate before November's election. And with polls showing Republican Trump extending a narrow lead after last week's televised showdown, Biden finds himself under pressure as never before to demonstrate his capacity to lead. "I had a bad night," Biden acknowledged to Wisconsin's Civic Media in a radio interview recorded the day before it aired yesterday. "I screwed up. I made a mistake," he added. "That's 90 minutes on stage. Look at what I've done in 3.5 years."

The Biden campaign has been desperate to reassure Democratic donors, voters and lawmakers that the president's dismal performance against Trump was a one-off. He repeated that message in an emergency meeting Wednesday with Democratic governors, who pledged their continued support, attendees said afterward. The White House has insisted Biden is "absolutely not" stepping down as the party's presidential nominee. Biden himself sought to appear determined he was staying in the race, telling his radio interviewer: "When you get knocked down, you just get back up." As a signal of the international concern swirling over Biden's status, British magazine *The Economist* became the latest major publication to call on Biden to withdraw, joining *The New York Times* and *Boston Globe* whose editorial boards this week called for the president to bow out of the race. The uncertainty simmered ahead of the embattled president's



US President Joe Biden speaks during a Medal of Honour Ceremony in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC. (AFP)

much-anticipated television interview Friday with ABC News, an event most of political Washington — and perhaps the nation — will be watching closely to see whether Biden can indeed bounce back from his faltering debate performance. All eyes will also be on a Biden campaign rally set for today in Madison, Wisconsin, one of the battleground states seen as crucial for a Biden victory. For July 4 Biden remained in Washington, where he and First Lady Jill Biden were to host a White House barbecue with military personnel and their families. "As we celebrate the Fourth of July, I'm grateful for the countless service members who are the backbone of who we are as a nation. Their service reminds us that democracy is never guaranteed — every generation must fight to maintain it," Biden said on X. In the evening Biden was to deliver remarks — again with his every move and tone likely scrutinised — before observing a fireworks display over Washington, accompanied by Vice-President Kamala Harris. The nation's first female VP is suddenly in the spotlight as Democrats weigh a potential Harris candidacy.

The 59-year-old has been unwaveringly supportive of Biden in public. But she is performing a delicate high-wire act, cheerleading for her boss while standing by as a leading contender to replace him if he ends his reelection bid. Trump, who has remained largely — and uncharacteristically — quiet as the Biden crisis deepens, broke his silence yesterday in fierce fashion, unleashing attacks on both Biden and Harris in a leaked video that he then posted on his own Truth Social account. "I kicked that old broken down pile of crap" during the debate, Trump, seen sitting in a golf cart, says in the video. "He's quitting the race. Yep, I got him out of the race. And that means we have Kamala," Trump says. "She's so bad, she's so pathetic." Biden's Wisconsin rally, and a press conference set for next week, are aimed at proving his capacity to speak impromptu, engage with voters and reporters, and generally to dismiss the doubts that have surged since his debate debacle. Two polls released Wednesday compounded the concern, including one post-debate survey by the *Times* that showed Trump with his biggest lead ever over Biden — 49% to 43% of likely voters. Biden, 81, told his campaign on Wednesday that he was still running. His campaign fired back at Trump, 78, in a statement. "No, Donald. What is bad is taking away women's rights; What is bad is losing an election and encouraging a violent mob to attack the Capitol; What is bad is assaulting women; What is bad is not paying your taxes," spokesperson Sarafina Chitika said. Trump's campaign stood by his words, with co-campaign manager Chris LaCivita responding on X: "Nothing in this video is incorrect." Reuters verified the location of the video as Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster, New Jersey. The golf cart Trump is seen driving features the number one and a presidential seal; he has been seen driving the same cart before in file video from the course.

Brussels, Warsaw fret over Orban's Russia 'visit plan'

European leaders voiced concerns yesterday over rumours that Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban — at the helm of the EU's presidency — was about to travel to Moscow, with Council President Charles Michel saying there was "no mandate" for it. Orban is the only EU leader to have maintained close ties with the Kremlin following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. On Monday, Hungary took over the European Union's rotating presidency, giving the central European country sway over the bloc's agenda and priorities for the next six months. "The EU rotating presidency has no mandate to engage with Russia on behalf of the EU," Michel wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "The European Council is clear: Russia is the aggressor, Ukraine is the victim. No discussions about Ukraine can take place without

Ukraine," he added. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk also took to X, posting: "The rumours about your visit to Moscow cannot be true @PM_ViktorOrban, or can they?" According to the investigative portal Vsquare and the media outlet RFE/RL, which quoted anonymous sources, Orban is expected to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow today, just days after travelling to Kyiv. If confirmed, the Moscow visit would be the first one by a European leader since Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer in April 2022. Asked by AFP about an upcoming visit by Orban to Russia earlier yesterday, the Hungarian government declined to comment. But on Monday, Orban foreshadowed that there would be "surprising news from surprising places".

