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### 122 killed in India landslides

Landslides triggered by pounding monsoon rains struck tea plantations in southern Indian state of Kerala and killed at least 122 people yesterday, with more than 250 others rescued from mud and debris. This is one of the worst natural calamities Kerala has ever witnessed. Another 128 people had been hospitalised for treatment after their rescue. Wayanad is famed for the tea estates that crisscross its hilly countryside. Several estates in the district were hit by two successive landslides before dawn when most of their inhabitants were asleep. **Page 9**

### Pezeshkian sworn in Iran president

Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian was sworn in yesterday before the Consultative Assembly in a ceremony attended by delegations from 86 countries from all over the world. In his remarks, Pezeshkian pledged to adhere to the constitution and to utilise all resources and capabilities to improve the lives of the Iranian people. He expressed his country's desire for constructive and effective interaction with the world based on mutual interests and benefits. **Page 5**

### Third child dies after UK knife attack

A third child died yesterday after a mass stabbing in Southport, northern England that had already killed two children and left five others critically injured, police said. The nine-year-old girl died as a result of injuries sustained in the knife attack on Monday, as Merseyside Police also confirmed the two earlier fatalities were girls aged six and seven. Five children and two adults remain in critical condition. **Page 9**

### California wildfire grows bigger

The largest wildfire in the US swelled to nearly 600sq miles yesterday morning, bigger than the city of Los Angeles, fire officials said, as thousands of firefighters battled the blaze in a wilderness area north of Sacramento. More than 5,000 firefighters from across California and other states were working around the clock to douse the Park Fire, burning in the state's Central Valley, about 145km north of Sacramento, the capital. **Page 7**

## Amir receives credentials of 7 new ambassadors



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received yesterday at his Amiri Diwan office the credentials of seven new ambassadors to Qatar. His Highness the Amir received the credentials of **ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain Mohamed bin Ali al-Ghatam**, **ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan Nurmurod Mahmadi**, ambassador of the Republic of Paraguay Jose Rafael Avila, ambassador of the Republic of Guinea Thierno Abdoulaye Sow, ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Nguyen Huy Hiep, ambassador of the Republic of Korea Yoon Hyunsoo, and **ambassador of the Federal Republic of Austria Erika Bernhard**. His Highness the Amir welcomed the new ambassadors and wished them success in their duties and for the relations between Qatar and their countries further development and growth. For their part, the ambassadors conveyed to His Highness the Amir the greetings of their countries' leaders and their wishes of further progress and prosperity to the Qatari people. The ambassadors were accorded official reception ceremony upon their arrival at the Amiri Diwan. **(QNA) Page 2**

### Interior minister meets French Gendarmerie director general



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met yesterday with Director General of the French National Gendarmerie Lieutenant General Christian Rodriguez. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between Lekhwiya and the French National Gendarmerie, and the resulting co-operation in carrying out missions and duties on the ground, as a Qatari security force is supporting and securing the 33rd Summer Olympic Games (Paris 2024). It also touched on a number of topics of mutual interest. **(QNA) Page 3**

## Municipality launches food safety campaign

Doha Municipality has organised a large-scale inspection and awareness-raising campaign of food outlets at over 155 hotels to mark the summer season and increase in the number of families and individuals' visit to hotels by the end of the academic year. Over 30 veterinarians, alongside food inspectors participated in this 15-day surveillance campaign and was attended by officials from the municipal control department who organised health awareness sessions for more than 620 workers. **Page 4**

## Gaza Strip declared a 'polio epidemic' area

● **Nine civilians massacred in Al-Bureij camp** ● **300 bodies recovered from Khan Younis** ● **Palestinian genocide toll 39,400**

Agencies  
Gaza Strip

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza has declared the Palestinian territory a "polio epidemic area," accusing Israel's military campaign of destroying health infrastructure, which it says led to the recurrence of the virus.

The CPV2 strain of the virus has been detected in sewage samples collected from the southern Khan Younis area and central governorates, the ministry said.

It did not say if any human cases had been detected, but said the presence of the virus "constitutes a health threat to the residents of the Gaza Strip and neighbouring countries and a setback to the global polio eradication programme".

"The brutal Israeli aggression that deprived the people of usable water, the destruction of the sanitation infrastructure, the accumulation of tonnes of garbage and a lack of food security" had led to the recurrence of the virus, the ministry said.

The World Health Organisation said it was "looking at a very problematic situation".



Palestinians walk near a puddle of waste water, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

The Israeli occupation forces (IOF) murdered nine Palestinian civilians yesterday, after carrying out an airstrike on Al-Bureij refugee camp, at the centre of the Gaza Strip.

Wafa news agency reported that the bodies were transferred to Al-Awda Hospital in Nuseirat refugee camp.

Gaza's civil defence agency said yesterday that an Israeli operation in and around the territory's second city of Khan Younis killed about 300 people since it began last week.

"Since the beginning of the Israeli ground invasion of the eastern part of Khan Younis province, the civil defence and medical teams have recovered approximately 300 bodies of martyrs, many of them decomposed," agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said.

The Israeli occupation forces (IOF) have murdered more than 39,400 Palestinian civilians and injured more than 90,996 others (mostly children), since the beginning of the genocide against Gaza in October 2023.

## Hezbollah commander survives Israeli strike

AFP  
Beirut

Israel struck Hezbollah's stronghold in southern Beirut yesterday in retaliation for rocket fire from Lebanon that killed 12 children over the weekend, saying it had targeted the commander responsible for the attack.

A source close to the Iran-backed militant group confirmed that "a leading commander" was the target of the strike, which hit near the group's decision making body, the Shura Council.

The source added that two people were killed in the strike, but was unable to confirm if the commander was among them.

However, another source close to Hezbollah said that senior commander Fuad Shukr, who is lead-



Damaged vehicles are seen after an Israeli strike on Beirut's southern suburbs, yesterday.

ing the group's operations against Israel in south Lebanon, survived the Israeli strike in the group's southern Beirut stronghold.

Shukr, "who goes by the nom de guerre Mohsen Shukr, survived the Israeli strike," the source told AFP, requesting anonymity.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had on Monday threatened a "severe response" to the attack which Israel and the US have blamed on Hezbollah, though the group denies responsibility.

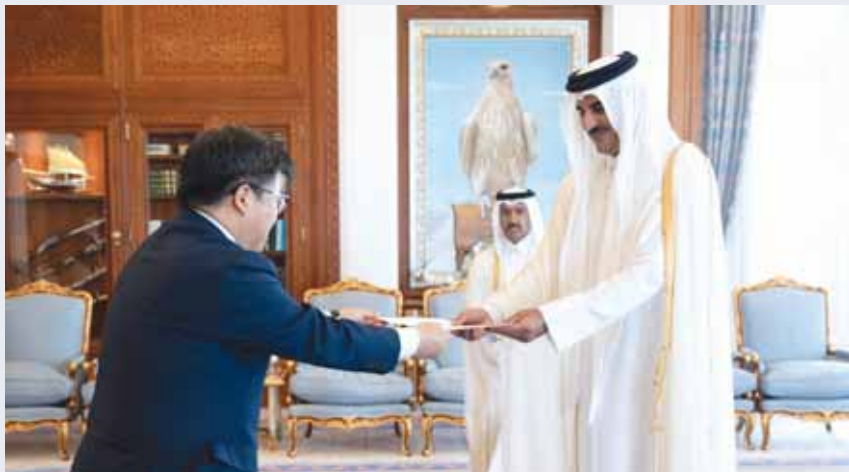
Following Saturday's strike, the international community had raced to head off any escalation that might tip the two into a first all-out conflict since 2006.

Lebanon's Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib said on Monday he had received assurances from international diplomats that there would be only a limited response.





## Amir receives credentials of new ambassadors



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received yesterday at his Amiri Diwan office the credentials of new ambassadors to Qatar. They included Korea's Yoon Hyunsoo, Vietnam's Nguyen Huy Hiep, Paraguay's Jose Rafael Avila and Guinea's Thierno Abdoulaye Sow. His Highness the Amir welcomed the new ambassadors and wished them success in their duties and for the relations between Qatar and their countries further development and growth. **(QNA)**



### Official

#### Amir sends cables of congratulations to Moroccan king

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 congratulations to King Mohamed VI of Morocco on his country's Throne Day.

#### Amir greets president of Vanuatu

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 congratulations to the President of Vanuatu Nikenike Vurobaravu, on the anniversary of his 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 Charlot Salwai. **(QNA)**

# EAA condemns relentless Israeli bombing of schools in Gaza

The Education Above All (EAA) Foundation has strongly condemned the relentless bombing of schools in Gaza, which have destroyed the safety of thousands of children and civilians.

The latest attack by Israel on a girls' school in Deir Al-Balah which killed at least 30 people, including several children, comes after a series of attacks on UN-RWA's Al-Razi and Al-Oraiban schools in Nuseirat, which killed around 70 people and injured more than 150 others.

The Israeli bombing of schools and civilian infrastructure in Gaza has been systematic and targeted, killing a total of 39,145, with 90,257 injured, over 70,000 housing units destroyed, approximately 1.9mn displaced and left 625,000 students without access to education. As much as 88% of

school buildings sustained severe damage while 54% of which were directly hit, a statement said yesterday.

The continuous targeting of educational facilities represents a grave violation of international humanitarian law. These actions not only threaten the lives of children in Gaza who are disproportionately affected by this conflict, but also infringe upon their fundamental right to education.

In June 2024, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, added the Israeli armed forces to the list of perpetrators who committed grave violations against children in armed conflict, after he found Israel responsible for 5,698 grave violations against Palestinian children, with another 19,887 alleged violations yet to be verified.

The EAA Foundation mourns the devastating impacts on Gaza's community and the severe disruptions to children's education, reiterating its commitment to advocating for the rights and protection of children in conflict zones globally.

As the world prepares to commemorate the International Day to Protect Education from Attack on September 9, EAA reaffirms its commitment to the Safe Schools Declaration and the principles of UN Security Council Resolution No 2601, emphasising the importance of education for peace and security worldwide.

EAA urgently calls upon the international community to intensify efforts to safeguard children and protect schools as part of states' obligations under international law, the statement added.

## Al-Khulaifi meets Russian FM, deputy FM



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met yesterday with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them. They also discussed a number of regional and international issues, especially the developments of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis and the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. Lavrov thanked Qatar for its efforts to reunite children with their families, as part of its ongoing mediation aimed at reuniting families separated by the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. The meeting was attended by Qatar's ambassador to Russia Sheikh Ahmed bin Nasser al-Thani. **(QNA)**

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met yesterday with Deputy Foreign Minister and Special Representative of the President of Russia for the Middle East and Africa Mikhail Bogdanov. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them. They also discussed a number of regional and international issues, the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, and a number of issues related to the Middle East. HE Dr al-Khulaifi emphasised that Qatar is continuing its efforts with the partners to reach a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip. He reiterated Qatar's firm position on the justice of the Palestinian cause and the legitimate rights of the fraternal Palestinian people, including the establishment



of their independent state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. He also stressed Qatar's firm belief in the necessity of resolving all regional and international disputes and crises through

peaceful means in a way that promotes global security and stability. The meeting was attended by Qatar's ambassador to Russia Sheikh Ahmed bin Nasser al-Thani. **(QNA)**

## QYH partakes in Arab Tourism Market

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

The Qatari Youth Hostels (QYH), participated in the activities of the Arab Tourism Market organised by the Egyptian Youth Hostels Association in co-operation with the Arab Federation of Arab Youth Hostels Associations in Egypt from July 24-28.

The opening activities were launched in the city of Ismailia in Egypt with the participation of eight Arab countries and a high-level presence from representatives of the Ministry of Youth and the Executive Authority of the Egyptian Youth Hostels Federation and the President of the Arab Federation of Associations.

Fatima al-Sulaiti, a member of the Qatari delegation, expressed her happiness to participate in the activities of the Arab Youth Tourism Market. Stressing Qatar's keenness to participate in international youth events, and the interest of its leadership in such programmes, al-Sulaiti said during her participation in the Arab Youth Tourism Market exhibition in Ismailia that the most important tourist attractions in Qatar were introduced, as well as the distinguished initiatives of Qatari youth hostels.



#### The opening activities were launched in the city of Ismailia in Egypt with the participation of eight Arab countries

She pointed out the most distinguished Qatari initiatives implemented, which were introduced: 'Discover Qatar in 144 Hours', which was implemented in three versions, and 'Youth at Hostel'. She added that Qatari youth hostels aim to promote domestic and foreign tourism, expand its concept, and empower Qatari youth by providing oppor-

tunities to represent the country in external forums, strengthening ties between different countries of the world.

In the same context, a member of the Qatari delegation, Ismail Radwani, praised the hospitality of the Egyptian youth hostels in Ismailia, and the good reception, stressing the success of the program, praising the arrangement and coordination by the organizing committee of the events.

Radwani confirmed that they greatly benefited from the workshops and accompanying programmes, describing the experience of visiting Egypt as useful and inspiring to get to know the country and benefit from the exchange of experiences between the various delegations.

## Customs officials receive US delegation



Mohamed bin Ahmed al-Mohannadi, assistant chairman of the Customs Authority for Customs and Ports Affairs, and a number of officials received a delegation from the US Department of Homeland Security. The US delegation was headed by Robert Pascal, principal deputy assistant secretary of Homeland Security, according to a post by the General Authority of Customs on X.





Students engaged in an activity during the programme.

