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### Summer activity to develop skills

As part of the activities of the fourth week of the summer activity "I Explore", the Friends of the Environment Center, affiliated with the Ministry of Sports and Youth, organised a number of activities that aimed to develop the skills and knowledge of young men and women joining the summer activity. The activities included holding a workshop "Plant and Learn". **Page 12**

### US stresses need for peace in Ukraine

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday emphasised the importance of a "just and enduring peace" for Ukraine in a meeting with Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, the State Department said. The discussion came amid a visit being reportedly planned to Ukraine by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Modi is likely to visit Ukraine in August, various Indian media outlets have reported in recent days, which would be his first visit to the country since Russia invaded in February 2022. **Page 9**

### Turkiye might enter Israel to help Palestinians: Erdogan

President Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday that Turkiye might enter Israel as it had done in the past in Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh, though he did not spell out what sort of intervention he was suggesting. Erdogan, who has been a fierce critic of Israel's offensive in Gaza, started discussing that war during a speech praising his country's defence industry. "We must be very strong so that Israel can't do these ridiculous things to Palestine. Just like we entered Karabakh, just like we entered Libya, we might do similar to them," Erdogan told a meeting of his ruling AK Party in his hometown of Rize.

### 19 dead in Ethiopia boat accident

At least 19 people are dead in Ethiopia after a boat capsized on a river in the country's northwest, a state-run media outlet said yesterday. The tragedy occurred in the Amhara region on Saturday as a group of people were crossing the river Tekeze, which partly forms the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the state-run Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) reported. **Page 6**

# Restraint urged as Israel vows to hit Hezbollah hard

## ●Rocket kills 12 youths in Golan

AFP  
Majdal Shams

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant yesterday vowed to "hit the enemy hard" after rocket fire from Lebanon killed 12 young people in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights and again raised fears that the war in Gaza will spread.

Iran warned Israel any new military "adventures" in Lebanon could lead to "unforeseen consequences".

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the rocket fire and called on all parties to "exercise maximum restraint".

Israel's army called it "the deadliest attack on Israeli civilians" since October 7.

Israel blamed Lebanon's Hezbollah movement for firing a Falaq-1 Iranian rocket but the Iran-backed group - which has regularly targeted Israeli military positions - said it had "no connection" to the incident.

It said, however, that it had fired one such rocket on Saturday toward an Israeli military target in the Golan.

The rocket fire in Majdal Shams, whose population are Arabic-speaking Druze, prompted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to return early from the United States. Upon arrival he went immediately into a security cabinet meeting, his office said.

Smoke rises above Lebanon, amid cross-border hostilities between Hezbollah and Israeli forces, as seen from northern Israel.

He said "Hezbollah will pay a heavy price" for the attack, "a price it has not paid before."

The Israeli foreign ministry said Hezbollah had "crossed all red lines".

In expectation of Israel's retaliation, Hezbollah evacuated several positions close to the border and in eastern Lebanon, a source close to the group said.

An Israeli drone fired two missiles at Taraiyya village in eastern Lebanon, destroying a hangar and a home without causing casualties.

The rocket strike on Majdal Shams hit a football pitch and killed young people who local authorities said were aged 10-16. Israeli police said an 11-year-old boy was still missing. Thousands of residents crowded the town's streets in a tearful funeral ceremony for many of the dead.

The White House meanwhile said the rocket launch was "conducted by Lebanese Hezbollah", adding that "it was their rocket and launched from an area they control".

The UN special co-ordinator for Lebanon, Jeanine Henniss-Plasschaert, and UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) chief Aroldo Lazaro said in a joint statement that intensifying exchanges of fire "could ignite a wider conflagration that would engulf the entire region in a catastrophe beyond belief".

Britain condemned the attack, as did Germany, whose foreign ministry urged "cool heads". **Page 6**

## Marchand wins gold for France

Gold medalist Leon Marchand of France celebrates with silver medalist Tomoyuki Matsushita of Japan during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games men's 400m individual medley victory ceremony in Nanterre, France, yesterday. (Reuters) **Sport Page 1**

# Israeli advance displaces more people in S Gaza

## ●39,324 Palestinians massacred in Gaza

Reuters  
Cairo/Gaza

Israeli forces sent tanks deeper into areas in the Gaza Strip's south yesterday as fighting with Palestinian resistance movement Hamas raged, and Gaza health officials said Israeli military strikes had killed 66 Palestinians across the enclave in the past 24 hours.

Tanks pushed further into the three towns of Al-Karara, Al-Zanna, and Bani Suhaila, in the east of Khan Younis in southern Gaza, and medics said at least nine Palestinians were killed earlier yesterday by Israeli military strikes in those areas.

Residents said fierce fighting could be heard in eastern areas of Khan Younis where the army was operating. The new incursions caused thousands more families to leave their homes and head to overcrowded areas in Al-Mawasi to the west, and north to Deir Al-Balah.

Later yesterday, two separate Israeli air strikes on Khan Younis killed at least 15 Palestinians, medics said.

One air strike on a tent area in the Mawasi district killed five people including a four-month-old girl named Maria Abu Ziada. Al-Mawasi in western Khan Younis is a humanitarian-designated area where the Israeli army has been ordering Palestinians from other places to go.

The Israeli military said it was aware of the report and looking into it.

Palestinian children play near the wreckage of a car in the Al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip.

Another airstrike on a house at the centre of Khan Younis city killed 10 people, health officials said.

The Israeli occupation army's offensive in the Gaza Strip since Oct. 7, 2023, has resulted in the martyrdom of 39,324 Palestinians.

Meanwhile, in Rafah, near the border with Egypt, Israeli forces advanced deeper into northern parts of the city, where they have yet to take full control. In Central Gaza, the Israeli military called upon Gazans to evacuate parts of the Bureij and Shuhada areas.

In the Tel Al-Hawa suburb of Gaza City, an Israeli air strike killed four Palestinians, medics said. Israel has lost 328 soldiers in combat in Gaza. **Page 6**

# HHCS reduces HMC emergency department visits

A comprehensive set of service improvements implemented by Hamad Medical Corporation's Home Health Care Service (HHCS) has led to a reduction in the number of unnecessary visits to emergency departments by registered patients.

The service changes have resulted in the percentage of home healthcare patients visiting an emergency department each month falling from an average of 8% to 5%.

Dr Feras Haddad, senior consultant head of section and lead physician, HHCS, said: "Our Home Health Care Service provides a wide range of healthcare services to more than 2,600 registered patients, most of them over 60 years of age with multiple comorbidities. Our aim is to deliver healthcare and assistance to patients in the comfortable and familiar environment of their home, ultimately reducing their need to

visit a hospital or healthcare facility for their care."

"Since the start of 2021, our HHCS has introduced multiple initiatives to ensure patients receive the best care possible at home and to reduce unnecessary emergency department visits, relieving pressure on hospital beds and enhancing the care experience for patients."

Service improvements include, A patient assigned physician model of care was introduced to improve continuity of care and follow-ups.

Decentralisation of HHCS services across four districts - Al Wakra, Landmark (with satellite in Al Khor), Muaither, in addition to the main centre at Hamad Medical City - has brought the care teams closer to patients' homes.

Initiatives to reduce hospital admissions, including assessing frequent emergency department attenders, active post-discharge

Dr Feras Haddad

Dr Essa al-Sulaiti

Dr Hanadi al-Hamad

reviews to evaluate the patient status after an inpatient admission, and putting care plans in place.

Collaboration with the Elderly Urgent Care Unit at Rumailah Hospital to refer patients with urgent, but non-emergency care needs for rapid access to care.

A feeding tube replacement pathway with the Elderly Urgent Care Unit to avoid patients visiting emergency departments for this service.

Enhancing the multi-disciplinary team approach within HHCS to ensure patients various needs are adequately assessed and met through an integrated plan of care.

Dr Essa al-Sulaiti, medical director, HHCS, said: "Each year the number of visits carried out by our HHCS teams increases and in 2023 we made approximately 80,000 visits to patients' homes. Our multidisciplinary care teams

of doctors, nurses and patient care assistants conduct home visits to perform necessary clinical examinations and review the patient's care plan. Services provided by our teams include regular medical check-ups, medication management, wound care, administering injections, respiratory therapy, and specialist physio and occupational therapy, speech, language and dietician services."

Dr Hanadi al-Hamad, HMC's Deputy Chief for Long-Term Care, Rehabilitation and Geriatrics Care, added: "This trend is expected to continue over the next few decades leading to increased demand on our Home Health care Service. I would like to thank everyone who has played their part in the service improvements that have led to the reduction in emergency department visits by registered home care patients. These initiatives are making a real positive impact on patient care."



## Al-Muraikhi receives copies of credentials of Bahrain and Austrian ambassadors



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received yesterday a copy of the credentials of Bahrain's ambassador to Qatar, Mohamed bin Ali al-Ghatam. HE al-Muraikhi wished the ambassador success in his duties, assuring him of providing all support to advance bilateral relations for a closer co-operation in various fields. (QNA)



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received yesterday a copy of the credentials of Austrian ambassador to Qatar Erika Bernhard. HE al-Muraikhi wished the ambassador success in her duties, assuring her of providing all the support to advance bilateral relations for closer co-operation in various fields. (QNA)

## Amir sends condolences to Saudi King Salman

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia on the death of Prince Abdullah bin Khalid bin Turki bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Saud. ●His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia on the death of the mother of Prince Bandar bin Khalid bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Saud. (QNA)

## Amir sends congratulations to Peru president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to Peru's President Dina Boluarte on the anniversary of her country's Independence Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of congratulations to Prime Minister Gustavo Adrianzen. (QNA)

## 'Basher' service to streamline registration of national workforce in private sector

As part of its commitment to enhancing national workforce participation in the private sector and supporting Qatar National Vision 2030, the Ministry of Labour (MoL) yesterday introduced the 'Basher' service to register the employment procedures of the national workforce in private sector establishments regulated by the Labour Law.

Assistant Undersecretary for National Workforce Affairs at MoL, Shaikha Abdulrahman al-Badi, said

'Basher' is one of many innovative digital services to be launched by the ministry aimed at streamlining procedures for private sector entities and citizens.

Employers can use 'Basher' to submit and track requests for employment contract endorsement, improving efficiency and transparency in the hiring process. Qatari candidates and children of Qatari women can conveniently review, verify and approve their contracts through this platform. (QNA)

## Qatari students attend Language and Culture Summer Camp in Japan



Qatari students (11th grade) who are studying the Japanese language as an optional subject, are attending the Japanese Language and Culture Summer Camp 2024, being held at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and Tsukuba University in Japan.

The camp primarily intends to help students practice the Japanese language, internalise the Japanese culture as well as to engage in wide-ranging activities of the summer programme. This is to further promote their character as well as to increase their awareness of the opportunities available for them to enrol in higher education institutions in Japan, culminating in career chances for them in the future.

The camp's study programme meets the students' needs for Japanese and English languages and is held as part of executing the expansion project in teaching foreign languages for public school students.

Additionally, the programme comprises 60-hour extensive lessons and online lectures, cul-



tural exchange through practising the language with students of Japanese schools, engaging with supervisors as well as organising field, cultural and scientific trips.

The participating students numbering 10, affirmed that

they are glad to participate in the camp and to benefit from its diverse activities to refine their linguistic skills, along with the huge opportunities for self-reliance, in addition to learning and respecting foreign cultures, values and devotion to work. (QNA)



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# Dates Fest launched at Rawabi Hypermarket

Rawabi Hypermarket Izghawa is hosting its first-ever Dates Fest until July 31, a statement said yesterday.

The event was officially opened on July 25 by officials from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in the presence of Zinab Srteb H al-Shammari and Dr Abdalkader Burhan Fyad from Al Rayyan Municipality.

Rawabi Hypermarket officials, including group general manager Kannu Baker, assistant marketing manager Sajith and store manager Ansar P P were present. The festival showcases a wide variety of dates, renowned for their exceptional quality and nutritional benefits. As Qatar's date season is in full swing, the festival offers a timely opportunity for consumers to explore and appreciate the diverse range of date products available.

Baker, said: "On behalf of our management, including chairman M P Abdullah Haji, managing director Mohamed Abdulla and executive director Ajmal Abdullah, I express our enthusiasm for promoting national products in Rawabi stores."

The Dates Fest is showcasing over 30 varieties of dates and date-based products. The wide selection of fresh dates include Al Ghur, Khalas, Shishi, Gurh, Khenizee, Medjool, Kimia, and many others.

"This festival not only celebrates Qatar's agricultural richness but also serves as a platform to educate our community about the health benefits and culinary uses of dates," Baker added.



# talabat relaunches 'Summer Together' campaign to aid riders

talabat, the region's leading platform for everyday deliveries, has officially relaunched the 'Summer Together' campaign to assist riders across the region.

This campaign is in line with talabat's duty of care towards rider safety and well-being, ensuring that they are well taken care of while out on deliveries during the summer.

Additionally, talabat has introduced newer initiatives sponsored by Al Rayyan Water to support riders, further complementing the overall 'Summer Together' campaign.

talabat provides riders with water bottles and bike windshields as well. This year, talabat has launched buses across Qatar, so that riders have access to air-conditioned areas where they can take a break to grab a snack, hydrate or charge their phones whenever needed. Sponsored by Al Rayyan Water, these rest stops are fully stocked with chilled water for riders on the move.