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GULF TIMES

Amazon counts on ‘grit and innovation’ to meet AI surge

The AI revolution is upon us with companies around the world looking to jump headfirst into the technology made famous by ChatGPT. To satisfy their generative AI urge, firms need to secure state-of-the-art software and ramp up computing power, which quickly brings them knocking on the doors of the globe’s cloud computing giants, of which Amazon’s AWS is the biggest. Amazon’s computing arsenal is housed in data centres scattered across the globe, and Prasad Kalyanaraman, Vice-President for AWS Infrastructure, is the man in charge of keeping them running. Amazon’s AWS data centres are spread across dozens of regions, serving as a kind of engine room to the online world, with Microsoft and Google as the company’s closest rivals. And with the generative AI revolution entering hyperdrive, it is up to Kalyanaraman to make sure the data centre battalions are ready for the challenge.

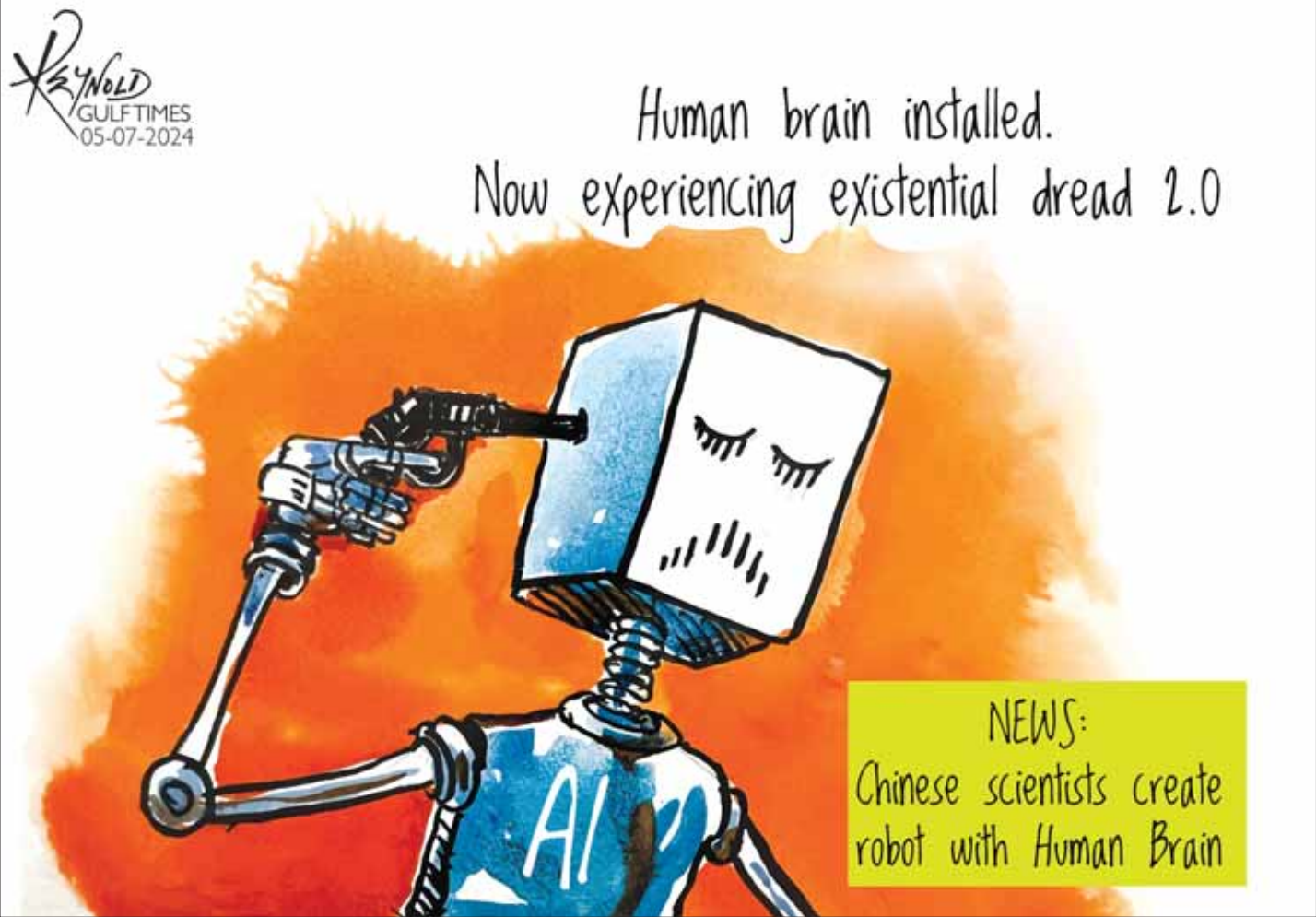
“It takes a significant amount of grit and innovation” to meet the need for computing right now, Kalyanaraman told AFP during an interview at Amazon’s second headquarters near Washington. “Building the right technology, both in terms of consuming the least amount of power needed, and optimising all the way from the chip level to the data centre level... requires a lot of innovation,” he said.