## QC concludes summer event for girls

The recently concluded summer programme 'Pearls and Corals 13', dedicated for girls and organised by Qatar Charity (QC) as part of its Summer 2024 activities, saw impressive participation.

The annual initiative featured a blend of educational and recrea-

tional activities to optimise the girls' summer break by equipping them with new skills and developing their personal abilities. Held throughout July, the programme engaged 84 girls sponsored under QC's 'Future's Leaders' programme, as well as other community members.

The activities included cultural and social events, training workshops, recreational trips, and field visits to various locations. The programme also included lessons in public speaking, dialogue skills, crafts, arts, cooking, with educational, and sports lectures, a statement added.

# IHI recognition for Rumailah Hospital

Hamad Medical Corporation's Rumailah Hospital (RH) has been recognised as the first Age-Friendly Health System in the Middle East, achieving the esteemed Level 2 recognition as "Committed to Care Excellence."

This acknowledgment, granted by the United States-based Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) and its founding partners, underscores RH's unwavering commitment to delivering exemplary care to older adults and supports Qatar's Third National Development Strategy.

The Age-Friendly Health Systems programme, aimed to transform healthcare for older adults by implementing the 4Ms framework - What Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility. RH, HMC's longest established hospital having opened in 1957, has set a benchmark for other healthcare institutions in the region by being the first to integrate these essential, evidence-based practices comprehensively.

Dr Hanadi Khamis al-Hamad, HMC's deputy chief, Long-Term Care, Rehabilitation and Geriatrics, and medical director of RH, has been the driving force behind this ground-breaking initiative.

"We are incredibly honoured to receive this recognition. Receiving this award from IHI is a testament to the dedication and hard work of all multidisciplinary healthcare staff at Rumailah Hospital in ensuring that elderly patients in Qatar have fast access to high-quality healthcare services. Qatar has a growing elderly pop-



Dr Hanadi al-Hamad



Nasser al-Naimi

ulation, and we are committed to continuing the advancement of specialist healthcare services to meet their medical needs as well as delivering education and awareness to support the elderly community to stay healthy through good lifestyle habits," said Dr al-Hamad.

The recognition comes after months of rigorous evaluation and data collection, demonstrating the tangible impact of the 4Ms framework on the quality of care provided to older adults at RH. By adhering to these evidence-based practices and prioritising what matters most to older adults, the hospital has not only improved patient outcomes but also set a precedent for other healthcare institutions in the region to follow.

"Our journey towards becoming an Age-Friendly Health System reflects our deep commitment to enhancing the quality of care for older adults in our community. This achievement is

a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire team at Rumailah Hospital," added Dr al-Hamad.

Nasser al-Naimi, chief, Patient Experience and director of the Hamad Healthcare Quality Institute at HMC, stated: "HMC's long-standing strategic partnership with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement has led to numerous meaningful improvements in healthcare in Qatar, including those at Rumailah Hospital, enabling patients to benefit from access to healthcare services on par with the highest international standards."

"Rumailah Hospital has set a remarkable example of care excellence for the elderly for the Middle East and beyond. This milestone signifies a landmark moment in the care of the elderly in the region, and we are proud to support them in this journey," said Kedar Mate, president and chief executive officer, IHI.

## QRCS launches medical convoy for specialised surgeries in Idlib

Under its annual medical convoys programme, the representation mission of Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) in Turkiye has implemented a medical convoy for displaced Syrians in Idlib, northern Syria. The purpose of the project was to reduce mortality and morbidity rates resulting from the lack of specialised healthcare services, as well as to improve the quality of life for patients in need of specialised surgical interventions. To that end, a volunteering medical delegation from Hamad Medical Corp (HMC) and Sidra Medicine was deployed from Qatar to perform examinations and surgeries led by consultant urologist Dr Abdullah al-Nuaimi. With a capacity-building programme for local surgeons and medical equipment provided for hospitals, the number of direct beneficiaries increased to 435 patients, in addition to 2,175 indirect beneficiaries. The specialised medical convoys scheme in Syria is part of the emergency and life-saving medical response programme, especially after the devastating earthquake in southern Turkiye and northern Syria in February 2023. (QNA)



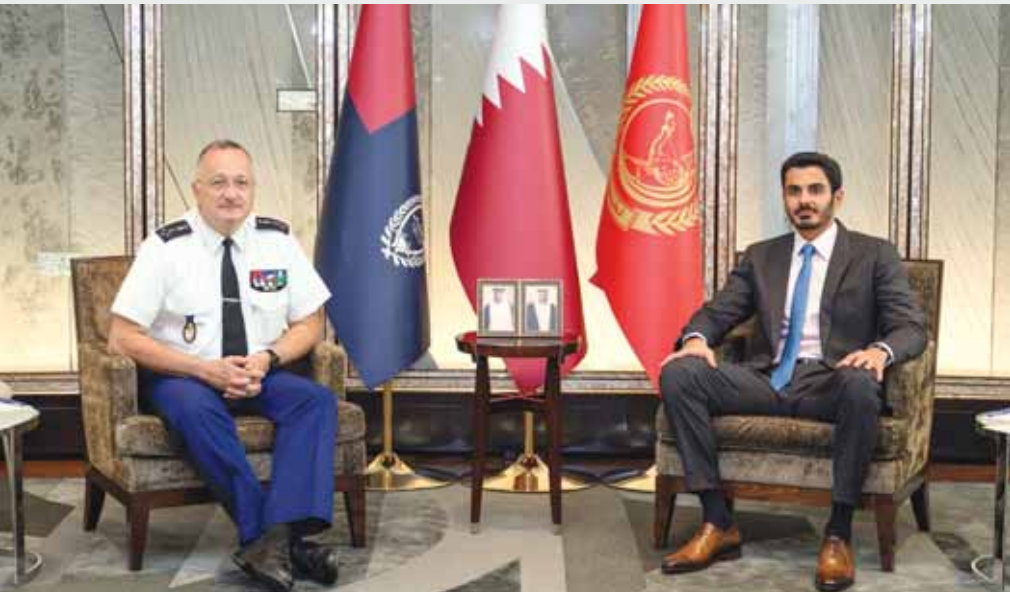
The purpose of the project was to reduce mortality and morbidity rates resulting from the lack of specialised healthcare services.



## Interior minister holds talks with French National Gendarmerie DG



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met in Paris yesterday with Director General of the French National Gendarmerie Lieutenant General Christian Rodriguez. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between Lekhwiya and the French National Gendarmerie. (QNA)



## Carrefour Qatar opens 2nd edition of Retail Graduate Programme

Majid Al Futtaim Retail, which owns the exclusive rights to operate Carrefour in Qatar, has officially launched the second edition of its Retail Graduate Programme, welcoming applications until August 1, with the expectation to onboard candidates in October 2024.

Building on the success of the inaugural edition, which welcomed 71 candidates from six countries, the programme expands its reach this year to empower more candidates from eight countries.

These countries include Lebanon, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, in addition to the existing countries of Egypt, Georgia, Kenya, Pakistan, and the UAE. Majid Al Futtaim Retail aims to enrol candidates across various countries, with a special focus on providing opportunities for women, a statement said yesterday. This expansion reinforces Majid Al Futtaim Retail's commitment to empowering young talent and developing future leaders in retail.

The 18-month programme offers recent graduates an opportunity to gain hands-on experience across the dynamic retail industry. Through three six-month rotations, participants will explore various operational areas, including in-store operations, e-commerce, merchandise functions, and customer service. This structured approach, which provides a strong foundation for future career development within the company, reflects Majid Al Futtaim Retail's commitment to both its colleagues and the local communities in which it operates.

Commenting on the launch, Philippe Peguilhan, Carrefour's regional director - Lower Gulf, stated: "The Retail Graduate Programme embodies our commitment to nurturing future retail leaders - a reflection of our core



value, 'Together We Make Every Moment Count.' By providing graduates with hands-on experience and mentorship, we empower them to drive innovation and deliver exceptional customer experiences. We are excited to welcome a new generation of talent who will shape the future of retail."

Peguilhan added: "At Majid Al Futtaim Retail, we embrace the power of diversity and collaboration. By creating a culture of continuous learning, we leverage our collective strengths, shared purpose, and diverse perspectives to

drive innovation and excellence in customer experience. As we continue to bring our iconic brand experiences to over 770 thousand customers daily, we always look forward to nurturing young minds, creating opportunities, and unleashing their potential with our proud history of success and ever propelling growth."

Interested candidates are invited to submit their applications before August 1, 2024 by visiting careers.majidalfutaim.com/go/Graduate-and-Internship-Programmes/3197801/

## Maritime Transport recorded 4,767 transactions in Q2 of 2024

The Maritime Transport Affairs recorded 4,767 transactions during the second quarter of 2024, according to a post by the Ministry of Transport (MoT) on X. These covered maritime vessels' main services, including issuance and accreditation of certificates of competency for safe manning, naval architect and marine officer. Also, services were provided for maritime vessels' ownership transfer, renewal and registration. Data monitoring and renewal services were extended for foreign vessels engaged in operations in Qatar waters. The MoT provides various services

to small and large vessels to develop the maritime transport sector. They are also designed to facilitate operations and procedures, and keep pace with technological advancements by automating all ship services. The various services are provided through integration with MoT's national documentation and archiving system to ensure business procedures are facilitated and completed through the mobile app or portal. The ministry recently launched a new package of digital services related to maritime transportation. The new digital services cover

small craft transactions. This comes in the context of MoT's digital transformation and service automation plans that aim for performance excellence, faster transactions, and simpler procedures. The new services, which are available for the public on a test run at MoT's official website, allow beneficiaries to register a small craft, renew craft registration, modify craft specifications, issue replacements, delete small crafts, and issue craft owners sequence certificates, in addition to the mortgage, release of mortgage and ownership modification services.





# QPC invites journalists, media professionals to publish their works

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Press Center (QPC) has invited all journalists, media professionals in Qatar who wish to publish their works to contact the centre.

This comes as part of the QPC's vision aimed at enriching journalistic and media content, and within the framework of its efforts to support journalists and media professionals.

The invitation includes journalists, article writers, researchers in the fields of journalism and media, investigative journalism, journalistic investigations, cartoonists, photojournalists and others, provided that applicants are Qataris or residents in Qatar.

Sadiq Mohamed al-Amari, QPC Director General, said: "We are pleased at the QPC to encourage all journalists, media professionals and researchers from various journalistic fields in Qatar to submit their works for possible issuing and printing them in a way that contributes to spreading the centre's message and vision and consolidating its role in the media scene."

He added: "Journalists and media professionals are often busy



with covering news and events without paying attention to collecting their work, articles, or investigations for publishing them in a book. This could be due to lack of time or the absence of a party that covers printing expenses, or in view of the great influence of social media."

He said: "Here comes the role of the centre to fill this gap, in documenting journalistic and media content."

He added: "We invite all those wishing to publish their works to contact the centre, as we have al-

located the e-mail Info@qatar-press.qa and the phone number 44994997. Indicating the formation of a committee of experts to evaluate these works, and provide advice and guidance to those wishing to publish their publications, which is part of the centre's strategy that aims to enhance the role of journalists in diversifying journalistic and media content, indicating that the centre will begin receiving printing requests starting today until the end of August 2024."

The centre recently participated

**The invitation includes journalists, article writers, researchers in the fields of journalism and media, investigative journalism, journalistic investigations, cartoonists, photojournalists and others, provided that applicants are Qataris or residents in Qatar**

in the 33rd Doha International Book Fair, where it issued a diverse collection of books, most notably *The World Cup Feather*, which includes the caricatures published by Qatari newspapers on the occasion of hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, and the book *The World Cup Legacy: Pictures from the Heart of the Event*, which is the first work of a group of professional photographers from Qatar, the Gulf and the world, as it included shots of decisive moments in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, and the book *Sunday Morning - Part Three*, which includes articles by the writer and media figure Mubarak bin Jaham al-Kuwari, in addition to the book *On the Sword of the East* by Professor Sultan al-Jassim, which is an album of rare photos of prominent sports and local events during the '50s and '60s.



## Doha Municipality keen to expand green areas

Doha Municipality is keen to expand green areas within its jurisdiction for the benefit residents, director Mansur Ajran al-Buainain told local Arabic daily *Arrayah*.

He stressed that the municipality would not spare any effort to use any plot of land available at any location within its limits to convert into a public park that would serve all.

For instance, a vacant plot of land at Dafna Area 67, which was used for unregulated parking, eventually got converted into a public park called "Istidama" (sustainability). This park was created with the available capabilities of the municipality at the lowest possible cost on a space of 2,300sq m. Al-Buainain pointed out that the municipality currently has 57 sites of public parks, gardens and green areas in different parts of the city, and equipped with all the necessary public services and facilities for the convenience of the visitors.

He noted that the health control section is considered one of the main control entities within the municipality, as it supervises more than 10,000 food outlets and establishments through highly qualified health inspectors. They also constantly carry out morning and evening inspection campaigns on these places, making sure to raise the awareness of the workers there on the necessary conditions to maintain food health and safety.

Al-Buainain stressed that under the Ministerial Decision No 123 for 2024, reducing the rental of the ministry's industrial zone would certainly reflect positively on enhancing the national economy and the role of the private sector in diversifying the economy of the country, giving investors more incentives to expand and grow their businesses.



## Food inspection at over 155 Doha hotels



Doha Municipality has carried out an extensive inspection and awareness campaign targeting food establishments in hotels.

The campaign covered more than 155 hotels, including their restaurants and cafeterias, coinciding with the summer season and the increased demand from families and individuals at the end of the school year.