As part of its collaboration with restaurant partners, talabat has encouraged partners like Pearl Juice Bar in Doha Festival City, Kopi Kade, Harvest Coffee, and Clementine Juice at The Pearl to set up air-conditioned waiting areas where riders can rest while picking up deliveries. Optimised technology helps riders find the safest and shortest routes while out on deliveries, minimising waiting and travelling time - also allowing them to choose their preferred shifts and take breaks whenever needed. In addition, riders receive regular updates and tips on how to keep safe during the summer, along with bus locations and operating hours, kit pick-up locations and more.

In a statement, talabat Qatar managing director Francisco Miguel De Sousa said: "We are proud to announce the 'Summer Together' initiatives, which are aimed at supporting riders during summer months. With adopting important initiatives like Rest Stops, we continue to strive to enhance the well-being and satisfaction of riders.

"We would also like to extend our gratitude to Al Rayyan Water for generously providing water bottles for our riders in our designated rest areas. I encourage our valued customers to acknowledge and support riders by simple gestures like offering water when your order is delivered. Together, we can create a supportive environment that supports riders' hard work and dedication."



# Delta Draconid meteor shower to adorn Qatar skies today

Qatar Calendar House (QCH) has affirmed that residents of the northern hemisphere, including those in Qatar, are set to witness the celestial phenomenon, the Delta Draconid meteor shower, this year.

QCH added that the phenomenon will reach its peak today evening extending until the early hours of Tuesday morning.

Astronomical expert at QCH, Dr Bashir Marzouk, stated that the Delta Draconid meteor shower becomes active on a yearly basis throughout the period extending from mid-July until Aug 23 each year, and reaches its peak on July 29 and 30.

He highlighted that the rate of its fall in the sky at its peak will reach 20 meteors per hour, according to estimates by astronomers who are familiar with sighting meteors.

What distinguishes meteor shower, is that sighting it only requires a location away from environmental and light pollution.

Therefore, residents of Qatar will be able to observe the shower without resorting to astronomical devices or telescopes, Marzouk emphasised.

He pointed out that people can see this celestial activity with the naked eye from today evening until the dawn of Tuesday, the best times of sighting, by looking toward the southeastern horizon of the sky from midnight until dawn the following day.

Marzouk added that cutting-edge digital cameras can be used to have images of these meteors, by taking into account the increased exposure time while photographing, to receive distinctive images. (QNA)

# JUDICIAL GUARD

## URGENT WARNING

The receiver, warns against dealing in the name of these companies and their branches or concluding any contracts with them except through the receiver in accordance with the rulings issued in the following cases:

No	Tradename	Register No.	Case No.
1	TeaTime	64469	1072/ 2023
2	TeaTime Premium Restaurant	95064	1128/ 2023
3	Keema Chapati Special RESTAURANT	94453	1127/ 2023
4	Keema Chapati CAFETERIA	99755	1140/ 2023

We also note that the name and trademark of the aforementioned companies are the sole property of these companies, and we warn against the use of the tradename and trademark by others without legal justification, and that any violation is considered void and places its actor under legal accountability.

## The companies' logos:





Picpa Doha marked its 17th general assembly and induction ceremony recently.

### Picpa Doha marks 17th general assembly, induction ceremony

The Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants (Picpa) Doha celebrated its 17th general assembly and induction ceremony with the theme *Advancing Excellence, Empowering Professionals: Where Expertise Meets Impact*, recently.

The event, attended by more than 80 members and associates, was graced by the presence of Philippine ambassador Lillibeth V Pono, PPO-Q chairman Teofilo F Tongson Jr, chairman of the board Lyndon M Magsino, members of the Picpa board of directors and past presidents, among others.

In her speech at the event, Pono highlighted the importance of accountants in the business world and how their unseen efforts create a ripple effect in maintaining seamless business operations and efficient resource management.

The envoy, who is herself a certified public accountant, said: “Our work is the ground-

work for the integrity and success of the institutions and the business that we serve.”

Magsino acknowledged the critical contributions of council officers, underscoring their collective responsibility and commitment to advancing the organisation’s goals.

The key feature was the introduction of a new set of officers for the 2024-2025 term.

Magsino introduced the newly appointed officers and Pono officiated their induction.

All members present during the assembly also took the oath of membership led by the newly elected president, Kathryn Joyce Fajardo.

The newly inducted council officers are: Jy-erex Abrasado (as senior vice-president), Rowena Cahintong (vice-president), Keyziel Joy Domingo-Taroma (secretary), Jeamma Varry Tamayo (treasurer), Kaiser Sevellano (auditor) Marivel Pagayonan (accountant), and Keziah Sadiwa (press relations officer).

The heads for various committees are Sherman Ilustre, Effie Sevellano, Marilou Tabisora, Kentry Ayson, Hashim Tating, Rey Barcena, Maria Irene Laforteza, Carmi Bue, and Micah Lizette Pataueg.

The associate volunteers are Katherine Javier, Katherine De los Santos, Cyrelgerom Catchero, Jeremy Santiago, Roque Galgo, Aaliyah Remo, Jay Rafael Angeles, Najeeb Mamacotao, Catherine Deligero, Alvin Guanzon, and Charianne Liezl Tomacruz, and Ruby Nepacena.

Another highlight of the programme was the symbolic handover of the chapter leadership by 2023-2024 president John Vincent Gunita to Fajardo.

A special presidential legacy award was given to 2018-2019 president Sharon Dela Cruz, in recognition of her outstanding leadership and contribution to nurturing future leaders, a statement added.

### Shura Council assists with monitoring Venezuela vote



Representatives of the Shura Council, along with several international bodies, organisations and parliamentary councils, are taking part in monitoring the Venezuelan presidential elections that began yesterday. The Shura Council is represented by Dr Sultan bin Hassan al-Dhabet al-Dosari, head of the Qatari Parliamentary Friendship Group with Latin American and Caribbean countries. **See report on Page 7**



### Istidama certifies the third batch of certified trainers

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

The 3rd annual session of the “Istidama” (Arabic for sustainability) programme concluded on Saturday.

The programme was launched by experts in the field of administrative training and human development with the objective of preparing Qatari trainers and national cadres capable of making a positive impact in society.

The final day of the programme witnessed the graduation of a new batch of trainees, including 19 male and female trainees who obtained a certified trainer certificate and certificates accredited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Qatar Chamber of Commerce, and the Mear Centre for Training.

Dr Issa al-Hur, trainer and expert in the field of human development and advocate of the “Istidama” initiative, confirmed that the initiative is concerned with nurturing the human element as a pillar for achieving sustainable development.

“We work in ‘Istidama’ to

build green human resources, which means that a person is productive and influential in all his fields of specialisation,” he said.

Dr Sultan al-Hajri, a trainer and lecturer in management, said that the “Istidama” programme is a social initiative that targets enhancing the professional skills and competencies of individuals in various fields with the aim of enabling a group of people capable of influencing society to acquire these skills and invest them in what serves society.

Hamad al-Shammari, a trainer in behavioural management skills and emotional intelligence, one of the founders of the “Istidama” programme for Training of the Trainers (TOT), said that the programme is spread out over more than three months of training.

Dr Maryam Mohamed al-Emadi, a certified trainer in relationships and systems and deputy director-general of the “Istidama” programme, expressed her pride in the graduation of a new batch of new trainers.

## 26,000 food inspections in Doha from April to June

Doha Municipality carried out 26,000 food health inspection tours on the various food outlets across the country during the second quarter of this year.

There were 6,432 technical inspection tours, and 9,765 public supervision tours.

During this period 172 food samples from the local market

were sent to the laboratories for examination.

Accordingly, eight food outlets were shut for different periods, and 3,390 various violation reports were issued.

Veterinarians of the municipality supervised the slaughter 11,000 head of livestock, with 62 carcasses entirely destroyed for being unfit for human consumption, and

606kg of meat destroyed for the same reason.

The municipality also planted 1,270 trees, carried out 11,752 pests and rodents control campaigns, and issued 400 building permits and 3,775 advertising permits.

Further, the municipality organised 24 workshops and events.

The total number of food health control inspections carried out by

all the municipalities across the country amounted to 62,000 during the second quarter of the year.

In addition, there were 11,000 technical inspections, 23,000 public supervisions and 1,636 food samples taken to the lab examinations.

These resulted in the shutting of 51 outlets, and issuing of 12,000 violations.

### Daam, NAMA launch ‘Gain Me Experience’ programme

The Behavioural Healthcare Centre (Daam) and Social Development Centre (NAMA), under the Qatar Social Work Foundation, affiliated with the Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF), and in co-operation with the Ministry of Sports and Youth, are to launch a training programme during summer under the theme *Gain Me Experience*, which is devoted to youth from both genders aged 15-20.

The programme primarily aims to enhance the societal responsibility of youth by engaging them in volunteering activities and improving the society, in terms of psychological, social and behavioural levels, to further build a society based on constructive values and strengthening their social and positive role.

The programme intends to increase the youth’s awareness of the social work to serve the society, in addition to catalysing them to protect the society from behavioural aberration.




It comprises practical activities and training workshops, such as on “Youth and Society” and Badir Workshops. Daam community awareness director Ja-

whar Abu Alfain affirmed the importance of participation in summer activities to create an environment conducive for a generation that enjoys good and positive morals, stemming from summer activities to invest in leisure times of youth and fill them with beneficial programmes.

She added that the programme seeks to build the balanced character of youth, in addition to directing individuals’ behavioural reactions, along with their intellectual and physical energy toward the correct positive direction, as well as training them on teamwork and developing their diverse skills.

Additionally, Daam is committed to underscoring the importance of the role played by youth in the society through engaging them in training programmes and volunteering, which would in turn help them achieve their future goals and help them avoid behavioural aberration. – QNA



### QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	SUP/C/SUP/6742/24 FOR MATERIAL MASTER HARMONIZATION PROJECT	28/07/2024 to 08/08/2024	0	0	19/08/2024

**Scope of Work:**  
QatarEnergy LNG operates North, South, and Barzan facilities, along with offshore operations. Company aims to unify the Material Master by merging the duplicate material masters between the North, South and Barzan Facilities.

Tentative start date is: 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2024

Duration of Project: The duration of the CONTRACT shall be for a period of One (1) year from the EFFECTIVE DATE of the CONTRACT and the Project timeline will be completed within 3 months from the date of ITP issuance.

**Bid Validity:** Bid should be valid for 180 calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.


**Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:**  
ITT document for this tender will be available in QatarEnergy LNG website under Suppliers tab >Current Open Tenders. The bids shall be submitted through the QatarEnergy LNG online platform (SMART by GEP).

### Volkswagen, Land Rover, Range Rover models recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Q Auto, has announced the recall of Volkswagen Golf, 2009 model, over deterioration of front air bag propellant due to humidity, which may lead to the burst of the gas generator housing, potentially injuring the occupants.

The MoCI, in co-operation with Alfardan Premier Motors, also announced the recall of Land Rover Defender 110 3.0i6 HSE 400PS, Discovery 2.0i4 R-Dynamic S, Range Rover Vogue 3.0 V6 SC, Range Rover Sport 3.0i6 HSE, and Range Rover Velar 2.0 R-Dynamic SE, 2024-2025 models, due to the possibility of cracks developing in the oil filter housing over time if incorrect specifications were used during manufacture, resulting in oil leaking into the engine and engine bay and causing a fire.

The MoCI urges all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, which processes complaints, inquires and suggestions through the following channels: Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, social media channels @mociqatar, and mobile application MOCIQatar available on iPhone and Android devices.



### Dolphin Energy Limited

#### Invitation to Tender

Tender Number	Description	Tender Bond	Deadline for Submission, 12 Noon (Qatar Time) on
RFP-QC-TSU-1794	Energy Audit at DEL facilities Upstream and Downstream	-	11 <sup>th</sup> August 2024
RFP-QC-TSU-1801	Archiving Services	QAR 20,000	18 <sup>th</sup> August 2024

Dolphin Energy Limited (Qatar) is inviting companies to participate in the above Tenders.

Only companies registered in the State of Qatar with proven experience, the required facilities and technical knowledge as well as a demonstrated track record in the supply of the services required should apply.

**How to Tender**

Expression of Interest (EOI) Form can be downloaded from the company's website [www.dolphinenergy.com/procurement](http://www.dolphinenergy.com/procurement)

Interested companies must complete the EOI Form and submit it to the company's email address within two (2) working days from the publication date of this advertisement.

Following receipt of the completed EOI Form, interested companies will receive a Request for Proposal (RFP) through Dolphin Energy's SAP Arriba to tender.

# Ashghal, QSC wind up 3rd edition of Future Engineer programme

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) and the Qatar Scientific Club (QSC) have concluded the third edition of the Future Engineer programme.

A total of 30 students from the age group of 14-18 participated in the programme, which had 20 trainers from Ashghal and QSC. Fifteen training workshops and three field visits to Ashghal work-sites were offered.

The programme aims to provide an opportunity to learn about various engineering disciplines and working environments closely and to support and enhance knowledge regarding engineering disciplines, an Ashghal statement said.

Students were introduced to engineering planning and project management. Participants received engineering information through workshops and field visits to 'Ashghal' laboratories and departments.

During the visit, the participants viewed Ashghal's latest devices (drones) while learning about the mechanism of inspection to measure the chemical and biological quality of treated groundwater.

The students visited the Rain-fall Emergency Room and the Road and Drainage Networks Department Centres in Asset Affairs. They participated in the Sustainability and Construction Hackathon where the ideas were constructed. Projects were implemented encouraging them to find innovative solutions to some of the problems resulting from the construction process.