To satisfy their generative AI urge, firms need to secure state-of-the-art software and ramp up computing power

Kalyanaraman, a graduate of the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology and Queen’s University in Canada, has been at Amazon for almost two decades where he worked on software before holding the keys to the data centres. “Most users, unbeknownst to them, are using cloud computing today. If you go to a website, or you stream video, or you go to your financial institution and look at your transactions, you’re actually using some form of cloud computing,” he said. Amazon’s decision to make a side business out of the cloud dates to 2006, when the company realised that its partners and sellers didn’t want to build – or buy – expensive computing pipework. “We saw that it’s so hard for our customers to... go through all the muck of building this infrastructure. So why not bring this to them,” much like utilities bring power to your home, he said. Nearly two decades later, AWS is nearing 20% of the giant’s total revenue and bringing in about two-thirds of total profit. “It’s a pretty significant undertaking to actually construct a data centre from scratch,” Kalyanaraman said. “First, obviously, we have to find enough land to be able to deploy these data centres. Typically, we deploy further away from metropolitan locations” for both cost and environmental reasons, he said. Connectivity is also key since most clients want the high computing speeds that come by being closer to their data. Then there has to be a power source and the power lines to get the electricity. With success comes scrutiny, or in the case of some communities across the globe, some exasperation with the proliferation of data centres. Data centres can creep into an area’s bucolic scenery, and put a massive burden on the local power supply, straining already fragile electricity grids. And with the emergence of generative AI, Amazon has announced new projects around the globe. Kalyanaraman acknowledged that “power will be a constrained resource in the world today, especially with generative AI and some of the other things that are required to run this amount of compute.” But even though “it’s not something that you can actually change overnight,” Kalyanaraman said that AWS has worked with power companies to manage the flow, notably through renewable energy. AWS “is the largest purchaser of renewable energy in the world today. And that’s for four years in a row,” he said, with AWS committed to being a net-zero carbon company by 2040. Ever the techno-optimist, Kalyanaraman remained confident that innovation could find a way to meet the generative AI challenge, with the industry looking to nuclear energy to help. “Every time we’ve actually had a constraint, we’ve all figured out a way of innovating.” “I see (AI) as an opportunity,” he said.

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Sunak and the dangerous migration fixation of UK

By Antara Haldar
Cambridge

After 14 long years of Tory rule, the United Kingdom’s general election on July 4 could determine the political fate of the Conservative Party. While Prime Minister Rishi Sunak may have hoped to capitalise on declining inflation and improved economic performance, polls show the Conservatives trailing far behind Keir Starmer’s Labour Party, with Sunak poised to lose his own parliamentary seat. A more ominous development is that prominent Brexititeer Nigel Farage, the former leader of the UK Independence Party, is running for a seat as the leader of Reform UK. Declaring this “the immigration election,” Farage – the country’s most popular politician, according to YouGov – launched his campaign by calling for a freeze on “non-essential” immigration. Britain’s political discourse in recent years has placed immigration at the top of voters’ minds. British tabloids warn of an “intensifying immigration crisis” without explaining that long-term net migration reaching an all-time high in 2022 was largely driven by healthcare workers and asylum seekers from Ukraine and Hong Kong. While Farage aims to further fan the flames of anti-immigrant sentiment and exploit divisions within the Conservative Party over this issue, Sunak, too, has pledged to tighten immigration rules and “stop the boats.” Sunak has also staked his political capital on a highly controversial and possibly illegal immigration policy that seeks to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda. According to Conservatives, the so-called “Rwanda Bill” will ultimately save lives by deterring migrants from making the perilous journey across the

English Channel. But international observers, including the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, have warned that the bill could run afoul of human-rights legislation. Sunak’s policies highlight a core inconsistency in Conservative thinking. Since the days of the late prime minister Margaret Thatcher, deference to the free market’s superior wisdom has been the central tenet of British conservatism. Thatcher, a disciple of Austrian economist Friedrich von Hayek and a lifelong admirer of his 1944 book The Road to Serfdom, believed that government interference in markets would inevitably lead to inefficiency, if not societal collapse. This was the basis of Thatcher’s attacks on trade unions – the “enemy within” – and her suppression of the 1984-85 miners’ strike. Despite it accelerating the deindustrialisation of northern England, to this day, the Tories admire the Iron Lady’s ruthlessness and disregard for “soft,” supposedly “emotional” considerations like social impact – reflected in the miners’ slogan, “Close a pit, kill a community” – in favour of “hard” economic reasoning. So, why do Sunak and other Thatcherite Conservatives suffer a sudden loss of faith in market competition when it comes to economic migration? In nearly every other context, Conservatives view lower prices as an economic cure-all and omit no opportunity to weaken worker protections at home and advise developing countries to make their labour markets more “flexible,” arguing that labour should be treated as a “commodity” like any other. Yet, when immigrants increase the labour supply, in theory exerting downward pressure on wages by outcompeting native-born workers, the otherwise