The 15-day campaign had the participation of more than 30 veterinarians and food inspectors, along with officials from the Con-

trol Department. Health awareness instructions were provided to more than 620 workers in hotels, highlighting the importance of the role of food handlers in the food chain and explaining the causes of foodborne diseases.

The effective application of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) programme was also discussed. Besides, 55 various food samples were collected and analysed at the central laboratory to ensure their compliance with the standard specifications.

## Closure at Education City Interchange underpass



The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced a closure at the underpass of Education City Interchange, stretching from Al Gharrafa Street and Huwar Street to traffic coming from Al Rayyan towards Al Gharrafa only, while keeping the other direction of the underpass, the overpass and parallel service roads open to traffic, effective on Thursday and Friday 02 & 03 August 2024 as follows:  
Friday: 02:00 AM - 10:00 AM  
Saturday: 02:00 AM - 07:00 AM

## WAREHOUSE FOR RENT

- ✔ Warehouse for rent in Industrial area
- ✔ Warehouse 600 Sqm/1200 Sqm
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- ✔ Civil Defence Approved
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## Back-to-School campaign at Al Asmakh Mall, Barwa Plaza Mall



Al Asmakh Mall and Barwa Plaza Mall have launched their Back-to-School campaign for customers to shop and win diamond vouchers up to QR50,000, a statement said. The diamond partner is Malabar Gold & Diamonds. Customers shopping for QR300 and above at Centrepoint, Max and Shoexpress in Al Asmakh Mall and Barwa Plaza Mall will automatically qualify for the e-raffle draw. The campaign showcases more than 50 brands and 100,000 products in both the malls. A total of 25 winners will be selected through a randomiser by a ministry official at Al Asmakh Mall, with each winning a QR2,000 worth of diamond voucher. The campaign concludes on September 7.

## Aston Martin, Mercedes-Benz models recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Alfardan Luxury Motors, has announced the recall of Aston Martin DBX, 2023 model, over a possible defect in the quality of engine oil cooling hoses, which results in the loss of oil and oil pressure, thus causing the engine to stop suddenly and increasing the risk of a crash or fire. The MoCI, in co-operation with Nasser Bin Khalid and Sons Automobiles, has announced the recall of Mercedes-Benz CLA, GLB, GLC, and GLE, 2019-2021 models, as the programming of entertainment and information control unit does not match

the factory specifications, which results in the multimedia system not being available. The MoCI, in co-operation with Nasser Bin Khalid and Sons Automobiles, also announced the recall of Mercedes CLA, 2023 model, as upper area of the fender may be in contact with the side wall due to sheet metal burr that may possibly cause damage to the surface coating of both component parts. The MoCI said the recall campaign comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers and ensure that car dealers follow up on vehicle defects and repairs.

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 Center: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, social media channels @mociqatar, and mobile application MOCIQatar available on iPhone and Android devices.

## Vitamix products recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Tavola, has announced the recall of Vitamix 225ml and 600ml Blending Containers and Blade Bases, manufactured between 2018-2024, over the possibility that the container may separate from the blade base, exposing the blades and posing a laceration hazard. The MoCI said it will co-ordinate with the dealers to follow up on the recall campaign and communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary actions are carried out.



# Qatar participates in oath ceremony of Iranian president



Qatar participated in the constitutional oath in Tehran yesterday of Masoud Pezeshkian as president of Iran. HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi represented Qatar at the ceremony. (QNA)

# Destruction of water wells deepens Palestinian misery

■Severe humanitarian crisis grips Gaza  
■Over 30 water wells destroyed, says official  
■People wait in long lines every day for water

Reuters  
Gaza

Israel's military blew up more than 30 water wells in Gaza this month, a municipality official and residents said, adding to the trauma of air strikes that have turned much of the Palestinian enclave into a wasteland ravaged by a humanitarian crisis.

Salama Shurab, head of the water networks at Khan Younis municipality, said the wells were destroyed by Israeli forces between July 18-27 in the southern towns of Rafah and Khan Younis.

The Israeli military did not respond to the allegations that its soldiers had torched the wells.

It is not only ever-present danger from Israeli bombardment or ground fighting that makes life a trial for Gaza's Palestinian civilians. It is also the daily slog to find bare necessities such as water, to drink or cook or wash with.

People have dug wells in bleak areas near the sea where the bombing has pushed them, or rely on salty tap water from Gaza's only aquifer, now contaminated with seawater and sewage.

Children walk long distances to line up at makeshift water collection points. Often not strong enough to carry the filled containers, they drag them home on wooden boards.

Gaza City has lost nearly all its water production capacity, with 88% of its water wells and 100% of its desalination plants damaged or

destroyed, Oxfam said in a recent report.

Palestinians were already facing a severe water crisis as well as shortages of food, fuel and medicine before the destruction of the wells, which has deepened the anguish brought on by the Gaza war, now in its tenth month.

All Gazans can do is wait in long lines to collect water since mediators have failed to secure a ceasefire from Israel and Hamas. Not only is there a shortage of water, much of it is also contaminated.

"We stand in the sun, my eye hurts because of the sun, because we stand for long (hours) to (secure) water," said Youssef El-Shenawy, a Gaza resident.

"This is our struggle with non-potable water, and then there is our struggle with drinking water, which we take another queue for, that's if it is available." The war started in the first week of October last year when Hamas, the Pales-

tinian group ruling Gaza stormed Israel. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed more than 39,000 people and bombed much of Gaza, where functioning hospitals are scarce, into rubble, Gaza health authorities say.

Fayez Abu Toh observed fellow Gazans standing in line in the heat eager to get their hands on water. Like many Palestinians he wonders why Israel strikes targets that pose no threat to its military.

"Whoever has a bit of a sense of humanity has to look at these people, care for them and try to (impose) a ceasefire and end this war. We are fed up; we are all dead and tired. The people have nothing left," he said.

"Does this well affect the strength of the (Israeli) Defence Force? This is a destruction of the infrastructure of the Palestinian people to further worsen the situation, and to pressure these people that have no one, but God."



Displaced Palestinians queue for water supply in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday, amid the ongoing conflict.

# Palestinian group demands int'l inquiry into abuse allegations

Reuters  
Ramallah

The association representing Palestinian prisoners called for an international inquiry into allegations of abuse of detainees in Israeli jails since the start of the war in Gaza, following an outcry by right wing protesters over an Israeli investigation.

Qadura Fares, head of the Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs Commission, said on Monday night there had been multiple reports of abuse at Sde Teiman, the military facility in southern Israel at the centre of the investigation. "Every day, as we witness the massacres against our people in Gaza, we hear horrific and harsh testimonies from legal teams and detainees who are released," he said in a statement.

He said the Israeli investigation and the detention of nine Israeli soldiers was a "farce"

aimed at misleading world opinion. The Israeli military said the investigation into the Israeli soldiers was ordered "following suspected substantial abuse of a detainee". It provided no further details.

According to Israeli press reports, the soldiers have been accused of physically abusing the prisoner. Reuters has not been able to independently verify those reports. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Army Radio reported that the detainee had been a member of an elite unit of the Hamas group who had been captured in Gaza during the Israeli offensive there that followed the group's October first week storming of Israel.

The investigation underscored longstanding tensions in the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu between nationalist-religious parties and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and the army command.

# Iran's president Pezeshkian sworn in at parliament

AFP  
Tehran

Iranian reformist Masoud Pezeshkian was sworn in before parliament yesterday as the nation's ninth president at a ceremony attended by foreign dignitaries.

Pezeshkian won a runoff race against conservative Saeed Jalili on July 5 to replace president Ebrahim Raisi who died in a helicopter crash in May.

Yesterday's ceremony came two days after Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei officially endorsed Pezeshkian and gave the 69-year-old heart surgeon presidential powers.

Pezeshkian, who is expected to unveil his government within two weeks, had secured more than 16mn votes during the runoff, or about 54% of the roughly 30mn ballots cast.

Iran's presidential election took place against a backdrop of heightened regional tensions since the Gaza war began in early October, disputes with Western powers over Iran's nuclear programme and domestic discontent over the state of the sanctions-hit economy.

Yesterday's ceremony was attended by senior officials from several countries including Armenia, Tajikistan, Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Cuba and Brazil.

European Union envoy Enrique Mora was also present.

Regional allies were also in attendance, namely Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and the head of the Islamic Jihad Ziyad al-Nakhalah.

Lebanon's Hezbollah movement was represented by the group's deputy secretary-general Naim Qassem while the Yemen's Houthi fighters sent spokesman Mohamed Abdulsalam.

Haniyeh and Nakhalah, whose groups have been fighting Israel in the Gaza Strip since Hamas's October first week storming of Israel, met with Khamenei and Pezeshkian.



New Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian stands next to Iranian judiciary chief Gholam Hossein Ejeie (left) during a swearing in ceremony at the parliament in Tehran, yesterday.

"Supporting the cause of the oppressed Palestinian nation will continue with strength, and no factor can disrupt our will in this direction," said Pezeshkian on Monday. Yesterday's swearing-in ceremony came amid concerns of war between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah following a Saturday rocket attack on the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights.

Israel has accused Hezbollah of responsibility for the attack that killed 12 children but the Lebanese group has denied any involvement.

During his inauguration speech, Pezeshkian slammed Israel's "crimes" in the Gaza Strip with some Iranians present in parliament chanting "Death to Israel, Death to America!" "Those who supply the weapons that kill children in Gaza cannot teach humanity and tolerance to others," he said in reference to the US.

Iran has made support for the Palestinian cause a centrepiece of its foreign policy since the 1979 revolution, and hailed Hamas's October first week storming of Israel.

Iran's president is not head of state, and the ultimate authority rests with the supreme leader — a post held by Khamenei for the last 35 years.

On Monday, Pezeshkian

warned Israel against attacking Lebanon, saying such an act would have "heavy consequences".

Since his election, Iran's new president has reaffirmed support for the so-called "axis of resistance", Tehran-aligned groups such as Hezbollah and the Houthis, that support Hamas against Israel.

Pezeshkian was the only candidate representing Iran's reformist camp allowed to stand in Iran's presidential election, for which all contenders were approved by the conservative-dominated Guardian Council.

In his speech yesterday, he also reaffirmed his willingness to end Iran's isolation, saying: "I will not stop on the path of lifting the cruel sanctions".

During his campaign, he had vowed to try and revive a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers which collapsed in 2018 after the US unilaterally withdrew from agreement.

The deal had given Iran sanctions relief in return for curbs on its nuclear activity.

Pezeshkian has recently called for "constructive relations" with European countries, even though he accused them of reneging on commitments to mitigate the impact of renewed US sanctions.

## FREE VEHICLE RECALL

وزارة التجارة والصناعة  
Ministry of Commerce and Industry  
دولة قطر  
State of Qatar



## Mercedes CLA

Manufacturing Year 2023



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# Sudan govt seeks ‘discussions’ before peace negotiations

AFP  
Port Sudan

Sudan's foreign affairs ministry which is loyal to the regular army fighting paramilitaries said yesterday that it “wants more discussions” before accepting a US invitation for ceasefire talks.

“Any negotiation before...the

complete withdrawal” of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) headed by general Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, and a “halt” to their expansion, are “unacceptable”, the ministry said in a statement.

American secretary of state Antony Blinken last week invited the Sudanese army and the RSF for negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland, set to begin on August 14.

The same day, Daglo welcomed the invitation and announced the RSF's intent to participate. The army, headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, did not react.

A war has raged in Sudan since April 2023 between the army and the RSF that has left tens of thousands dead and sparked a major humanitarian crisis.

On Sunday, the foreign affairs ministry asked for “consultations

with the Sudanese government on the form and agenda” and for a “meeting with the United States” before any future negotiations.

The talks, co-sponsored by Saudi Arabia, must include the African Union, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and the UN as observers, Blinken said.

They are aimed at “achieving a country-wide cessation of violence and allowing access for hu-

manitarian aid”, said the top US diplomat.

Previous rounds of talks in Jeddah ended in failure.

The war has forced the displacement of more than 11mn people both inside and outside Sudan's borders, according to the United Nations, obliterating infrastructure and pushing the country to the edge of famine.

Some 25.6mn people — more

than half the population — are facing high levels of “acute food insecurity”, the world body said in a report published in late June.

Both sides have been accused of war crimes for deliberately targeting civilians. Since the beginning of the war, the army and RSF have also been accused of looting and obstructing humanitarian aid, as well as almost entirely destroying an already-fragile health system.

# Libya repatriates 369 Nigeria and Mali migrants

AFP  
Tripoli

Libya repatriated yesterday 369 irregular migrants to their home countries Nigeria and Mali, including more than one hundred women and children, an official said.

Mohamed Baredaa, head of the Libyan interior ministry organisation tasked with halting irregular migration, said two repatriations flights took place transporting 204 Nigerians and 165 Malians.

Nine babies, 18 minors, and 108 women were among the Nigerian irregular migrants, said Baredaa. He said that the flights were carried out “in co-ordination with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)”.

The UN agency provides free return flights to migrants and help reintegrating them into their home countries with its “voluntary humanitarian return programme”.

But some migrants told AFP on Tuesday that they were being forcibly deported.

Libyan authorities “came at night and broke down the door”, said Hakim, 59, a Nigerian who has lived in Libya for 25 years who declined to give his surname. He said they confiscated his passport before detaining him and his wife prior to repatriation. Libya is still struggling to recover from years of war



Irregular Nigerian migrants, who voluntarily agreed to be deported home, sit waiting at the anti-migration bureau, tasked with co-ordinating deportations of foreigners who are in the country illegally, before departing to Mitiga International Airport in Tripoli, yesterday.

and chaos after the 2011 Nato-backed overthrow of long-time ruler Muammar Gaddafi.