The helmet cooling, sustainable



engineering building and road-blocks project, interlock formation of recycled materials and air quality sensor projects qualified for the final stage of the hackathon.

The jury composed of experts and engineers from Ashghal hailed the work of QSC on the level of completed projects and the quality of their implementation.

Dr Ali al-Marri, Quality and Safety department manager, said Ashghal is keen to co-operate with various educational and scientific institutions to enhance students' knowledge of engineering disciplines, acquire the skills and experiences required for future engineers, allow them to engage in real life experiences at worksites and prepare them for work life after graduation.

Engineer Abdulrahman Khamis, deputy executive director, said QSC has put all its technical capabilities towards the success of the programme as it is considered a positive challenge and a way to determine the future for the participants.

Dr Abdulla Ali Albehaih, assistant manager of the Human Resources department said Ashghal is always pleased with these community collaborations with the Qatar Scientific Club and various entities in the country.

Eman al-Obaidi, QSC Public Relations and Communications section head, said the results of the programme are impressive and thanked Ashghal for providing national expertise and support for the programme.



## Qatari families balancing tradition and modernity amid global influences: QU study

The Ibn Khaldon Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences at Qatar University (QU) has presented a comprehensive study on the Qatari family's structure and functions, authored by research assistant, Afrah al-Otaibi. The study delves into the intricate balance Qatari families maintain between deep-rooted traditions and the evolving demands of modernity, influenced heavily by globalisation and western ideologies. The study, titled 'Qatari Family's Structure and Functions: Balance between Tradition and Modernity,' aimed to answer a central question: Does the Qatari family represent a traditional or modern intellectual model? Amidst the changes, the Qatari family system finds itself at the crossroads of tradition and modernity, striving to maintain a balance between deeply rooted Arab traditions and Islamic values, as well as the modern influences brought about by globalisation and openness to universal values, particularly those of a Western, capitalistic, liberal, and materialistic nature. The study identified three distinct



This study delves into the balance Qatari families maintain between deep-rooted traditions and evolving demands of modernity.

intellectual phases within the Qatari family. Firstly, the Qatari family continues to uphold religious and cultural traditions, such as regular prayers, wearing national costumes, and sharing family meals. Women primarily focus on childrearing, while fathers are the main decision-makers. Secondly, some aspects of family life are in a state of flux, such as the shift towards nuclear families, women's financial contributions, and multilingual communication within families. Thirdly, new trends include

acceptance of marriages outside the tribe, the involvement of fathers in child-rearing, and a preference for luxurious lifestyles. The study also highlighted gender differences in perceptions of marriage and family, with a higher percentage of males viewing these as important life goals compared to females, possibly influenced by the spread of feminist ideas. The research team proposes several recommendations to support and preserve the Arab family structure.

Encouraging marriage and promoting the importance of family formation among youth is essential as a fundamental social unit. Enhancing the family's role in pedagogy and value consolidation among young people is crucial. Integrating family value reinforcement into school and university curricula to promote family ethics and communication is recommended. Conducting periodic studies every five years to monitor ongoing transformations in family perceptions will be beneficial. Strengthening the family through religious programmes and initiatives by religious institutions will help preserve core values. Addressing the encroachment of foreign languages and ensuring the continued use of Arabic within families is necessary to maintain cultural continuity. The comprehensive study sheds light on the evolving dynamics of the Qatari family, emphasising the need for a balanced approach that respects traditional values while embracing beneficial aspects of modernity. By understanding these transformations, Qatar can develop informed strategies to support and strengthen the family as a cornerstone of its social structure.

## Khamenei formally grants Pezeshkian presidential powers

AFP  
Tehran

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday gave his official endorsement of Masoud Pezeshkian as the Islamic republic's ninth president, following snap elections won by the reformist camp's candidate. In a message read by the director of Khamenei's office, he said: "I endorse the vote (for) the wise, honest, popular and scholarly Pezeshkian, and I am appointing him as the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran". The new reformist president is due to be sworn in before parliament tomorrow. The endorsement ceremony was held in the capital Tehran in the presence of senior Iranian officials and foreign diplomats, and broadcast on state TV. It took place as banks and most government offices were ordered shut nationwide yesterday to tackle an extreme heatwave. Following the event, acting president Mohamed Mokhber handed over official responsibilities to 69-year-old Pezeshkian. Later yesterday, Pezeshkian appointed reformist Mohamed Reza Aref, 72, as his first vice-president, according to an announcement carried by state TV.

## WCM-Q, University of Sao Paulo host global congress on precision health

Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q), in collaboration with the Centre for the Development of Medical Education at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Sao Paulo (CEDEM-FMUSP), hosted a global congress on precision health innovations and education in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Precision health represents a revolutionary approach in healthcare, integrating advanced technologies and personalised data to gain comprehensive insights into an individual's unique biology, environment, and lifestyle factors. By leveraging evidence and data, precision health aims to enhance individual lifespans by addressing specific determinants of health. Titled 'Transforming Health Professional Education, Research and Care,' the international congress brought together leading local and international experts to explore how the latest innovations, approaches, and technologies are reshaping medical education, translational research, and precision care. Highlights included discussions on how extended reality is transforming classrooms and emergency rooms; how artificial intelligence is revolutionising learning, disease diagnostics, and treatments;



Dr Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q (front centre, blue suit) with organisers and speakers.

and how wearable technologies are uncovering the impact of climate change on health. Reflecting the innovation theme of the congress, Brazilian education-tech and health-tech startups also pitched their groundbreaking ideas. WCM-Q experts participated in a variety of workshops and panel discussions, addressing important topics such as leadership in the workplace; breaking gender barriers in science; the ethics and macroeconomic implications of big data/AI; the future of medical education; patient advocacy; and

innovation in health education and precision health. The event was an important gathering of the global healthcare community, attracting approximately 700 attendees, including medical educators, students, health practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and innovators. This diverse range of participants underscored the global interest and commitment to precision health. Dr Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said: "The congress brought together researchers and experts, who

are globally recognised for their outstanding scientific contributions and practical expertise. It provided a platform for discussions and knowledge-sharing to drive the positive transformation of health professions education, research, and patient care. As part of our commitment to enhancing the entire health span, we must work together to build a future where healthcare is participatory, proactive, and precise. Our pursuit of innovation must be accompanied by a commitment to sustainable and inclusive practices."

### Liquidation Announcement "2"

Based on the Extraordinary General Assembly Resolution

To Liquidate  
**DORCE GULF CONTRACTING AND TRADING W.L.L**  
(The Company)  
(under Voluntary Liquidation)

The Liquidator  
**FAROOK PUTHENPEEDIKAYIL VEERAN**

**Kreston SVP Chartered Accountants**

Announce the liquidation of

**DORCE GULF CONTRACTING AND TRADING W.L.L**  
Commercial Registration No. (I69937)

Any party who has any claims from this Company should send a registered letter, including all supporting documents, to P.O Box 82297, Doha - Qatar 3128 7231 or 6668 8575 or info@krestonsvp.com Within the remaining legal period of 20 days.

### Liquidation Announcement "2"

Based on the Extraordinary General Assembly Resolution

To Liquidate  
**GULF CONSTRUCTION SPECIALTIES TRADING L.L.C**  
(The Company)  
(under Voluntary Liquidation)

The Liquidator  
**FAROOK PUTHENPEEDIKAYIL VEERAN**

**Kreston SVP Chartered Accountants**

Announce the liquidation of

**GULF CONSTRUCTION SPECIALTIES TRADING L.L.C**  
Commercial Registration No. (I58342)

Any party who has any claims from this Company should send a registered letter, including all supporting documents, to P.O Box 82297, Doha - Qatar 3128 7231 or 6668 8575 or info@krestonsvp.com Within the remaining legal period of 20 days.



Smoke billows following an Israeli airstrike in the southern Lebanese border village of Chihine, yesterday.

# Hezbollah evacuates positions ahead of expected raids

AFP  
Beirut

Hezbollah has evacuated positions in south and east Lebanon after Israeli threats of reprisals for a deadly strike on the annexed Golan Heights, a source close to the group said yesterday.

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant vowed to “hit the enemy hard” a day after rocket fire from Lebanon killed 12 minors in Majdal Shams, again raising fears that the war in Gaza will spread.

Israel blamed Lebanon’s Hezbollah movement for firing a Falaq-1 rocket but the group – which has regularly targeted Israeli military positions – said it had “no connection” to the incident.

“Hezbollah has evacuated some positions in the south and in the Bekaa valley that it thinks could be a target for Israel,” the source close to the group said, requesting anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media.

Hezbollah has a strong presence in east Lebanon’s Bekaa valley, which borders Syria, and in south Lebanon, where it has been launching near daily attacks on Israeli positions since October in support of ally Hamas.

The cross-border exchanges of fire have largely been limited to the border area, but Israel has repeatedly struck deep inside Lebanon, including overnight.

Hezbollah is also deployed in Syria, where for years it has been fighting in support of President Bashar al-Assad in his country’s civil war.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor,



People push their luggage outside the Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport, in Lebanon, yesterday.

said some groups and Hezbollah-affiliated fighters have “evacuated their positions” south of the capital and in the Damascus countryside, as well as in parts of the Syrian-controlled Golan Heights, in anticipation of “potential Israeli airstrikes”.

Hezbollah had already abandoned positions in Syria in early June after Israeli raids, according to the Britain-based Observatory, which relies on a network of sources on the ground.

**FLIGHTS RESCHEDULED**  
Since Syria’s civil war erupted in 2011, Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes in the country, mainly targeting army positions and foreign-backed fighters, including from Hezbollah.

The raids also seek to cut off Hezbollah supply routes to Lebanon.

Israeli authorities rarely comment on individual strikes in Syria, but have repeatedly said they will not allow Iran to expand its presence there.

Israel’s raids on Syria intensified after Palestinian Hamas group’s storming of Israel in the first week of October last year

sparked war in the Gaza Strip, then eased after an April 1 strike blamed on Israel hit the Iranian consular building in Damascus.

That strike prompted Iran to launch a first-ever direct missile and drone attack against Israel on April 13-14, sending regional tensions skyrocketing.

Lebanon’s Middle East Airlines said in a statement that it had rescheduled a number of flights yesterday and today, citing “technical reasons related to the distribution of (aircraft) insurance risks”.

In October, the carrier said it was relocating some planes abroad in light of regional developments. During a 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, Israel struck Beirut airport, Lebanon’s only international facility.

The cross-border violence since October has killed at least 527 people in Lebanon according to an AFP tally, most of them fighters but also including 104 civilians.

Israeli strikes have killed at least 25 Hezbollah fighters in Syria since the Gaza war erupted, according to an AFP tally.

## Arab rights group slams Israeli evacuation order in south Gaza

QNA  
Cairo

Arab Observatory for Human Rights (AOHR) has condemned the evacuation orders issued by the Israeli occupation army in the north of Rafah and south of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

In a statement yesterday, AOHR denounced the systematic eviction of the Palestinians from their homes and workplaces by the Israeli occupation army, in addition to trapping hundreds of thousands of them in a constantly shrinking geographical area, and intentionally targeting them from the air, land, and sea.

AOHR warned of further Israeli escalation to commit crimes of genocide, stressing that the evacuation orders issued Saturday to the civilian inhabitants of Al Hassash, and Musbah in Rafah, and Al Manara, Al Salam, Qeizan Al Najjar, Qeizan Abu Rashwan, and Jourt Al Lout neighbourhoods in Khan Younis, are considered a full-fledged crime.

It added that such a crime is against humanity based on the norms of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is perpetrated, either for political, racial,



A Palestinian boy sits playing on the sand and rubble of a building destroyed in previous Israeli bombardment, in the Al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

or religious purposes within a large-scale attack and is a flagrant violation of human rights, and underlined that such an act violates a broad range of legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

The recurrence of crimes perpetrated by the Israeli occupation army in the Al Mawasi area, dubbed as the humanitarian zone, for the second time in less than a week, is a shocking brutality and a new episode of the relentless Israeli crimes against the Pales-

tinian people and the entire humanity, AOHR said. AOHR called for urgent international action to end this dastardly Israeli aggression immediately and to provide protection for the Palestinians amid their suffering from forced displacement in this limited geographical area compounded by measures to tighten a siege on it, in addition to intentionally and directly targeting the zone through air strikes, artillery shelling and attacks from gunboats.

## Jordan’s Umm al-Jimal added to Unesco heritage list

AFP  
Amman

Jordan’s Umm al-Jimal village has been added to Unesco’s World Heritage List, in a move hailed yesterday by the country’s tourism and antiquities minister as a “great achievement”.

Unesco, which is hosting a meeting of its World Heritage Committee in New Delhi, said on X on Friday that the earliest structures uncovered at Umm al-Jimal date back to the first century CE, “when the area formed part of the Nabataean Kingdom.” It added that inscriptions in “Greek, Nabataean, Safaitic, Latin and Arabic uncovered on the site... sheds light on the changes in its inhabitants’ religious beliefs”.

The village is near the Jordanian-Syrian border, 86 kilometres north of the capital Amman, and is known as “the black oasis” due to the prevalence of black volcanic rock in the area.

Jordan’s Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Makram al-Qaisi said in a press conference yesterday that the inclusion of Umm al-Jimal on the World Heritage List is a “great achievement we should be proud of”. He said the ministry hoped to invite local and inter-



A handout image made available by the Jordan Tourism Board yesterday, shows the Umm al-Jimal archaeological site, some 86km north of the capital Amman, which was added to World Heritage list by The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

national investors to the site and “present Umm al-Jimal as an attractive tourist destination”.