unassailable logic of markets is deemed to fail, and the free marketeers’ “night-watchman state” starts acting like a nanny. The explanation cannot be found in economic reasoning. Contrary to Conservative fearmongering, empirical evidence shows that the economic effects of immigration are overwhelmingly positive. Studies show that instead of substituting native workers, who typically retain preferential access to higher-paying jobs, immigrants complement the existing workforce, with lower-skill migrant workers helping to mitigate the effects of demographic shifts. They also boost demand, thereby creating more jobs and increasing wages, and fuel GDP growth by stimulating innovation among high-skill workers – all outcomes that Conservatives normally champion. Like the free trade Conservatives advocate, immigration is not zero sum. A recent analysis by the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford notes that, contrary to the “lump of labour” fallacy, the number of jobs in the UK is not fixed. New migration waves, the authors note, are most likely to affect migrants already employed in the UK. In fact, migration has had only a small impact on native-born workers’ wages and employment prospects. The UK’s obsession with immigration is driven more by emotional and cultural anxieties than economic realities. In hindsight, it is clear that the anti-immigration sentiment that drove the 2016 Brexit vote was an act of “economic self-harm,” as former Prime Minister David Cameron put it. But it helped Conservatives evade accountability for the impact of their disastrous austerity policies by vilifying immigrants as opportunistic “welfare shoppers” overburdening public services and causing housing shortages. This collective desire to externalise blame for the UK’s problems helps explain the Tories’ newfound interest in sociocultural issues. It turns out that when it suits their political needs, Conservatives are willing to admit that, pace Thatcher, there is such a thing as society. The UK’s migration fixation is either a genuine lapse of reason for Conservatives as they indulge a deep, if dark, psychological need, or it exposes their economic policies as fundamentally disingenuous, whether in northern England or the Global South. By scapegoating migrants, Conservative politicians are trying to postpone the UK’s long-overdue reckoning with its post-imperial decline. Ironically, British fears about diminished global standing have become a self-fulfilling prophecy under Tory rule. Eight years after the vote to leave the European Union, which polls suggest most Britons now regret, the UK economy is smaller than that of India, its former colony. Consequently, the real question facing the UK on July 4 is not whether Sunak, the child of African-born Indian immigrants, should be allowed to inflict needless cruelty on asylum seekers. Instead, what native-born Britons must confront this week is their post-imperial identity crisis, which Conservatives have exacerbated. They do not need to be protected from migrants but rather from something far more dangerous: the Tories’ economic policies. To paraphrase Thatcher, the enemy is indeed coming from within. — Project Syndicate

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British Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty hold hands during his final rally at Romsey Rugby Football Club, in Romsey, Hampshire as part of a campaign event in the build-up to the UK general election held yesterday. (AFP)

Muharram: The month of Allah

Muslims must fear Allah and take lessons from what Allah has told us in the Qur'an regarding the Prophets and Messengers of Allah and the previous nations.

Allah said (which means):
“Indeed in their stories, there is a lesson for men of understanding. It (the Qur'an) is not a forged statement, but a confirmation of Allah's existing books (the Torah, the Injeel, and other Scriptures of Allah), a detailed explanation of everything, and a guide and a mercy for the people who believe.” (Yusuf 12: 111)

And among the stories that Allah has narrated to us in His Book is what happened in Allah's month,⁽¹⁾ the sacred month of Muharram,⁽²⁾ and that is the story of Prophet Moosa, and Pharaoh the tyrant of Egypt, in the Qur'an, Allah tells us this story, which means,

“We recite to you some of the news of Moosa and Pharaoh in truth, for a people who believe (i.e. those who believe (ie those who believe in this Qur'an and in the Oneness of Allah). Verily, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and made its people sects, weakening (oppressing) a group (Bani Israa'eel) among them, killing their sons and letting their females live. Verily, he was of the *mufsidoon* (those who commit great sins and crimes, oppressors and tyrants). And We wished to do a favour for those who were weak (and oppressed) in the land, and to make them rulers and to make them the inheritors, and rulers and to make them the inheritors, and to establish them in the land, and We let Pharaoh and Haamaan (a minister of Pharaoh) and their hosts receive from them that which they feared.” (Al-Qasas 28:3-6)

Pharaoh dominated the nation of Israa'eel and enslaved them, killing their newborn sons but letting their females live. The reason he committed this criminal act was the fear of the truth coming out from one of those newborn males. The nation of Israa'eel used to know, according to what came to them from Prophet Ibraheem, that someone from his lineage would destroy the king of Egypt. These glad tidings were famous among the nation of Israa'eel; and the news of it was made known to Pharaoh. Pharaoh ordered his soldiers to kill all newborn boys of the nation of Israa'eel; on order to secure himself from destruction.

However, all of the precautions that he made were not enough to protect him from what Allah wanted, which was for this newborn boy to be raised in the house of Pharaoh. The will of Allah cannot be stopped by any precautions and His ability conquers anything. So Allah chose for the Prophet Moosa to be born safely, to be saved from being killed, and also to be raised in Pharaoh's own home under the protection of Allah until he was an adult.

Later Moosa accidentally killed a person from Pharaoh's people. Moosa was afraid that he would be captured and be killed for this, so he fled to the land of Madyan and abided there for some time. He married there and then returned to Egypt. On the way back Allah talked to him (by *wahy* - revelation) revelation and told him he was a prophet and the Messenger to Pharaoh. Allah told him many signs by which he will be known as the prophet of Allah and they would show that he was a true prophet.

Moosa went to Pharaoh and showed him the signs of Allah but Pharaoh was arrogant and stubborn.

