



Enjoy unlimited connectivity
with Roam Like Home



GULF TIMES





0 668039 136499

THURSDAY Vol. XXXXV No. 13068

July 11, 2024
Muharram 5, 1446 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

published in
QATAR
since 1978



Get covered worldwide
at qic.online



travel
insurance



www.habarirealstate.com

Ideal location for your business

Shops For Rent

Ready to Occupy

At Al Murra, Doha

At Al Khor

HABARI REAL ESTATE
CR No: 174949

At Al Murra, Doha
At Al Khor

+974 3030 0680, +974 3341 9475

P.O. Box: 60861, 1st Floor, Building # 11, Street 852, Zone 74, Al Khor, Qatar.

STUDIO ROOMS FOR FEMALE

Studio rooms with attached toilet
and kitchen in Thumama Area on
rent for Single ladies, families,
couples, company female staff

Safe & Comfortable

Pls. Call: 33598672,52038746

talabat rewards

You deserve
rewards!



Restaurant Space For Rent

A Restaurant Space For
Rent in Fereej Bin Mahmoud,
Doha Area. Attractive Location
& Nice View. Affordable Rent Price

Call: 33598672,52038746,50576993,

Amwaj

Amwaj

"Pure water
Refined taste"

Extra
Minerals
Added

LOW
SODIUM

Available at

GMax Hypermarket
A Division of Al Surood Group

مصنع الدوحة للصناعات والأغذية
DOHA JUICE & FOOD FACTORY
Mob: 70614776, 77949967

MoCI service fee cut comes into effect

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) announced the implementation of Ministerial Decision No. (60) for the year 2024, issued by HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Thani, reducing the MoCI's service fees for the commercial, industrial, business development, and consumer protection sectors, down by up to 90% on some services, starting today. **Page 4**

Biden should drop out, says Clooney

Actor George Clooney, a major Hollywood fundraiser for Democrats, said yesterday that President Joe Biden is no longer the same person who won the White House in 2020 and said he should drop his bid for re-election. "It's devastating to say it, but the Joe Biden I was with three weeks ago at the fundraiser was not the Joe Biden of 2010," Clooney said. **Page 7**

Nato to announce new Ukraine aid

US President Joe Biden and leaders of other Nato member states are set to announce new aid and stress a membership pledge for Ukraine at a summit in Washington after Biden promised to defend Kyiv against the Russian invasion. The US would start deploying longer-range missiles in Germany in 2026.

New rules to enhance nursery standards

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has announced a series of ministerial decisions aimed at enhancing the quality and efficiency of nursery services in the country.

These new regulations cover various aspects, including the classification of nurseries, staff qualifications, conditions and regulations for operating nursery premises, and specifications on the establishment and renewal of licensing fees.

Commenting on the decisions, Assistant Undersecretary for Special Education Affairs at MoEHE Omar al-Naama said, "The new decisions align with

Qatari security force leaves for France

● **Force to help secure Paris 2024 Olympics** ● **Interior minister witnesses departure ceremony**

HE Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Le-khwiya), yesterday witnessed the departure ceremony of the Qatari security force for the Republic of France, to participate in securing the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, which will be held from July 26 to August 11.

This participation reflects the strength of the growing strategic partnership between Qatar and France, especially in the security fields, and comes within the framework of an administrative agreement on security co-operation that was signed between the two countries last

February, where the agreement was signed on the Qatari side by HE Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, and on the French side by Gerald Darmanin, Minister of the Interior and Overseas Territories of the French Republic.

The Qatari security forces will participate in security operations with members representing groups, units, specialised security teams, and logistical work teams.

This participation confirms the experience gained by the Qatari security forces in organising and securing major global events, which represents a sustainable legacy for Qatar and the world. **Page 4**



MoI launches new services at Qatar Visa Centres

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) has launched new services at its Qatar Visa Centres (QVC), currently operational in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Philippines and Sri Lanka.

"Medical services for temporary work visas, medical test services for multiple entry work visit visas and vision test services for driving license applicants are available now," Major Nasser Ali al-Khalaf, director of the Visa Support Services (VSS) Department, said.

He was addressing yesterday an introductory seminar on new QVC services at the headquarters of the General Directorate of Passports at Wadi Al Banat.

"The procedures at QVC enable job seekers to complete the most important part of the visa process while they are in their country. These are in addition to reducing effort and time for them and facilitating the issuance of residency upon their entry into the country. At QVC, people wishing to work in Qatar must register their biometric data, sign employment contracts and undergo medical examinations," al-Khalaf said. **To Page 4**



Maj Nasser Ali al-Khalaf (centre) flanked by other officials at the event yesterday. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

New QVCs in 3 countries planned

Efforts are underway to establish new Qatar Visa Centres (QVCs) in Kenya, Indonesia and Tunisia in co-ordination with the authorities concerned, Maj Nasser Ali al-Khalaf, director of the Visa Support Services (VSS) Department, said. QVCs are currently operational in India (New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kochi); Pakistan

(Islamabad, Karachi); Bangladesh (Dhaka, Sylhet); Nepal (Kathmandu); Philippines (Manila); and Sri Lanka (Colombo). Currently, applicants are able to avail of services such as attestation, contract signing, biometric enrolment and medical checkup at QVCs. Apart from English and Arabic, QVCs provide applicants with services in local languages.

Israeli army orders evacuation of Gaza City

● **Gaza genocide toll 38,295**

AFP
Gaza Strip

Israel's army dropped thousands of leaflets over war-torn Gaza City yesterday urging all residents to flee a heavy offensive through the main city of the besieged Palestinian territory.

The leaflets, addressed to "everyone in Gaza City", set out designated escape routes and warned that the urban area, which had a pre-war population of over half a million, would "remain a dangerous combat zone".

Elsewhere across Gaza, deadly strikes have hit four schools used as shelters in four days, sparking rebukes from France and Germany which both labelled the attacks "unacceptable".

Heavy fighting also raged in Gaza's far-southern Rafah, where witnesses said that Israeli tanks had rumbled into the city centre and unleashed intense fire on buildings.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said yesterday at least 38,295 people have been killed in the war.

The toll added 52 new deaths in 24 hours, a ministry statement said. It said 88,241 people have been wounded.

The latest fighting in Gaza has newly displaced 350,000 civilians, said UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini, who spoke before the leaflet

drop and said "there is absolutely no safe space in Gaza".

The upsurge in fighting, bombardment and displacement came as talks were to resume in Qatar towards a truce and hostage release deal to end the war now grinding on into its 10th month.

An Israeli delegation led by Mossad chief David Barnea arrived in Doha, a source with knowledge of the negotiations said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

CIA director William Burns was also expected in the Qatari capital after holding talks in Cairo on Tuesday.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "emphasised his commitment" to a proposed truce plan, "as long as Israel's red lines are preserved," his office said.

The Israeli army said it was reviewing the Khan Yunis area at attack Tuesday in which hospital sources said at least 29 people were killed in a school used as a displacement shelter.

Gaza's Hamas government said a "majority" of the dead were women and children.

Three previous strikes since Saturday on Gaza schools used by displaced Palestinians have killed a total of at least 20 people, said Gaza officials and rescue services.

Aid group Doctors Without Borders has warned of "critical" shortages of medical supplies in Gaza, with no resupply for more than two months.



Palestinian families walk past the destroyed buildings in the Shujaiya neighbourhood, east of Gaza City yesterday.



استمع الرمز لمعرفة آخر العروض
SCAN THE QR CODE FOR LATEST
PROMOTION CATALOGUE
VIEW NOW



برتقال نافل أحمر
أ كيلو (كارا كارا)
Orange Navel Red
(Cara Cara) 1kg
QAR 6.50
QAR 4.75



خوخ مسطح
أذربيجان 1 كيلو
Peaches Flat
Azerbaijan 1kg
QAR 13.50
QAR 11.00



تمور خلاص
قطرية 1 كيلو
Dates Khalas
Qatar 1kg
QAR 11.50
QAR 6.75



خس مدور
عماني 1 كيلو
Iceberg Lettuce
Oman 1kg
QAR 10.00
QAR 5.75



فخذ دجاج بروسند 1 حبة
Roasted Chicken
Thigh 1pc
QAR 4.00



سبياس متوسط
قطري 1 كيلو
Sea Bass Medium
Qatar 1kg
QAR 25.75
QAR 17.75



لحم ماعز مقطع
هندي 1 كيلو
Mutton Cuts
India 1kg
QAR 44.75
QAR 37.50



لحم جاموس بدون
العظم هندي 1 كيلو
Buffalo Boneless
India 1kg
QAR 29.75
QAR 22.75



سنيكرز شوكولاتة
٤٥ غرام / ٥ حبات
Snickers Chocolate
45gm X 5pcs
QAR 12.50
QAR 8.75



دك فارم بيض البط
قطع ١٠
Duck Farm Duck
Eggs 10's
QAR 15.00



بيور فودس
نقانق طرية 1 كيلو
Pure Foods Tender
Juicy Franks
Classic 1kg
QAR 29.50
QAR 25.75



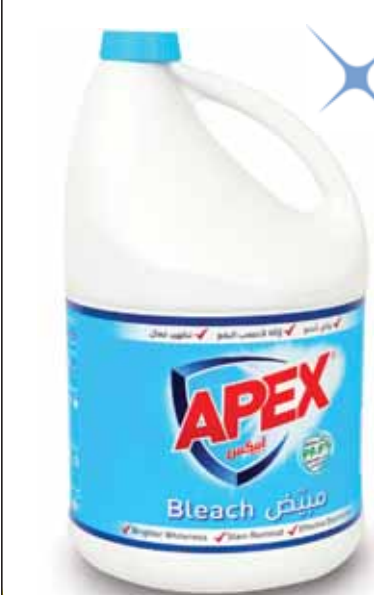
لندن دايري أعواد آيس كريم
صغيرة 1٠ مل 1 قطع / ١ باكيت
London Dairy Mini
Ice Cream Stick
60ml 6's X 1pkt
QAR 25.50
QAR 19.00



بروك بوند أكياس
شاي ١٠٠ قطعة
Brooke Bond
Red Label
Tea Bags 100's
QAR 16.75
QAR 10.00



كاجو مشوي بالقشر
٥٠٠ غرام
Grilled Cashew With
Skin (180) 500gm
QAR 20.00



إبيكس مبيض
٤ لتر
Apex Bleach
Original 4Ltr.
QAR 16.00
QAR 10.00



لوكس سائل غسيل الصحون
برائحة الليمون ٧٥٠ مل / حبتان
Lux Dishwash Liquid
Lemon 750ml X 2pcs
QAR 17.50
QAR 10.00



لوكس صابون منوع
١٠٠ غرام ٥ + ١٠
Lux Soap AsstD
170gm 5+1
QAR 27.00
QAR 16.00



نيفيا لوشن للجسم
منوع ٢٥٠ مل / حبتان
Nivea Body Lotion
AsstD 250ml x 2pcs
QAR 20.00



فارملاند زيت دوار
الشمس ١ لتر / حبتان
Farmland
Sunflower Oil
1Ltr X 2pcs
QAR 9.50

تسوق واربح SHOP & WIN

السحب الكبير في اللولو
LULU MEGA LUCKY DRAW

1 مليون ر.ق. + 1 مليون
مليون
نقاط الولاء سعادة
HAPPINESS LOYALTY POINTS
نقدا / قسائم شرائية
CASH PRIZES/GIFT VOUCHERS

SHOP FOR QAR. 50/- GET AN E-RAFFLE COUPON TO WIN
WORTH QAR. 1 MILLION CASH PRIZES/
GIFT VOUCHERS & 1 MILLION LOYALTY POINTS

(For registering please visit customer service counter or luluhypermarket.com)
Promotion valid from 25.04.2024 to 03.08.2024, Draw Date: 05.08.2024, Lulu Hypermarket D-Ring Road.

CASH PRIZES / GIFT VOUCHERS

- 1st Prize 100,000 QAR. x 1 Winner = 100,000/-
(Cash 50,000/- + Voucher 50,000/-)
- 2nd Prize 50,000 QAR. X 2 Winners = 100,000/-
(Cash 25,000 + Voucher 25,000) x 2 Winners
- 3rd Prize 25,000 QAR. X 4 Winners = 100,000/-
(Vouchers 25,000 x 4 Winners)
- 4th Prize 10,000 QAR. X 30 Winners = 300,000/-
(Vouchers 10,000 x 30 Winners)
- 5th Prize 5,000 QAR. X 50 Winners = 250,000/-
(Vouchers 5,000 x 50 Winners)
- 6th Prize 2,500 QAR. X 60 Winners = 150,000/-
(Vouchers 2,500 x 60 Winners)

سعادة HAPPINESS

- 7th Prize 100,000 Loyalty Points
(1 Winner)
- 8th Prize 50,000 Loyalty Points
(2 Winners)
- 9th Prize 25,000 Loyalty Points
(4 Winners)
- 10th Prize 10,000 Loyalty Points
(30 Winners)
- 11th Prize 5,000 Loyalty Points
(50 Winners)
- 12th Prize 2,500 Loyalty Points
(60 Winners)

DELIVERY WITHIN 2 HOURS

ON GROCERY PRODUCTS

Shop Online at
luluhypermarket.com

*Slot selection is not required
(9am to 9pm)

Orders placed after 9pm
will be fulfilled the following morning



Find the best deals from the
comfort of your home

Unlock extra savings: Get an instant

20% discount

when you shop online or via the
LuLu App with your Mastercard
credit card, saving up to QAR.75.

Offer valid from 11 July - 17 July 2024

luluhypermarket.com

• Minimum purchase – QR. 200.
• Customer eligible only for 1 order per campaign period.