The name Umm al-Jimal comes from the use of camels as part of trade caravans in the village.

The village was first settled by the Nabataean peoples in the first century CE and later occupied by the Romans, becoming an important agricultural and commercial village. Umm al-Jimal is the seventh historical site in Jordan to be added to Unesco’s World Heritage List, along with Petra, Quseir Amra, Umm al-Rasas, Wadi Rum,

Mughatas and Salt. Tourism contributes between 12 and 14% of GDP in the kingdom, whose 10mn inhabitants rely heavily on the sector. Qaisi said Jordan welcomed more than 6mn tourists in 2023, bringing in \$7bn.

But tourism has started to feel the effects of the war raging in nearby Gaza. Qaisi said the kingdom saw a 4.9% drop in tourism revenue so far in 2024, and a 7.9% drop in visitors.

Most tourists come from Europe, the US and Canada, followed by Asia Pacific countries.

## Libya jails 12 over dam management during deadly Derna floods

AFP  
Tripoli

Twelve people were convicted yesterday in Libya’s eastern city of Derna over their role in “managing dam facilities” during last year’s deadly floods, the general prosecutor’s office said in a statement.

The defendants, who included government employees and local officials, received prison sentences ranging from nine to 27 years, said the statement published on Facebook.

They were jailed over their management of “the country’s dam facilities” at a time when the collapse of two dams near the port city of Derna contributed to catastrophic flooding.

On September 10 last year, Storm Daniel hit the east coast of Libya triggering flooding and the dam collapses that razed entire neighbourhoods.

The vast surge of water killed more than 4,300 people and left over 8,000 missing, according to the United Nations.

Nearly 44,800 people were displaced by the disaster, including 16,000 children, and their access to care and education has severely deteriorated since, said the UN.

Around 250,000 people still required humanitarian aid in December. A report by the European Union, the UN and the World Bank found last January that the “disaster impacted approximately 1.5mn people – 22% of Libya’s population – living in the coastal and inland cities that were hardest hit”.

The report estimated that \$1.8bn would be required for reconstruction.

UN humanitarian agency OCHA has confirmed 4,352 deaths and more than 8,000 missing persons, “making Storm Daniel the deadliest storm in Africa since 1900”, said the report.

In addition to the reconstruction needs, the report estimated the material damage and economic losses, including of businesses and farms, at \$1.65bn, or 3.6% of Libya’s GDP in 2022.

Libya has been battered by armed conflict and political chaos since a Nato-backed uprising led to the toppling of former ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

The North African country is now divided between an internationally recognised Tripoli-based government led by interim Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah in the west and an administration in the east backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

## New beauty queen



Nada Koussa reacts after being crowned Miss Lebanon 2024, in Beirut, Lebanon.

## Stampede in DR Congo stadium kills seven

AFP  
Kinshasa

Seven people died in a stampede at a stadium in the Democratic Republic of Congo capital Kinshasa, local authorities said.

The incident happened at the Stade de Martyrs stadium in the north of the city during a concert by Congolese gospel singer Mike Kalambayi on Saturday.

State broadcasters RTNC said on X that there had been “seven deaths and several people admitted to intensive care”.

“Overflows and crowd movements” at the stadium “resulted in the death of men”, the cabinet of Kinshasa governor Daniel Bumba said in a statement late on Saturday.

The stadium has a capacity for 80,000 people.

Event organisers Maajabu Gospel said 30,000 people had attended the concert.

### REMEMBRANCE

## France makes landmark gesture over WWII massacre of African troops

France has made a key gesture of remembrance for the dozens of African troops shot dead on French army orders in Senegal during World War II, as Paris seeks to ease tensions with former colonies over historical memory, the government said yesterday, AFP reported from Paris.

Six of the African soldiers – four from Senegal, one from Ivory Coast and one from what is now Burkina Faso – have been posthumously honoured for having “died for France” (“morts pour la France”). An official from France’s veterans and remembrance ministry told AFP that the decision was taken ahead of the 80th anniversary of the events in Thiaroye in Senegal in 1944. It was also in line with the “desire of President Emmanuel Macron to look history in the face”, added the official. “It is now time to look at this history, our history, as it was.” The decision was taken on June 18 just days before the first meeting in Paris between Macron and the new Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye. Macron has during his seven years in power sought to address the most painful historical scars over France’s relationship with Africa, notably relating to the 1954-1962 Algerian War of Independence and the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi minority in Rwanda. However critics have often said that the gestures, while welcome, do not go far enough and often stop short of a full apology.

### TRAGEDY

## 19 killed as boat capsizes in Ethiopia

At least 19 people drowned when their boat sank in a river in Ethiopia’s northern Amhara region on Saturday, the region’s official media said yesterday, AFP reported from Addis Ababa. “Seven people including a child were saved in difficult circumstances,” the Amhara Media Corporation (AMC) added, quoting a local administrator. The boat was taking passengers across the Tekeze river, which runs along Ethiopia’s border with Eritrea before it crosses into Sudan at the point where the three countries meet. Twenty six people were estimated to have been on board at the time of the accident at around noon (0900 GMT) on Saturday, officials said. Only two bodies had been recovered, AMC said, adding that those rescued had been taken to nearby hospitals. Media access to the remote northern Ethiopia is heavily restricted by the authorities, with information often trickling in hours later. Amhara – Ethiopia’s second most populous region – has been wracked for months by clashes between the Ethiopian military and an Amhara militia known as Fano. It was also caught up in the neighbouring region Tigray’s war, with its regional forces fighting alongside federal government troops against Tigrayan rebels.

# Venezuelans vote in highly charged election

Reuters/AFP  
Caracas

Venezuelans waited in line at polling stations and cast ballots yesterday in the most consequential election in a quarter-century of socialist party rule, with President Nicolas Maduro confident of victory even as the opposition has attracted impassioned support and warned of possible irregularities.

Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado has been the star of the coalition campaign, despite a ban on her holding public office that forced her to pass the torch to candidate Edmundo Gonzalez, a 74-year-old ex-diplomat.

Gonzalez has won backing even from some former supporters of the ruling party, but the opposition and observers have questioned whether the vote will be fair, saying that decisions by electoral authorities and the arrests of opposition staff are meant to create obstacles.

Maduro – whose 2018 reelection is considered fraudulent by the United States, among others – has said that Venezuela has the world's most transparent electoral system and has warned of a "bloodbath" if he loses.

The comments drew condemnation from leaders including Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who said: "Maduro has to learn: if you win, you stay. If you lose, you go."

Concerns were further stoked when Caracas blocked international observers at the last minute, including four Latin American ex-presidents who had their plane held up in Panama on Friday.

Observers from the European Union had their invitation withdrawn weeks ago by authorities that have allowed a small delegation from the US-based Carter Centre.

Reuters journalists located in seven locations around the country reported lines outside polling stations, including some that opened late or where voting was moving slowly.

Many voters had arrived before dawn. "It's really delayed," said voter Jonathan Pernia, 35, in San Cristobal, near Venezuela's western border with Colombia, who said he arrived at the polling station at 3.30am. "But we must not give up, it's our chance."

Polls close at 6pm local time (2200 GMT), and results could be published later in the evening or in the following days.

Maduro's government has presided over an economic collapse, the migration

of about a third of the population, and a sharp deterioration in diplomatic relations, crowned by sanctions imposed by the United States, the European Union and others which have crippled an already struggling oil industry.

Maduro has said he will guarantee peace and economic growth, making Venezuela less dependent on oil income.

The minimum wage is equivalent to \$3.50 per month, while basic food for a family of five is estimated to cost about \$500. Many people receive government food baskets or remittances from relatives abroad.

Dozens of voters cast ballots at the Venezuelan consulate in the Spanish island of Tenerife, with others gathered outside waving flags and cheering.

Several voters said they had been registered at the consulate for many years.

Migrants around the world have reported difficulties registering and only a small percentage of the diaspora is expected to be able to vote.

Maduro voted early in the morning in Caracas and said the result announced by the National Electoral Council will be recognised and defended by the armed forces and the police.

After casting his ballot yesterday, the

president insisted he was the only Venezuelan politician being "persecuted" – by the "world powers, by Goliath".

Maduro said he will decree a national dialogue today, using a term that typically means conversations between the government and opposition, businesses, communities and others.

Many Maduro supporters speak enthusiastically of his late mentor, long-time socialist President Hugo Chavez, and see Maduro, in power since Chavez's death in 2013, as a continuation of Chavez's legacy of helping the poor.

Others have told Reuters that they saw Maduro's record as mixed but that they would back him.

"There are things that without doubt need to improve in our country, but this government has lived through sanctions and blockades like no other. That's why I back President Maduro and think he deserves another chance," said Jose Lopez, 57, as he waited to vote in central Valencia.

Gonzalez and Machado, who have promised major changes and said a fresh start may motivate migrants to return, have urged people to hold vigils at polling stations.

They have said they expect the military to uphold the results of the vote.

Gonzalez voted around noon in Caracas, and Machado was expected to cast her ballot in the Caricuao district of the capital. The opposition campaign posted videos of her greeting supporters and taking photos as she was transported on the back of a motorcycle.

Venezuela's military has always supported Maduro, a 61-year-old former bus driver, and there have been no public signs that leaders of the armed forces are breaking from the government.

Twenty-two people have been arrested since Friday "in the context of the electoral process", Gonzalo Himiob, the vice-president of human rights organisation Foro Penal, said on X, adding that at least 15 remain detained.

Venezuela's attorney-general this week denied participating in political persecution.

Public spending has grown only slightly during the campaign, analysts say, a change from past campaigns when spending was generous.

Maduro says he has opened 70 public works projects during the last several months, but many have been renovations of already existing schools, hospitals and roads, according to events broadcast on state television.

## Yellen says \$3tn needed annually for climate financing

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on Saturday that the global transition to a low-carbon economy requires \$3tn in new capital each year through 2050, far above current annual financing, but that filling the gap is the biggest economic opportunity of the 21st century.

Yellen said in Belem, Brazil's Amazon gateway city, that reaching net-zero emissions goals remained a top priority for the Biden-Harris administration and this would require leadership far beyond US borders.

"Neglecting to address climate change and the loss of nature and biodiversity is not just bad environmental policy. It is bad economic policy," Yellen said in a speech after attending a G20 finance leaders meeting on Thursday and Friday in Rio de Janeiro.

Wealthy economies provided and mobilised a record \$116bn for climate finance for developing countries in 2022, 40% of which came from multilateral development banks (MDBs).

Yellen said the banks, including the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), are setting new targets.

The financing need is "the single-greatest economic opportunity of the 21st century" and can be leveraged to support sustainable and more inclusive growth, including for investment-starved countries, she said.

While in Belem, Yellen met with finance ministers from Amazon basin countries and IDB President Ilan Goldfajn.

She reaffirmed the US commitment to the bank's Amazonia Forever platform, which provides a holistic approach to sustainable development in the region through financing, project preparation and collaboration.

"We are hopeful that this programme will incentivise greater private-sector investment in the region that supports nature," she added.

Yellen called on MDBs nearly two years ago to expand their missions and lending capacity to include fighting climate change.

She said this was "now in their DNA", but massive private investment was needed, and the Treasury, Brazil's finance ministry and other stakeholders were working to boost engagement with the private sector.

She said the banks should also catalyse new business models to mobilise investments that support nature and biodiversity while strengthening economies and advancing climate transitions.

Earlier on Saturday, Yellen launched a new initiative with Amazon basin countries Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Suriname to combat nature crimes, such as illegal logging and harvesting of wildlife and minerals, that are threatening biodiversity and the Amazon ecosystem. – **Reuters**



### Big events

Members of the security forces wait for their turn to vote at a polling station in Caracas, during the Venezuelan presidential election yesterday. – **AFP**

Left: Deadpool cosplayers pose during Comic-Con International in San Diego. – **AFP**



US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen delivers a speech during a meeting in Brazil's Belem marking the first year of the implementation of the Amazonia Forever programme. – **AFP**



An air tanker drops fire retardant on a ridge near the Paynes Creek area of Tehama County, California. – **AFP**

## California fire rapidly reaches state's top 10 biggest ever

A fire raging out of control in northern California has rapidly become among the biggest ever in the western US state, authorities said.

The so-called Park Fire burned more than 350,000 acres (142,000 hectares) as of Saturday evening, making it the seventh-largest ever recorded in California history, the state agency Cal Fire said.

The fire, which prompted orders for more than 4,000 people to flee their homes, was burning through a largely rural, mountainous area near the city of Chico, about 90 miles (145km) north of state capital Sacramento.

"Extreme fire conditions continue to challenge firefighters," Cal Fire said in a post on X.

The fire was just 10% controlled, despite the efforts of more than 3,700 personnel with over a dozen helicopters and several planes, according to an agency update.

"Numerous firefighting air tankers from throughout the State are flying fire suppression missions as conditions allow," it said.

"Lower temperatures and higher humidity have reduced fire activity," the agency said, while adding that fire was still spreading.

US President Joe Biden has been briefed on the fire and has directed his team to do everything possible to support efforts to fight it, a White House official said.

The Park Fire started on Wednesday near Chico, in Butte County, and within hours had devastated a wide area there and in neighbouring Tehama County.

Cal Fire's latest update said 20 structures were confirmed destroyed by the fire, lowering an earlier estimate of 134.

The agency said the numbers were expected to fluctuate as officials assess the damage on the ground.

The blaze has generated an enormous column of dense gray smoke which has also been blown over nearby states.