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

Libya has been criticised over the treatment of migrant and refugees, with accusations from rights groups ranging from extortion to slavery.

Situated about 300 kilometres from Italy, it is a key departure point for migrants, primarily from sub-Saharan African countries, risking perilous Mediterra-

nean Sea journeys to seek better lives in Europe.

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

Earlier this month, Libyan authorities said up to four in five foreigners in the North African country were undocumented.

“It's time to resolve this problem”, Interior Minister Imad Trabelsi had said at the time, adding that Libya has turned from a “transit country to a country of settlement” — something he deemed “unacceptable”

# Congo River shipwreck kills at least 25 in DRC

AFP  
Goma

The shipwreck of an overloaded passenger barge on the Congo River in the Democratic Republic of Congo killed at least 25 people, local authorities said yesterday.

An unknown number of people went missing after the barge sank in the night from Sunday to Monday near the city of Kindu, capital of Maniema province, according to multiple local sources.

“We've fished out 25 bodies,” said Maniema's provincial governor Moussa Kabwankubi Moise, cautioning it was a “provisional tally” as an unknown number of people are missing.

Moise pointed the finger at the boat being overloaded and the challenges of navigating at night as the “principal reasons” for the shipwreck, telling AFP that a commission of enquiry had been set up.

Kindu's Mayor Augustin Mulamba Atibu warned that there were “many missing people”, adding that authorities were “continuing the search to find other corpses”.

For his part Stephane Kamundala, a leading figure in Maniema civil society, bemoaned the lack of a list of passengers which would help estimate the number of missing people.

“We don't know the exact number of people aboard the barge,” Kamundala said, adding

that the shipping authorities were unable to give them a figure.

A vast Central African nation, the Democratic Republic of Congo suffers from a lack of practicable roads.

As a result travel often occurs on lakes, the Congo River and its tributaries, where shipwrecks are frequent and the death tolls often heavy.

In October, at least 47 people died after a boat navigating the Congo sank in the northwestern Equateur province.

And in 2019, a shipwreck on Lake Kivu in the country's east claimed around 100 lives.

Attempts to find the victims and the missing are often complicated by the chronic lack of passenger lists.

## Kenya protesters seek improved public amenities



Demonstrators light a bonfire to barricade a road as they protest to advocate for the reopening of the Woodley grounds as a public amenity and better services from the Nairobi County government, in Kibera district, Kenya, yesterday.

# Kenya charges former state firm head over edible oil import graft

Reuters  
Nairobi

A former head of Kenya's main state-owned trading company was charged in court yesterday with abuse of office and other offences over a 2022 scheme to import edible oil that local media said cost more than \$120mn.

The arraignment of Pamela Mutua is the first notable attempt by President William Ruto's government to rein in Kenya's rampant corruption, after more than 50 people were killed in deadly

protests against tax hikes and the graft. Mutua, who was managing director of the Kenya National Trading Corporation (KNTC), was accused of flouting procurement laws in the award of a contract to a company called Purma Holdings Limited at an anti-corruption court in the capital.

She and KNTC both deny the charges. The imports were worth 16bn shillings (\$123.55mn), domestic media outlets have reported, but there was no mention of the figure in the charges presented in court. Mutua faces six charges and she was freed on bail until Aug 12 when she will appear before

the court again. She was charged alongside another official of the company.

The cooking oil import scheme was put in place by Ruto's government after he got into office in late 2022, to lower the price of the commodity, but it has been criticised by the public and local media for only benefiting well-connected importers.

KNTC contracted private companies to import the oil, mainly from Asia. The government's standards body initially said the oil was not fit for human consumption before rowing back and clearing the consignment.

# Uganda police find 17 human skulls at suspected shrine

AFP  
Kabanga

Seventeen human skulls, including those of children, have been unearthed in boxes in an underground chamber at a suspected shrine in the centre of Uganda, police said yesterday. Children foraging for firewood outside the village of Kabanga near Mpigi town, about 40 kilometres west of the capital Kampala, made the grisly discovery on Sunday, according to local residents, AFP reported from Kabanga.

Shocked villagers told police there were metallic boxes containing what appeared to be skulls in an underground chamber beneath one of three ruined shrines on a sleepy hillside.

“We swiftly moved in and dug up the place, and so far we have recovered 17 human skulls,” regional police spokesman Majid Karim said.

“We are conducting more excavations to ensure there are no more skulls other than what we have so far recovered,” he said.

The underground chamber “was well built” and was more than two metres deep, police said.

Karim added that the remains, discovered in four boxes, were being examined to determine their age and sex, as well as when they may have been buried.

Three skulls are those of children, Karim said after an initial examination.

“When there are skulls...there must be other parts of the body like the legs,” he said, calling on residents to volunteer information that may lead to the discovery of other body parts.

# Displaced musicians from Gaza strive to rebuild their lives in Egypt

Reuters  
Cairo

Palestinian musician Raouf Belbeisi had dreamt from a young age of creating a vibrant cultural hub in the Gaza Strip, but five months after he opened a cafe in Gaza City, the war between Israel and Hamas shattered his plans.

Now the Oud-playing singer is among a group of Gazan musicians looking to rebuild their lives and careers after crossing into neighbouring Egypt.

“The war broke out, and the cafe was completely shut. This dream collapsed. It was bombed and demolished,” Belbeisi, 28, told Reuters at a community event for displaced musicians in Cairo on Saturday titled Deira, which means home in Arabic.

“Since the start of the war, I



Palestinian musician and oud player Raouf Belbeisi speaks during an interview with Reuters, after he took part in organising a community event, at the Cairo Citadel, Egypt. **Right:** Ahmed Shamaly, a Palestinian underground rapper and musician, speaks during the interview.

was displaced along with my family four or five times. In the end, it was agreed that I come here to Egypt to help my entire family get out,” he said.

Belbeisi remains undeterred, though his primary concern is the safety of his family, still trapped in Gaza. “My wish for now is that the war ends, of course, and for me to

get my family out of Gaza, or for me to go back.”

The war that started in the first week of October has reduced much of Gaza to rubble and left almost 40,000 people dead, according to the local health ministry.

Israel launched its military offensive after Hamas stormed Israel. Egypt provided the only



route for civilians to leave the long-blocked territory, many paying brokers thousands of dollars to do so, though the border crossing closed as Israel advanced on the Gazan town of Rafah in early May.

Displaced by the conflict but driven by his passion for music, 22-year-old rapper Ahmed Shamaly arrived in Cairo three months

ago with little more than his family and the hope of launching his first collection of recorded tracks.

Shamaly had a chance to perform live tracks from the compilation for the first time at the Deira event, hosted by arts collective Kalam Aflam along with other local initiatives. He said that people working in the arts in Gaza faced restrictions on creative freedoms as well as a lack of infrastructure and support. However, “before the war, I felt that there was more acceptance for rap music among the youth, and there was an energy that would take us to wonderful places,” Shamaly said.

Deira is also the name of the latest album from Algerian-Palestinian performer Marwan Abdelhamid, better known by his stage name Saint Levant, who was the main performer at Saturday's event. The album's name signifies a connection to his roots. Hayat Aljowaily of

Kalam Aflam said the Cairo event aimed to inspire young Palestinians with a sense of possibility. “Egypt is a historical crossroads of arts and culture in the Mena (Middle East and North Africa) region, and it has the infrastructure and industry leaders who can help these artists reach new audiences and sustain their art until they can return home,” she said.

Shamaly's 20-year-old music manager, Adam Ghanim, is determined to launch Gaza's first music label. In January 2023 he received a fellowship from the 2048 Foundation, founded by Saint Levant, which backs creative Palestinian projects. “With their support, we were able to open a music studio in Gaza City, but nearly five months later, Israeli forces destroyed it,” he said.

“We lost everything, but now in Cairo, we're determined to gain it all back,” he said.





This handout picture released by Venezuelan Presidency shows President Maduro addressing the nation after the Venezuelan presidential election. - **AFP**



A police officer fires tear gas during a protest against Maduro's government in Caracas. - **AFP**



Right: Opponents of Maduro's government clash with police in Caracas neighbourhood. - **AFP**

# Protests spread in Venezuela

**UN rights chief says Venezuela at a 'critical juncture'**

Reuters/AFP  
Caracas/Geneva

Demonstrations in Venezuela spread yesterday as anger grew over the awarding of Sunday's election to President Nicolas Maduro despite opposition claims that they had clinched a landslide victory.

The protests began after the election board declared on Monday that Maduro had won a third term with 51% of votes to extend the "Chavista" movement's quarter-century rule.

The opposition, which considers the election body to be in the pocket of a dictatorial government, said the 73% of vote tallies to which it has access showed its candidate Edmundo Gonzalez had more than twice as many votes as Maduro.

The renewed instability brought divided international reaction: the United States said it was considering fresh sanctions on individuals linked to the election unless there was greater transparency about the vote, while China and Russia congratulated Maduro.

As well as new sanctions, Maduro's move could spur yet more migration from

a country that has shed a third of its population in recent years.

However, with no sign the military will break from its long-standing support for Maduro, and with previous cycles of anti-government protests and sanctions failing to dislodge him, the mechanisms open to the opposition appear limited.

Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, who was barred from running in the election but spearheaded the campaign for Gonzalez, was expected to appear with him at a gathering in Caracas.

"Edmundo is the president. We know he won the election," said 27-year-old brokerage worker Andrea Garcia as she waited with thousands of others for Machado's and Gonzalez's appearance. "We want to live in the Venezuela that our parents had, where there wasn't hunger in the streets."

"(Maduro) can't govern with 80% of the country against him," she added.

Opposition protesters were also marching in the cities of Valencia, Maracay, San Cristobal, Maracaibo and Barquisimeto.

In some locations Reuters witnesses saw marchers being attacked by security forces.

In Valencia, a protester spray-painted

the word for "fraud" on the road.

Pro-Maduro demonstrations took place later in the day.

At least six people had been killed around the country in incidents related to the election count or associated protests, according to rights group Foro Penal.

On Monday protesters blocked roads, lit fires and threw petrol bombs at police, and police in Caracas and Maracay fired tear gas.

In Coro, capital of Falcon state, on the Caribbean coast west of Caracas, protesters on Monday cheered and danced when they tore down a statue depicting former president Hugo Chavez, Maduro's mentor who ruled from 1999-2013.

The government calls them violent agitators.

"We've seen this movie before," Maduro said from the presidential palace on Monday, pledging that security forces would keep the peace. "We have been following all of the acts of violence promoted by the extreme right."

Defence Minister General Vladimir Padrino described the protests as a "coup".

"There is a coup in progress so President Nicolas Maduro has stepped up to stop it again and with him the people who elected him president, all the institutions, the Bolivarian armed forces and the democratic

institutions," Padrino said on state television yesterday. "We will defeat the coup."

A local monitoring group, the Venezuelan Conflict Observatory, said it had registered 187 protests in 20 states by 6pm on Monday with "numerous acts of repression and violence" carried out by paramilitary groups and security forces.

Attorney-General Tarek Saab said on state TV that there had been 749 arrests and two deaths of security force members in Aragua state.

The UN's human rights chief has voiced alarm at the deadly unrest in Venezuela following this weekend's disputed presidential election, saying the country was now at a "critical juncture".

"I am extremely concerned about increasing tensions in Venezuela, with worrying reports of violence," Volker Turk said in a statement. "Venezuela is at a critical juncture. I urge the authorities to respect the rights of all Venezuelans to assemble and protest peacefully and express their views freely and without fear."

"This troubles me deeply," he said. "I am alarmed by reports of disproportionate use of force by law enforcement officials along with violence by armed individuals supporting the government."

"Several protesters have been injured by firearms ... more allegations are still

pending verification," Turk added. "Those responsible for human rights violations must be held to account."

Maduro, a 61-year-old former union leader and foreign minister, won election after Chavez's death in 2013 and was re-elected in 2018.

The opposition said both votes were rigged.

Independent pollsters have called Maduro's victory implausible, while governments in Washington and around Latin America questioned the results and urged a full tabulation of votes.

"Not even (Maduro) believes the electoral scam he is celebrating," said Argentina's President Javier Milei.

Peru ordered Venezuelan diplomats to leave within 72 hours, citing "serious and arbitrary decisions made today by the Venezuelan regime".

Many Venezuelans have said their decision whether to join the exodus from the country had been dependent on the election.

"It feels like I no longer have anything to do here in Venezuela," said 23-year-old graduate Jorge Salcedo in Caracas. "We'll start from scratch in another country ... we live in a country with repression, and we live in a country under dictatorship. It was our last chance."

## Raging California wildfire grows bigger than city of Los Angeles



A helicopter is seen flying over the Borel Fire near Lake Isabella, California. - **Reuters**

Reuters  
Los Angeles

The largest wildfire in the US swelled to nearly 600sq miles yesterday morning, bigger than the city of Los Angeles, fire officials in California said, as thousands of firefighters battled the blaze in a remote wilderness area north of Sacramento.

More than 5,000 firefighters from across California and other states were working around the clock to douse the Park Fire, burning in the state's Central Valley, about 90 miles (145km) north of Sacramento, the capital.

The fire grew to 383,600 acres (155,237 hectares), becoming the sixth largest wildfire in Californian history.