Allah says (which means):
“Has there come to you the story of Moosa? When his Lord called him in the Valley of Tuwaa. ‘Go to Pharaoh, verily he has transgressed all bounds (in crimes, sins, polytheism and disbelief). And say to hi, ‘Would you purify yourself from the sin of disbelief and by becoming a believer). And that I guide you to your Lord, so you should fear him?’ Then (Moosa) showed him the great signs (miracles). But (Pharaoh) belied and disobeyed; then he turned his back, striving hard against (Allah). Then he gathered his people and cried aloud, saying, ‘I am you lord, most high!’” (An-Naazi'at 79: 15-24)

Pharaoh claimed that the signs Moosa brought were only magic and that he had magic that would overtake the magic of Moosa. So Pharaoh gathered magicians from his kingdom and they presented their magic, and Moosa presented what he had from the signs, which Allah had given him.

Allah said (which means):
“Thus truth was confirmed, and all that they did



was made of no effect. So they were defeated there and then, and were returned disgraced. And the sorcerers fell down prostrate. They said, ‘We believe in the Lord of the ‘Aalameen (i.e. all that exists), the Lord of Moosa and Haaroon (Aaron).’” (Al-A'raf 7: 118-122)

At that time Pharaoh decided to try a different plan - fear, force and retaliation. Allah told Moosa to get every believer out of Egypt and direct them to where Allah would tell him. Pharaoh gathered his army and forces, which were around one million soldiers according to the seerah, and he chased Moosa and his people, hoping to destroy them completely. Moosa ended up at the sea with Pharaoh and his army behind him. The believers were afraid because the sea was in front of them and the enemy was behind them.

Allah says (which means):
“And when the two hosts saw each other, the people of Moosa, said, ‘We are sure to be overtaken. (Moosa) said, ‘Nay, verily! With me is my Lord and He will guide me!’” (Ash-Shu'araa 26: 61-62)

Whoever is close to Allah, Allah will never let him down or leave him on his own. Allah ordered Moosa to strike the sea with his staff. Moosa did so and the sea opened up for them to cross:

Allah says (which means):
“And indeed We inspired Moosa (saying): ‘Travel by night with ‘*Ybaadi* (My slaves) and strike a dry path for them in the sea, fearing neither to be overtaken (by Pharaoh) nor being afraid (of drowning).’” (Taaha 20: 77)

Moosa walked across the path that opened in the sea and the last of his people left the sea and every soldier of Pharaoh's army was inside the path. At this time Allah ordered the sea to collapse upon them, drowning Pharaoh and his army.

That was the victory of the truth over falsehood. The promise of Allah was true - He made the people of Moosa victorious over Pharaoh and his army. From this story we see how the truth is victorious, regardless of the size or seeming power of falsehood. Falsehood has its own limited time, but the truth is always victorious. This story should enrich the hearts of the believers and make them steadfast in the face of their enemies, regardless of size or seeming power of their enemies.

The believer should also benefit from this story by understanding that the people of falsehood claim that they are on the right path and are calling people to the truth. In fact, the opposite is true—they rely on lies and deception.

Pharaoh said to his people,
“I guide you only to the path of right policy!” (Ghaafir 40:29)

But he was a liar. From this story we also see that whoever knows the truth and truly believes in it will not lose, regardless of what he or she endures of torment, torture or even death. An example is of the magicians. When they knew the truth, they believed in Allah and in the message of Moosa.

Allah says (which means):
“So the magicians fell down prostrate. They said, ‘We believe in the Lord of Haaroon and Moosa.’” (Taaha 20:70).

Pharaoh threatened to crucify them, but they were strong in their belief and refused to return to disbelief after believing.

Allah said (which means): “Pharaoh said, ‘Believe you in him (Moosa) before I give you permission? Verily! He is your chief who taught you magic. So surely I will cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and I will surely crucify you on the trunks of palm-trees, and you shall; know which of us, (I, Pharaoh) or the Lord of Moosa (Al-lah) can give the severe and more lasting torment.’

They said, ‘We prefer you not over the clear signs that have come to us, and to Him (Allah) who created us. So decree whatever you desire to decree, for you can only decree (regarding) this life of the world.’

“Verily! We have believed in our Lord, that He may forgive us our faults, and the magic to which you did compel us. And Allah is better (as regards in comparison to your punishment).’

Verily! Whoever comes to his Lord as a mujrim (criminal, sinner, polytheist, disbeliever in the oneness of Allah and in His messengers) then surely, for him is Hell, therein he will neither die nor live.

But whoever comes to Him (Allah) as a believer (in the oneness of Allah) and has done righteous deeds, for such are the high ranks (in the Hereafter).’” (Taaha 20:71-75)

We also derived from this story the lesson that falsehood, regardless of how big or the number of its adherents, will be defeated by the truth and the people of the truth are patient with whatever they are facing. This is an example of an arrogant tyrant with power, an army and a kingdom which he ruled, who pursued a few who had no munitions or other means (of defence), but Allah was with them and they had the force of *Imaan* in their hearts. Allah gave them His victory, His guidance, His help; and in a single moment the forces of falsehood were destroyed. Pharaoh's forces were destroyed in the sea and as Allah said (which means):
“We fling (send down) the truth against the falsehood, so it (truth) destroys it, and behold, it (falsehood) is vanished.” (Al-Anbiyaa 21: 18)

We also learn that Allah tests the prophets and the believers, and the tests are sometimes very difficult, but in the end, victory is for the prophets and the believers. Allah is with the prophets and the believers in victory and guidance.