On Thursday, police detained a 42-year-old male on suspicion of having started the fire by pushing a burning car into a ravine.

Chico is only about 15 miles from Paradise, a city devastated by a 2018 fire that ranked as California's most deadly ever, claiming 85 lives.

The explosive growth of the Park Fire has again placed Paradise under evacuation warning, unleashing painful memories for its residents.

Ava Elsnar, who lived through the 2018 fire, told CNN that she worries about her neighbours as the Park Fire blazes.

"I don't want anyone else to experience this. It's the most traumatising, terrifying, and sad-dening thing to have a whole community go up in flames," she told the broadcaster.

Experts say climate change, accelerated by human action, is leading to more extreme weather events.

The Park fire was the largest of dozens of active blazes across the country that have burned more than 2mn acres, according to the National Interagency Fire Centre.

In Oregon, the Durkee Fire, which started earlier this month, has consumed nearly 290,000 acres and was about 50% contained, the state's wildfire response and recovery agency said. – **AFP/Reuters**

## Robert Downey Jr returns to Marvel as Doctor Doom

Reuters/AFP  
San Diego

Robert Downey Jr stunned fans as he removed a mask during Saturday's San Diego Comic-Con Hall H panel, revealing that the *Iron Man* actor will rejoin the franchise as one of Marvel's biggest villains named Doctor Doom.

The panel was flooded with hooded figures concealed by masks that resembled the iconic comic book villain known for his skills in both sorcery and science when Downey Jr revealed himself.

The actor launched the entire MCU with 2008's *Iron Man*.

"New mask. Same task. What'd I tell you? I like playing complicated characters," said Downey Jr.

Marvel fans have complained in recent years about over-complicated plotlines and the departure of beloved characters, including Downey Jr's Iron Man, with some calling for a wholesale reboot of the movies.

The franchise was also rocked by domes-

tic violence revelations about actor Jonathan Majors, who had originally been set to become the major new supervillain across multiple films.

Majors, who was convicted for assaulting and harassing his then-girlfriend, was dropped by Marvel.

The answer to who will fill that role was seemingly answered by Downey Jr's return as a villain.

Downey Jr won an Oscar this year for his role in Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer*, and had seemingly retired from the Marvel films in 2019.

The Russo Brothers, who are returning to direct both *Avengers: Doomsday* and *Avengers: Secret Wars*, believe that while Downey Jr has a "new mask, he, the rest of the Marvel team, and everyone else has the "same task" of helping to "create the greatest possible experience" at the movie theatre.

Another major villain joining the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) is cosmic entity called Galactus, which will be the antagonist of *The Fantastic Four: First Steps*, and directed by *WandaVision* director Matt Shakman.

The panel had plenty more showstopping moments, as it began with a boisterous "Deadpool choir", inspired by the recent film *Deadpool & Wolverine*.

Different iterations of the silly red-costumed character named "Deadpool" danced around the Hall H floor, walking amidst the seated attendees as the film's anthem *Like a Prayer* by Madonna played.

The cast of the upcoming film *Captain America: Brave New World*, later joined the stage with lead Anthony Mackie sharing how his version of the titular superhero would be quite different from actor Chris Evans's version.

"Sam is surrounded by a host of intricate characters that help him move through the plot of the story. He's not so much a muscle bound guy, he's more of a cerebral, thoughtful character," Mackie said.

Following that *Indiana Jones* actor Harrison Ford, who replaces William Hurt's role as antagonist "Thunderbolt" Ross, joined the cast and playfully "hulked out" with his arms out and mouth open and then chases Mackie around the stage.

## US to announce military command structure revamp in Japan

The US will unveil a major revamp of its military command structure in Japan and other measures to deepen defence ties with its Asian ally at high-level security talks in Tokyo, a US official said.

The overhaul comes as Tokyo looks to establish a new joint headquarters to oversee

its armed forces by March to co-ordinate better with Washington on growing regional threats they see emanating from China and North Korea.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin will hold talks with Japanese counterparts Yoko Ka-

mikawa and Minoru Kihara.

Austin and Kihara also met their South Korean counterpart, Shin Won-sik earlier.

"Secretary Austin plans to announce that the United States intends to reconstitute US Forces Japan as a Joint Force Headquarters, reporting to the commander of US IN-

DOPACOM," the US official told a briefing ahead of the talks.

Japan provides a base for the US to project its military power in Asia, hosting 54,000 American troops, hundreds of US aircraft and Washington's only forward-deployed aircraft carrier strike group. – **Reuters**

# Myanmar ethnic armed group moves into key town

AFP  
Yangon

Fighters from Myanmar's most powerful ethnic minority armed group have moved into a strategic town fought over by the junta and another ethnic armed group for weeks, they

and the military said yesterday. Fighting has rocked Lashio in northern Shan state since early this month after the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA) renewed an offensive against the military. On Thursday the MNDA claimed it had captured the town of around 150,000 people and the

military's northeastern command there - a claim denied by the junta. On Saturday the United Wa State Army (UWSA) - another ethnic minority armed group with greater manpower - moved personnel into Lashio to "protect" its properties there, its spokesman said. The UWSA is the best-equipped

of Myanmar's dozen or so ethnic rebel groups, with close ties to China, which analysts say supplies much of its weaponry. It has so far stayed out of the fighting sparked by the military's 2021 coup, which reignited decades-old conflicts with some ethnic minority groups. "Security members from Wa

State entered into Lashio town on the night of the 27th to protect our external relations office and properties in Lashio township," UWSA spokesman Nyi Rang said. "Before entering the town, we informed both sides which are fighting and entered smoothly with their approval." Wa personnel in Lashio "are not

going to intervene, cooperate nor give support to the groups which are fighting," he said. He did not say how many UWSA fighters were now in the town, or how long they would stay. The military had "been informed in advance" about the move, the junta's information team said in a statement, without giving details.

# US, Japan take a swipe at China and deepen defence ties

AFP  
Tokyo

The US and Japan issued scathing verbal attacks on China and Russia yesterday after high-level discussions on enhancing already close defence collaboration between Tokyo and Washington in an increasingly unstable region. A joint statement issued after "2+2" talks in Tokyo between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and their Japanese counterparts said China's "foreign policy seeks to reshape the international order for its own benefit at the expense of others". They also reiterated their "strong objections" to China's "unlawful maritime claims, militarisation of reclaimed features, and threatening and provocative activities in the South China Sea".

The communique also criticised Russia's "growing and provocative strategic military co-operation" with China, as well as Moscow's procurement of ballistic missiles and other materiel from North Korea "for use against Ukraine". It also expressed alarm at China's "ongoing and rapid expansion of its nuclear weapons arsenal". Blinken said US alliances were all "defensive in nature". "They have no ambitions toward anyone else, and never have been or ever will be offensive in nature," he told a news conference. "But at a time when unfortunately these threats are increasing, our alli-

ances, our partnerships, they're getting deeper, they're getting stronger, they're getting more effective," he said. Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa said: "We are at an historic turning point." "Developments that shake the very foundation of free and open international order based on rule of law are continuing. "We must deepen and develop the US-Japan alliance to safeguard the international order and enhance deterrence," she said.

China claims the South China Sea, through which trillions of dollars of trade passes annually, almost in its entirety, while Tokyo and Beijing are also at loggerheads over disputed Japan-controlled islands in the East China Sea. The statement also confirmed US plans to establish in Japan a new Joint Force Headquarters, headed by a three-star US commander, for the 54,000 US military personnel stationed there. It will serve as a counterpart to Japan's planned Joint Operations Command for all its armed forces, making the two militaries more nimble in the case of a crisis over Taiwan or the Korean peninsula. US forces in Japan currently report back to Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii, around 6,500kms away and 19 hours behind Tokyo. Japan and the US also agreed to enhance planning for contingencies and "improve and expand" the scope of joint training and exercises. Japan has been shedding its strict pacifist stance in recent years, ram-

ping up defence spending and moving to obtain "counterstrike" capabilities. President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced a "new era" in cooperation at a summit at the White House in April. Japan and the Philippines - Blinken's and Austin's next stop for a "2+2" - signed a defence pact this month that will allow the deployment of troops on each other's territory. That followed the first trilateral summit between the leaders of Japan, the Philippines and the US in Washington in April. Japan and South Korea, like the Philippines, have also moved to bury the hatchet over World War II, with Biden hosting both countries' leaders at Camp David last August. Austin and Japanese Defence Minister Minoru Kihara held talks with Shin Won-sik, the first South Korean defence minister to visit Japan in 15 years, ahead of the Japan-US "2+2" meeting.

They signed a memorandum of cooperation to further tighten ties, including information sharing and trilateral exercises. "Trilateral co-operation among Japan, the US and South Korea has become stronger and unshakable even under various changes in the international situation," Kihara told reporters. The discussions between Japan and the US also covered enhancing Washington's "extended deterrence" commitment to use its military capabilities, including nuclear weapons, to protect Japan.

## Lok Baintan Floating Market Festival



A drone view shows vendors selling goods on their wooden boats during Lok Baintan Floating Market Festival on the Martapura river, near Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan province, Indonesia, yesterday.

# Philippines delays recovery of oil from sunken tanker

AFP  
Manila

The Philippines yesterday postponed the removal of fuel from a tanker that sank in Manila Bay, with fears of an environmental catastrophe growing as leaking oil reached shore for the first time. The siphoning of the 1.4mn litres of industrial fuel oil from the vessel's hold was pushed back to tomorrow at the earliest so divers could seal nine leaking valves first, Philippine Coast Guard spokesman Rear Admiral

Armando Balilo told reporters. The tanker sank in bad weather off Manila early Thursday, killing one crew member and leaving the Philippines facing the possibility of its worst oil spill ever. "An order was given to seal the valves first before the start of the siphoning operations in order to prevent further leakages," Balilo said yesterday. "The weather remains bad out there but they have a target to finish this (sealing the valves) by today." Balilo later said the coast guard had found "small patches"

of oil on the coast of the municipality of Bulakan, on the bay's north shore near Manila. The contaminated shoreline was on the edge of a reclamation project for a future international airport, he said. Balilo said the coast guard was also investigating a report by the environmental group Greenpeace that a "thick layer of oil" was coating the sea yesterday about 4kms off the coast of Hagonoy municipality, near Bulakan. The coast guard has warned that it would be an "environmental catastrophe" if the entire cargo were to leak.

## Central China landslide kills 15: state media

A landslide caused by flooding in central China's Hunan province destroyed a guesthouse and killed 15 people yesterday, state media reported. Officials initially believed that 18 people had been buried by the landslide but rescuers have since found 15 bodies and six injured survivors, the official Xinhua news agency said. The landslide was caused by flash flooding on a mountain, which destroyed the guesthouse, according to state broadcaster CCTV. More than 300 emergency personnel were sent to the scene, according to Xinhua. A video published by the state-run *Beijing Youth Daily* showed a swathe of mud and debris cutting through a green hillside and an uprooted tree lying in front of a three-storey building. An aerial video on Xinhua showed what appeared to be the ruined bottom half of a building at the top of the debris trail, as well as damaged buildings at the foot of the hill.

## End of Korean War anniversary marked



North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un (centre) watches a performance at the Monument to the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War, during celebrations to mark the 71st anniversary of the end of the Korean War, in Pyongyang.

# Australia prime minister Albanese rejigs cabinet

AFP  
Sydney

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese yesterday replaced the government ministers responsible for immigration and national security, overhauling the scandal-plagued portfolios. Australia's department of home affairs has been under pressure since it was forced to release more than 100 immigration detainees - many convicted of assault, kidnapping and murder - in the wake of a landmark court ruling. Albanese has sought to draw a line under the politically damaging saga, dumping home affairs minister Clare O'Neil and Immigration minister Andrew Giles and moving them into new portfolios. Both roles were taken over by

veteran government problem solver Tony Burke. Some of the detainees were charged with further crimes after they were released, stoking a barrage of bad publicity for the centre-left Labor government. Officials scrambled to fit the cohort with ankle monitoring bracelets while imposing other strict conditions such as curfews. Under the old policy, migrants could be detained indefinitely if Australia refused them a visa but could not legally deport them elsewhere - for example, if they faced the death penalty in their home country. With nowhere to go and no hope of release, many languished inside spartan Australian detention centres for years. But a high court ruling in November found this was "unlawful", overturning a 20-year-old bipartisan policy and forcing the release of almost 150 people.