*T&C Apply.



**LULU
HYPER
MARKET
COM**
SHOP ONLINE

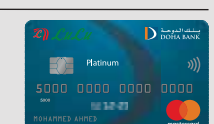


GET
**5%
BACK**

with your Doha Bank shopping Co-branded credit card
Type 'LULU' & SMS to 92610 or visit any Doha Bank Branch

0% INTEREST

Buy now, pay over 6 months



LuLu
Where the world comes to shop

[luluhypermarket](https://luluhypermarket.com) [luluhyperqa](https://luluhyperqa.com) [luluhyperqa](https://luluhyperqa.com)

Milipol Qatar delegation visits Eurosatory 2024 in Paris



A delegation from the Milipol Qatar Committee at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) visited the eighth edition of the International Exhibition of Homeland Security and Defence (Eurosatory 2024), held in the French capital of Paris. According to a statement from MoI, the Milipol Qatar delegation was headed by the committee chairman Maj Gen Nasser bin Fahd al-Thani. He was accompanied by committee members Brig Saud Rashid al-Shafi, Col Abdullah Khalifa al-Muftah and Maj Khaled Saadoun al-Kuwari. The exhibition brought together over 1,900 international companies specialising in security and protection from 60 countries. The delegation explored the latest innovations in security, police and defence systems. The committee invited companies to participate in the Milipol Qatar 2024 exhibition, scheduled to be held from October 29-31 this year.

QT summer campaign draws surge of visitors



Rehan Ali Syed

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Qatar Tourism (QT)'s 'Your Summer Starts Here' campaign is witnessing a surge in popularity with a noticeable rise in visitors, particularly from neighbouring GCC countries, according to an industry expert.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Tawfeeq Travel Group CEO Rehan Ali Syed highlighted the campaign's ability to showcase the country as a year-round destination, offering a range of activities beyond the traditional winter season.

"Qatar has got it all - right from beautiful beaches and resorts to various outdoor attractions. As of now, there are 39,000 room keys available with the best of the hotels in Qatar, attracting the GCC families especially from Saudi to take a short break," he said.

Syed noted that QT's latest campaign caters to families with its several attractions such as 30,000sqm Inflata City at the Qatar National Convention Centre. Dubbed the world's largest indoor inflatable event, this massive indoor activation provides exceptional entertainment for various age groups and a suitable place to beat the summer heat.

The campaign video features Bahraini influencer Omar Farooq and Qatari athlete Mutaz Barshim exploring Qatar's curated summer offerings during a 24-hour Doha adventure.

Syed pointed out that the cam-



Banana Island Resort by Anantara. **PICTURE:** Visit Qatar



Sealine Resort **PICTURE:** Visit Qatar

paign's focus on diverse activities guarantees something for everyone, ensuring widespread appeal and success.

He underlined the appeal of Qatar's luxurious beaches and the newly opened Meryal Waterpark at Qetaifan Island, perfect for outdoor enthusiasts. He also points to promotions at Hilton Salwa, offering transportation to the resort and various water activities.

"The new beaches with water parks will be most appealing as shopping is the same in GCC countries," said Syed, noting that Tawfeeq Travel Group is actively promoting staycations, encouraging residents to explore the offerings within Qatar.

He added that they are also leveraging the campaign through social media and promoting it in key markets such as India, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

According to Syed, the campaign's focus on extending Qatari vacations is also being embraced, with expatriates and citizens choosing to stay in Qatar due to high flight prices and the desire to avoid travel crowds.

He also cited emerging travel trends, specifically the growing appeal of destinations like Japan, Korea and Sweden among younger generations. "You need visitors to have activities all year round for all different age groups. Qatar is very focused under the leadership of QT, chairman HE Saad al-Kharji, to bring in more people with several activities around the year.

"The next cruising season will start from October, hence, with all the summer activities and upcoming season will make Qatar as a destination for summer especially with GCC residents and citizens," Syed added.

QCS signs pact with QM to enhance cancer awareness



QCS, QM officials at the signing ceremony.

Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) and Qatar Museums (QM) have signed an agreement to enhance collaboration for cancer awareness and in supporting patients emotionally and financially.

The agreement includes integrating community-oriented awareness activities into the cultural and artistic events organised by QM. QCS chairman HE Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabor al-Thani and QM CEO Mohamed Saad al-Rumaihi were the signatories.

Under this agreement, both parties will work to enhance awareness efforts by incorporating QCS activities into QM events and exhibitions.

QM will support these efforts

by providing community workshops and interactive activities and supporting cancer survivors emotionally and financially; illuminating buildings in solidarity with the Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign and World Cancer Day and providing discount cards for cancer survivors.

Sheikh Dr Khalid said: "We believe that integrating health awareness activities with cultural and artistic events will significantly contribute to spreading important health messages and reaching a wide segment of the community.

"The collaboration with Qatar Museums will enable us to offer workshops and awareness lectures within a unique cultural and artistic environment, mak-

ing awareness messages more impactful. Additionally, Qatar Museums' support for cancer survivors through dedicated activities and events reflects the spirit of co-operation and solidarity in the Qatari community."

Al-Rumaihi added: "Our collaboration with Qatar Cancer Society marks a significant step in utilising cultural platforms to bolster community health initiatives. This partnership underscores our commitment to enriching lives through art and culture while advancing impactful societal causes. Together with Qatar Cancer Society, we strive to establish meaningful awareness and to support frameworks that resonate profoundly within our community."

370 families benefit from QR11.6mn Zakat aid in June

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has announced that the Department of Zakat Affairs provided aid worth QR11,684,940 to 370 eligible families in Qatar during June.

Head of the Collection and Zakat Accounts at Zakat Fund Mohamed Ahmed al-Sayed said the assistance provided by the department is of two types: one is provided to families monthly to help them with their needs for food, drink,

and housing, which amounted to QR6,872,224. The second is a lump sum aid, which is donated to families once according to need, which amounted to QR4,812,716.

He explained that those eligible for assistance can submit a request for assistance through the Department of Zakat Affairs application on smart devices under the name "Department of Zakat Affairs".

He noted that applicants for assistance must provide all the

required documents and upload them in their specified places on the site, while individuals and companies can perform the obligatory Zakat obligation.

They can do so through the application or offices and collection points spread throughout the country, or through the express collection service on the phone numbers: (55199990 - 55199996), or through the account numbers of the Zakat Affairs Department at banks. **(QNA)**

PHCC smoking cessation clinics report high success rate

A recent study by the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) has revealed that 63.5% of the visitors to smoking cessation clinics successfully quit the habit, local Arabic daily *Al-Rayah* reported.

Significant differences in smoking cessation rates were noted based on the nationality and educational level of the participants, though.

The study pointed out that 23.3% of those who initially quit smoking relapsed and resumed smoking within six months of completing the cessation programme. The relapse rate in-

creased over time to 38.7%, 47.2%, and 51.1% at 12, 24, and 36 months, respectively.

Eventually, within 42 months, 45.8% of the participants were able to maintain their non-smoking status. The study stressed that the smoking cessation services provided by PHCC achieved significant success, indicating that the vast majority of individuals seeking help from the health centres managed to quit smoking.

The published study is titled "Investigating the socio-demographic characteristics and smoking cessation incidence among smokers accessing smoking ces-

sation services in primary care settings of Qatar, a Historical Cohort Study."

The study found that the smoking cessation services at PHCC were effective in both the short and long term. Researchers discovered that young smokers with higher incomes and educational levels are the at-risk group.

The study also suggested that to reach a larger local audience, the corporation should promote its services more broadly. The primary goal of the study was to examine the background, characteristics, and frequency of smoking cessation among individuals

receiving help from smoking cessation services at Primary Health Care Centers in Qatar. It also focused on the number of people who started smoking again after initially quitting.

The study found that the smoking cessation services at PHCC were effective in both the short and long term

The study included a large sample of 490 participants, selected through simple random sampling from those attending the PHCC smoking cessation clinics, providing a comprehen-

sive view of smoking cessation outcomes. The study explained that 43% of the survey participants were aged between 30 and 39, followed by the 40-49 age group, comprising 28% of the respondents. Most participants (90.2%) were male and had a smoking history of more than 10 years, with the majority (96.3%) being cigarette smokers.

It pointed out that smoking cessation clinics are managed by trained and certified doctors who provide effective counselling and medication prescriptions to help individuals successfully quit tobacco use. These clinics can be ac-

cessed through a doctor's referral or by calling 107 directly to schedule an appointment.

The study concluded "there is a need to target high risk individuals and upscale the accessibility to the service among the local population by active community engagement, promoting a multi-sectoral approach strengthening legislative and policy measure for smoking cessation services and further advertisement of the existing services."

It was conducted by a number of researchers and doctors from the PHCC's Department of Clinical Research and others.

CRA workshop focuses on efficient postal services

The Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) has hosted a workshop with local and international postal service providers to discuss 'Regulatory Complaints Handling Process'. About 50 representatives from 27 service providers, including major industry players, participated in the event. This initiative is essential for refining postal services and supporting informed decision-making within the sector.

As Qatar's postal sector evolves in response to global market dynamics and new entrants, the workshop aimed to enhance the quality of services. This aligns seamlessly with Qatar National

Vision 2030 and its Third National Development Strategy, which prioritises improving residents' quality of life and delivering services that meet global standards.

Amel Salem al-Hanawi, director of the Consumer Affairs Department at CRA, remarked: "This workshop is essential for engaging with postal service providers, addressing their concerns, and collaborating on refining our regulatory frameworks. Our goal is to effectively meet industry and consumer needs while fostering a transparent and efficient sector."

The workshop underscored CRA's commitment to transparency and trust. All service providers are encouraged to implement



About 50 representatives from 27 service providers, including major industry players, participated in the event.

straightforward procedures for handling complaints, particularly those related to non-compliance and issues of loss, delays, and damage.

The Global Monitoring System (GMS), implemented by the Universal Postal Union (UPU), monitors international postal performance. Since 2017, Qatar has

consistently achieved high scores, reaching a 100% performance level in the past two years, highlighting its leadership in postal quality. The outcomes of the work-

shop will be integrated into broader regulatory frameworks, benefiting multiple stakeholders. Consumers can anticipate improved complaint handling and enhanced service standards. Service providers will gain from clearer guidelines and streamlined operations, fostering a stable business environment. Additionally, businesses relying on postal services may experience more efficient logistics, contributing to economic growth.

Following the issuance of the Law Regulating Postal Services in 2023, CRA remains steadfast in its commitment to enhancing postal services, ensuring transparency and efficiency across the sector.

Theater Affairs Center's workshop explores acting techniques

The Theater Affairs Center, under the Ministry of Culture, organised a workshop titled "Art of Acting" with the participation of numerous theatre veterans, actors, theatre professionals and enthusiasts in Qatar.

The workshop, led and supervised by actor and theatre director Safwat al-Ghashm, aimed to explore acting techniques, enhance participants' acting skills, and to examine the relationship between theatre and drama.

In this context, artist Saad Bourshid commented that drama began in theatre during the Greek and Roman civilisations. Historically, after theatrical drama, cinema emerged before television drama. Even television drama came after radio drama, which originated before television, and it had a direct impact on all members of society.



Al-Ghashm noted that this workshop is a result of the recommendations from the 36th Doha Theatre Festival, the jury, critics, and the Department of

Culture and Arts at the Ministry of Culture. The month-long workshop runs until early August, during which numerous young talents will be showcased. (QNA)

Qatar Media Center wraps up cybersecurity training course

In collaboration with the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA), the Qatar Media Center, a Ministry of Culture affiliate, wrapped up a cybersecurity training course.

The three-day course, as part of the centre's summer programme, aimed to introduce participants to the safe use of the Internet, social media, and the digital realm.

Cybersecurity coach at NCSA Eshraq al-Hazbi delivered the course, raising participants' cybersecurity awareness amidst the current digital transformation and heavy social media usage. Al-Hazbi informed participants on the principles of safe Internet browsing, understanding cyber threats and their impact on individuals and organisations, in addition to providing them with the knowledge and means to deal with those



threats. Moreover, participants learned ways to protect their personal data and identify suspicious, malicious users and activities.

Upcoming on the Qatar Media Center summer programme is a

training course on public speaking, to kick off on Monday and run for three days. Registration can be done through the centre's code on the centre's digital platforms. (QNA)

'No vegetables or meat': pangs of hunger stalk Gazans

AFP
Gaza Strip

Yussef Jaber dreams of drinking a mint tea with a lot of sugar, but instead he is confronting hunger more than nine months into the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

There is barely any food left in the north of the besieged Palestinian territory, said the 24-year-old in Jabalia. And the price of what little reaches residents there is skyrocketing.

"There is nothing for us except some flour and tinned goods that make us sick," he said.

"We have no vegetables to cook or meat. We need everything."

Independent UN rights experts has said Israel was conducting a "targeted starvation campaign" against Palestinians in Gaza.

Israel accused the expert panel of "spreading misinformation".

While the United Nations has not officially declared famine in Gaza, the experts noted 34 Palestinians have died from malnutrition since Hamas' October first week storming of Israel set off the war.

Israel imposed a siege on the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, limiting the entry of aid and commercial goods.

Jaber and aid groups working in Gaza say the rare food and basic supplies available in the markets now cost a small fortune.

Sugar sells for about 100 Israeli shekels (\$27) per kilo, said Jaber, making it - and his beloved tea - an out-of-reach luxury.

Northern Gaza is suffering particularly badly. The UN humanitarian office OCHA says commercial trucks have not been able to make deliveries there for months.

"We lead a life of shame and humiliation," said Jaber.