The fire is fast-moving, said Fire Captain Dan Collins of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection or Cal Fire.

"This fire has lots of fuel that is receptive to burning, and it's hard to get to," he said. "Our fire line is 260 miles around, that's the size of three Lake Tahoes. It can take two-three hours to get personnel in there over the terrain."

The weather brings only a slight chance of a stray thunderstorm, said Ashton Robinson Cook, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service (NWS).

After that, no rain is in sight, and hot and extremely dry will prevail, he said.

Temperatures will reach 100° Fahrenheit (37.8° Celsius) today and highs could hover at that level until next Monday, he said, with relative humidity dropping to as low as 7%.

The Park Fire, which was only 14% contained yesterday, has forced the evacuation of more than 4,000 people and destroyed or damaged more than 100 structures, fire officials said.

No injuries or deaths were reported.

Evacuations included Paradise, the town that was devastated by the 2018 Camp Fire, the deadliest in the state's history.

The man charged with starting the Park Fire, allegedly by pushing a flaming car down a Butte County gully last Wednesday, was formally charged with arson on Monday, but awaits additional charges, officials said.

The man, Ronnie Dean Stout II, 42, of Chico, California, denied wrongdoing at an arraignment on Monday, said Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey at a news conference.

Stout did not enter a plea but was denied bail. His arraignment was extended to tomorrow, as more charges could be added, Ramsey said.

## Harris, Trump campaigns launch million-dollar ad blitzes

Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris launched a \$50mn advertising blitz yesterday, capitalising on the momentum of a fledgling campaign against Republican rival Donald Trump with a one-minute spot titled *Fearless*.

It was Harris's first big ad buy since consolidating support for the Democratic nomination after President Joe Biden dropped out of the race on July 21 and endorsed her.

In addition to garnering the backing of big-money donors, Harris has sparked newfound energy among groups such as young voters that Biden had been struggling to win over.

Public opinion polls in the last week have shown Harris, 59, closing the gap with 78-year-old Trump, who still leads in some national surveys.

The ads will be rolled out on television as well as streaming and social channels across election battleground states in the weeks before the Democratic National Convention that starts on August 19.

The first ad in the campaign begins with images of Harris as a little girl and follows her progression to a prosecutor, attorney-general and US vice-president.

"The one thing Kamala Harris has always been: fearless," the ad says.

Since stepping into her new role, Harris has focused on Trump's felony convictions in a hush-money trial involving an adult entertainment actress and the other criminal charges he faces, and portrayed him as responsible for a wave of anti-abortion measures in Republican-led states around the country.

The Harris campaign's ad buy dwarfed the \$10mn advertising buy announced

### 'White dudes' raise more than \$4mn for vice-president

A star-studded live video call urging white men to vote for Kamala Harris raised about \$4mn on Monday night for the US Democratic presidential candidate, attracting more than 190,000 people including *Star Wars* actor Mark Hamill and singer Josh Groban.

The "White Dudes for Harris" event, which lasted over three hours, centred on how and why white men should help elect Harris, currently the vice-president, in the November 5 presidential election against Republican rival Donald Trump.

Trump won the votes of over 60% of US white men in both the 2016 and 2020 elections, said organiser Ross Morales Rocketto, founder of "Run for Something".

"If white guys would just show up, if we would stand up and be counted, if we would talk about what it really means to be a great partner, and a man, which is to protect, and to help, and to lift up, and to not push down, all of us are going to be better for it," Mitch Landrieu, a Harris campaign co-chair, said during the call.

The call is the latest in a series of video calls for Harris that have attracted large audiences and raised millions, sparked by one held by black women the evening President Joe Biden stepped aside from the race and endorsed her.

Other guests included Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, actor Jeff Bridges, who explained his presence on the call by

by Trump's campaign on Monday, to be launched in six battleground states this week as it tries to counter a surge of voter enthusiasm and donations for Harris.

That was Trump's biggest ad buy since January.

After months of attacks on Biden's fitness for office, Trump's campaign has had to pivot to find a new message to use against the younger Harris, less than 100 days until the November 5 election.

On Monday, Trump released an ad on his Truth Social platform using Harris's own words from old interviews, campaign

events and debates to try to portray her as an extreme liberal out of touch with everyday Americans, particularly in the Rust Belt.

In response, Harris accused the Trump campaign of lying about her record.

"Vice-President Harris has been a key leader in working across the aisle to pass the Biden-Harris administration's historic, popular agenda," said Harris spokesperson Sarafina Chitika.

A super PAC supporting Trump, MAGA Inc, kicked off a parallel ad blitz when it said last week it will spend \$32mn in three states

with new ads criticising Harris.

Unlike presidential campaigns, there are no limits on donations to super PACs, meaning they often have more money to spend.

However, they are not permitted to coordinate with campaigns on strategy.

Future Forward, a Democratic super PAC, said it is launching a \$50mn effort to back Harris in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, the six states seen as pivotal to deciding the election because their voting preferences can swing either way. - **Reuters**

## US soldier Calley, face of My Lai massacre, dies at 80

William Calley, who during the Vietnam War led his US Army platoon into the Vietnamese hamlet of My Lai and carried out one of the worst war crimes in American military history, has died, according to media reports. He was 80.

The *Washington Post* on Monday first reported Calley's death, which happened in April, according to a death certificate the newspaper cited.

The *New York Times*, citing Social Security Administration death records, also reported Calley's death.

Neither paper reported a cause of death. Calls to numbers listed for Calley's son, William L Calley III, were not returned.

American soldiers killed 504 people on March 16, 1968, in Son My, a collection of hamlets between the central Vietnamese coast and a ridge of misty mountains, in an incident known in the West as the My Lai Massacre.

The killings galvanised the anti-war movement.

Initially charged in an Army court martial for 102 deaths, Calley was sentenced to life in prison in 1971 for the killing of 22.

He was behind bars only three days before then President Richard Nixon ordered him released under house arrest.

Four soldiers were brought up on charges stemming from the massacre but only Calley was convicted.

Calley spent three years in home detention at his apartment in Fort Benning, Georgia, and was then paroled and cashed out of the Army.

In later years, as a successful businessman in Columbus, Georgia, Calley refused to talk about My Lai with reporters or historians.

Friends, however, said he admitted committing the deeds he was charged with and had learned to live with it.

In 2009, he made his first public apology.

"There is not a day that goes by that I do not feel remorse for what happened that day in My Lai," Calley told a Kiwanis Club in Columbus, Ohio. "I feel remorse for the Vietnamese who were killed, for their families, for the American soldiers involved and their families. I am very sorry." - **Reuters**





# Meloni seeks better terms for Italian firms in China

Reuters  
Beijing

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni came to China to boost co-operation with the world's second-largest economy and re-set trade ties, she said yesterday, during a visit to burnish relations

after leaving the Belt and Road scheme. Meloni, making her first visit to China as prime minister, which comes after Italy left Chinese President Xi Jinping's flagship initiative last year, said the euro zone's third-largest economy wanted to rebalance ties with Beijing.

"Today, Italian investment in China is about three times as much as Chinese investment in Italy," Meloni told reporters. "We clearly want to work to remove obstacles for our products to access the Chinese market." Asked what the right-wing government she has led since 2022 hoped to gain from her visit, Mel-

oni said Italy sought to "strengthen our co-operation with a view to...clearly rebalancing trade". Italy is of strategic importance to China as it has struck out on its own with Beijing before. It could prove to be a moderating voice within the European Union, as the bloc's 27 members weigh up backing the Commission

over tariffs on Chinese electric cars. EU members will vote in October whether to impose more tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles. Italy is one of the countries to have indicated it will back the motion. In 2019, Italy became the only member of the Group of Seven industrialised democracies to join

Xi's Belt and Road infrastructure investment scheme that aims to resurrect the ancient Silk Road trade route, in a diplomatic coup for China. Although Rome eventually exited the programme under US pressure last year, it signalled that it still desired to develop its trade ties with the \$18.6tn economy.

# Taiwan president warns on China, highlights defence self-reliance

Reuters  
Taipei

China's threat to any individual country is a threat to the world, Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said yesterday, adding that the island will continue to work hard to promote defensive self-reliance and foreign arms purchases. Taiwan will also work hard to promote regional peace and stability, Lai told a conference of international lawmakers meeting to discuss threats posed by China. "I'd like to stress that China's threat to any individual country is a threat to the world," Lai told the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) conference in Taipei, a group with ties to an international network of several hundred politicians who promote democratic values and call on Beijing to abide by a rules-based international order. "Taiwan will do its best to put out a democratic protection umbrella with our democratic partners to keep them away from the threat of authoritarianism," Lai said to the lawmakers from 24 countries including Australia, Britain, Japan and Germany. China, which views the democratically governed island as its territory, has been staging so-called "grey zone" military exercises for years to pressure Taipei to accept Beijing's claim of sovereignty, despite Taiwan's strong objections.

Taiwan's armed forces are dwarfed by those of China's, but it has been modernising its military with the help of allies such as the US. In a statement, some IPAC lawmakers said they had received emails and phone calls from Chinese officials before they left for the summit to dissuade them from attending. "Democratically elected lawmakers are free to visit and support causes of their choosing. This is the normal exercise of their rights and responsibilities as elected officials," the statement said. China's foreign ministry criticised IPAC for what it said was the malicious hyping up of China-related issues. "We advise the parliamentarians concerned to abandon ideological bias, stop using the Taiwan issue to interfere in China's internal affairs," said foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian. Meanwhile, Taiwan yesterday said it had reached an agreement with China to resolve a months-long row over the deaths of two fishermen pursued by Taipei's coast guard near its outlying islands. The Chinese fishing boat capsized near the Taiwan-administered Kinmen islands on February 14, leaving two men dead. Taiwan said its coast guard was following legitimate procedures when pursuing the vessel after it entered "prohibited waters," but Beijing accused Taipei of "hiding the truth".



Philippines' President Ferdinand Marcos Jr (centre) greets US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (left) and US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin during a courtesy visit at the Malacanang Palace in Manila yesterday.

# US vows funds to boost Manila defences amid China disputes

Reuters  
Manila

The US yesterday pledged funding of \$500mn for the Philippines' military and coast guard in a big show of support for Manila as it faces Chinese actions in disputed waters in the South China Sea. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin met their Philippine counterparts in Manila to reaffirm Washington's unwavering commitment to its oldest treaty ally in Asia. "This level of funding is unprecedented, and it sends a clear message of support for the Philippines, from the Biden-Harris administration, the US Congress and the American people," Austin said in joint press conference following security talks. Ahead of their meetings, Blinken and Aus-

tin met with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr who has moved the Philippines closer to Washington since he replaced Rodrigo Duterte, who was openly hostile to the Americans and pursued warmer ties with China during his six-year term. "I'm always very happy that these communication lines are very open so that all the things that we are doing together...are continuously examined and re-examined so we are agile in terms of our responses," Marcos said. The Philippines has competing claims with China in the waters to its west also known as the South China Sea. China claims 90% of the sea as its sovereign territory. Violence broke out after a Filipino sailor lost a finger in a June 17 mission to resupply troops stationed at a contested shoal after what Manila described as "intentional-high speed ramming" by the Chinese coast guard.

Manila reached a provisional arrangement with China for resupply missions this month to ease tensions and manage differences, but the two sides appear at odds over the details of the deal, which has not been made public. Philippine Foreign Minister Enrique Manalo said in the same news conference his country agreed to an "exchange of information" under its arrangement with China. Blinken said the US shares the Philippines' concerns about "escalatory" actions China has taken in the South China Sea. Blinken also reaffirmed Washington's "ironclad" commitment to the defend the Philippines against an armed attack on its vessels, aircraft and soldiers in the waterway. A 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague found that China's claims had no basis under international law. The case was brought by the Philippines and China rejects the court ruling.

## Typhoon remnants kill four in China, sever transport, power links

Record rainfall and widespread flooding killed four people in China's southern province of Hunan, with roads in rural areas damaged and access to electricity and the internet disrupted, state media said yesterday. Days of heavy rains from the remnants of Typhoon Gaemi have breached major dikes and dams and flooded swathes of cropland, with state broadcaster CCTV saying the finance ministry has earmarked funds of 238mn yuan (\$33mn) for disaster prevention and agricultural aid. Weather experts blamed the heavy rain on a combination of a southwest monsoon and the outer cloud system from Gaemi, which made landfall in China last week. In Zixing county, the extreme weather fuelled by the most powerful tropical cyclone to hit China this year has affected almost 90,000 people, damaging about 1,400 homes and tearing up about 1,300 roads, the *People's Daily* said on its website.



People walk through a rainstorm in Beijing yesterday.

# EU slams Bangladesh crackdown on protesters

AFP  
Brussels, Belgium

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell yesterday condemned the "use of excessive" force against protesters in Bangladesh after days of violence that killed at least 206 people, according to an AFP count. The violence erupted after student rallies against civil service job quotas this month and the death toll based on police and hospital data includes several police officers. Critics say the quota is used to stack public jobs with loyalists of the ruling Awami League party. Borrell expressed his deep concern over the deaths of officers as well as the "torture, mass arrests and damage to property

that have taken place." He called for an investigation and for those responsible to be brought to justice. "There must be full accountability for the numerous instances of use of excessive and lethal force by the law enforcement authorities against protesters and others," he said in a statement. "We will follow closely the actions of the authorities in the context of this crisis and, with the fundamentals of EU-Bangladesh relations in mind, expect all human rights to be fully respected," he added. The clashes were some of the worst of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year tenure but her government has since largely restored order with mass arrests, troop deployments and a nationwide internet shutdown that was rescinded on Sunday.