# Bangladesh students vow to resume protests unless leaders freed

AFP  
Dhaka

Bangladeshi student group has vowed to resume protests that sparked a lethal police crackdown and nationwide unrest unless several of their leaders are released from custody. Last week's violence killed at least 205 people, including several police officers, according to an AFP count of police and hospital data, in one of the biggest upheavals of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year tenure. Army patrols and a nationwide curfew remain in place more than a

week after they were imposed, and a police dragnet has scooped up thousands of protesters including at least half a dozen student leaders. Members of Students Against Discrimination, whose campaign against civil service job quotas precipitated the unrest, said they would end their week-long protest moratorium. The group's chief Nahid Islam and others "should be freed and the cases against them must be withdrawn", Abdul Hannan Masud told reporters in an online briefing. Masud, who did not disclose his location because he was hiding from authorities, also demanded "visible actions" be taken against

government ministers and police officers responsible for the deaths of protesters. "Otherwise, Students Against Discrimination will be forced to launch tough protests" from today, he said. Islam and two other senior members of the protest group were forcibly discharged from hospital in the capital Dhaka on Friday and taken away by a group of plain-clothes detectives. He said last week he was being treated at the hospital for injuries police inflicted on him during an earlier round of detention and said he was in fear for his life. "I haven't seen him since he was picked up," Islam's mother Momo-

taz Nahar told reporters outside the national detective agency after unsuccessfully asking officers to allow a visit with him. "We are worried about his life," she said. "I want my son back." Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan has said the trio were taken into custody for their own safety but did not confirm if they had been formally arrested. At least 9,000 people have been arrested nationwide since the unrest began, according to *Prothom Alo*, Bangladesh's largest daily newspaper. *Khan* said 147 people had been killed in clashes so far in the government's first toll, published a day after Students Against

Discrimination gave its own preliminary count of 266. Khan told reporters yesterday the police had operated with restraint and only fired on demonstrators to protect government buildings. A curfew imposed last weekend remains in force but it has been progressively eased through the week, a sign of the Hasina government's confidence that order was gradually being restored. One small street rally held in Dhaka yesterday to demand Hasina's resignation was quickly dispersed by police. Bangladesh's mobile internet network was restored yesterday afternoon, 11 days after a nationwide blackout imposed at the height

of the unrest. Fixed line broadband connections were restored on Tuesday but the vast majority of Bangladesh internet users rely on mobile devices to connect with the world. Protests began this month over the reintroduction of a quota scheme reserving more than half of all government jobs for certain groups. With around 18mn young Bangladeshis out of work, according to government figures, the move deeply upset graduates facing an acute employment crisis. Critics say the quota is used to stack public jobs with loyalists to the ruling Awami League.

# India links of US poll contenders may spell little fizz for ties: experts

Reuters  
New Delhi/Chennai

The Indian links of some US presidential election contenders probably mean little additional benefit for ties, experts said, against the backdrop of bipartisan support for closer rela-

tions with the South Asian nation to counter an assertive China. Democratic Vice-President Kamala Harris and Usha Chilukuri Vance, the wife of Republican Donald Trump's running-mate, have rarely visited the birthplace of one or both of their parents, although Indians take pride in their success. "Either way, from India's per-

spective, whether it is Republican or Democrat, that relationship enjoys bipartisan support and should not be affected," said Harsh Vardhan Shringla, a former Indian ambassador to the US. "It can only benefit," he said of the India links, adding: "(It) cannot be affected adversely." Since ties with New Delhi are viewed favourably by both parties

in Washington, there will be little impact on relations, regardless of which party wins, or the candidate's Indian roots, an Indian government official said on condition of anonymity. Both President Joe Biden and Trump, his predecessor in office, sought to woo India, not just to challenge China in the region, but

also to wean New Delhi from a traditional dependence on Russian weapons. Both Harris and Usha Vance, the wife of Republican vice-presidential candidate, J D Vance have links to southern India. Vance belongs to a family of renowned academics. Harris, who has garnered the backing of enough delegates to secure the Democratic

nomination, is viewed as role model in her mother's ancestral village of Thulasendrapuram. She has "proven how young women, previously confined to their homes, can reach such heights, becoming a public figure in the world's No 1 country," said J Sudhakar, a resident of the village where Harris' maternal grandfather was born.

# India will not sign global tax deal 'until concerns are addressed'

The so-called "Pillar 1" arrangement, part of a 2021 global two-part tax deal, aims to replace DSTs via a new mechanism to share taxing rights on multinational companies

Reuters  
New Delhi

India will not sign a global corporate tax deal focused on highly profitable multinational firms unless its concerns on dispute resolution and the treatment of withholding tax are addressed, a finance ministry official said.

The so-called "Pillar 1" arrangement, part of a 2021 global two-part tax deal, aims to replace unilateral digital services taxes (DSTs) via a new mechanism to share taxing rights on multinational companies, such as US tech giants Alphabet's Google and Amazon and Apple.

India is "constructively engaging" with all the countries for the successful conclusion of "Pillar 1", and was hopeful the deal would be finalised soon, revenue secretary Sanjay Malhotra, one of the top finance ministry officials, said. "However, it cannot be at the cost of our own interests."

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen in May accused the Indian government of refusing to engage on issues important to US inter-

ests, noting that negotiations were stuck. "Unless our suggestions are accepted and we get a reasonable solution which is acceptable to us. We cannot agree to the formulation," Malhotra said in an interview. Among other issues, India does not want any tax-related disputes to be subject to international arbitration.

**"Unless our suggestions are accepted and we get a reasonable solution which is acceptable to us. We cannot agree to the formulation"**

As a conciliatory measure, India proposed to remove a 2% equalisation duty on digital service providers that would cost the Indian government about Rs25bn (\$300mn) annually.

Talks over a global tax deal are continuing well past a June 30 deadline and governments are now looking to a Group of 20 finance leaders' meeting in Brazil for progress.

The stakes are high. A failure to reach agreement on final terms could prompt several countries to reinstate their taxes on US tech giants and risk punitive duties on billions of dollars in exports to the US.

Many countries are already implementing Pillar 2, which sets a global minimum tax of 15% on multinationals, although it has not been ratified by the US.

## Blinken meets India's Foreign Minister Jaishankar



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (front left) speaks with India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (front right) during their meeting on the sidelines of his visit, at a hotel in Tokyo, Japan, yesterday.

# Britain 'broke and broken', new government declares

Reuters  
London

Britain's government declared the country was "broke and broken" ahead of an assessment of the public finances on Monday which the newly-elected Labour Party will use to blame their predecessors for a £20bn (\$26bn) shortfall.

Elected to run the world's sixth largest economy in a landslide victory on July 4, Labour has spent much of its first three weeks in power telling the public that things are worse than expected in almost every area of public policy.

Finance Minister Rachel Reeves will set out the findings of a fiscal review in a statement to parliament that will accuse the Conservative Party - which led the country for the previous 14 years - of making unfunded spending com-

mitments to try to win public support.

"The assessment will show that Britain is broke and broken - revealing the mess that populist politics has made of the economy and public services," a statement issued by Prime Minister Keir Starmer's office said.

"It will show that the previous government made significant funding commitments for this financial year without knowing where the money would come from."

The Conservatives have dismissed Labour's widely-expected announcement of a 'black hole' in the public finances as a fabricated pretext for tax rises it did not disclose during the election campaign. Some economists were also sceptical, saying there were few big surprises Labour could not have foreseen before taking office. Reeves will also reveal the date for her first budget, commission the independent forecasts that will be published alongside that

budget, and set out plans for the formal spending review process that decides how much money each department gets.

She is also expected to agree to above-inflation pay awards for teachers and health workers. It is unclear how Labour will address the shortfall it identifies. Reeves is hemmed in by election promises not to raise rates of income tax, National Insurance social security payments, value-added tax and corporation tax.

Media reports have mooted that Reeves would use today's statement to pave the way for other tax rises at the subsequent budget. The *Financial Times* said she would delay some road and hospital building projects.

The government statement did not set out any measures, but senior Labour minister Pat McCadden said: "We will not shy away from being honest with the public about the reality of what we have inherited."

## RBI fines Visa for unauthorised payment method

The Reserve Bank of India imposed a penalty of Rs24.1mn (nearly \$288,000) on Visa in relation to its usage of an unauthorised payment transfer method, the central bank said. "It was observed that the entity (Visa) had implemented a payment authentication solution without regulatory clearance from RBI," the central bank said in a statement. "We duly acknowledge the Reserve Bank of India order and remain committed to following RBI guidelines and regulations to continue providing safe and secure payment solutions in India," a Visa spokesperson said. In February, the RBI had ordered the credit card company to stop using an unauthorised route to make some commercial payments, per a Reuters report. The central bank has aimed to tighten scrutiny of the processes followed by financial technology, or fintech, companies.

## Rowers train on River Thames



Rowers train during warm summer weather on the River Thames at Isleworth in London, Britain, yesterday.

# India set to decide soon on sugar selling price

Reuters  
Mumbai

India will make a decision on sugar industry calls for a hike in the minimum selling price (MSP) in the coming days, a senior government official said, adding that ethanol policies would be set before the start of the next season.

India, the world's largest sugar consumer, restricted the use of sugar in ethanol production during the 2023-24 marketing year that ends on September 30 and also prohibited exports to keep a lid on domestic prices.

"We are discussing the MSP (proposal). In the coming days, we will hopefully take a call," food secretary Sanjeev Chopra told reporters during a conference.

The sugar-processing industry has been demanding an increase in the minimum selling price,

saying the government has raised the mandatory procurement price of sugarcane in recent years while the MSP has remained unchanged since 2019.

Industry bodies say a higher MSP would enable them to make timely payments to millions of sugarcane farmers in the upcoming season starting on October 1.

Chopra said the production outlook for the next season has improved due to good monsoon rainfall and increased sugarcane acreage, allowing the government to formulate policies for the next year. The sugarcane area has edged up to 5.77mn hectares from 5.7mn hectares a year ago. "We should be having very healthy stocks at the end of the present sugar season, which would allow us to have better planning of its diversion in the next year," Chopra said, referring to sugar's use in ethanol production.

# Supermarket loyalty pricing not misleading UK shoppers: regulator

Reuters  
London

The British competition regulator's ongoing review of supermarket loyalty prices is unlikely to identify widespread evidence of promotions that mislead shoppers, the watchdog said.

Loyalty schemes have proved hugely successful for the UK's biggest supermarkets, offering significantly lower prices for members. The vast majority of customers now use them and an increasing number of products are covered by them.

The Competition and Markets

Authority (CMA) launched a review in January to consider the impact on shoppers of the schemes used by supermarkets that offer cheaper prices only to loyalty card members. Market leader Tesco and No 2 Sainsbury's are among those who offer such schemes.

The watchdog considered whether there are pricing practices that indicate the non-loyalty, or non-member, price may have been artificially inflated to make the loyalty price appear misleadingly attractive.

It looked at what happens to prices before, during and after a product goes on a loyalty price promotion.

"Our analysis - involving tens of thousands of loyalty price promotions - is ongoing, but the results to date suggest we are unlikely to identify widespread evidence of loyalty promotions that mislead shoppers in this way," the CMA said.

But the regulator said it had seen examples of retailers alternating between so-called "was/now" promotions available to all shoppers and loyalty price promotions.

"This raises questions as to what the 'regular' price is for the product and therefore whether the claim saving for the 'was/now' promotion is genuine," the CMA said, adding that it was examining

the issue further and planned to publish a full report in November.

The British Retail Consortium, which represents the major supermarket groups, welcomed the CMA's update, saying grocers know they have to demonstrate value to retain customers.

Tesco, which has a 27.7% share of the UK grocery market, currently offers more than 8,000 Clubcard Prices deals each week. Sainsbury's, which has a 15.3% market share, has rolled out Nectar Prices to about 7,000 products.

Separately, the CMA said competition in UK grocery appears to be effective in bearing down on profit margins, with the average

operating margin for supermarket groups less than 3% in 2023-24.

However, it added that UK drivers were still paying too much for road fuel, with increases in retail fuel margins costing them over £1.6bn (\$2.1bn) in 2023.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said its analysis showed the cost to drivers of weakened competition in the fuel sector persisted, and that margins were "still significantly above historic levels."

It said supermarkets' fuel margins were roughly double their 2019 level.

The report echoes the findings of a 2023 CMA review, which

proposed reforms to help boost competition in the sector by giving consumers more information about pricing.

"One year on and drivers are still paying too much. We want to work with government to put in place our recommendation of a real-time fuel finder scheme to kick-start competition among retailers," CMA chief executive Sarah Cardell said in a statement.

The watchdog compiled its analysis using a voluntary price-sharing system, which it said covered only 40% of fuel retail sites and was not yet comprehensive enough to properly help consumers and impact competition.

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GULF TIMES

What Democrats can learn from science of co-operation

In a fitting finale to one of the most upstanding and progressive political careers in modern American history, US President Joe Biden, once again, did the right thing. By deferring to his party's preference that he drop out of the presidential race, he has provided a model of selflessness and decency not only for all Americans, but for democratically minded people around the world.

Still, the struggle within the Democratic Party over the past month has been unsettling, exposing divisions that could still put the party's prospects – and America's future – in peril. The drama began with Biden's wobbly performance in the debate against the Republican presidential nominee, Donald Trump, on June 27. In the weeks that followed, Democratic Party "elders" (including Nancy Pelosi, Barack Obama, and Chuck Schumer), as well as the editorial boards of major newspapers (the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* most prominently) and leading celebrity fundraisers (George Clooney) called for Biden to step down.

They questioned Biden's cognitive capacities, even as others – including Bernie Sanders, a former rival, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a major star of the left – remained loyal to him. After three weeks of displaying the tenacity that has marked his half-century in politics, Biden threw in the towel.

But the story is not over. Biden has endorsed Vice-President Kamala Harris, as have Bill and Hillary Clinton and other high-profile Democrats, and Harris responded by signalling her intention to "earn and win" the nomination. But others, Obama for one, refrained from immediately endorsing her, perhaps heeding those who called for a competitive open process or some type of "mini-primary." Nonetheless, as of July 23, Harris had secured enough Democratic Party delegates to clinch the nomination.

While the Democrats were airing their dirty laundry in public to convince Biden to step aside, the Republicans put on an ostentatious display of unity at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee. Trump, strengthened by a wave of sympathy following the attempt on his life, formally accepted

If they fail to co-operate in mobilising voters and reaching out to independents in key states, they will lose

enjoy the show playing out within the Democratic Party.