The shortages include a "near total lack of protein sources", with only a few, locally sourced vegetables for sale at unaffordable prices, OCHA said on Monday.

In Deir Al-Balah, the exorbitant cost of fuel, at 120 shekels per litre, has prevented trucks from delivering drinking water, according to Maysa Saleh,



Egyptian truck driver Mohamed Murad sits on an aid truck for Gaza waiting to be deployed, in Al Arish.



A Palestinian child suffering from malnutrition is treated at the Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip.

a Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) worker in the central Gazan city.

The price of shampoo has soared to \$26, soap to \$8. "Most of us resort to showering with homemade dishwashing liquid," Saleh said. "Any washing is in salt water from the sea."

She said there had been a significant increase in diseases such as Hepatitis C. "Unfortunately, with the lack of healthcare and sterilising and cleaning

materials, people's health is at stake."

Thousands of aid-laden trucks meanwhile remain stuck in Egypt or the Kerem Shalom border crossing with Israel, according to NRC.

"Due to Israeli restrictions and breakdown of law and order, NRC has not received any aid at its sites since May 3," the group said.

Israel has repeatedly denied blocking aid to Gaza, and blames the United

Nations for not effectively delivering supplies.

Saleh, in Deir Al-Balah, said families displaced by bombing campaigns elsewhere in Gaza have arrived in "deplorable conditions" after walking long distances while dodging attacks.

Almost all of Gaza's 2.4mn population has been uprooted by the war, many more than once, according to UN agencies.

And those converging on Deir Al-Balah can expect little reprieve.

On Tuesday, the Barood family had only just finished surveying the damage to their home when they were woken by the thunder of bombing and children screaming.

"We were sleeping at one o'clock and suddenly we heard the sound of explosions," Eyad Barood said. The family went into the street and found his uncle's house destroyed and his aunt and cousin killed.

"We are innocent," Randa Barood said. The Gaza war broke out after Hamas's October first week storming of southern Israel.

Israel's retaliatory offensive since has killed at least 38,243 people, also mostly civilians, according to data from the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

President-elect of Iran to be sworn in on July 30

AFP
Tehran

Iran's reformist president-elect Masoud Pezeshkian (pictured) will take the oath of office in parliament on July 30, a member of the legislature's presiding board, Mojtaba Yousefi, said yesterday.

"The swearing-in ceremony of Masoud Pezeshkian will be held on July 30," state news agency IRNA quoted Yousefi as saying.

Yousefi had said earlier this week that the swearing in would be



held on August 4 or 5.

Iran's president is not head of state. Ultimate authority rests with the supreme leader - a post held by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei for the past 35 years.

Pezeshkian won a second-round runoff against conservative Saeed Jalili on Friday. The 69-year-old reformist took around 54% of the 30mn votes cast.

NOTICE TO TYLER G. GALLAGHER

You have been named as a defendant in a lawsuit filed by the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission ("CFTC") and the California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation ("DFPI") in the United States District Court for the Central District of California. The name of the case is CFTC v. Regal Assets LLC, et al., and it has a case number of 2:23-cv-08078-FMO-SK.

THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST YOU

The CFTC and DFPI have filed a Complaint alleging that, from at least November 2019 through at least October 2022, you and your co-defendants, Regal Assets LLC and Leah Donoso, engaged in a scheme to defraud people throughout the U.S. in connection with the purchase and sale of precious metals, and, as a part of that scheme, misappropriated more than \$21 million from more than 120 customers. As a result, the Complaint alleges that you and your co-defendants violated Section 6(c)(1) of the Commodity Exchange Act, 7 U.S.C. § 9(1), CFTC Regulation 180.1(a)(1)-(3), 17 C.F.R. § 180.1(a)(1)-(3), and Section 29536 of the California Corporations Code. The DFPI also alleges that you and your co-defendants violated Section 29520 of the California Corporations Code by unlawfully selling commodities in California.

SUMMONS

You are directed to contact Rishi Gupta, Senior Trial Attorney in the CFTC's Division of Enforcement, 1155 21st Street NW, Washington, DC 20581, 1-202-418-6773, rgupta@cftc.gov, so that you may be served with the Summons, Complaint, and related materials. If you do not contact the CFTC within 28 days from the date of first publication of this notice, the CFTC will seek entry of a judgment by default against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint, pursuant to Rule 55 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. You may obtain a copy of the Complaint by contacting Mr. Gupta or by reviewing CFTC Press Release No. 8791-23, which is available at <https://www.cftc.gov/PressRoom/PressReleases/8791-23>, and accessing the link to the Complaint.

UN 'deeply concerned' over Libyan activist abduction

AFP
Tripoli

The UN yesterday said it was "deeply concerned" over a Libyan activist's recent abduction and called on authorities to "secure his safe and immediate release".

Reports on Monday said political

activist Al-Moatassim al-Areebi was abducted by an unknown armed group in Misrata, about 190 kilometres east of the capital Tripoli.

The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) "is deeply concerned by reports of another abduction, this time in Misrata", said the statement.

Kidnappings are not uncommon in the restive North African country, in-

cluding in May, when an elected member of Libya's eastern-based House of Representatives was abducted in the city of Benghazi.

The UN mission called on "law enforcement agencies to urgently investigate the abduction of Mr. Al-Areebi, disclose his whereabouts, and secure his safe and immediate release".

Areebi was reportedly abducted

along with another person, Mohamed Shtewi, who "was released after being beaten", UNSMIL said.

Libya has been wracked by division and unrest since the 2011 Nato-backed overthrow of former ruler Muammar Gaddafi.

It is currently divided between two rival administrations based in Tripoli and Benghazi.



Hezbollah to accept any Hamas truce decision, abide by ceasefire

AFP
Beirut

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said yesterday his group would accept Palestinian ally Hamas' decision on Gaza truce negotiations and would stop cross-border attacks on Israel if a ceasefire were reached.

Hezbollah has traded almost daily fire with Israeli forces in support of Hamas since the Palestinian group's October first week storming of Israel triggered war in the Gaza Strip.

"Hamas is negotiating... on behalf of the whole axis of resistance," Nasrallah said, referring to regional pro-Iran groups opposed to Israel and the US.

"Whatever Hamas accepts, everyone accepts and is satisfied with," he said, adding: "We do not ask (Hamas) to co-ordinate with us because the battle in the first instance is theirs." Nasrallah's remarks came days after he met with a Hamas delegation headed by foreign relations chief Khalil al-Hayya, and as talks were to resume in Qatar towards a truce and hostage release deal in the Gaza war, now grinding into its 10th month.

Hamas has signalled that it would drop its insistence on a "complete" ceasefire – which Israel has repeatedly rejected – as a condition for starting truce talks.

Nasrallah repeated his position



An image grab taken from Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV yesterday, shows Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah giving a televised address from an undisclosed location in Lebanon.

that "if a ceasefire is reached, and we all hope for that... our front will cease fire without any discussion". "That is a commitment, because it is a support front and we have been clear (about this) from the start," he said, during a televised address commemorating a senior Hezbollah commander killed in an Israeli strike last week.

However, Nasrallah warned that "we will never allow any attack that the Israeli enemy might carry out against Lebanon (even) if there is a ceasefire in Gaza".

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said Sunday that "we will continue fighting and doing everything necessary to bring about the desired result" in the cam-

paign against Hezbollah, "even if there is a ceasefire" in the Gaza Strip. Hezbollah announced three new attacks yesterday, including an "aerial offensive with a squadron of explosive drones" targeting a military base in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights.

The Israeli military said one soldier was lightly wounded after "approximately three" drones "crossed from Lebanon... and fell" in the southern Golan Heights.

The Lebanese group, which has increased its use of explosive drones in recent weeks, said the latest attack was in retaliation "for the attack and assassination carried out by the Israeli enemy... on the Damascus-Beirut road" on Tuesday. A source close to the group, requesting anonymity, told AFP that a former bodyguard to Nasrallah was killed in the strike, identifying him by the surname of Qarnabash. Hezbollah in a statement announced the death of a fighter with the same surname.

In Lebanon, the cross-border violence since October has killed nearly 500 people, mostly fighters but also including 95 civilians, according to an AFP tally.

Nasrallah said Israeli demands to push Hezbollah back from the border "won't fix" the situation for Israel. His group's launching of "hundreds of rockets and dozens of drones in a single day" towards Israeli targets was a message "that Hezbollah doesn't fear war", he added.

No oil, no food: Damaged pipeline piles misery on South Sudan

AFP
Juba

At 75, Galiche Buwa has lived through civil wars, famine and natural disasters, but the South Sudanese widowed mother of four always managed to get by, thanks to her grocery business.

Now, however, even that standby is on shaky ground, as the oil-dependent nation's economy reels from revenue losses following the rupture of a key pipeline in its war-torn neighbour Sudan in February.

The damaged pipeline was crucial for transporting South Sudan's crude oil abroad, with petroleum exports traditionally accounting for about 90% of the impoverished country's GDP.

The implications have been far-reaching, with inflation soaring as the value of the South Sudanese pound relative to the US dollar plunges on the black market, from 2,100 in March to 3,100.

The official rate slipped from around 1,100 in February to nearly 1,550 this month.

"Since the 1970s up to now I am still here, but these days we are suffering. Things are tough," Buwa said as she glumly tended to her stall at the Konyo-Konyo market in the capital Juba.

"We are unable to buy stock, things are expensive... and prices keep rising every day," she said, compelling her to purchase supplies on credit.

As wholesale costs shoot up, retail prices follow – a mug of maize sold by Buwa was worth 800 South Sudanese pounds in March, compared to 2,000 today, she said.

Teddy Aweye, a 28-year-old mother of two, said she was struggling to put food on the table, forcing her family to eat just one meal a day.

"You go to the market today, you get a price, and tomorrow you go back and you get a different price... I had to return home without buying anything," Aweye said.

"Life is really very difficult."

It is a common refrain across Juba's biggest market, where several traders said they were racking up losses every day.

Abdulwahab Okwaki, a 61-year-old butcher, said his business was in crisis.

"A customer who used to (buy) one kilo is now taking half a kilo, and the one taking half a kilo now takes a quarter... and the one who was taking a quarter is not coming anymore," he said.

The father of eight often loses money when he is unable to sell meat before it goes bad.

Many of his fellow butchers

have simply quit, unable to make ends meet, he said.

Higher-end businesses have also taken a hit.

Harriet Gune, a 27-year-old entrepreneur, said her fashion boutique was losing customers.

"The more you increase prices for the items in the shop, the more you scare away clients," she said. A pair of jeans that used to cost 25,000 South Sudanese pounds in March now sells for 35,000, she said, adding that she needed to raise prices "to be able to get enough money to order new stock".

Even government officials are feeling the pinch.

In May, Finance Minister Awow Daniel Chuang told parliament that the government would struggle to pay salaries to lawmakers, military, police, civil servants and other officials because of a shortfall in revenues.

He said the country was losing about 70% of its oil revenues because of the pipeline rupture, which has affected exports of Nile blend crude and Dar blend crude.

"The production is only from Blocks 12, 14, and 58, which means there is only around 30 to 35% of the oil that is flowing," he said.

South Sudan was in crisis even before the pipeline shutdown sent shock waves through its economy, with fears that long-anticipated elections, currently scheduled for December, will be delayed.

In addition to rampant corruption draining its coffers – with the ruling elite routinely accused of plunder – the country is very vulnerable to currency shocks, because it imports nearly everything, including agricultural produce.

The fighting in Sudan between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces since April 2023 has only exacerbated the situation, analysts say.

The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people, forced millions to flee – including over 700,000 to South Sudan – and pushed Sudan to the brink of famine.

Economist and government advisor Abraham Malliet Mamer said that South Sudan, which declared independence from Sudan in 2011, needed to plan ahead to secure its future.

"Our country is suffering. We have less money, we have fewer services, and our security is a problem," he said, urging the government to build refineries and pipelines through other nations.

"Sudan will never be the same again. Until we develop alternatives... we will be having issues," he warned.

Court rules SA govt negligent in deaths of mentally ill patients

AFP
Johannesburg

A judge ruled yesterday that the negligence of two South African officials was to blame for the deaths of psychiatric patients after they were transferred to unlicensed facilities in 2016.

In a tragedy that has gripped the country for years, at least 144 mentally ill people died after being moved from a psychiatric hospital to non-governmental organisations and other facilities in an apparent cost-cutting measure.

They died from causes such as pneumonia, dehydration, diarrhoea and food aspiration.

The patients were moved after the provincial health department in Gauteng, where Johannesburg and Pretoria are located, ended a contract with Life Esidimeni psychiatric hospital in 2015.

In her ruling, Pretoria High Court judge

Mmonoa Teffo said that the provincial health minister at the time, Qedani Mahlangu, had ended the contract "despite numerous expert advice and warnings from professionals."

"Her conduct led to the regrettable and unfortunate deaths, some of which could have been avoided," the judge said.

Mahlangu, who resigned in 2017 after the release of a report into the deaths by the Health Ombudsman, the country's health watchdog, said she was misled.

The investigation found that more than 1,300 patients were hurriedly transferred from Life Esidimeni to 27 poorly prepared facilities that were compared to "concentration camps".

The patients' families were kept in the dark about the move, some only finding out after they went to visit their relatives.

The 2017 probe found that the centres failed to provide the severely ill patients with enough food and water, leaving some of them severely malnourished, underweight and in

some cases dying from dehydration. In her ruling, the judge also blamed the then provincial head of mental health, medical doctor Makgabo Manamela.

She "created the circumstances in which the deaths were inevitable," Teffo said.

Families of the people who died have demanded justice for the tragedy.