Allah says (which means):
“Truly, Allah is with those who fear him, keep their duty unto Him, and those who are *Muhsinoon* (doers of good, those who perform good deeds solely for the sake of Allah and in accordance with the *Sunnah* of the Prophet).” (An-Nahl 16: 128)

As Muslims, we should always fear Allah and consider

these lessons and not follow the ways of those who were disobedient to Allah; but rather to obey the Prophet and follow his guidance as Allah told us, which means,

“Indeed in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the meeting with) Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much.” (Al-Ahzaab 33: 21)

This great event - the victory Allah gave Moosa and the believers over Pharaoh and his army - occurred on the 10th of the sacred month of Muharram and the day is called *Yaumul Aashoorah* (the day of ‘*Aashoorah*). It is a day that has great merit. Prophet Moosa fasted on that day, and ordered the people to fast that day.

Ibn ‘Abbas reported that when the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, arrived in Madinah, he found the Jews fasting on the day of *Aashoorah*. The Messenger of Allah asked them, “What is the significance of this day that you fast on?” They said, “It is the day of great significance when Allah delivered Moosa and his people and drowned Pharaoh and his people. Moosa observed fast out of gratitude, and we also observe it.” Upon this, the Messenger of Allah said, “We have more right and we have a closer connection (*awlaa*) to Moosa than you have. So Allah's Messenger fasted (on the day of ‘*Aashoorah*) and gave orders that it should be observed. (Saheeh Muslim)

According to Muslim, the Prophet said of fasting on ‘*Aashoorah* that “It is an expiation (of sins) for the previous year.” (Saheeh Muslim)

According to many authentic *ahaadith*, fasting on ‘*Aashoorah* was obligatory, but later made voluntary when the obligation of fasting the month of Ramadan was revealed in the Qur'an. (Saheeh Muslim)

The Prophet fasted on the day of ‘*Aashoorah* and commanded that people should fast on that day. The sahaabah (his companions) said, “Messenger of Allah, it is a day which the Jews and Christians hold in high esteem.” Thereupon the Messenger of Allah said, “When the next year comes, *inshaa Allah*, we would fast on the 9th (i.e. the ninth as well as the 10th in order to differ from the disbelievers).” But the Messenger of Allah died before the advent of the next year. (Saheeh Muslim) Therefore we should fast that day and one day before it (the 9th), following the Prophet's *Sunnah* and looking for the reward from Allah. (3)

We also benefit from the story of Moosa by learning that the *Sunnah* of the Prophets is to thank and praise Allah in times of peace and when they gain victory over their enemies. Moosa fasted on the 10th, the day on which Allah made his followers victorious over Pharaoh; and this is another sign that the truth will always defeat falsehood.

The Prophet fasted on this day thanking Allah for the victory of the people of the truth over the people of falsehood. The victory in that time was for Moosa, but the *Sunnah* of the prophets is one. This is the jilhad against the disbelievers - to make the word of Allah the highest on earth. Victory always comes from Allah and victory is a *ni'mah* (bounty) from Allah for which we must thank Allah by being obedient to Him.

Some people nowadays create bid'ah (innovation in the deen), and deviant slogans and hold demonstrations, or invent a state of mourning for themselves on this day.

NOTES:

1 The Prophet said: “The most excellent fast after Ramadan is Allah's month, Muharram, and the most excellent prayer after what is prescribed is praying during the night.” (Saheeh Muslim)

2 The sacred months are four: Dhul-Qa'dah, Dhul-Hijjah, Muharram and Rajab. See Qur'an, *At-Tawbah* 9: 36-37. Waging war, killing and plunder are prohibited during these months. It is prohibited to intentionally violate the sanctity of one of the months and then make up for it, as the pre-Islamic Arabs used to do in order to give themselves a military edge. However, if you are attacked during one of these months, it is permitted, as mentioned in the *qyah* 2:194 to attack them as you were attacked.

3 We may only single out this day as a day of fasting and not a day of celebration. Abu Moosa reported that the people of Khaybar (most of them were Jews) observed fast on the day of ‘*Aashoorah* and they treated it as “Eid and gave their women ornaments and beautiful dresses to wear. The Messenger of Allah said, “You (only) fast on this day.” (Saheeh Muslim)

Differing from the disbelievers

Khutbah by Shaykh Saalih bin Fawzaan al-Fawzaan

Dear people! Fear Allah and be proud of your religion. O Allah's servants! Allah, the Most High, has granted the Muslims a complete *Shari'ah*, or comprehensive set of rules, that cover all religious and worldly matters. He made happiness both in this world and in the Hereafter contingent on working according to and adhering to its guidance. Allah, Most High says that which means: “Whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray [in the world] nor suffer [in the Hereafter].” (Taa Haa: 123). “Whoever follows My guidance - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.” (Al-Baqarah: 38). This *Shari'ah* is the straight and correct way, which is the way of those on whom Allah has bestowed His Grace such as His Prophets, the sincere, the martyrs, and the righteous. Anything other than this is the way of those who have earned the wrath of Allah. Dear Muslims! In every *rak'ah* (unit) of your prayer, you invoke Allah to show you the straight path and keep you away from the path of those who have earned His wrath and those who have gone astray. You do this because you recite *Surah Al-Faatihah*. This recitation in every *rak'ah* is one of the pillars of *Salaah* (prayer). Therefore, you should reflect on this *Du'aa'*, or supplication, its objectives and its positive results.