The Democrats' self-questioning, critical spirit may seem laudable compared to the cultish, chilling vision of a Republican Party that now exists to serve a convicted felon. But 100-odd days before one of the most consequential elections in history is no time for bickering in public. To keep things together between now and Election Day, the Democrats should heed lessons from the science of co-operation.

According to group selection theory, "multi-level selection" is the key factor driving evolution in social animals like ourselves. Societies that have achieved uniquely rapid rates of progress have done so not because they embraced competition between individuals or a "survival of the fittest" mindset, but because they fostered co-operation within groups. Call it survival of the friendliest. The takeaway for the Democrats is that the individual candidate they field may matter less than their ability to coalesce around that person.

Despite its incessant preaching about individualistic values, the right has often practiced this form of collectivism better than the left. Neoliberalism's capture of economic theory and policymaking from the 1980s to 2008, for example, owed much to Milton Friedman's brother-in-law, Aaron Director, who showed relentless zeal in consolidating the Chicago School of Economics into a highly cohesive, unified intellectual paradigm. Equally, the gains made by left-of-centre parties in elections this year – whether in India or France – were products of strong coalitions, whereas the British right lost because it had fragmented into warring factions, both within the Conservatives and between them and Reform UK.

If Democrats are serious about averting the catastrophe of another Trump presidency, they will remember that any remaining uncertainty or ongoing infighting is their biggest enemy. Internal ambivalence about the 2016 Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton, may have helped pave the path for Trump's first term. That same Democratic dithering and self-doubt could put him in the White House again.

Science offers a clear lesson for the course that Democrats must chart in the run-up to their convention and beyond. If they fail to co-operate in mobilising voters and reaching out to independents in key states, they will lose. – Project Syndicate

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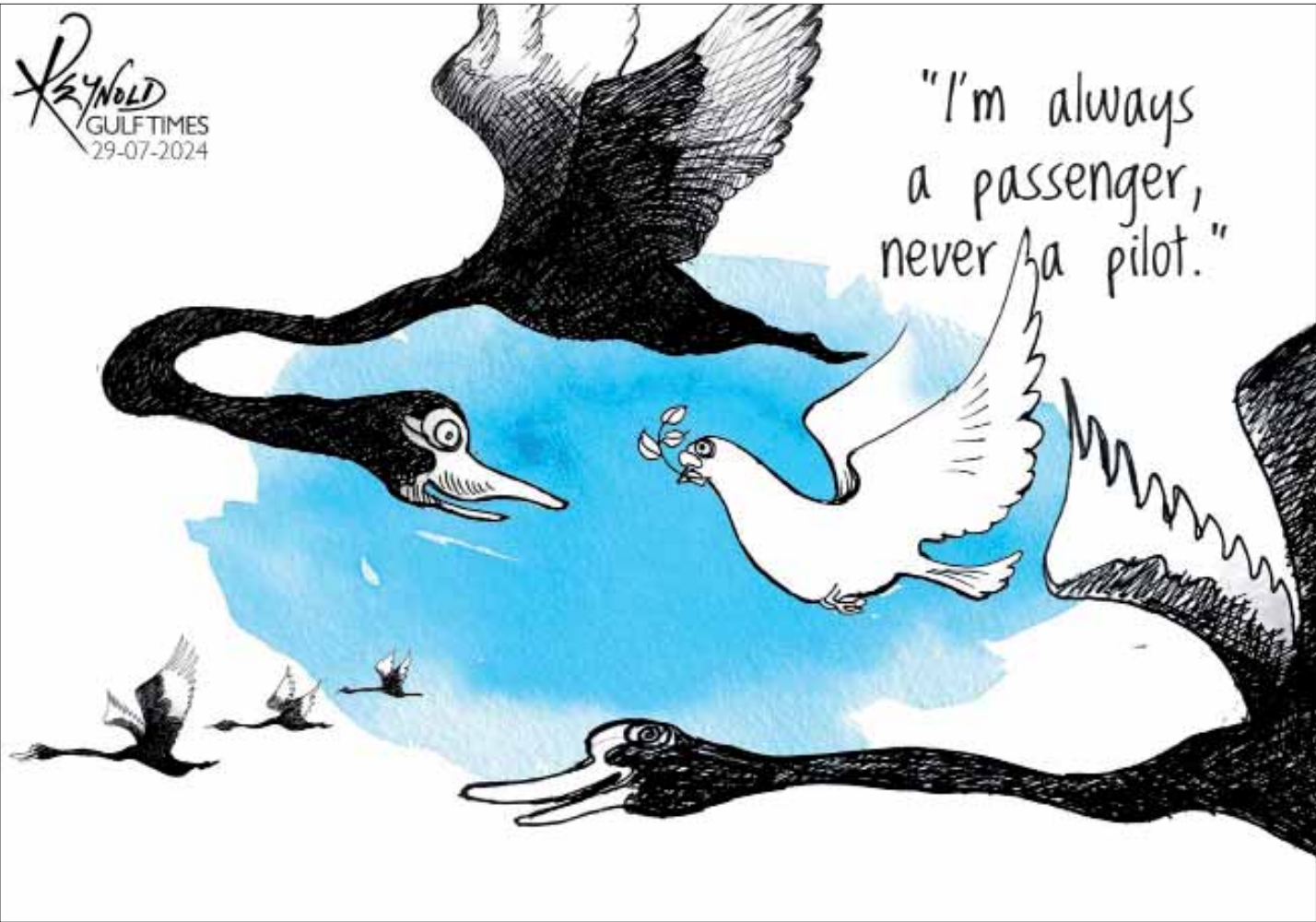
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Peru celebrates its 203rd National Independence Day



By José Benzaquén Perea  
Ambassador of Peru

On July 28 of every year, the Republic of Peru celebrates with pride its National Independence Day, known as "Fiestas Patrias", which was proclaimed in 1821 when the Peruvian people managed to gain their freedom from the status of colony and converted into a Republic, thanks to the liberation movement led by the Argentine General, Jose de San Martin.

The patriotic nation of Peru and our communities abroad show our recognition on this special and memorable day by raising high our national flag.

The country boasts a vibrant culture, evident in its diverse music, colourful textiles, and ancient traditions passed down through generations. Breathtaking

natural beauty surrounds Peru, from the majestic peaks of the Andes to the lush rainforests of the Amazon and the long, sandy coastline. Machu Picchu, a Unesco World Heritage Site and one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, is a testament to Peru's rich history and architectural prowess.

Peru aspires to solidify economic growth, ensuring prosperity for all their citizens. Addressing social inequalities and fostering inclusive development are key priorities. At the same time, Peru strives to preserve its unique cultural identity, ensuring that its rich traditions and heritage continue to flourish for generations to come. Building on the foundations of independence, Peru paves the way for a new chapter of prosperity and progress.

On this occasion it is worth remembering the important and successful visit of His Highness the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, to Lima, Peru, in October 2018.

Both Qatar and Peru are reinforcing multilateralism, which allows the two states maintain peace and unite for common objectives and interests, as well as to promote a positive image of their countries in all different aspects related to health, education, cultural openness and trade, promotion of sport and tourism, and the scientific and

technological innovation.

The bilateral relationship incorporates the role of diplomacy and its promotion of democracy; similarly, both nations tend to share comparable principles as far as foreign policies are concerned, such as:

- The promotion of peace, security, co-operation and development in the various spheres of international relations.
- The recognition of the sovereign equality of states, and respect for their independence.
- The proscription of the threat and the use of force in international relations, which threatens the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or serves as a retaliatory measure or resource to resolve international disputes.
- Non-intervention or interference in matters of internal jurisdiction of other states, either directly or indirectly.
- The pacific solution of international controversies based on the sovereign equality of states and the free choice of means, in such way that neither peace nor international security nor justices are endangered.
- Subjection to International Law as a norm of conduct in international relations and compliance in good faith with the obligations contracted under international legal instruments.
- The universality of human

rights, and the interpretation of laws in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ratified treaties on this matter.

• Respect for democratic values and the rule of law. On the other hand, we also share similar objectives with "Qatar National Vision 2030", officially released in October 2008, whose main goal is to transform Qatar into an advanced society capable of achieving sustainable development, according to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda.

Respectively, our relations were formalised on November 7, 1989, establishing our embassies in Doha and Lima, in 2011 and 2012. The relations have extended its strength after the official visit made by His Highness the Amir (now Father Amir) Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, in February 2013 to Lima and that of the Peruvian president of that time in February 2014.

During our friendly relations we have signed various agreements, which cover fields of co-operation in education, cultural, sports, civil defence, legal, economic and commercial investment

It's important to mention recently we had the opportunity to sign in Lima the Air Services Agreement (ASA), between Civil Aviation Authority and Ministry of Transport and Communications, which will strengthen the aero-commercial relations and co-operation between both nations.

Nowadays, we are negotiating significant agreements to be signed in the near future, specially in the fields of youth and sports, protection of investments, co-operation in agri-food and food security and museums.

A relevant event in our bilateral relations was the celebration in November 2023 of the II Mechanism for Political Consultations at the level of Vice-Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Held in Doha, these consultations provided a valuable space for dialogue and agreement, solidifying the bilateral agenda in political, economic, and co-operation spheres between the two countries.

One of the events that is important to acknowledge is the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022: an exceptional organisation undoubtedly fostered friendships between countries across the globe. This World Cup, featuring the most popular sport in the world, will forever be a cherished memory for fans around the world.

On the day of National Independence, our commitment is to continue strengthening our bilateral relationship considering the framework of cordiality and friendship that unite our peoples, promoting mutual support and strengthen our Peruvian identity in this generous and prosperous nation of Qatar.

With a fraternal greeting to the Peruvian community and friends in Qatar, we remembered Peru with patriotism on July 28, 2024.



Machu Picchu, a Unesco World Heritage Site and one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, is a testament to Peru's rich history and architectural prowess.

# River Seine fails first Olympics test as pollution hits training

AFP  
Paris

The River Seine failed its first Olympic test on Saturday as a training session for triathletes was scrapped after the water failed pollution checks.

A statement from Paris 2024 organisers and World Triathlon said “a joint decision was taken to cancel the swim leg of the triathlon familiarisation” but that running and bike training sessions would “go ahead as planned.”

The quality of the Seine — which is set to be used for triathlon and marathon swimming — is dependent on the amount of rain that falls in and around Paris.



A general view of the Eiffel Tower and the River Seine taken from the Triathlon start after training was cancelled amid water quality concerns. (Reuters)

Heavy downpours of the sort seen on Friday during the sodden opening ceremony of the Games overwhelm the city’s sewage system, leading to discharges of untreated effluent into the waterway.

“We’re not particularly worried,” chief organiser Tony Estanguet told reporters during a trip to an equestrian event at the Versailles Palace yesterday. “We’re vigilant as we have been since the beginning.”

“We know that for 24 to 48 hours

after heavy rain that we might need to delay (events),” he added. “The weather forecast shows that in theory the rain shouldn’t return.” The triathlons are set to take place on July 30-31 and August 5, followed by the open-water swimming on August 8-9.

Due to an exceptionally wet spring and start to summer, the Seine had been consistently failing water tests until the start of July.

Levels of the E.Coli bacteria

events by several days in the event of rain.

As a last resort, they have said they will cancel the swimming leg of the triathlon and move the marathon swimming to Vaires-sur-Marne, on the Marne river east of Paris.

French authorities have invested €1.4bn (\$1.5bn) over the last decade to clean up the Seine.

On July 17, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo swam in the river to demonstrate that it was ready for the Olympics, but also to underline what is meant to be one of the key legacy achievements of Paris 2024.

Hidalgo plans to create three public bathing areas in the Seine for the city’s residents next year — a century after swimming was banned.

French authorities have invested in new water treatment and storage facilities in and around Paris, as well as ensuring that thousands of homes and canal boats without waste water connections are linked up to the sewerage system.

The locations chosen for outdoor swimming at the Olympics have caused difficulties in the past, notably ahead of the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games and those in Tokyo in 2021.

## Organisers ‘sorry’ for any offence over Olympic opening ceremony

Paris Olympics organisers said yesterday they were “really sorry” if any offence was caused by their quirky opening ceremony while denying any intention to “disrespect” religion after complaints from French bishops.

Some Catholic groups and French bishops have condemned what they saw as “scenes of derision and mockery of Christianity” in the parade on Friday choreographed by theatre director Thomas Jolly. Catholics and other Christian groups have been angered by a tableau in the opening ceremony that appeared to parody Leonardo da Vinci’s ‘The Last Supper’ painting.

“Clearly there was never an intention to show disrespect to any religious group,” Paris 2024 spokeswoman Anne Descamps told reporters.

“If people have taken any offence, we are of course really, really sorry,” she added.

Jolly, 42, denied taking inspiration from the Last Supper in his nearly four-hour production, which took place in driving rain along the River Seine.

“The idea was to do a big pagan party linked to the gods of Olympus,” Jolly told the BFM channel.

“You’ll never find in my work any desire to mock or denigrate anyone. I wanted a ceremony that brings people together, that reconciles, but also a ceremony that affirms our Republican values of liberty, equality and fraternity,” he added.

In one of the other striking moments of the ceremony, a woman holding a bloodied severed head and intended to be executed French queen Marie-Antoinette appeared in a window of the Conciergerie, a building where she was imprisoned after the 1789 French Revolution. She was later guillotined along with her husband Louis XVI.

“Certainly we were not glorifying this instrument of death which is the guillotine,” Jolly added.

Reactions were mixed towards the unprecedented ceremony, the first time a Summer Olympics has opened outside of the main athletics stadium.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Saturday that the ceremony had “made our compatriots extremely proud”.