Speaking to local broadcaster ENCA after the ruling, Andrew Pieterse, whose uncle died, said he felt vindicated by the ruling but wanted to see justice.

In 2018, the South African government said it would pay each family R200,000 (\$11,000) to compensate for emotional trauma, psychological injury and funeral expenses.

Yet some families have not been compensated the full amount, Pieterse said.

"The health department will formally and publicly respond after it has studied the judgement and its implications," the health ministry's spokesman Foster Mohale said.

12 children killed in SA minibus blaze

AFP
Johannesburg

Twelve children were killed in South Africa yesterday when a minibus taking them to school near Johannesburg overturned and burst into flames

after being hit by another vehicle.

The driver of the minibus was also killed and seven other children were rushed to hospital, according to officials in Johannesburg's Gauteng province.

Television images showed that the minibus was totally destroyed by the fire in the early morning crash

in Merafong, more than 70km west of the city. Charred schoolbook pages were scattered on the tarmac, as police examined the scene. It could not immediately give the ages of the children but said most were from a primary school, where students are normally aged between six and 13.

Libya says 'cannot continue' hosting Europe-bound migrants

AFP
Tripoli

Authorities in Libya said yesterday that up to four in five foreigners in the North African country are undocumented, and hosting migrants hoping to reach Europe has become "unacceptable".

Libya, about 300 kilometres from Italy, is a key departure point for migrants, primarily from sub-Saharan African countries, risking perilous Mediterranean Sea journeys to seek better life in Europe.

But with mounting efforts by the European Union to curb irregular migration, many have found themselves stranded in Libya.

"Today, there are approximately 2.5mn foreigners in Libya," said Imad Trabelsi, the interior minister in the war-torn country's Tripoli-based administration.

He told a news conference that "70 to 80% of them entered the country illegally". "The issue of immigration concerns our national security," said Trabelsi.

"It's time to resolve this problem", he added, because "Libya cannot continue to pay its price".

According to Trabelsi, the country has turned from a "tran-



Libya's Interior Minister Imad Trabelsi gives a joint press conference in Tripoli, yesterday, ahead of the upcoming Trans-Mediterranean Migration Forum.

sit country to a country of settlement", and undocumented migrants "don't pay taxes".

"The resettlement of migrants in Libya is unacceptable" Libya is still struggling to recover from years of war and chaos after the 2011 overthrow of longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi.

Smugglers and human traffickers have taken advantage of the climate of instability which has dominated the vast country since.

Since the start of 2024, Libyan

authorities have "repatriated 6,000 migrants" through a UN scheme, the minister said.

Tripoli is set to host the Trans-Mediterranean Migration Forum on July 17, bringing together African and European governments and aiming to forge "a new strategy for development projects in the countries of departure", the Libyan government said on Facebook.

The meeting comes as the EU and Italy have ramped up efforts to combat irregular migration.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, TERESITA TIZON SAMBULAN

holder of

PHILIPPINE Passport No. P7966650B
QID No. 28760830540

hereby change my name

from

TERESITA TIZON SAMBULAN

to

TERESITA SAMBULAN LUKMAN

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

Mali fuel shortage causes flight cancellations

AFP
Dakar

A fuel shortage at Mali's main international airport led to flight cancellations and disruption yesterday, according to several air transport stakeholders.

The West African country's civil aviation agency has asked the regional air traffic control body Asecna to notify airspace users of the "unavailability of Jet A1 fuel" at the capital Bamako's Modibo Keita international airport from Tuesday until

the end of July 15, in an official document seen by AFP. Jet A1 is a kerosene-type fuel widely used in civil aviation.

AFP was unable to obtain any official information from the Malian Civil Aviation Agency or the airport about the causes of the shortage.

Since 2012, Mali has been plunged into a deep political, security and economic crisis, which is having a severe impact on supplies. The West African nation has been ruled by a military junta since back-to-back coups in 2020 and 2021.

LEGAL

US judge may end Giuliani bankruptcy

A US judge said he would likely end Rudy Giuliani's bankruptcy, a move that would enable lawsuits for defamation and other claims to proceed in other courts against Donald Trump's former lawyer. US bankruptcy judge Sean Lane said at a court hearing in White Plains, New York, that he would rule tomorrow on competing requests from Giuliani and his creditors about the future of his bankruptcy. Giuliani, 80, filed for bankruptcy protection in December after a Washington, DC court ordered the former New York City mayor to pay \$148mn to two Georgia election workers that he falsely accused of rigging votes in the 2020 presidential election.

PROJECT

Musk's Neuralink working on new brain implant device

Neuralink, Elon Musk's brain-chip company, is working on a new device that it believes will require half the number of electrodes to be implanted in the brain to make it more efficient and powerful, the company's executives said. The company is also taking risk mitigation measures such as skull sculpting and reduce the carbon dioxide concentration in the blood to normal level in patients, the executives said in a live stream on social media platform X. Neuralink is taking these risk mitigation measures after the first participant in the device's trial faced issues with the tiny wires that were part of the implant.

CORPORATE

CNN plans to launch paid streaming service, cut 100 jobs

CNN, which has struggled amid the decline of the US cable broadcasting industry, plans to launch a new paid streaming service and to cut about 100 jobs, the company's CEO said yesterday. The network, which once set the pace in cable news, aims for its new \$1bn-plus subscription news product to launch before the end of 2024, chief executive Mark Thompson said in a memo to staff. "We are creating best-in-class, subscriber-first products that provide need-to-know news, analysis and context in compelling formats and experiences," Thompson said. "This starts with our first subscription product launching before the end of 2024."

TRIAL

Exiled Chinese businessman 'stole millions from followers'

An exiled Chinese businessman spent hundreds of millions of dollars he raised from online followers for sham investments on luxury goods including a red Lamborghini and a yacht, a US prosecutor said yesterday. In his closing argument at Guo Wengui's trial on racketeering and fraud charges, prosecutor Ryan Finkel said Guo repeatedly guaranteed followers in social media broadcasts that they would not lose money if they invested in a series of schemes he carried out from 2018 to 2023. Guo has pleaded not guilty to each of the 12 counts he faces. His lawyers are expected to give their closing argument later.

Biden allies raise fresh doubts on re-election chance

Reuters
Washington/Dallas

US President Joe Biden faced fresh doubts yesterday about his re-election chances from two heavyweights who may influence other Democratic lawmakers and financial donors: Nancy Pelosi and George Clooney. Biden must decide quickly whether to stay in the 2024 White House race, former House Speaker Pelosi, a longtime Biden ally, said on MSNBC while declining to say definitively that she wanted him to run.

Hollywood star Clooney, a Democrat who co-hosted a fundraiser for Biden last month, withdrew his support with a damning opinion piece in the *New York Times* saying that Biden was not the same man he was in 2020.

Pelosi's remarks, which ignored Biden's repeated insistence that he is staying in the race, suggested he could face a fresh wave of calls from fellow Democrats to exit the race.

For nearly two weeks the 81-year-old Biden has sought to stem defections by Democratic lawmakers, donors and other allies worried he might lose the November 5 vote to Republican Donald Trump, 78, after Biden's halting June 27 debate performance. The president has said again and again that he will be the Democratic candidate and that he believes he can beat Trump. He said he had a bad night at the debate and vowed to stay in the race.

Pelosi said on MSNBC she was encouraging her colleagues on Capitol Hill with concerns about Biden to refrain from airing them while he hosts Nato leaders in Washington this week. "I've said to everyone: let's just hold off. Whatever you're thinking, either tell somebody privately, but you don't have to put that out on the table until we see how we go this week," she said, describing Biden's strong remarks at the Nato summit on Tuesday as "spectacular."

She declined to say definitively that she wanted Biden to run. "I want him to do whatever he decides to do," she said. "We're all encouraging him to make that decision because time is running short."

Biden's campaign chair Jen O'Malley Dillon and senior advisers Mike Donilon and Steve Ricchetti will brief senate Democrats at a lunch today, Biden's campaign said.

Asked to comment on Pelosi's remarks and Clooney's article, Biden's campaign pointed to a letter he sent Democrats in Congress that said he was "firmly committed" to staying in the race and beating Trump.

On Tuesday, Pelosi said that she had "always been committed" to Biden, the campaign noted. She told ABC News yesterday she thought Biden could win in November.

Asked at the Nato summit whether he still had Pelosi's support, Biden responded by raising a triumphant fist. However, other Democrats' echoed Pelosi yesterday, suggesting Biden's efforts to quell dissent within his party had not succeeded.

Democratic senator Richard Blumenthal said he was "deeply concerned" about Biden's ability to win the race.

In Dallas, Vice-President Kamala Harris, the party frontrunner to replace Biden if he were to step aside as the Democratic candidate, spoke to a group of some 19,000 people at an event of the historically Black Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

The election is the most "existential" and consequential of their lifetimes, Harris said to a crowd that chanted, "Four More Years!"

In his opinion piece, Clooney wrote: "It's devastating to say it, but the Joe Biden I was with three weeks ago at the fund-raiser was not the Joe 'big deal' Biden of 2010. He wasn't even the Joe Biden of 2020. He was the same man we all witnessed at the debate," Clooney wrote.

"We are not going to win in November with this president. On top of that, we won't win the House, and we're going to lose the senate."

Democrats in Congress remain deeply divided over whether to fall in line behind Biden or to urge him to step aside because of persistent questions about his health and acuity. But public defections remain a small segment of the 213 Democratic-aligned House members, and the party's leadership continues to back Biden publicly. No members of the senate have publicly said Biden should stand aside, though senator Michael Bennet of Colorado said on Tuesday he did not believe Biden could beat Trump.



Actor Alec Baldwin leans on a chair during a break in his hearing in Santa Fe County District Court, New Mexico, yesterday.

Alec Baldwin accused of breaking gun rules

Reuters
Santa Fe, New Mexico

A New Mexico prosecutor yesterday said Alec Baldwin broke "cardinal rules" for handling guns in the 2021 killing of *Rust* cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, while his lawyer said he was failed by the movie's set safety experts who already have been convicted in the case.

The 66-year-old Baldwin, on trial in Hollywood's first on-set shooting fatality in three decades,

took notes at the defence table and listened calmly in his involuntary manslaughter trial. The prosecution is largely unprecedented in US history, holding an actor criminally responsible for a gun death during filming.

A New Mexico jury heard prosecutor Erlinda Johnson outline arguments Baldwin disregarded safety during filming of the low-budget movie when he pointed a gun at Hutchins, cocked it and pulled the trigger as they set up a camera shot in movie-set church southwest of Santa Fe.

"The evidence will show that someone who played make believe with a real gun and violated the cardinal rules of firearm safety is the defendant, Alexander Baldwin," Johnson said.

His lawyer Alex Spiro pointed to *Rust* armorer Hannah Gutierrez - head of gun safety - and first assistant director Dave Halls - responsible for overall set safety. Both have been convicted in the shooting, and Spiro said they did not check the rounds in the gun to ensure it was safe for Baldwin to use.

Musk beats \$500mn severance lawsuit by fired Twitter workers

Elon Musk won dismissal of a lawsuit claiming he refused to pay at least \$500mn of severance to thousands of Twitter employees he fired in mass layoffs after buying the social media company now known as X. US district judge Trina Thompson in San Francisco ruled the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act governing benefit plans did not cover the former employees' claims, and therefore she lacked jurisdiction. The case is one of many accusing Musk of reneging on promises to former Twitter employees, including former chief executive Parag Agrawal, and vendors after buying the company for \$44bn in October 2022. Musk also runs the electric car company Tesla, and is the world's richest person, according to *Forbes* magazine. An outside spokeswoman for Sanford Heisler Sharp, which represents the former employees, said the law firm was disappointed and considering its legal options.

Wooing voters



US Vice-President Kamala Harris greets members of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority after speaking at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Centre in Dallas, Texas, yesterday. The vice-president spoke to approximately 20,000 members from her sorority in a continued effort to rally support ahead of the upcoming November presidential election.

Canada sued over harsh migrant detentions

AFP
Montreal

The Canadian government is being sued for allegedly violating migrants' rights by detaining them alongside criminal suspects while awaiting processing of their status, lawyers for the migrants said.

One of the migrants described his time in detention as a "living hell." Another described a traumatic atmosphere in prison, with drug use and fights among inmates.

Migrants were at times shackled and subjected to strip searches, the lawyers said.

"Immigration detention is administrative detention and should not be punitive in nature," said the plaintiffs' lawyers, who are seeking C\$100mn (\$73.4mn) in damages.

These allegations of harsh treatment are contained in a ruling handed down on Friday by the Superior Court of Ontario province, which authorised a class action suit by 8,360 people detained by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) between 2016 and 2023 in 87 prisons.

Foreign nationals - including asylum seekers - who were not accused of a crime "encountered the same conditions as criminal inmates, including co-mingling with violent offenders, use of restraints such as shackles and handcuffs, strip searches, and severe restrictions on contact and movement," wrote Justice Benjamin Glustein.

Border agents can detain migrants if there is fear that they will not show up for an immigration hearing, if their identity is in doubt or if they pose a danger to public safety.

Astronauts confident Boeing Starliner 'will bring them home'

Reuters
Washington

The first two astronauts to fly Boeing's Starliner capsule said from the International Space Station yesterday they were confident in the spacecraft's ability to return them home whenever the company and Nasa fix an array of thruster issues that have kept them in space far longer than expected.

"I have a real good feeling in my heart that this spacecraft will bring us home, no problem," Nasa astronaut Sumita "Suni" Williams said during the test crew's first news conference since docking to the ISS

more than a month ago.

Williams and Barry "Butch" Wilmore, both veteran Nasa astronauts and former US navy test pilots, were launched aboard Starliner from Florida on June 5 and docked the next day at the ISS, where they were initially scheduled to spend roughly eight days.