# Air New Zealand drops 2030 carbon target

Reuters  
Wellington

Air New Zealand yesterday abandoned a 2030 emissions reduction target, citing delivery delays of fuel-efficient aircraft and high green fuel prices, in a move signalling the difficulty aviation is having meeting decarbonisation goals. This is the first major airline to row back on climate aspirations but the carrier said it was committed to an industry-wide target of net zero emissions by 2050 and was working on a new near-term goal.

Aviation is deemed responsible for about 2% of the world's emissions but is considered one of the hardest sectors to decarbonise as fuel for flights cannot be easily replaced with other kinds of power. "Many of the levers needed to meet the target, including the availability of new aircraft, the affordability and availability of alternative jet fuels, and global and domestic regulatory and policy support, are outside the airline's direct control and remain challenging," New Zealand's flag carrier said in a statement. Airlines are banking on plant-based Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) and more efficient aircraft to

reduce emissions in the near-term, but SAF production is expensive and challenging to ramp-up, and plane manufacturers are struggling to deliver new-generation aircraft on time. Many environmental advocates say aviation industry growth is fundamentally incompatible with sustainability. Air New Zealand in 2022 said it wanted to reduce carbon intensity 28.9% by 2030 compared with 2019 levels, in a methodology validated by the Science-based Targets initiative (SBTi), a UN-backed corporate climate action group. The target went further than a 2023 agreement by the global aviation industry to lower carbon emis-

sions by 5% by 2030. Air New Zealand has Boeing 787 Dreamliner and Airbus A320neo planes on order. CEO Greg Foran said it had become apparent in recent weeks that delivery delays risked the 2030 goal and the airline would withdraw from the SBTi network immediately. "It is possible the airline may need to retain its existing fleet for longer than planned," Foran said. Air New Zealand in February also said five of its "newest and most-efficient" A321neo aircraft will be out of service at any one time within the next 18 months, due to maintenance on their Pratt & Whitney engines - an issue af-

fecting airlines globally. Climate has been a significant part of Air New Zealand's corporate messaging. It has ordered an all-electric five-seat plane and wants to conduct a demonstration flight by 2026. The airline last year described the 2030 target as aspirational and challenging, with some factors out of its control. New Zealand's conservative government has set about rolling back several environmental policies since it was elected last October including removing agriculture from the emissions trading scheme and reducing incentives for companies that want to go green.

A draft emissions plan released last week shows that in part due to these policy changes the country could miss its 2035 emissions and net zero by 2050 targets. University of Otago Climate Change Research Network co-director Professor Sara Walton said the need for industry leaders in the climate and emissions space is more important than ever. "While it is understandable that the intensity targets are going to be difficult to meet when there is little incentive being provided and a lack of supportive policies and regulations, (Air New Zealand's) move away from the SBTi is quite concerning," she said.



# 122 KILLED IN KERALA LANDSLIDES

- 128 people have been hospitalised
- More than 3,000 were sheltering in emergency relief camps
- 200 soldiers are assisting state security forces



Rescuers search for survivors at a landslide site after multiple landslides in the hills in Wayanad yesterday. (Reuters)



People walk past debris at a landslide site in Wayanad, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP  
Wayanad, India

**L**andslides in India triggered by pounding monsoon rains struck tea plantations and killed at least 122 people yesterday, with at least 250 others rescued from mud and debris. The southern coastal state of Kerala has been battered by torrential downpours, with blocked roads into the disaster area in Wayanad district complicating relief efforts.

"This catastrophe has resulted in the loss of 108 lives," the state's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said in a statement. "This is one of the worst natural calamities Kerala has ever witnessed."

Another 128 people had been hospitalised for treatment after their rescue, he said.

"My thoughts are with all those who have lost their loved ones and prayers with those injured," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a post on social media platform X.

Wayanad is famed for the tea estates that crisscross its hilly countryside and which rely on a large pool of casual labourers for planting and harvest.

Several estates in the district were hit by two successive landslides before dawn when most of their inhabitants were asleep.



A rescuer walks past a damaged car at a landslide site after multiple landslides in the hills in Wayanad, Kerala, India, yesterday.

Images published by the National Disaster Response Force showed rescue crews trudging through mud to search for survivors and carrying bodies on stretchers out of the area.

Homes were caked with brown sludge as the force of the landslide scattered cars, corrugated iron and other debris around the disaster site. India's army said it had deployed more than 200 soldiers to the area to assist state security forces and fire crews in search-and-rescue efforts.

Modi's office said families of the dead would receive a compensation payment of \$2,400 (Rs200,000).

Vijayan said that more than 3,000 people were sheltering in emergency relief camps around Wayanad district.

More rainfall and strong winds

lashed Kerala yesterday, and Vijayan urged the public to "be prepared and heed warnings" of more potential disasters ahead.

"Everyone should be willing to follow the instructions given by authorities and not ignore them," he added.

Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, who until recently represented Wayanad in parliament, told lawmakers that the scope of the devastation was "heartbreaking".

"Our country has witnessed an alarming rise in landslides in recent years," he said. "The need of the hour is a comprehensive action plan to address the growing frequency of natural calamities."

Monsoon rains across the region from June to September offer respite from the summer heat

and are crucial to replenishing water supplies. They are vital for agriculture and therefore the livelihoods of millions of farmers and food security for South Asia's nearly two billion people.

But they also bring destruction in the form of landslides and floods.

The number of fatal floods and landslides has increased in recent years, and experts say climate change is exacerbating the problem.

"The number of extremely heavy rainfall days have increased," Kartiki Negi of Indian environment think-tank Climate Trends said.

"The atmosphere is quite disturbed," she said. "Thus we see more and more extreme events these days."

Damming, deforestation and development projects in India have also exacerbated the human toll.

Intense monsoon storms battered India this month, flooding parts of the financial capital Mumbai, while lightning in the eastern state of Bihar killed at least 10 people.

Nearly 500 people were killed around Kerala in 2018 during the worst flooding to hit the state in almost a century.

India's worst landslide in recent decades was in 1998, when rockfalls triggered by heavy monsoon rains killed at least 220 people and buried the tiny village of Malpa in the Himalayas.

## Viral encephalitis claims 56 lives in Gujarat

Reuters  
Ahmedabad, India

**V**iral encephalitis has caused at least 56 deaths in India's western state of Gujarat, forcing authorities to step up surveillance for the disease caused by a viral infection often spread by sand flies and ticks.

Viral encephalitis, which can cause high fever and in many cases affect the brain, is common in several parts of India during the monsoon season, but many of the deaths in Gujarat were caused by the Chandipura virus, a relatively new form that is known to affect mostly children under 15.

Of the 56 dead over the last month, a quarter were confirmed to have died from the Chandipura virus, Gujarat health commissioner Harshad Patel said.

"Almost all the patients are children. As far as I know, this virus affects only children," Patel said about the outbreak.

Patel said that local health authorities have been monitoring encephalitis cases for a month and would continue to keep a

close eye on infections in the general population, stepping up surveillance in areas which have reported cases.

A total of 133 cases of viral encephalitis, including 47 cases caused by the Chandipura virus, have been registered in the state of 70mn people in a month, the state government said in a statement.

The Chandipura virus, named after a small town in the western state of Maharashtra where it was first discovered, is known to cause sporadic cases of encephalitis and there have been outbreaks in the western, central and southern parts of the country, a health ministry statement said last week.

"It is transmitted by vectors such as sand flies and ticks. It is to be noted that vector control, hygiene, and awareness are the only measures available against the disease," the statement said.

Cases of viral encephalitis first came to light in two northern districts of Gujarat last month. However, more cases have since been registered from across more than two dozen districts, according to government data.

## India rules out rethink on China investment issue

**NEW DELHI:** India is not re-thinking the issue of allowing Chinese investments into the country, Trade Minister Piyush Goyal said yesterday. Earlier in July, India's chief economic adviser V Anantha Nageswaran said in the government's annual economic survey that New Delhi should focus on direct investments from China to boost its exports and help keep India's growing trade deficit with Beijing in check. "There is no rethinking at present to support Chinese investments in the country," the minister told reporters in New Delhi. The economic survey recommendations are not binding on the government, Goyal said. Following clashes in the remote Himalayan border in 2020 between the two nuclear armed nations, India tightened scrutiny on investments from Chinese companies. India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, however, had backed Nageswaran's suggestion to allow more Chinese investment into the country. The trade minister's comments follow a Reuters report last week that said India may ease restrictions on Chinese investment in non-sensitive sectors like solar panels and battery manufacturing. (Reuters)

## Two killed in India train derailment

AFP  
Patna, India,

**A**n Indian passenger train derailed and several of its cars overturned yesterday, killing at least two people and injuring 20 others.

The Howrah-Mumbai Express derailed near Jamshepur in the eastern state of Jharkhand before dawn.

"At least two people were killed and 20 injured," Indian Railways spokesman Om Prakash Charan said.

The accident happened at around the same time a goods train coming from the opposite side derailed, possibly colliding with the passenger train when it passed by.

"There was another derailment of a goods train nearby, but it was unclear if the two accidents occurred concurrently," Charan said.

Eighteen train coaches were thrown off the tracks, Charan added, with rescue operations ongoing to clear the site.

India has launched a \$30bn railway infrastructure modernisation in a bid to boost the economy and connectivity. But analysts say that while the number of accidents has gone down over time, India's antiquated rail system still has a long way to go.

An average of 20,000 people died each year between 2017 and 2021 in rail accidents, according to official records.

Defective tracks, poor maintenance

and old signalling kit combined with human error were the main cause of derailments, a report by India's top audit authority said.

Last year, nearly 300 people were killed when a passenger train and a stationary goods train collided, with the derailed compartments then striking another fast-moving passenger service.

India's worst-ever rail accident occurred in 1981, when a cyclone blew a train off its tracks and into a river in Bihar state, leaving 800 dead and more than 100 injured.

Indian Railways, the world's fourth-largest rail network, runs some 14,000 trains daily with 8,000 locomotives over a vast system of tracks some 64,000km long. The trains carry more than 21 million people each day.



People gather near the Howrah-Mumbai Express train that derailed near Jamshepur in India's eastern state of Jharkhand yesterday. (AFP)

## Third child dies following mass stabbing in UK

AFP  
Southport, United Kingdom

**A** third child died yesterday and five others remained critically injured after a knife attack on a Taylor Swift-themed dance event in a quiet seaside community in northern England, police said.

The nine-year-old girl died in hospital early yesterday, Merseyside Police said, as the force confirmed that two victims who died in the "ferocious" stabbing spree on Monday were also girls, aged six and seven.

Eight other children suffered stab wounds during the attack in Southport, near Liverpool, which has shocked the UK and beyond. Two adults were also in a critical condition after being injured.

A 17-year-old male suspect from a nearby village arrested shortly after the incident remained in custody, police added, as they warned against speculating about his identity or details of the investigation.

"This incident is not currently being treated as terror-related and we are not looking for anyone else in connection with it," Merseyside Police said in its latest update.

Hours earlier, US pop star Swift took to social media to say she was "completely in shock" over "the loss of life and innocence, and the horrendous trauma inflicted on everyone".

"These were just little kids at a dance class. I am at a complete loss for how to ever convey my sympathies to these families," she added on Instagram.

Visiting the scene of the attack to lay flowers and meet local officials,

Interior Minister Yvette Cooper said police were pursuing "every single avenue" as part of "a serious criminal investigation".

"This was a horrific attack," she told reporters.

Residents of Southport, a small seaside town popular with summer visitors, were still coming to terms with the attack.

"The town is in shock and in mourning," local MP Patrick Hurley said, calling it the "most horrific atrocity that Southport has experienced in living memory".

It is a "very small town, a close-knit community and everybody will be intimately affected by this", he added.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer has called the events "just truly awful" and said "the whole country is deeply shocked".

"I just cannot believe that it hap-

pened so close to home," Leanne Hassan, a Southport resident, told reporters yesterday.

Hassan had rushed to collect her daughter from a nearby nursery which was locked down after the attack.

Her daughter was safe, "but unfortunately that's not the reality for a lot of parents waking up today," she added.

Police have revealed the children at the event were aged between six and 11, and the two adults injured were trying to protect them.

Tributes have been paid on social media to the bravery of dance and yoga teacher Leanne Lucas, who was among the victims.

Local business owner Colin Parry, one of those to call police, recounted to UK media members of his staff seeing "about 10 kids go running past him, all bleeding".

"One of them collapsed on the floor outside the neighbour next door," he told the Press Association (PA) news agency.

Bare Varathan, who owns a local shop, told PA he saw "seven to 10 kids" who were "injured, bleeding".

The teen male arrested on suspicion of murder and attempted murder is from neighbouring village Banks but was born in the Welsh capital Cardiff, according to police.

His identity and a possible motive for the attack have not been revealed.

"A name has been shared on social media in connection with the suspect," police said yesterday. "This name is incorrect and we would urge people not to speculate on details of the incident while the investigation is ongoing."

Witnesses told UK media the attacker was seen arriving at the

scene in a taxi late Monday morning, and that he entered the venue wearing a mask.

Armed officers detained the suspect nearby and seized a knife.

Targeted attacks on children are extremely rare in the UK.

Monday's incident evoked memories of a school massacre in the Scottish town of Dunblane in 1996, which claimed the lives of 16 young pupils and their teacher in Britain's worst mass shooting.

King Charles III has offered his "most heartfelt condolences, prayers and deepest sympathies" following the "utterly horrific" incident.