First and foremost, it implies following Allah's Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, and adhering to Allah's *Shari'ah* concerning acts of worship, business transactions, morals and inward and outward manners. It also entails differing from the disbelievers with regard to their specific acts of worship, business transactions, morals and manners. This is because imitating them outwardly leads to loving them inwardly.

Therefore, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* are replete with evidences that command the Muslims to differ from the disbelievers and forbid imitating them in order to keep the Muslims away from all harmful matters. This is because the actions of the unbelievers are false and only for show, their endeavours are misleading and their end is certain destruction. Consequently, all the actions and affairs of a disbeliever are blighted and fruitless.

Allah, Most High says that which means: “But the disbelievers - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing.” (Al-Noor: 39) and also: “The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day.” (Ibraaheem: 18).

O Muslims! Although Allah has warned us severely against following the way of the disbelievers, He knew that this would happen as His Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, reported that Allah has decreed this according to His Knowledge. Al-Bukhari and Muslim reported on the authority of Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him, that Allah's Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “You will follow the errors of your predecessors so completely and literally that if they should go into the hole of a lizard, you would follow them.” The people asked: “O Allah's Messenger! Do you mean (by ‘your predecessors’) the Jews and the Christians?” He, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, replied, “Who else?” Al-Bukhari reported on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that Allah's Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “The Hour will not come until my nation will follow completely and literally the errors of the previous nations.” The people asked: “O Allah's Messenger! Are you referring to (the people of) Persia and the Romans?” He, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, replied: “Are there other than these?”

Therefore, Allah's Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, reported that his nation will follow the Jews and the Christians, who are the People of the Book, as well as the people of Persia and the Romans. Allah's Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, forbade imitating all of them.

Despite the fact that he, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, told us that his nation would imitate the errors of the disbelievers, he also stated that a group of his nation will firmly adhere to the truth until the Hour comes. He also said that Allah would make it such that the Muslim nation would not unanimously agree on falsehood. Also, he assured us that Allah frequently raises certain persons for the sake of His religion whom He uses and appoints for obeying Him. As a result, it becomes clear from the authentic

Ahadith of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, that there will be a group of people who follow and adhere to his guidance, the religion of Islam. On the other hand, some Muslims will deviate to the doctrines of the religion of the Jews or that of the Christians. Such deviation is made alluring by Satan. That is why a servant of Allah is commanded to ask Allah to guide him to the straight path, which is far away from Christianity and Judaism.

O servants of Allah! The wisdom behind the prohibition of imitating the disbelievers and commanding us differ from them is so clear. This is because imitating them outwardly leads to imitating them inwardly which in turn results in resembling them in their morals and actions. However, being different from them outwardly leads to differing from them inwardly, which in turn leads to being so completely distinct from them that one is rescued from the causes of Allah's wrath.

Being distinguished also saves one from going astray and leads to being directed to the way of guidance and Allah's pleasure. O Muslims! Today many Muslims, both men and women, imitate the disbelievers in their manners of speaking, dressing, appearance and in so many other areas that time does not allow me to enumerate them. Among these aspects is the shaving of beards and growing moustaches. Allah's Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, commanded trimming the moustache and allowing the beard to grow in a generous manner, thus being distinct from the disbelievers who shave their beards and grow their moustaches. We must know that clipping the moustache and growing the beard are among the characteristics of Fitrah, or human-nature and from the guidance of the Prophets, peace be upon them all. It is a symbol of being distinct from the enemies of Allah and His Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*. This is because clipping the moustache brings about cleanliness, keeping it away from the phlegm of the nose and because when it becomes long and hangs over the lip; it becomes immersed in food and drinks in a disgusting manner.

What we say to those people, may Allah guide us and them, is: You must repent and return to the truth, for returning to the truth is far better than continuing with falsehood. The *Sunnah* of Allah's

Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, has become clear to you and you have been commanded to obey and follow in his footsteps. Allah says that which means: “There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example.” (Al-Ahzaab: 21).

Therefore you have to adhere to his *Sunnah* and not to change it, despite the great number of Muslims who neglect it. Another example of imitating the disbelievers is speaking in their languages unnecessarily; this happens even among the native Arabs in their own countries. The reason why this is so disliked is that when a person speaks a foreign language, he becomes accustomed to this practice and deserts the Arabic tongue which is the symbol of Islam.

In fact, the language spoken is among the greatest of the symbols that define the culture and practices of any given group of people. Therefore, the majority of Islamic jurists are of the view that offering *Du'aa'*, or supplication, within *Salaah*, or prayers; and saying *Dhikr*, or the mentioning of Allah's names, in a language other than Arabic is *Makrooh*, or not recommended. Allah has glorified the Arabic language, revealed His Book in it and made it the native language of Muhammad, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, the last of His Prophets. So, being accustomed to speak in any language other than Arabic is *Makrooh* - if a person knows Arabic - for it leads to resembling non-Muslims, deserting the Arabic language, and replacing it by another language. Arabic is a part of the religion and learning it is obligatory, because comprehending the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* is obligatory; and they cannot be comprehended except by knowing Arabic. Therefore what is necessary for fulfilling an obligation also becomes obligatory. As for learning foreign languages, Muslims are allowed to learn and speak in them, but only when necessary. If it is unnecessary, then speaking in them is *Makrooh*.