A series of issues with Starliner's propulsion system has extended their mission indefinitely. Five of Starliner's 28 manoeuvring thrusters went dead during its 24-hour trek to the station, a propellant valve failed to properly close and there have been five leaks of helium, which is used to pressurise the thrusters.

"We're absolutely confident," Wilmore told reporters. "That mantra you've heard, failure is not an option."

"And that's why we're staying, because we're going to test it. That's what we do," Wilmore said, acknowledging that an ongoing investigation by the US space agency and Boeing involving thruster tests on Earth is key for their return.

The current test mission is Boeing's final step before the spacecraft can clinch Nasa certification for routine astronaut flights and become the second US orbital capsule alongside SpaceX's Crew Dragon, which has dominated the nascent human spaceflight mar-

ket amid Starliner's development delays.

Nasa officials and Boeing engineers have focused on the faulty thrusters and aim to conduct weeks of further testing before allowing Starliner to return Wilmore and Williams to Earth. That testing includes firing identical thrusters at the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico to get insight into what might be plaguing the thrusters in space.

"Once that testing is done, then we'll look at the plan for landing," Nasa's commercial crew chief Steve Stich told reporters last month. "We're not going to target a specific date until we get that testing com-

pleted." The testing could last "a couple weeks" or more, followed by a Nasa review of the resulting data, Stich said.

Starliner is approved to stay docked to the ISS for 45 days, or up to 90 days using various backup systems and depending on the health of its lithium ion batteries, which have caused concerns in the past.

Though Nasa and Boeing have said Starliner is capable of returning the astronauts to Earth in the event of an emergency on the ISS, the capsule is not approved to fly home under normal, non-emergency circumstances until its thruster issues are resolved or at

least better understood. Nasa and Boeing officials have emphasised that the two astronauts are not stranded in space.

A Russian satellite last month broke apart into some 180 pieces of debris near the space station's orbit and forced astronauts into their various docked spacecraft, including Wilmore and Williams getting into Starliner, to prepare for a potential escape.

Boeing cited the event as an example of Starliner's readiness to return home if absolutely necessary.

"Starliner stood ready to undock and return Wilmore and Williams to Earth if needed," the company said in a statement last month.

OPINION

Manila’s Scarborough Shoal water concerns baseless: China

A Chinese report on the waters around the disputed fishing ground of Scarborough Shoal have deemed it to be of excellent quality with a healthy coral reef, months after the Philippines accused Chinese fishermen of damaging the marine environment. State news agency Xinhua said yesterday that through assessments done by various government institutes as well as satellite surveys have shown that the environmental quality of the shoal is excellent with low levels of heavy metals, hydrocarbons and other pollutants. The Philippines in May accused Chinese fishermen of destroying the ecological environment in Scarborough with cyanide fishing.

CLAIM

Australia sent back migrants to remote island: Indonesia police

Indonesian police yesterday said Australia has sent back dozens of illegal migrants to a remote southern island after intercepting their vessel at sea, at least the second time this has happened this year. The police chief of Indonesia’s Rote Island said the migrants landed last month in two boats they said they had been forced to board after an Australian vessel intercepted their wooden craft. Police chief Mardiono said they initially received reports of a vessel running aground. “After we checked, we found a boat...made from aluminium, without a name and without a flag,” he said, adding it was carrying 22 people.

CONFLICT

Myanmar armed group claims control of town

Myanmar ethnic minority fighters yesterday said they had seized a town along a key trade highway to China following days of clashes, in another blow to the military. Northern Shan state has been rocked by fighting since late last month, when an alliance of ethnic armed groups renewed an offensive against the military along the highway to China’s Yunnan province. The clashes have shredded a Beijing-brokered truce that in January halted an offensive by the alliance of the Arakan Army, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army and the Ta’ang National Liberation Army. The town of Naungcho “is totally ours”, general Tar Bhone Kyaw of the TNLA said.

OFFBEAT

Man caught smuggling 100 live snakes in his trousers

A man has been caught trying to smuggle over 100 live snakes into mainland China by cramming them into his trousers, according to the country’s customs authority. The unnamed traveller was stopped by customs officers as he sought to slip out of semi-autonomous Hong Kong and into the border city of Shenzhen, China Customs said in a statement. “Upon inspection, customs officers discovered that the pockets of the trousers the passenger was wearing were packed with six canvas drawstring bags and sealed with tape,” the statement said. “Once opened, each bag was found to contain living snakes in all kinds of shapes, sizes and colours,” it added.

Philippines air force joins multi-nation war games in Australia

Reuters
Darwin, Australia

The Philippines Air Force arrived in northern Australia yesterday on its first overseas deployment in six decades for combat practice alongside US and Australian fighter jets, amid a rise in tensions with China in the South China Sea. Four Philippine FA-50 fighter jets and 162 personnel are taking part in the Pitch Black war games over Australia’s largely unpopulated Northern Territory, involving 20 countries and 140 aircraft. “This is the first time they have taken their combat aircraft abroad since 1963 so it is a huge honour for Australia to be chosen as the first location for the deployment,” Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Air Commodore Pete Robinson said. The Northern Territory provides a “huge amount of airspace” to boost capabilities from dog fighting to using radar and missile systems to engage adversaries beyond visual range, he added. The Philippines fighter jets would work with other air forces “to solve some complex problems against a simulated adversary and ground threats”, he said. The US F-22 stealth fighter and Australia’s F-35A and F-18 are among the combat aircraft taking part. “Bringing that package together will provide an impressive outcome that is stronger than its parts,” Robinson said.

“It’s all about enhancing our operational readiness and capabilities,” Philippines Air Force Colonel Randy Pascua said in Darwin. China and the Philippines are locked in a confrontation in the disputed South China Sea and their encounters have grown more tense as Beijing presses its claims to shoals in waters that Manila says are well within its exclusive economic zone. Australian Strategic Policy Institute senior analyst Euan Graham said although the Philippines has a mutual defence treaty with the US, it would look to its own air force and navy as the first line of defence. “Within the context of the South China Sea and the Philippines feeling an external sense of threat very strongly now from China, Manila has been trying to improve its own defence capability,” Graham said. “The big change is they lost a lot of their capability and now they are regaining it,” he added. The Philippines is seeking to modernise its military’s outdated hardware. Philippine Armed Forces chief Romeo Brawner said last week the Philippines wants to buy longer-range, multi-role fighters although it has not made a decision on which aircraft it will buy for its modernisation programme. Recent deals with Australia and Japan to allow militaries to visit and move through each other’s territory show the Philippines is seeking more regional defence relationships, said Graham.

Chemical explosion sparks fire in Australia suburb



Plumes of smoke rise following an explosion at a factory on the outskirts of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, yesterday. The massive blaze was a result of a chemical explosion. According to local police sources, several 44-gallon barrels of chemicals exploded spewing toxic fumes into the air. Firefighters rushed to the scene to combat the rising flames.

China carrier ‘passes close to Philippines on way to drills’

Reuters
Taipei

Chinese aircraft carrier the Shandong passed close to the northern Philippines on its way to drills in the Pacific, Taiwan’s defence minister said yesterday, as Taipei reported dozens of warplanes joining the ship for exercises. The manoeuvring of the carrier through waters closer to the Philippines than to Taiwan comes during a period of rising tensions between Beijing and Manila over territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Taiwan, which China claims as its own terri-

tory, keeps a close watch on all Chinese movements given the daily military activity around the island. Taiwan’s defence ministry said starting around dawn yesterday it had detected 36 Chinese military aircraft, including J-16 fighters and nuclear-capable H-6 bombers, flying to the south and southeast of the island heading to the Western Pacific to carry out drills with the Shandong. Speaking to reporters at parliament shortly before his ministry announced details of the latest mission by the Shandong, commissioned by China in 2019, Taiwan Defence Minister Wellington Koo said they had a “full grasp” of the ship’s movements. “It did not pass through the Bashi Channel,” he said, referring to the water-

way that separates Taiwan from the Philippines and is the usual route Chinese warships and warplanes take when they head into the Pacific. “It went further south, through the Balintang Channel, to the Western Pacific,” Koo added, a waterway between the Philippines’ Batanes and Babuyan Islands. China’s defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment. The Philippines military said it was concerned with the deployment of the Chinese carrier group. “We emphasise the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the region and urge all parties to adhere to international laws and norms,” said spokesperson Francel Margareth Padilla.

Thailand announces new Senate, replacing army-named lawmakers

Thailand’s election commission yesterday endorsed 200 new senators who will replace a military-appointed upper house, revealing a new legislative body that analysts say could make it harder for the embattled ruling Pheu Thai party to govern. The new upper house will not have a role in voting to approve who becomes prime minister, but will retain the power to vet laws and appoint crucial members of powerful organisations like the election commission and the constitutional court. Election commission secretary-general Sawaeng Boonmee said that there had been a delay in announcing the results of a complex Senate selection process that ended last month because of a number of complaints, which have now been examined. “The election commission has passed a resolution to endorse 200 senators,” Sawaeng said.



Students block roads as they protest to demand a merit-based system for civil service jobs in Dhaka, Bangladesh, yesterday.

Bangladesh suspends job quotas after protests

AFP
Dhaka

Bangladesh’s top court yesterday temporarily suspended quotas for coveted government jobs after thousands of students staged nationwide protests against what they call a discriminatory system, lawyers said. The quota system reserves more than half of well-paid and massively over-subscribed civil service posts, totalling hundreds of thousands of government jobs, for specific groups including children of liberation heroes. Students launched protests earlier this month, demanding a merit-based system, with demonstrations yesterday blocking highways and railway lines. “We will not return to classrooms until our demand is met,” protest leader Rasel Ahmed of

Chittagong University said. The quota system was abolished in 2018 after weeks of protests, but reinstated in June by Dhaka’s High Court, sparking fury from students. The Supreme Court yesterday suspended that order for a month, said lawyer Shah Monjurul Hoque, who represents two students seeking to end the quota system. Hoque said chief justice Obaidul Hassan had also requested that students return to class. Despite the call, student groups continued to block key highways and railway tracks, bringing traffic movement in much of the capital Dhaka and several major cities to a halt. “This (court) order is temporary. We want a permanent executive order from the government, saying that the quotas are abolished, except some quotas for the disabled and minorities,” said Parvez Mosharraf, a student at Dhaka University.

Manila probes mayor’s alleged ties to Chinese crime

Reuters
Manila

The Philippine senate yesterday threatened to arrest a small town mayor for contempt during a hearing investigating her alleged ties with Chinese criminal syndicates, a case that has captivated the nation amid tensions between Manila and Beijing. The arrest threat came after the mayor, Alice Guo, failed to appear for a second consecutive hearing, citing stress. The case that began in March, when authorities raided a casino in Guo’s sleepy farming town of Bam-

ban, has shed light on criminal activity in the mostly Chinese-backed online casino industry in the Philippines. It gained national attention after one senator questioned whether Guo might not have been born in the Philippines and could even be a Chinese “asset”, an accusation she denied. She has also denied links to criminals, saying she is a natural-born Philippine citizen. She has not been charged with any crime related to illegal gambling. Guo did not respond to request for comment but wrote to the senate that she was the subject of “malicious accusations”. Guo’s case comes at a time of

growing Philippine suspicion about China’s activities following an increasingly tense dispute over reefs and shoals in the busy waterway of the South China Sea, where both nations have claims. It has boosted calls for a crackdown on Philippine offshore gambling operators, or POGOs, mostly run by Chinese nationals to serve clients in China, which flourished during the tenure of former President Rodrigo Duterte, but have since drawn scrutiny. The senate cited Guo in contempt for failing to appear and senator Risa Hontiveros, who is leading the investigation, said she would set in motion steps to get a warrant for her arrest. Guo’s legal team yesterday

asked the Supreme Court to nullify the summons. “To Alice Guo, we will arrest you and you will attend the next hearing,” said Hontiveros, who told a previous hearing that Guo might have been born in China, although she gave no proof. The investigation began after a police raid revealed a scam centre operating out of a facility built on land partially owned by Guo. It was one of many that have sprung up across Southeast Asia in recent years. The raid uncovered hundreds of trafficked workers including foreign nationals, spurring a human trafficking complaint against Guo from an agency battling organised crime.

Guo has said she sold her stake in the business before she was elected in 2022 and had no knowledge of criminality. Officials have turned a searchlight on her background since. The senate heard testimony yesterday that appeared to contradict Guo’s account, with senator Sherwin Gatchalian saying records had been found that showed Guo attended grade school in the Philippines registered as a Chinese national. Guo has said she was home-schooled. Her lawyer was not present at the hearing and did not respond to a request for comment. The National Bureau of Investigation said Guo’s fingerprints matched those of a Chinese national who en-

tered the country as a teenager. The solicitor general is seeking to cancel her birth certificate and she has been suspended from her post during the investigation. The senate committee urged the immigration agency to stop Guo from leaving the Philippines. Earlier hearings grilled Guo about her background. After she was unable to recall details of her childhood, Hontiveros asked if she was an “asset” for China. In May, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr told reporters, “No one knows her. We wonder where she came from. That’s why we are investigating this, together with the Bureau of Immigration, because of the questions about her citizenship.”