A spokesman for France’s far-right National Rally party, Julien Odoul, called the ceremony “a ransacking of French culture”.

Around 300,000 spectators watched from the river banks, often at a cost of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of euros.

# Putin warns US to be ready for the consequences if it deploys missiles

## Russian president threatens to restart the production of mid-range nuclear weapons

AFP, Reuters  
Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday threatened to relaunch production of intermediate-range nuclear weapons if the United States confirmed its intention to deploy missiles to Germany or elsewhere in Europe.

The United States said on July 10 that it would start deploying long-range missiles in Germany from 2026 in preparation for a longer-term deployment that will include SM-6, Tomahawk cruise missiles and developmental hypersonic weapons.

In a speech to sailors from Russia, China, Algeria and India to mark Russian navy day in the former imperial capital of St Pe-

tersburg, Putin warned the United States that it risked triggering a Cold War-style missile crisis with the move.

“The flight time to targets on our territory of such missiles, which in the future may be equipped with nuclear warheads, will be about 10 minutes,” Putin said.

“If the United States carries out such plans, we will consider ourselves liberated from the unilateral moratorium previously adopted on the deployment of medium- and short-range strike capabilities,” Putin said, adding that now in Russia “the development of a number of such systems is in the final stages”.

“We will take mirror measures in deploying them, taking into account the actions of the US, its satellites in Europe and in other regions of the world,” the Russian president warned.

Such missiles, which can travel between 500 and 5,500km, were the subject of an arms control treaty signed by the US and the Soviet Union in 1987.

But both Washington and Mos-

cow withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019, each accusing the other of violations.

Russia subsequently said it would not restart production of such missiles as long as the United States did not deploy missiles abroad.

In early July, Washington and Berlin announced that the “episodic deployments” of long-range US missiles, including Tomahawk cruise missiles, to Germany would begin in 2026.

Putin said that “important Russian administrative and military sites” would fall within the range of such missiles that “could in the future be equipped with nuclear warheads, such that our territories would be within around 10 minutes” of a strike being launched.

The Russian president also mentioned that the US has deployed Typhon mid-range missile systems in Denmark and the Philippines in recent exercises.

Russian and US diplomats say their diplomatic relations are worse even than during the 1962



Russian President Vladimir Putin attends the main naval parade marking the Russian Navy Day in Saint Petersburg yesterday. (AFP)

Cuban Missile Crisis, and both Moscow and Washington have urged de-escalation while both have made steps towards escalation.

Putin said that the United States was stoking tensions and had transferred Typhon missile systems to Denmark and the Philippines, and compared the US plans to the Nato decision to deploy Pershing II launchers in Western Europe in 1979.

The Soviet leadership, including General Secretary Yuri Andropov, feared Pershing II deployments were part of an elaborate US-led plan to decapitate the Soviet Union by taking out its political and military leadership.

“This situation is reminiscent of

the events of the Cold War related to the deployment of American medium-range Pershing missiles in Europe,” Putin said.

The Pershing II, designed to deliver a variable yield nuclear warhead, was deployed to West Germany in 1983.

In 1983, the ailing Andropov and the KGB interpreted a series of US moves including the Pershing II deployment and a major Nato exercise as signs the West was about to launch a pre-emptive strike on the Soviet Union.

Putin repeated an earlier warning that Russia could resume production of intermediate and short-range nuclear-capable missiles and then consider where to deploy them after the United States

brought similar missiles to Europe and Asia.

US missiles continued to be stationed through the reunification of Germany and into the 1990s.

But following the end of the Cold War, the United States significantly reduced the numbers of missiles stationed in Europe as the threat from Moscow receded.

The Kremlin had already warned in mid July that the proposed US deployment would mean that European capitals would become a target for Russian missiles.

“We are taking steady steps towards the Cold War. All the attributes of the Cold War with the direct confrontation are returning,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a state TV reporter.

## 35 killed as Pak tribal feud sparks sectarian fighting

A land feud between tribes in northwestern Pakistan has spilled over into days of sectarian fighting with machine guns and mortars, killing 35 people so far, officials said yesterday.

The Muslim Madagi and Mali Khel tribes have been fighting since Wednesday, when a gunman opened fire at a council negotiating a decades-long dispute over farmland, local police official Murtaza Hussain said.

While no-one was wounded in that attack, Hussain said it reignited longstanding religious tensions between the clans who live side-by-side in the district of Kurram on the border with Afghanistan. “Initially a land dispute, the issue has now escalated into sectarian violence,” Hussain told AFP, confirming the conflict “claimed 35 lives” so far. “The government and local leaders are attempting to halt the fighting through jirgas (tribal councils), but have not yet succeeded,” he said.

Inter-family feuds are common in Pakistan. However, they can be particularly protracted and violent in the mountainous northwestern region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where communities abide by traditional tribal honour codes.

# Meloni vows to ‘relaunch’ China ties

Reuters  
Rome/Beijing

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni vowed yesterday to “relaunch” co-operation with China, signing a three-year action plan during her first official visit to Beijing since taking office.

Meloni, who has led a right-wing government since 2022, made the announcement during a meeting with Chinese Premier Li Qiang, as Rome seeks to improve trade ties with Beijing after it exited President Xi Jinping’s flagship Belt and Road infrastructure investment scheme last year.

The Italian leader said her five-day trip was a “demonstration of the will to begin a new phase, to relaunch our bilateral co-operation”. The action plan aims to experiment with new forms of co-operation, she added.

Later in the day Meloni said that an industrial co-operation memorandum signed by Italy and China includes strategic industrial sectors such as electric mobility and renewables.

Li Qiang pointed to “mutually beneficial co-operation between small and medium-sized enterprises in the fields of shipbuilding, aerospace, new energy, artificial intelligence,” in a statement released by his office.



A man watches a screen showing Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni meeting China’s Premier Li Qiang in Beijing. (AFP)

Meloni, who sees Chinese investment as a way to spur Italy’s anaemic economic growth, will meet Xi and China’s top legislator, Zhao Leji, third in the leadership hierarchy.

Yesterday, Meloni also attended an Italy-China business forum, to which companies including Italian tyre-maker Pirelli, energy group ENI, defence group Leonardo, wine producers and several Italian luxury fashion groups such as Dolce & Gabbana were invited.

The forum gives “another signal of the mutual interest ... (to) balance more our interests, our commercial exchange,” she said. Meloni is expected to raise Chinese overcapacity with Chinese officials, as well as Chinese economic support for Rus-

sia in its war with Ukraine.

“China and Italy should adopt a win-win mentality and increase trade and investment co-operation, making cooperation even more dynamic and sustainable,” said Li at the opening of the forum, according to a video shared by Meloni’s office.

In 2019, Italy became the only Group of Seven country to join the massive Belt and Road Initiative but withdrew last year under US pressure over concerns about Beijing’s economic reach.

Meloni’s government said the deal had brought no benefits to Italy, whose trade with China — worth €66.8bn (\$80bn) in 2023 — is heavily tilted in Beijing’s favour. China is Italy’s biggest non-EU trading partner after the US.

## 2 Japanese climbers fall from Pakistan’s ‘Savage Mountain’

Two elite Japanese mountain climbers fell from Pakistan’s K2, officials said yesterday following an attempt at a helicopter rescue that spotted the motionless pair but was forced to turn back.

Veteran mountaineers Kazuya Hiraide and Kenro Nakajima were attempting an ascent of the jagged western face of the world’s second highest mountain, using an expert climbing style prioritising speed and relying on minimal fixed ropes.

But on Saturday “they fell from a height of 7,500 metres (24,600 feet)”, Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) Secretary Karrar Haidri said in a statement.

“A helicopter rescue was attempted, however the heli could not land,” said Wali Ullah Falahi, the deputy commissioner for Shigar district, which encompasses the 8,611-metre K2.

“Upon close inspection, the bodies of the two climbers were spotted, and it was determined that there was no movement. The heli then turned back,” he told AFP.

No organisation, as yet, has confirmed the pair are dead.

Ishii Sports — a Japanese outdoor goods brand sponsoring the pair — said the high altitude and steep slope forced the helicopter to abort its landing. “The pilot said the two men can be seen, but their status was unclear,” the firm said in a statement. “We are currently reviewing how we will rescue them.”

Rescue attempts are extremely risky on K2, even on the southeastern ridge, which is the most common route climbers take to the top. The western face is a more vertical and exposed rock face, and has only been successfully scaled once before by a Russian team in 2007.

The ACP said Hiraide and Nakajima had both won multiple Piolets d’Or awards — described as “the Oscars of climbing” — for their feats of sportsmanship.

They “meticulously planned and trained for their K2 expedition, underscoring their dedication to pushing the boundaries of high-altitude mountaineering”, the ACP said.

During this summer climbing season three other Japanese climbers have died in Pakistan — all on the 7,027-metre Spantik mountain, which is also in the Gilgit Baltistan region.

Pakistan is home to five of the world’s 14 mountains above 8,000 metres, including K2 which is considered a more difficult ascent than Everest, earning it the nickname “Savage Mountain”.

# Friends of the Environment Centre holds summer activities



As part of the fourth week of the summer activity “I Explore”, the Friends of the Environment Centre (FEC) of the Ministry of Sports and Youth organised activities aimed at developing the skills and knowledge of the participants.

The activities included a “Plant and Learn” workshop organised in collaboration with Al Arabi Sports Club, presented by FEC events, programmes, and activities supervisor Hassan al-Katheeri.

He taught the students home gardening techniques and methods, and explained its importance in providing food for humans, and its role in preserving the environment by releasing oxygen and extracting carbon dioxide from the air.

The FEC organised a workshop on making scented candles for girls, using simple raw materials and highlighted the importance of adding fragrances during the manufacturing process.

There was a workshop on the importance of agriculture in collaboration with Al Khor Sports Club, presented by environmental activist Ali Taleb al-Hanzab.

He raised awareness among the students on the benefits of agriculture and its positive impact on the environment and society, noting that it is one of the main methods for addressing the effects of climate change.



## QM reveals activities for August

Qatar Museums (QM) has announced workshops, camps, and exhibitions designed to offer enriching indoor experiences for children and adults throughout August.

M7, in collaboration with Liwan, is set to present a camp centred on character development and storytelling, from August 21-27, 9am-1.30pm.

Participants will utilise different hands-on creative practices to bring their imagined characters to life.

The Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) will host storytelling sessions, various art workshops for children and adults, and a Family Day activity.

“Family Day: Science” on August 10, 3pm-5pm, will take place at the MIA Atrium. No registration is required.

At the “Workshop: Creative work by Arabic Calligraphy” on August 18, from 4pm-6pm, participants can explore the beauty of calligraphy by making a fine art piece.

They can choose a text from the Museum collections and write it on glossy ornament paper. Required materials will be provided.

Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art will host a series of workshops.

“Mixed Media with Fabric”



(for ages 15 and above) on August 17 and 24, from 3pm-5pm, is designed to ignite participants’ imagination and empower them to create artwork rich in texture and depth.

“Cartooning for Critical Thinkers” on August 8, from 4pm-6pm and on August 10 from 11am-2pm, will be led by renowned satirical cartoonist Khalid Albaih. Participants will embark on an immersive journey into the realm of political cartooning.

The National Museum of Qatar (NMQ) will organise a workshop on Cybersecurity along with other workshops, storytelling sessions and summer camps.

“Workshop: Minecraft Education – Cybersecurity” (for ages 9-15) will be on August 18 from 10am-1pm.

“Storytelling: The Farmer who saved the Village” will be on August 2 and 3, from 4pm-7pm.

3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum (QOSM) will host a “3-2-1 Summer Olympic Festival” and a storytelling programme.

The “3-2-1 Summer Olympic Festival” (for both children and adults), until August 4, is from 4pm-6pm.

“Storytelling: Game, Set, Sisters!” on August 31 from 4pm-5pm features the book *Game, Set, Sisters!* by Jay Leslie. The book will be read aloud to children aged 7-11.

The QM’s Archaeology and Heritage department will host summer camps on “Artefacts Workshop” for children and adults. The programmes will be held at Liwan.

“Summer Camp: Artefacts Workshop” (for children), on August 12 from 10.30am-12 noon, is on what happens to objects discovered after a dig.

Help archaeologists sort pottery according to its shape, size, material, colour and wear patterns and discover what the objects are used for.

“Artefacts Workshop” (for adults) will be on August 14 from 4pm-5.30pm.

Learn about different types of artifacts and eco facts, and help archaeologists sort pottery according to their typology.

Dadu, Children’s Museum of Qatar will host workshops for the little ones.

“Workshop: Design Thinking” (for ages 10-14) will be on August 12 and 26, between 3.30pm and 5.30pm, and on August 14 and 28 between 10am and 12.30pm.

“OctoStudio” (for ages 7-9) will be on August 5 and 19, between 3.30pm and 5.30pm, and on August 7 and 21, between 10am and 12 noon.

At “OctoStudio” participants can immerse themselves in the world of block programming and explore the captivating galleries of the National Museum of Qatar.



## New group takes part in Katara Summer Camp

The Katara Summer Camp got into full swing with a new group of participants joining the event, amid a high turnout from a variety of age groups.

Organised by Katar – the Cultural Village Foundation, the camp features educational and recreational programmes, chiefly workshops, awareness-raising sessions, and practical training that primarily aim to hone the individual and collective skills of participants.

Through its programmes, the camp strives to upgrade the participants’ skills and offer a fully integrated educational and recreational atmosphere.

The event is due to run until August 7, four days a week. – QNA