The disbelievers are also imitated in certain acts of worship, such as building up the areas around graves and making them places of visitation and worship. Allah's Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “May Allah's curse be on the Jews and the Christians, for they build places of worship at the graves of their Prophets.”



Joaan bin Jassim Academy holds ceremony to honour graduates of two courses



The Joaan bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies has celebrated the graduation of the National Defence Course No (4) and the Joint Command and Staff Course No (10) at the Academy's headquarters in Al Khor city.

The ceremony was held under the patronage and presence of HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiyah, and in the presence of HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi, HE the Commander of the Amiri Guard Lieutenant - General Hazza bin Khalil al-Shahwani, HE the Minister of State for Interior Affairs Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Faisal al-Thani, senior officer commanders in the armed forces and military authorities, and a number of officials and diplomats in the country.

The participants in those two courses included high-ranking members of the armed forces units, military and security authorities, and senior employees in ministries and institutions in the country, in addition to a number of officers from fraternal and friendly countries.

The ceremony also honoured outstanding students and graduates, and saw a presentation on the most important stages of the educational process at the academy.

The president of the Joaan bin Jassim Academy, Major-General Fahd bin Mubarak al-Khayreen, presented HE Dr al-Attiyah with the academy's postage stamp, issued by Qatar Post in co-operation with the academy on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the founding of the academy. - QNA

Qatar's coastal gems a top summer draw



Al Mafjar (above) and Umm Bab (below) beaches.



By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

While Qatar's indoor spaces see exceptional footfall this summer, the country's beaches, resorts, and marinas, which offer access to marine sports and activities, are proving to be a significant draw for residents and visitors.

Among these coastal gems, Al Thakira beach stands out as a favourite, particularly for kayaking.

This thrilling outdoor activity allows adventurers to navigate the area's picturesque mangroves, home to an array of fauna and a variety of bird species.

According to Visit Qatar, Al



Al Thakira beach stands out as a favourite destination even during the summer, particularly for kayaking. PICTURES: Visit Qatar

Thakira's appeal is further enhanced by these natural attractions, making it a must-visit destination for nature enthusiasts.

Visit Qatar highlights the allure of these coastal spots through a series of social media posts, showcasing pristine beaches such as Al Thakira, Zekreet, and Al Mafjar, and describing the beach experiences as an escape from the bustling city life to coastal serenity.

Tour operators offer sunrise and moonlit trips, complete with training, equipment, and guides, enhancing the visitor experience.

Founder and managing director of Outing Qatar, Mosaad Moustafa Eleiwa, told Gulf Times that the country's beaches and resorts have become "one-stop shops", catering to a wide range of needs.

From five-star dining to various water sports and marine activities, he said these offerings are attracting an increasing number of people

seeking fun, entertainment, and adventure, even during the searing summer temperatures.

While Simaisma beach near Doha is widely known as a "serene paradise" with soft sand and safe, shallow waters perfect for families, various other beaches in Qatar offer similar attractions.

Like Simaisma, these beaches boast peaceful, clean waters ideal for leisurely walks and sun-drenched relaxation.

Another gem, Umm Bab beach, also known as "Palm Tree Beach", on Qatar's western coast, is a popular camping destination, best for "swimming during the day and stargazing at night".

Visitors from GCC countries and beyond find Sealine beach in Mesaieed particularly appealing.

Known for its family-friendly environment, it offers an array of activities, including camel riding, safari tours, and dune bashing.



Mosaad Moustafa Eleiwa. Supplied Picture

Beyond the natural beaches, urban locations like the Old Doha Port, Katara beach, and Doha Beach Club are attracting many families and young people.

These spots offer a range of activities, including skiing, swimming, and boat rides.

Visit Qatar noted that as a peninsula surrounded by the Arabian Sea and bathed in year-round sunshine, Qatar is an irresistible playground for water sports lovers.

From the thrill of wakeboarding and parasailing to the serenity of diving and kite surfing, the diverse options cater to all levels of adventure seekers.

QDA hosts support meetings for children with Type I diabetes and their families

As part of its summer programme, the Qatar Diabetes Association (QDA) recently organised an event - the Support Group for Children with Diabetes and Families - at the association's building in Al Muntazah.

The support group acts as a social networking platform for parents of children diagnosed with diabetes under the auspices of the health team of the Qatar Diabetes Association.

The programme aims to provide recreational activities for children and at the same time provides support to the parents through group discussions.

The summer programmes covers upcoming activities for all age groups of people diagnosed with diabetes.

"Being involved and engaging in a diabetes support group is hugely beneficial, as connecting with others facing the same challenges allows you to ease the burden of responsibilities by sharing information, tips and experiences, and not feeling different," said QDA executive director Dr Abdulla al-Hamaq. "Parent participants can also discover help and assistance in many forms."



The support group event took place at the Qatar Diabetes Association building in Muntazah.