UK police hunt suspect after three women killed

AFP
Bushey, United Kingdom

UK police were yesterday searching for a suspect who may have a crossbow after the wife and two daughters of a BBC radio racing commentator were killed in a suspected “target-

ed” attack. Kyle Clifford, 26, from Enfield in north London, is wanted in connection with the deaths of the three women in the town of Bushey, north of London, on Tuesday night.
The victims were Carol Hunt, the 61-year-old wife of BBC radio and Sky Sports racing commentator John Hunt, and their two daugh-

ters, Louise, 25, and Hannah, 28, the broadcasters said.
Local police said officers were called to a house in the leafy commuter town where the three women were pronounced dead at the scene.
Chief superintendent Jon Simpson said armed officers and specialist search teams were involved in the manhunt, with the suspect

believed to be in north London or around Bushey.
Simpson also urged Clifford to contact police and warned the public not to approach the suspect.
He called it “a horrific incident involving what is currently believed to be a crossbow, but other weapons may also have been used.”
A primary school in nearby En-

field kept children indoors during the police search.
There is no licence required to own a crossbow in the UK, but it is illegal to carry one in public without a reasonable excuse.
Interior Minister Yvette Cooper called the deaths “truly shocking” and said she was being kept updated about the inquiry.

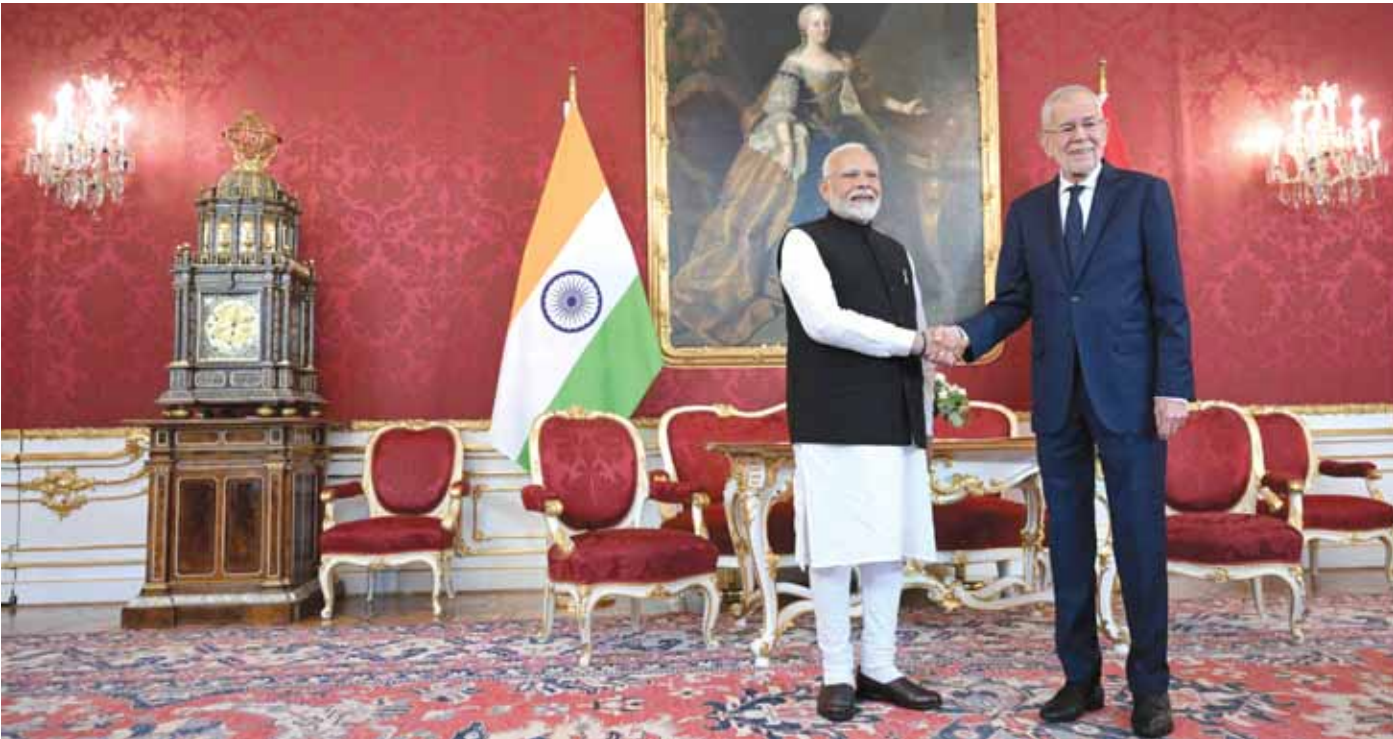
A spokeswoman for her department said legislation was “under constant review and a call for evidence was launched earlier this year to look at whether further controls on crossbows should be introduced.”
She said the minister would “swiftly consider the findings to see if laws need to be tightened further”.

India has no right to develop border region, claims China

Reuters
Beijing

India has no right to carry out development in the area China calls South Tibet, China’s foreign ministry said yesterday in response to a report on New Delhi’s plans to speed up hydropower projects in the border state.
“South Tibet is China’s territory,” a foreign ministry spokesman said in a statement.
It said India had no right to carry out development there and the establishment of what India calls Arunachal Pradesh on Chinese territory is “illegal and invalid”.
India plans to spend \$1bn to expedite the construction of 12 hydropower stations in the state.
The federal finance ministry under Nirmala Sitharaman recently approved up to Rs7.5bn (\$89.85mn) in financial assistance to each hydropower project in the northeastern region, the sources said.
Under the scheme, about Rs-90bn rupees will likely be allotted for the 12 hydropower projects in Arunachal Pradesh, said sources, who have direct knowledge of the matter.
The scheme is likely to support northeastern states and help them finance equity holdings in the projects they host. Having state governments on board generally helps in expediting regula-

tory clearances, locals rehabilitation and negotiations on sharing electricity with the host state.
The plans for the hydropower stations are expected to be announced in the 2024-2025 federal budget that Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government will unveil on July 23, the sources said, declining to be named as the information remained confidential.
Last August, the government awarded contracts to state-run firms NHPC and Neepeco for the construction of the 11.5-gigawatt-capacity plants entailing an estimated investment of \$11bn, as part of a broader project to develop infrastructure in the border region.
The technologies will enable, still, all of us to enjoy fashion because isn’t that at the end of the day everyone wants to be looking good.
India’s foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on China’s statement.
India says Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of the country, but China says it is a part of southern Tibet, and has objected to Indian infrastructure projects there.
Last week, India Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Kazakhstan where the two agreed to intensify efforts to resolve issues along their border.



Austria’s President Alexander Van der Bellen and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi meet at the Hofburg Palace in Vienna, yesterday.

‘No disagreements’ between Putin, Modi at Moscow meet

Reuters
Moscow

Both India and Russia yesterday denied there had been any disagreement between President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at their talks in Moscow this week.
Modi delivered an implicit rebuke to Putin on Tuesday, the day after a lethal strike on a children’s hospital in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, when he told him the death of innocent children was painful and terrifying.
Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters a decision to cancel a session of talks between Russian and Indian delegations was taken for scheduling reasons and because the entire agenda had been covered.

“This has absolutely nothing to do with any disagreements or problematic situations,” he said.
India’s Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra denied reports of friction between the two leaders, saying they were incorrect and misleading.
He also denied there were any cancellations during the visit, saying the two leaders “far exceeded” the time planned for their meetings.
“To the best of my knowledge there were no cancellations of any particular programming element during the prime minister’s visit to Moscow,” Kwatra said at a press briefing in Vienna.
“Whether it is war, conflict or a terrorist attack, any person who believes in humanity is pained when there is loss of lives,” Modi said in

Moscow on Tuesday, in remarks made during a meeting with Putin.
Prime Minister Modi yesterday reiterated in Vienna that India stands ready to give all possible support to restoring peace to war-torn Ukraine.
Modi arrived in Vienna after talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, where the Indian leader urged “peace through dialogue”, saying that “war cannot solve problems”.
Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky criticised a photo of Modi hugging Putin during the visit, saying it was “a devastating blow to peace”.
“This is not an age of war. Problems cannot be solved on the battlefield,” Modi told reporters in Vienna alongside Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer.

18 killed as bus rams tanker in India: police

At least 18 people died and 19 were injured when a bus collided with a milk tanker in northern India’s Uttar Pradesh state early yesterday, police said.
“The bus rammed into the tanker from behind killing 18 people and leaving 19 others injured,” Zulfiqaar Ali, from the district police chief’s office, said.
Three women and one child were among those killed in the accident, the police said.
Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath called the smash “heart-wrenching”.
The bus was on its way to the capital New Delhi from the eastern state of Bihar, broadcaster NDTV reported.
The impact of the collision was so huge that the people were flung out of the vehicle, the police said. Visuals from the scene showed bodies on the ground, twisted scraps of metal, shattered glass and destroyed belongings.

Ambani home decorated ahead of wedding



Antilia, the house of Indian businessman Mukesh Ambani, is decorated ahead of his son Anant Ambani’s wedding with Radhika Merchant, in Mumbai, India, yesterday.

Room behind Buckingham Palace balcony open to public

AFP
London

The room behind Buckingham Palace’s famous balcony opens to the public for the first time next week, giving a rare glimpse into one of the royal residence’s inner sanctums.
For decades the royal family has been seen emerging from the room after coronations, weddings and other landmark occasions.
From the appearance of World War II leader Winston Churchill alongside the royal family in 1945 to the wedding of King Charles III and Princess Diana in 1981, the balcony and the room behind it has repeatedly played witness to history.
But despite endless images of the balcony, the room itself has always been kept under wraps.

Charles most recently appeared on it following his birthday parade last month along with his daughter-in-law Catherine, Princess of Wales.
The 42-year-old princess’s presence drew huge interest as it was her first appearance at an official royal event since she announced she was undergoing cancer treatment earlier this year.
Visitors will be able to see the room as part of a tour of the palace’s east wing -- the first time it has been opened to the public since it was created around 175 years ago.
Almost 6,000 tickets for the new tour were snapped up within hours of going on sale in April.
The wing was added between 1847-49 to accommodate the growing family of Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert.

UK’s under-fire water industry braced for regulatory showdown

Reuters
London

Britain’s under-fire water companies are braced for a reckoning when the industry’s regulator today sets out the level of bill increases they will be permitted, amid public outrage over rising costs and worsening pollution.
The trade-off between price hikes, investment and the environment will test the country’s new Labour government, and will illustrate the challenges of managing the privatised water industry, particularly as Thames Water - the

biggest supplier - teeters on the brink of collapse.
Water companies have routinely released sewage into rivers and seas, which have made Britain’s waters increasingly dirty in the last five years, putting the regulator, Ofwat, under intense pressure to act.
It will publish its initial decision on how much the dozen or so water companies can charge customers for the 2025-30 period before a final decision in December.
Ofwat said Thames has asked for a 44% increase in bills over the period, excluding inflation, while other providers have sought varying amounts, from Southern Water’s 73% hike to Severn Trent’s 36% rise

and United Utilities’ 25% rise.
The companies say the bill hikes are needed to upgrade ageing pipe networks and help accommodate a growing UK population, and say more frequent droughts and storms have helped cause sewage spills.
But critics of the industry, privatised in 1989, argue that the companies have under-invested for decades while taking out billions of pounds in dividends for shareholders and paying large bonuses to executives.
“We want the water bill payer protected and for essential infrastructure funding to come from investors and lenders who have, until now, profited from pollution,”

James Wallace, CEO of environmental group River Action UK, said.
While the government might publicly want the regulator to take a tough line on the water companies, it also needs investors onside as newly-elected Prime Minister Keir Starmer seeks tens of billions of pounds of private investment to upgrade infrastructure and revive Britain’s economic growth.
The new government is setting up a National Wealth Fund which wants to attract private investment, to the tune of £3 of private money for every pound from public funds, for clean energy and other projects.
Thames Water, which supplies a quarter of Britain’s population, has

a £15bn (\$19bn) debt pile and is at risk of collapse next year unless it can convince reluctant shareholders, bond investors plus new investors to stump up more cash.
“Thames is a high profile asset and if Thames isn’t dealt with carefully then that could influence investor sentiment,” said Nalaka De Silva, head of private market solutions at fund manager abrdn.
“What they need to do is basically convey a message that the policy and regulatory environment is stable.”
A Thames collapse could spook investors in the water sector as well as further afield in regulated sectors like energy where Britain also needs

investment. In 2019, Ofwat agreed a plan for average water bills to fall by 12% before inflation over the five years.
But since then, both inflation and interest rates have jumped, making price rises in the next period all but inevitable to allow investors to make returns.
A number of major international funds have already sold out of Thames bonds in recent months, filings data shows, after its parent company Kemble Water defaulted in April amid a standoff with shareholders over providing more equity.
Some investors blame Ofwat for allowing the crisis at Thames to develop.

CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

- P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- editor@gulf-times.com
- 44350478 (News),
- 44466404 (Sport),
- 44466636 (Home delivery)
- 44350474
- facebook.com/gulftimes
- twitter.com/gulftimes_Qatar
- instagram.com/gulftimes
- youtube.com/GulftimesVideos

GULF TIMES

Australia, New Zealand property markets face creeping climate risks

When floods hit the eastern Australian town of Lismore two years ago, Adam Bailey lost all the historic collections from his antique store, including rare photos of the Dardanelles taken during World War One.

Now, when it rains at night, he can't sleep. If he wants to insure his new store and its contents at a nearby location, he needs to fork out almost A\$80,000 (\$53,272.00) — peace of mind he says he cannot afford.

"I have got no insurance at all — if the flood was to come again that would be it for me," said Bailey, a Lismore resident since 1988 who now lives upstairs from his new store.

The deadly floods knocked 30% off the prices of low-lying properties in Lismore, a town of 44,000, and reflect the growing risks climate-related disasters pose to hot real estate markets Down Under as dwellings and businesses in affected areas become harder to insure.