Meanwhile Prince William and his wife Catherine said "as parents, we cannot begin to imagine what the families, friends and loved ones of those killed and injured in Southport today are going through".



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GULF TIMES

World’s hunger crisis amid conflicts and economic chaos

The world is heading towards an unprecedented food crisis. About 733mn people – or 9.1% of the global population – were undernourished in 2023, little changed for a third straight year, UN agencies said in the latest report.

That’s still 152mn more than in 2019, putting the world off track to reach key goals, including zero hunger, by the end of this decade.

The world has made little progress in combating global hunger as conflict, extreme weather and economic challenges restrict people’s access to food.

“While we have made some progress, improvements have been uneven and insufficient,” the UN said in the annual flagship study. “Vulnerable populations, particularly women, youth and indigenous peoples, are disproportionately affected.”

Moderate or severe food insecurity, which forces people to occasionally skip meals, hit 2.33bn people last year – almost 29% of the global population.

The report by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, Unicef, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organisation suggests the UN goal of a world without hunger by 2030 is fading further.

Conflicts, climate chaos and economic downturns are already known as major drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition that combine with underlying factors including persistent inequality, the unaffordability of healthy diets and unhealthy food environments.

But these major drivers are becoming more frequent and intense – and occurring concurrently more often – meaning more people are exposed to hunger and food insecurity.

A healthy diet was unaffordable for more than one third of the world’s population in 2022.

About 733mn people – or 9.1% of the global population – were undernourished in 2023, little changed for a third straight year, according to UN agencies

Regional inequalities are stark: More than 71% of people in low-income countries could not afford healthy diets, compared with just over 6% in high-income nations.

Hunger continues to rise in Africa, affecting 20.4% of the population, while remaining stable in Asia at 8.1%. Latin America has shown some progress with 6.2% of its population facing hunger.

However, from 2022

to 2023, hunger increased in Western Asia, the Caribbean, and most African subregions.

According to David Laborde, an economist at the FAO and one of the report’s authors, the post-Covid economic rebound was unequal within and between countries.

Wars and extreme weather events also raged unabated in 2023, but the world has failed to put in place a “Marshall Plan” to bolster funds earmarked for fighting hunger, he said.

The UN agencies’ report, which was presented for a G20 summit in Brazil, suggested a major reform of financing food security and nutrition to alleviate the scourge.

This would start with adopting common definitions putting all actors on the same page. According to current estimates, between \$176bn and \$3,975bn are needed to eradicate hunger by 2030.

Yet the “highly fragmented” financial architecture “makes the scale-up and effective implementation of financing for food security and nutrition unfeasible.

Donors, international agencies, NGOs and foundations are required to coordinate better as the current set-up lacks shared priorities and is characterised by “an over-proliferation of actors delivering mostly small, short-term projects.”

Another weakness of the current system is that donor intentions do not always meet the needs of populations.

The global food problem is worsening and some nations in Africa and the Middle East could soon slip into famine with conflicts, economic hardships and weather extremes limiting access to food.

The UN report also recommended developing financial instruments combining private and public funds so that private actors invest in food security, a source of productivity and political stability.

“There is no time to lose, as the cost of inaction greatly exceeds the cost of action this (UN) report calls for.”

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Energised Kamala Harris has momentum to beat Trump



In the space of just 4 weeks, the race for presidency has been twisted, turned, upended, and reset

By Reed Galen  
Washington, DC

Books will be written about the last month in American politics. In the space of just four weeks, the race for the US presidency has been twisted, turned, upended, and reset. Now, with just about 100 days to go until the election, Americans begin the race’s home stretch.

From the start of the campaign, voters’ top concern about President Joe Biden was his age. Already the oldest US president ever, Biden would be 86 at the end of a second four-year term. In both national and swing-state surveys, voters expressed serious doubts about his ability to maintain the mental acuity needed to run the country at such an advanced age.

Biden’s disastrous debate performance on June 27 seemed to vindicate voter concerns. His support dipped significantly, but not catastrophically, buoyed only by the profound unpopularity of his opponent, Donald Trump. If Trump was even a marginally more “normal” candidate, his gains may well have been far larger.

In the weeks that followed, while Biden, his family, and his inner circle wrestled with the question of whether he should drop out of the race, Trump went to ground, spending more time on the golf course than in the public eye. When he emerged for a campaign rally in Pennsylvania on July 13, America’s electoral saga grew more dramatic: while Trump was delivering his speech, shots rang out, and a would-be

assassin’s bullet grazed his ear.

Even after the shooting – which Trump turned into a cunning photo-op, thrusting his fist into the air before the crowd, cheek smeared with blood – support for Trump didn’t surge. Nor did he gain much traction after the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, where he officially accepted his nomination as the GOP’s presidential candidate with a rambling, incoherent, and divisive speech that defied his campaign’s calls for “unity” in the face of political violence.

How could all that drama fail to sway independents, undecided voters, or anti-Trump Republicans? Simply put, most Americans did not like either of their options. Biden is old, but at 78, Trump is not much younger. Trump is also chaotic, corrupt, irrational, and likely to implement policies that enjoy little support outside his narrow, extremist base.

The Democrats also made important strategic blunders. While Biden deliberated on whether to remain in the race, his campaign and the entire Democratic political apparatus should have been making the case against Trump and his newly announced, Kremlin-endorsed running mate, JD Vance. Instead, the Democrats stayed stuck in a kind of holding pattern – and not for the first time.

In fact, in my nearly five years working alongside the Democratic Party apparatus, I have seen firsthand how an unwillingness or inability to act quickly and decisively has left the party overly dependent on external factors to strengthen its position. Dobbs v Jackson Women’s Health

Organisation – the 2022 Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v Wade, is a case in point. The Democrats could have cemented Roe by federal statute in 2009, when they controlled the White House and both houses of Congress. But President Barack Obama decided that it was not a high priority.

So, perhaps we should not be surprised that so little happened on the Democrats’ side between the June debate debacle and the Biden campaign’s announcement, nearly a month later, that he was stepping aside as the party’s presumptive nominee and endorsing Vice-President Kamala Harris. What was previously a rematch between two old, unpopular candidates has become a captivating contest for the future of the United States.

The twenty-first century has brought many firsts in American politics: the first African-American president, followed by the first would-be authoritarian president, the first election conducted amid a global pandemic, and now a major party candidate leaving the race after winning his party’s primary.

Soon there may be another first: if Harris wins in November, she will be America’s first female president. That prospect has proved invigorating. In just over 24 hours, donors shelled out a record-breaking \$81mn for the Harris campaign, and her first appearances have featured roaring crowds. The Democratic Party – from its leaders to its donors – has done what it needed to do, expressing unreserved support for its new candidate.

The Trump team’s response has been entirely predictable. Trump

argued that he should get a refund for the millions of dollars he spent campaigning against Biden, and claimed that anointing Harris amounted to a “coup.” Several Republican members of Congress have referred to Harris as a “DEI” (diversity, equity, and inclusion) candidate, suggesting that she was chosen for her identity, not her record. The GOP is throwing everything it can at Harris, but so far, nothing has stuck.

Over the next 100 days, the contrast between the two candidates will continue to sharpen. Standing beside the young, energetic Harris, the nearly 80-year-old Trump will look even more decrepit. Whereas Harris has the wind at her back, Trump’s lack of broad appeal will continue to drag him down. And as Harris (one hopes) makes a clear, forceful, and enthusiastic case for entering a new post-Baby Boom political era, Trump, inept and retrograde, will continue to lean on ugly rhetoric and scare tactics.

As the late President George HW Bush suggested, in politics, one should bet on the team with “Big Mo” (momentum). And, right now, that is Team Harris. If she manages to build on that momentum – to raise enthusiasm for her campaign to fever pitch – she may well get the chance to inflict a crushing defeat on Trump and the Republican Party.

– Project Syndicate

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Supporters wave and holds signs as US Vice-President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris arrives to speak during a campaign fundraising event at the Colonial Theater in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, on Saturday. (AFP)



## Lavish state banquets tip French presidency into red

French President Emmanuel Macron's office racked up a multi-million euro budget overrun last year as it pulled out the stops on a lavish lobster dinner for Britain's King Charles and other state banquets, the public audit office said. News of the presidency's spending jars with the outgoing government's message that France can ill afford its current levels of public spending, among the highest in the world in relation to the size of the economy. Macron treated the King and his wife Queen Camilla last September to blue lobster, Bresse French poultry with mushroom gratin, and a selection of French and English cheeses during the state dinner in the famed Hall of Mirrors of the 17th century Versailles Palace. That set the French state back €475,000 (\$513,427), including €166,000 just for the catering, the Cour des Comptes said on Monday in a report on the finances of the French presidency. Eager to convince New Delhi to buy more French submarines and fighter jets, Macron also held a state dinner in Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's honour at the Louvre in July 2023, costing a cool €412,000, the auditor said. Banquets held at the president's Elysee palace cost far less, it added, noting that a state dinner with Chinese President Xi Jinping in May cost only €138,000. The auditor also raised an eyebrow over the rising cost of presidential trips abroad, including the growing use of an Airbus A330 for international flights at a cost of over €23,000 per hour. As a result of the higher spending on state receptions and official travel, the presidency's costs rose 6.5% last year to €117.2mn, leaving a budget shortfall of €8.3mn, the audit office said.

## Spanish watchdog fines Booking.com €413mn for 'abusing dominant position'

Spain's competition watchdog said yesterday it had slapped online travel agency Booking.com with a record €413mn fine for "abusing its dominant position" during the past five years. "These practices have affected hotels located in Spain and other online travel agencies that compete with the platform. Its terms and conditions create an inequitable imbalance in the commercial relationship with hotels located in Spain," the authority, known by its acronym CNMC, said in a statement. "By better positioning hotels with more bookings on Booking.com, other online agencies have been prevented from entering the market or expanding," it added. This is the largest fine ever imposed by the CNMC, a spokeswoman for the authority told AFP. The regulator said Booking.com's market share in Spain, the world's second most visited country after France, during the period under investigation was between 70% and 90%. Booking.com said it "strongly disagreed" with the CNMC's findings. The platform said it would appeal the authority's "unprecedented decision", adding that it did not take into account programs it offers its "accommodation partners" to help them boost their business. The online travel agency, whose parent company Booking Holdings is headquartered in the United States, is a dominant player with a market share in Europe of more than 60%. In May, the European Union added Booking.com to its list of digital companies big enough to fall under tougher competition rules, giving the firm six months to prepare for compliance with the landmark Digital Markets Act (DMA). The rules aim to level the playing field in the digital market, ensuring EU users have more options when choosing products. Brussels said that tougher regulation of Booking.com would mean that holidaymakers would "start benefiting from more choice" and hotels would "have more business opportunities". Hungary's competition watchdog earlier this month slapped Booking.com with a second fine for failing to cease its "unfair" business practices, including putting psychological pressure on customers. In 2020, the firm was fined Ft2.5bn (\$7mn) by the Hungarian Competition Authority for aggressive sales tactics. And on July 15 the authority hit Booking.com with an additional penalty of Ft382.5mn after a follow-up investigation showed the company had continued its unfair practices.

## French D-Day veteran who welcomed Biden dies at 105

One of the last surviving French veterans of the June 1944 D-Day landings has died aged 105, only weeks after he helped welcome US President Joe Biden to Paris for the 80th anniversary of the amphibious assault, the presidency said yesterday. Jacques Lewis passed away on Thursday at the Invalides memorial complex in Paris where he had spent his final years added. He took part in the June 1944 D-Day landings alongside American units on Utah beach, as Allied forces swept into Normandy to begin their offensive to end Nazi occupation of France and Western Europe in World War II. After landing, he sought out locals from the town of Carentan to map the area to help Allied forces take the town. He then took part in other battles in France before moving into Germany itself "always alongside his brothers-in-arms from the American division", the Elysee said.



Jacques Levis waits for the arrival of US President Joe Biden ahead of a ceremony as part of his state visit to France at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. (AFP)

He was caught up in the war from the age of 20, in 1939, while he was a student at Sciences-Po university in Paris. He first served as an officer cadet in the army before joining the ranks of Free France in London after the 1940 capitulation of France to Germany. Making it to Britain from occupied France had been anything but easy. "Crossing the Pyrenees on foot, armed only with a compass, arrested on his arrival in Spain (...) he managed to escape from the prison in Pamplona, boarded a Liberian cargo ship and began

the crossing of the Atlantic under German bombardment," the Elysee said. Speaking good English, he was integrated into the ranks of US General George Patton's 2nd Armored Division where his interpreting skills proved hugely valuable. He was present in June under the Arc de Triomphe for the welcoming ceremony for Biden in Paris marking the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings. President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte salute "a figure of a French destiny filled with courage and audacity, who preferred to risk his life rather than his honour, and allowed the nation to regain its freedom". The 80th anniversary celebrations in Paris and Normandy were widely seen as a final chance for the world to pay its respects to surviving veterans on a major D-Day anniversary. Just 209 French soldiers took part as infantrymen in the June 6, 1944, Normandy landings out of around 150,000 Allied troops, but their role has been hugely symbolic for France's modern historical memory.