Policymakers, researchers and property experts warn climate change is a risk that home buyers in Australia and New Zealand have not priced in as they pursue lifestyles near the water or bushland or seek simply to get onto the property ladder.

Natural disasters could wipe about A\$800bn off Australia's housing market by 2030 or about 6.7% of the total value, climate risk specialist XDI said in data shared with Reuters.

In New Zealand, around 20% of houses are on floodplains, according to research by Climate Sigma.

There are few signs of systemic problems in the housing economy because of climate risks

amplifying the threat to the economy, banks and the people. Among OECD nations, Australians have the second-highest amount of wealth in real estate in mean US dollar terms while New Zealand also ranks above average.

For now, there are few signs of systemic problems in the housing economy because of climate risks.

However, pockets of pain are springing up, such as Lismore, where land prices halved and locals told Reuters many people have left town with flood cover increasingly out of reach.

Across the Tasman Sea, the coastal settlement of Haumoana near some of New Zealand's best wineries on the east coast of the North Island is one of the first communities to bear the brunt of inundation.

Earlier this year, a beachfront property was listed for sale with a starting bid of NZ\$1. It sold for NZ\$100,000 (\$61,310.00), less than half its local government value, in part because the house on the site was pulled down.

Research by Australian property website Domain showed each increase in bushfire risk rating decreased a home's value by 2%, while each percentage point rise in the chance of a 50-centimetre flood led to an 0.8% drop in the property's value.

Insurance premiums for climate risk are reaching a point where some homeowners can no longer afford to protect their homes, industry experts say.

In an ongoing government inquiry, top insurer Allianz Australia revealed about 74% of customers with the highest flood rating did not purchase flood cover last year, up from 63% before. For some highly exposed communities, such as the river regions around Lismore, 90% had no flood cover.

Climate Council expects 4% of Australian properties will be uninsurable by 2030. In the first quarter of the year, insurance premiums surged 16.4% — the biggest annual increase in 23 years.

In New Zealand, around 1,000 properties are uninsurable and being bought by authorities following major floods in 2023.

Insurance premiums have doubled in the past 10 years due to growing climate risk and high construction costs, Kerry Watt, director of financial stability assessment and strategy at the Reserve Bank of New Zealand.

"What we would like people to do is to start to take more notice of the specific risks to the properties they might be buying," Watt said.

To be sure, quantifying the exact impact of natural disaster risk on property prices is obscured by other factors, chiefly demand and mortgage rates. — Reuters

To Advertise

gtadv@gulf-times.com

Display

44466621 44418811

Classified

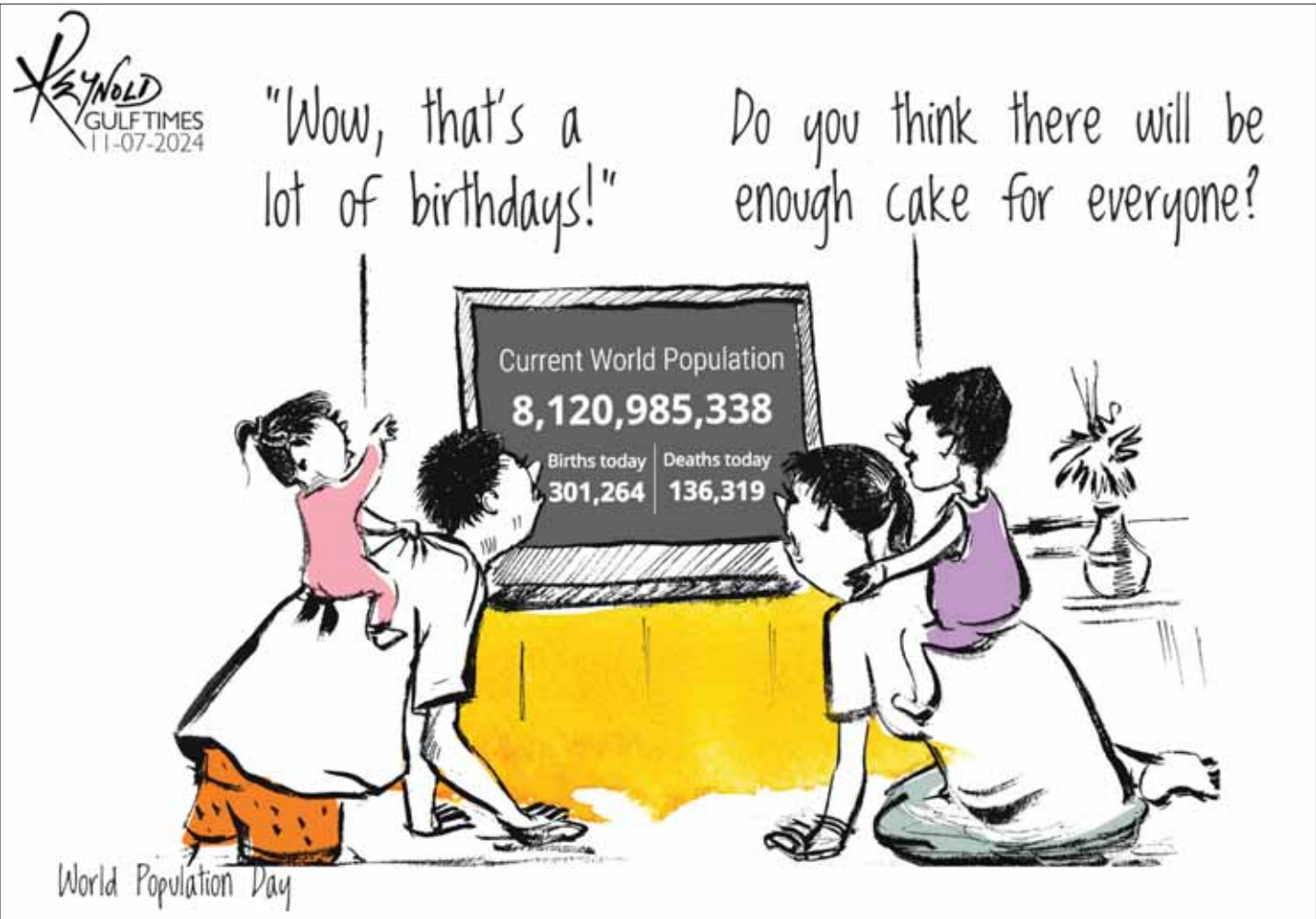
44466609 44418811

gtcad@gulf-times.com

Subscription

circulation@gulf-times.com

© 2024 Gulf Times. All rights reserved



‘No safe place’: Women flee conscription risk in Myanmar

By Emily Fishbein and Myo Thazin Nwe

Estelle knew she had to flee Myanmar. The military junta had just announced it would introduce conscription to bolster its forces against myriad armed groups challenging its power, and she was terrified she would be forced to fight.

The former government worker, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, is among thousands of people who have decided to leave their homes since the mandatory military service law was announced in February, and then came into effect in April.

Some people have risked their lives to trek through jungles and ford rivers, crossing into neighbouring countries without documentation because the military has made it increasingly difficult to leave through formal channels.

Others have fled to areas under the control of armed groups fighting against the military, or have joined these groups themselves.

The mass exodus is taking place as the military regime faces its most serious crisis since it took power in a 2021 coup, which sparked widespread protests. The street demonstrations, which were met with a brutal crackdown, morphed into an armed resistance movement that has seen newer anti-coup forces join with many of Myanmar's autonomy-seeking ethnic armed groups, posing the most significant challenge to the military in decades.

The UN Human Rights Office says more than 5,000 people have been killed by the military since the coup, including more than 1,000 women. Around 3 million people have been displaced. Estelle had to sneak out of the country because she had joined a countrywide Civil Disobedience Movement after the coup and faced international travel restrictions as a result.

She and a friend paid the equivalent of around \$280 each in Myanmar's kyat currency to travel by car from the city of Mawlamyine to the border with Thailand and then hired a smuggler to take them across the Moel River.

"It was just the two of us girls travelling with a man we didn't know," Estelle said. "We were scared we would be arrested or trafficked."

But they took the risk anyway despite the fact that, at 36, Estelle falls outside the age range for conscription. A few days after its initial announcement, the junta also pledged to exempt women for the time being.

But Estelle is not going back. "That's just words," she said. "We never know when the time will come when they will make difficulties for us."

The junta has been accused by Western governments of systematic atrocities, including executions and torture, and excessive use of air strikes and artillery in civilian areas. It has dismissed that as misinformation and says it is targeting "terrorists".

The junta said it planned to call up 5,000 people by the end of April and 60,000 by the end of the year. Men aged 18-35 and women aged 18 to 27 are eligible, with the age limit extending to 45 for men and 35 for women in the case of specialists like doctors.

In a report published in July, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, said women's rights organisations had identified increasing reports of the trafficking of women and girls following the enactment of the conscription law.

"Women are using dangerous channels to flee the country amid fears of conscription, putting them at high risk of trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Conscription exemptions for married women also raise the risk of early and forced marriage for girls and women," Andrews wrote.

For Catherine, whose name has also been changed for security reasons, the writing is on the wall.

"The military is weak, so it's calling (up) young people. It's not OK for us, and we don't accept it," the 23-year-old florist and office worker said in a telephone interview from the northern city of Myitkyina.

"Military conscription laws in other countries are designed to protect and defend their nations against external threats, but in our country, this law is intended to force us to kill our own people."

Catherine and her friends attempt to make light of the situation, but they are worried.

"We joke that the hands that once held flowers will hold guns now," she said. "Although we are joking, we feel deeply concerned and disappointed that it has come to this situation."

Catherine is trying to get a passport but is struggling as the demand for passports has surged since February. The military call-up comes on top of an economic crisis that has sent the currency spiralling lower and caused unemployment to surge. The World Bank says women have been particularly hard hit by the economic downturn that followed the Covid pandemic and the coup.

Moon Nay Li, joint general secretary for advocacy group the Women's League of Burma, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that displaced women could be pushed into early or forced marriage, and also face heightened risks of domestic violence.

"There is no safe place for women and girls... they have to survive in risky situations," she said.

In his report, UN Special Rapporteur Andrews said women and girls were acutely vulnerable to discrimination, violence, and exploitation since the coup. Women interviewed by the Thomson Reuters Foundation said a sense of unease has seeped into their everyday lives.

"Sometimes, I feel mentally exhausted," said Catherine. "I'm scared to go out alone, even to get a coffee."

And in the past months, there have been signs that their exemption from military service may be coming to an end.

Several media have said that local-level officials serving under the military's administration were drawing up lists of women who were eligible to be called up to the army.

The military has denied these claims - describing them as "fake news" — but an analysis of military pamphlets and pro-military media channels conducted by the Burma Affairs and Conflict Study (BACS) advocacy group found that women were likely to be included in the fifth batch of conscripts, due to be called up in August.

Min Htet Aung, a lead researcher for BACS, said women would face unique risks if forced to serve.

"The Myanmar military is an organisation dominated by patriarchy and male chauvinism. Consequently, women who join the military may face discrimination and sexual abuse," he said in an emailed response to questions.

Women were at the forefront of resistance to the 2021 coup and have also joined armed groups fighting the military. Around one-fifth of the 20,000 political prisoners in Myanmar are female, according to a local rights group.

Women from the Rohingya, a mostly Muslim minority from Myanmar's Rakhine State, have

also faced fresh hardships after years of abuses. In 2017, a violent military crackdown against the Rohingya sent 730,000 people fleeing to Bangladesh. The United Nations described the action as genocidal in intent.

Although Rohingya are not eligible for conscription under the law because they are denied citizenship, the military has conscripted more than 1,000 Rohingya men and boys since February using methods including abduction, threats and false promises of citizenship, according to a Human Rights Watch report.

And this has had an effect on women and the economic welfare of their households.

"Families are worried... Women don't want their husbands to go," said Sofia, a Rohingya women's protection specialist in Rakhine State, who also used a pseudonym for security reasons.

On May 3, the military said men of conscription age would no longer be allowed to seek employment abroad, and those avoiding conscription would face three years in jail.

Min Htet Aung said the army was snatching people from their homes, roadside checkpoints, tea shops and bars and sometimes soldiers threatened the parents of people who had fled, a tactic it also uses against opponents.

"The junta propagates the notion that they only recruit volunteers. However, in reality, few people willingly enlist. Most are recruited by force," said Min Htet Aung.

The International Organisation for Migration in Thailand said it had seen a steady increase in people crossing the border from Myanmar, including a nearly 30% increase between January and February. Women were more likely than men to enter without official documentation, it added. But it's not just military conscription that some women have to fear.

In the eastern Shan State, at least three ethnic armed groups have announced mandatory service policies in recent months and two conscript women.

Fear of being conscripted into an ethnic armed group drove 16-year-old Christine, who also did not give her real name for security reasons, from her home in Lashio township in February after one of the armed groups there told her grandmother that Christine and her siblings would have to serve in its forces.

They fled the next day and Christine headed to Malaysia. She described hiding in the back of a cargo truck and walking through mountains at night. She is now in Kuala Lumpur where she is terrified of being arrested by immigration officials.

"I don't have many difficulties as long as I don't leave my room," she said. "It's not safe around here."

Estelle also found it hard to get by in Thailand because she did not enter legally. But she has no intention of going home while the junta remains in power.

"I hope the revolution will succeed quickly and that I can return home quickly!" — Thomson Reuters Foundation



Biden, Nato to spur Ukraine, alliance

Communique cites at least €40bn in aid

Reuters
Washington

US President Joe Biden and leaders of other Nato member states are set to announce new aid and stress a membership pledge for Ukraine at a summit in Washington yesterday after Biden vowed to stand by Kyiv in its fight against Russia's invasion.

A communique, expected to be released later yesterday, said the allies intend to provide Ukraine with at least €40bn (\$43.28bn) in military aid within the next year, but stopped short of the multi-year commitment Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg had sought.

The document, seen by Reuters, also strengthened past Nato lan-

guage on China, calling it a "decisive enabler" of Russia's war effort in Ukraine and saying Beijing continues to pose systemic challenges to Euro-Atlantic security.

Biden said in a speech on Tuesday that Nato was "stronger than it's ever been" and that Ukraine can and will stop Russian President Vladimir Putin "with our full, collective support".

Yesterday, he said he was pleased all Nato members were pledging to expand their industrial bases and to develop plans for defence production at home.

"We cannot allow the alliance to fall behind," Biden said. "We can and will defend every inch of Nato territory and we'll do it together."

Biden, 81, has faced questions about his fitness for office after fumbling a June 27 debate and hopes the Nato spotlight will help him stage a comeback of sorts, surrounded by allied leaders he has spent his three years in office cultivating.

However, November's US presi-

dential election could presage a sharp change in Washington's support for Ukraine and Nato. Republican candidate Donald Trump, 78, has questioned the amount of aid given to Ukraine to fight Russia's invasion and US support for allies generally.

Yesterday, Trump told Fox News Radio he would not pull the US out of Nato but reiterated that he wanted members to pay more. "I just want them to pay their bills. We're protecting Europe. They take advantage of us very badly," he said.

Trump had pressed congressional Republicans to stall military aid for Ukraine before later reversing course.

Uncertainty about US leadership has unsettled Nato allies.

"If there's one thing that I'm concerned about with the United States, it's the polarization of the political climate — it is, I have to admit, very toxic," Alexander Stubb, president of Nato member Finland, told reporters.



US President Joe Biden speaks during a meeting at Nato's 75th anniversary summit in Washington. (Reuters)

While Biden has been seeking to rally allies and domestic support, several high-ranking European officials met a top foreign policy adviser to Trump during the summit.

Stoltenberg told reporters he expected allies will agree upon a "substantial" package for Kyiv that would involve a new Nato command for Ukraine to provide security assistance and training.

There would be new announce-

ments of immediate military support, he said, including air defence and moves to ensure full interoperability between Ukrainian forces and Nato forces.

Nato members have announced the delivery of five additional Patriot and other strategic air defence systems to help Ukraine.

The communique says the alliance will continue to support Ukraine "on its irreversible path to

full Euro-Atlantic integration, including Nato membership". That language had been a major point of contention among the allies.

It called on China to cease material and political support for Russia's war effort. It expressed concern about China's space capabilities, referenced rapid expansion of its nuclear arsenal, and urged Beijing to engage in strategic risk reduction talks.

Nato begins sending F-16 jets in new support for Ukraine

AFP
Washington

Nato allies announced yesterday they had started the long-promised transfer of F-16 jets to Ukraine as leaders meet for a summit in Washington clouded by political uncertainties in the United States.

With the pomp of the three-day gathering in the US capital, President Joe Biden is aiming to rally the West and also reassure US voters amid pre-election scrutiny on whether at 81 — six years older than the alliance — he remains fit for the job.

Biden individually welcomed the other 31 leaders of the alliance before urging them to keep pace with Russia's military production which has stepped up sharply in the two years since President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine.

"We can — and will — defend every inch of Nato territory and we'll do it together," Biden told the North Atlantic Council, the formal decision-making body of the alliance, convened in an air-conditioned convention centre as Washington sweltered in a heat wave.

Biden announced that Denmark and The Netherlands had begun sending US-made F-16 jets to Ukraine — making good on a key promise last year to Kyiv, which has struggled to gain parity in the air with Russia.

Biden earlier announced new air defence systems for Ukraine and said the United States had agreed to place long-range missiles periodically in Germany.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the F-16 transfer

"concentrates Vladimir Putin's mind on the fact that he will not outlast Ukraine, he will not outlast us and, if he persists, the damage that will continue to be done to Russia and its interests will only deepen."

"The quickest way to get to peace is through a strong Ukraine," Blinken said.

But Donald Trump, who is edging out Biden in recent polls, has mused about bringing a quick peace settlement by forcing Ukraine to surrender territory to Russia.

The Republican mogul has repeatedly questioned the utility of Nato — formed in 1949 as collective defence against Moscow — which he sees as an unfair burden on the United States.

On the eve of the summit, Russia fired a barrage of missiles on Ukraine, killing dozens, including in Kyiv where a children's hospital was reduced to debris.

Biden invited to the summit Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who voiced gratitude for the F-16s.

The new aircraft will "bring just and lasting peace closer, demonstrating that terror must fail," Zelensky wrote on social media.

The summit will look for ways to "Trump-proof" the alliance including by having Nato itself take over coordination of arms delivery from the United States.

Outgoing Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg has also secured a pledge to keep supplying arms at the same rate — some €40bn (\$43bn) annually — that Nato members have been since Russia invaded.

"I expect that regardless of the outcome of the US elections,

the US will remain a strong and staunch Nato ally," Stoltenberg said as leaders gathered for the summit.

Biden has also invited four key Pacific partners — Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand — as he seeks to increase Nato's role in managing a rising China.

Ukraine wants firm assurances that it will one day join Nato, which considers an attack on any member an attack on all.

Several diplomats said negotiations had settled on wording of a statement that will voice support for Ukraine's "irreversible path to full Euro-Atlantic integration, including Nato membership."

Kyiv's membership enjoys wide backing from Baltic and Eastern European nations still haunted by decades under the Soviet yoke.

But Biden and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz have led opposition, concerned that the alliance would effectively be entering war with nuclear-armed Russia as it occupies swathes of Ukraine.

President Alexander Stubb of Finland — which, like Sweden, joined Nato following Russia's invasion of Ukraine — hailed the language as a message to Putin that he is failing in his goal of pushing back the alliance.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, visiting days after his Labour Party swept to power, promised Zelensky that Britain — unlike the United States — was united across partisan lines on supporting Ukraine.

The summit, Starmer told reporters, will show Putin that Nato is "bigger now than it's ever been, more united than it's ever been, and absolutely clear-eyed about the threat of Russian aggression."

US to start deploying long-range weapons in Germany in 2026

The United States will start deploying long-range fire capabilities in Germany in 2026 in an effort to demonstrate its commitment to Nato and European defence, the United States and Germany said in a joint statement yesterday. The United States' "episodic deployments" are in preparation for longer-term stationing of such capabilities that will include SM-6, Tomahawk cruise missiles and developmental hypersonic weapons that have a longer range than current capabilities in Europe, the two countries said. Ground-based missiles with a range exceeding 500km were banned until 2019 under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty signed by the Soviet Union's Mikhail Gorbachev and former US president Ronald Reagan in 1987. It marked the first time the two superpowers had agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals and eliminated a whole category of weapons. Falling in line with the signatories, Germany, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic destroyed

their missiles in the 1990s, to be followed later by Slovakia and Bulgaria. The United States withdrew from the INF Treaty in 2019 saying that Moscow was violating the accord, citing Russia's development of the 9M729 ground-launched cruise missile, known in Nato as the SSC-8. The Kremlin repeatedly denied the accusation and then imposed a moratorium on its own development of missiles previously banned by the INF treaty — ground-based ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500-5,500km. At the end of June, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow should resume production of intermediate and shorter range nuclear-capable missiles after the United States brought similar missiles to Europe and Asia. Putin said Russia had pledged not to deploy such missiles but that the United States had resumed their production, brought them to Denmark for exercises and also taken them to the Philippines.

Peace chance in Ukraine if Trump returns: Hungary

Hungary sees a potential return of former US president Donald Trump as a "chance for peace" in Ukraine, Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto (pictured) said yesterday as a Nato summit began with most allies hoping to send a firm message of support for Kyiv. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban visited Moscow last week on what he called a peace mission, but the initiative angered some of Budapest's fellow Nato allies, who said the trip handed legitimacy to Russian President Vladimir Putin's claims to Ukrainian territory seized since Russia's 2022 invasion. The meeting of Nato leaders takes place in Washington as US President Joe Biden is under pressure after a disastrous June 27 debate that boosted Trump in the polls ahead of a November 5 election and raised concerns



among allies about how the Republican candidate would approach the alliance and the war in Ukraine. In an interview with Reuters in Washington, Szijjarto said Hungary's aim was to bring an end to the war through peace talks involving both Russia and Ukraine. "I think a very strong external impact must take place in order to make them negotiate at least," Szijjarto said. "Who

has the chance for that in the upcoming period? That's only President Trump if he is elected." Orban's recent meetings with both Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had demonstrated the vast distance separating the two sides, and other Western leaders were unwilling or unable to bring them together, he said. Trump has said he would quickly end the war. He has not offered a detailed plan to achieve that, but Reuters reported last month that advisers to the former president had presented him with a plan to end the war in part by conditioning any future aid to Kyiv on Ukraine joining peace talks. "We see a chance for peace if President Trump is winning. We see a chance for good Hungary-US relationships if President Trump is winning," he said.

Pakistan extends Afghan refugees' right to remain

AFP
Islamabad

Some 1.45mn Afghan refugees in Pakistan will be allowed to stay for another year, Islamabad said yesterday, but it insisted evictions of undocumented migrants would continue.

More than 600,000 Afghans have fled Pakistan since Islamabad last year ordered undocumented migrants to leave or face arrest as relations with Kabul soured over security.

Human rights monitors warned those sent to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan were given little support and some faced persecution by Kabul's new rulers.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's cabinet said it approved an extension until June 2025 for the 1.45mn Afghan refugees legally residing in the country who hold Proof of Registration cards. The cards expired at the end of last month, leaving holders without legal certainty about their right to remain in Pakistan.

Not all Afghan citizens in Pakistan have such cards and even those who do hold them have reported being harassed and intimidated to leave the country. Islamabad's an-

nouncement came the day after a three-day visit by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Filippo Grandi.

In a statement on Tuesday, the UNHCR said Grandi "expressed appreciation that the 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan' had been suspended".

However a foreign office spokeswoman said "this is not true".

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch told reporters in a statement: "No such understanding has been given by Pakistan to the UNHCR" and the scheme "remains in place and is being implemented in an orderly and phased manner".

Meanwhile, a Pakistani immigration official at the Torkham border crossing said they had begun seizing documents, including refugee registration cards, from departing Afghans.

"We are implementing this directive following instructions from the Ministry of Interior," said the official at the busiest crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"This measure aims to ensure they do not return to Pakistan and instead depart permanently, though they may re-enter after obtaining a visa," he told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Macron urges broad coalition to break political deadlock

AFP
Paris

President Emmanuel Macron yesterday put responsibility on parliament to negotiate a broad coalition reflecting France's "republican institutions" to break the stalemate following an inconclusive snap election.

"Nobody won", Macron said in a written message to voters published in French regional newspapers about the election.

"I am asking all political forces who recognise themselves in the republican institutions, the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, a European orientation and the defence of France's independence, to start a sincere and fair dialogue to build a solid, and by definition pluralist, majority," Macron said.

The formulation appeared designed to exclude Marine Le Pen's far-right RN party, but also implicitly far-left firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon's France Unbowed (LFI), a big portion of the left-wing New Popular Front (NFP) alliance.

The election called by Macron with the aim of "clarifying" the political landscape in the end left France with a hung parliament.

Centrists allied with Macron were looking yesterday for an alliance with the right to counter ambitions by the NFP which emerged, surprisingly, with most seats in the National Assembly.

Prime Minister Gabriel Attal's government will remain in power as Paris makes final preparations for the Olympics, starting in just over two weeks.

But Attal's centrist group in parliament lost ground and the hunt is on for his successor.

French leftists believe that as the largest bloc in the new National Assembly with some 190 seats they are entitled to propose a new prime minister.

"The president refuses to recognise the results of the ballot box which put the New Popular Front ahead in terms of votes and of seats," said Melenchon in a social media post in reaction to Macron's message.

Macron, Melenchon insisted, had to "accept defeat" at the hands of the leftist alliance.

The president's Renaissance outfit, meanwhile, appeared divided as it sought allies in the lower chamber, with some seeking to include forces ranging from the centre left to the right in a broad coalition, and others only wishing to join forces with conservatives.

Until yesterday's letter, Macron had laid low following the election, and was away on Wednesday for a Nato summit in Washington.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, who was also re-elected, told the CNews broadcaster he could support a "right-wing prime minister".

Any contender would have to survive a confidence vote in parliament when it opens for business next week.

The broad leftist NFP alliance including Greens, Socialists, Communists and LFI has said they would suggest a candidate for prime minister by the end of the week.

Divisive LFI leader Melenchon has put forward 33-year-old Clemence Guette, who prepared his programme when he ran for president in 2022.

The more moderate Socialist leader Olivier Faure has also said that he would be willing to lead a cabinet himself.

Pakistan spy agency gets legal cover to intercept phone calls

Pakistan has authorised its army-run spy agency to tap telephone calls and messages, strengthening its key role in the politics of the nation, as opposition politicians and social media users voiced concerns over potential misuse or privacy violations. The powerful military, in a country that has been ruled by the army for almost half its independent history, can make or break governments in Pakistan, and the new powers for its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency raised widespread alarm. Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar told parliament the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications was advised of the change in a July 8 notice. "Anyone who misuses the law will face action," Tarar said on Tuesday, adding that the measure would be restricted to tracking criminal and terrorist activities and the government would ensure it did not infringe on people's lives and privacy. "The federal government, in the interest of national security and in the apprehension of any offence, is pleased to authorise officers...to intercept calls and messages or to trace calls through any telecoms system," said the notice, seen by Reuters.