# Belarus pardons German facing execution

**Krieger 'was asked by Ukraine to photograph military sites and followed its orders to place an explosive device on a railway line'**

AFP  
Moscow

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has decided to pardon a German man facing the death penalty, his office said yesterday. Lukashenko "took the decision to pardon the German citizen Rico Krieger...taking into account all the circumstances," the president's press service said. Krieger, 30, had been shown on Belarusian public television last week, saying "I really hope that President (Alexander) Lukashenko will forgive me and pardon me", according to a statement quoted by the Russian news agency TASS. He was convicted under six articles of Belarus's criminal code in a secretive trial held at the end of June, the Viasna Human Rights Centre reported. Lukashenko held a meeting yesterday with the investigator in the case and Krieger's defence lawyer to discuss whether to apply the death penalty, his press serv-



Rico Krieger attends an interview with Belarusian state TV at an unidentified location. (Reuters)

ice said. "I've already said before that the hardest thing in the life of a president is such cases related to the death penalty," Lukashenko was quoted as saying at the meeting. Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, who lives in exile, said she was "relieved" that Krieger had been pardoned. "Every life is invaluable and we must use every tool to fight for it. But we must also fight for every hostage of the regime. More than 1,300 political prisoners are still held in Belarus," she said in a post on X. Krieger said on Belarusian television that he had been asked by Ukraine to photograph military



Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko chairs a meeting with people involved in the case of Rico Krieger in Minsk yesterday. (Reuters)

sites in Belarus in October 2023 and that he had placed an explosive device on a railway line near Minsk under their orders. "I deeply regret what I did and I am relieved that there were no victims," he said, adding that he had been "abandoned" by the German government. According to a LinkedIn profile that Viasna said belonged to Krieger, he worked as a medic for the German Red Cross and had previously been employed as an armed security officer for the US embassy in Berlin. German foreign ministry spokeswoman Kathrin Deschauer said Friday that "it is unfortunately common practice in Belarus to present people in videos or

on television like this and we are of course very concerned that being paraded in this way massively violates that person's dignity". "We can only appeal to the Belarusian leadership to stop this practice," Deschauer said. "We have been providing the detainee in question with consular services and are very concerned about his case," Deschauer said, adding that "we as a government fundamentally reject the death penalty under all circumstances". Belarus is reported to have executed as many as 400 people since it gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, according to Amnesty International, but executions of foreign citizens are rare.

## Taliban cut ties with embassies loyal to last govt

The Taliban government has severed consular ties with swathes of Afghan embassies in Western countries, Kabul said yesterday, cutting off diplomats loyal to the former foreign-backed administration. The 2021 Taliban takeover left diplomats staffing Afghanistan's foreign missions in limbo, having pledged to serve a government which collapsed in chaos after the withdrawal of US troops. No country has yet formally recognised the Taliban government but in the past three years the Kabul authorities have installed Taliban ambassadors in some neighbouring embassies. But Afghanistan's foreign ministry said yesterday it now "bears no responsibility" for credentials including passports and visas issued by missions out of step with Kabul's new rulers.

# Spanish PM silent in wife's graft probe

**Counter lawsuit filed against magistrate for 'illegalities'**

AFP  
Madrid

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez refused to answer questions yesterday from a judge investigating alleged influence-peddling by his wife, and countered with a lawsuit against the magistrate accusing him of illegalities. Judge Juan Carlos Peinado went to Sanchez's official residence to quiz the Socialist prime minister as a witness but he made use of his legal right to not testify against his wife, government spokeswoman Pilar Alegria told reporters. She dismissed the case as a "montage that has a clear objective, which is to erode the image of the prime minister." "The strategy is to give legal cover to what is a political cause," she added. Gomez also invoked her right to remain silent under questioning by the judge earlier this month. Sanchez has denied any wrongdoing by his wife and has repeatedly argued the allegations are part of a right-wing smear campaign against his left-wing government. The case has put pressure on Sanchez's minority coalition government, with the main opposition Popular Party (PP) calling on Sanchez to resign. The only time a sitting Spanish prime minister has testified in a judicial case was in 2017, when Mariano Rajoy was summoned in a graft case that led to the conviction of several members of his party, the PP. Gomez is being investigated for alleged influence-peddling and corruption following a complaint filed by an anti-graft NGO "Manos Limpias" — Spanish for "Clean Hands" — which has links to the far right.



Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez next to his wife Begona Gomez during an election night rally in Madrid in 2019. (AFP)

Sanchez asked to testify in writing, as allowed under Spanish law for top government officials, but the courts rejected the request, arguing he would be questioned in his role as Gomez's spouse. Spain's state legal services yesterday filed a lawsuit against Peinado, arguing he and others may have committed "criminal acts" in his summons by not allowing Sanchez to testify in writing. "You cannot separate one person into two and claim that you are going to question him as his spouse, when what determines the subject of the investigation... is the fact that the husband of the person under investigation is the head of government," the lawsuit stated. Alegria said the aim of the lawsuit is to "defend the dignity" of the post of prime minister and ensure "this never happens again". Gomez, a veteran fundraiser, is alleged to have used her husband's position as leverage within her professional circles, notably with businessman Juan Carlos Barrabes, who was seeking public funding. In his testimony, Barrabes — who teaches part of a master's course at Madrid's Complutense University that is run by Gomez — acknowledged meeting her several times at the premier's official residence. Sanchez was present at two of the meetings, he said.

Barrabes — who obtained two letters of recommendation from Gomez before pitching for a public tender worth several million euros (dollars) — said they only talked about matters of innovation, judicial sources said. Manos Limpias has said its allegations against Gomez were entirely based on media reports, which could turn out to be false. Spanish prosecutors have failed to get the case dismissed. Sanchez's supporters have accused Peinado, whose daughter is a PP city councillor, of political bias. The judge has taken controversial decisions in the past seen as favouring the right. In 2015 he accepted another Manos Limpias complaint over tweets made by two left-wing Madrid city councillors deemed offensive. When the probe was opened in April, Sanchez took five days off to consider his future but ultimately stayed as prime minister. Sanchez, who has been in office since 2018, has struggled to pass legislation since he returned to power last year as head of a fragile coalition that relies on a patchwork of smaller parties to approve bills. Spanish lawmakers last week rejected the government's fiscal targets, a mandatory step before the government can table a budget.



Guilherme Peixoto performs on stage during a popular fair in Coimbra. (AFP)

## 50-year-old Portugal DJ priest is a sensation

With his chubby cheeks and clerical collar, Don Guilherme Peixoto doesn't exactly look like an electronic music star. But the DJ priest is a sensation in Portugal, greeted like a rock star wherever he goes. "I feel I'm a better priest thanks to electronic music," said the 50-year-old, whose popularity exploded after he played a set to nearly 1.5mn young people and Pope Francis last year at the closing mass of World Youth Day in Lisbon. Once a Catholic chaplain to Portuguese troops in Afghanistan, he realised there

that his passion for music could help him get the church's message across. So he went to DJ school. "It allowed me to take up the challenge that the church gives us not to turn in on ourselves but rather reach out to others," he told AFP. Known simply as "Father Guilherme" in Portugal, the shaven-headed cleric regularly swaps the altar for a DJ's mixing table at festivals and clubs across Europe. He juggles his burgeoning music career with his duties as a parish priest in Laundos

in northern Portugal, where he often slips on his chasuble to say mass over jeans and trainers. Equally popular with his parishioners, Father Guilherme sees no contradiction between getting people dancing and preaching the Christian good news. He said getting the word of Christ out there "rhymes with the beauty and harmonies of electronic music". "The joy of the gospel is a message of hope and faith but also of tolerance, harmony and peace," added the priest,

who has 900,000 followers on Instagram. Playing to hundreds of young people in the university city of Coimbra this month, he mixed bits of techno with excerpts of homilies by Pope Francis and the late John Paul II. "This priest is really cool," said Andreia Borges, 26, who managed to get a selfie with him. "He has managed to bring together two seemingly opposing worlds," said Filipe Barroso, a 32-year-old electro fan. "I think what he does is really great."



# Sidra Medicine gets Royal College institutional accreditation

Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, has achieved institutional accreditation from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (Royal College).

The Royal College accreditation paves the way for Sidra Medicine to accredit its postgraduate medical education residency training programmes in multiple specialties, including cardiology, general surgery, nephrology, neurology, medical genetics and genomics.

Prof Ibrahim Janahi, chair of Medical Education at Sidra Medicine, said: "This accomplishment reflects our commitment to delivering the highest quality postgraduate medical education for our students. It also highlights our steady commitment to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary for superior patient care and is



Sidra Medicine aims to accredit its postgraduate medical education residency training programmes.

a testament to the strength of our medical education programmes."

Sidra Medicine's medical education

programmes are designed to provide residents, graduates and trainees with an exceptional educational experience, with the

aim of shaping future doctors who specialise in children's and women's health.

Craig Ceppetelli, executive director of

the Royal College's Office of International Collaboration and Advancement and chief operating officer of Royal College Canada International, said: "We very much value our partnership with Sidra Medicine and their commitment to postgraduate medical education. The accreditation of their institution and all the work underway to accredit their programmes is very exciting for everyone involved."

Sidra Medicine is in the process of having its residency training programme in paediatrics accredited by the Royal College, and plans are underway to seek accreditation for several programmes between 2025 and 2029.

Once these steps are complete, it will eventually allow Sidra Medicine physicians to challenge the Royal College certification exams.



The arcade zone at Msheireb Galleria. **PICTURES:** Joey Aguilar

# SkillFest ignites creativity and community in Doha

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

Visit Qatar's "SkillFest" continues to attract visitors to its four locations, including Msheireb Galleria, showcasing the city's thriving creative scene and fostering a sense of community through art, crafts, and cultural experiences.

This month-long event, running until August 15, is bringing together resident artists and craftsmen to showcase their talents and share their passion.

At Msheireb Galleria, visitors can engage in hands-on activities and learn something new through workshops and activities.

The participating stalls offer a treasure trove of locally produced art, from handcrafted items and paintings to unique souvenirs and gifts.

"This event has been amazing, we have some more weeks to go and it is especially great for kids to come over because there's a lot of free workshops here," Filiz Cam, founder

and owner of Hook and Nail, a participant at SkillFest, told *Gulf Times*. "They can do lots of things, have fun and there's also a playground for families and kids."

"It's a great event and they can also see some skilled people around here ... they should come and check it out definitely," she said.

Cam highlighted the diverse range of crafts showcased, from painting and crochet to ceramics, and expressed optimism about SkillFest's potential to become an annual event in Doha.

Across various zones, workshops cater to diverse interests, offering hands-on experiences in incense-making, embroidery, calligraphy, cake decoration, palm weaving, and candle-making, among others.

Visitors can also immerse themselves in the vibrant marketplaces, supporting local artisans and businesses.

Visit Qatar noted that the event extends beyond Msheireb Galleria, with locations at Place Vendome, Mall of Qatar, and West Walk, offering unique experiences.

Visitors can explore astronomy and science

exhibitions, examine manuscripts and anecdotes, and marvel at pavilions showcasing local marine creatures.

Qatari photographer Azzam al-Mannai's exhibition at Msheireb Galleria offers a glimpse into the country's rich marine biodiversity.

His work, spanning aerial, wildlife, and underwater photography, has been featured in exhibitions and publications by Unesco and renowned media organisations.

His focus on "the alignment of compositional elements" invites viewers to see the familiar from a new perspective, fostering a deeper appreciation for nature's beauty.

Adding to the festive atmosphere, SkillFest at Msheireb Galleria includes an arcade zone where visitors can engage in various activities and games.

SkillFest is open from Sunday to Thursday, and Saturday between 11am and 10pm, and on Fridays from 2pm-10pm.

Entry to the events and workshops is free, while some workshops require prior registration.



Qatari photographer Azzam al-Mannai.



Qatari photographer Azzam al-Mannai's work on display at Skillfest at Msheireb Galleria.



Filiz Cam showcases her work at her stall at Msheireb Galleria during the month-long Skillfest.



# EU delegation hosts summer camp for Gaza children in Doha

The European Union (EU) Delegation in Qatar, in partnership with Generation Amazing Foundation and Aspire Academy, the View Hospital, AI Sports and Toys4me, hosted at Aspire Academy a "eunited" summer camp for Palestinian children from Gaza evacuated to Qatar.

Held from July 14-25, the camp offered fun, sportive, and cultural activities de-

signed to promote personal development, social-emotional learning, and sports-manship to 55 children aged 9-14, a statement from the EU Delegation to Qatar said.

Activities include football, basketball, kick boxing training, friendly matches, educational sessions, workshops, and masterclasses on sports, arts, and mindfulness.

"I am greatly proud that for the second



year in a row we have brought together some of the most prominent local organisations in order to create a safe space

where children from Gaza could enjoy some moments of pure joy, away from the pain of war," stated EU ambassador to Qatar Dr Cristian Tudor.

"Aspire is proud to have provided a safe and secure environment for the youngsters and is glad that we can share our incredible facilities with them," deputy director-general Ali Salem Afifa said.

"We are very proud to continue our partnership with the Delegation of the European Union and Aspire Academy in delivering the 'eunited' summer camp to the evacuee children from Gaza," said Generation Amazing Foundation executive director Nasser al-Khori.

"We are privileged to contribute to the joy and growth of children from Gaza," said The View Hospital chief executive

Matthew Dronsfield. "Through enriching activities, our aim is to enhance their well-being and make a positive impact on their lives."

"At The View Hospital, we recognise the vital link between well-rounded health and overall well-being," he said. "We value collaborative efforts and are proud to partner with the EU Delegation in Qatar in creating lasting memories and empowering youth through sports, arts, and education."

The summer camp, also supported by Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development and Family, had participating entities, including the Qatar Financial Centre and Olympic Sport Museum, mobilising resources and volunteers, the statement added.

