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BUSINESS | Page 1

Deluxe hotel apartments and four-star hotels in Qatar see improved room yield in July: NPC

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PM, US national security adviser discuss Gaza

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received yesterday a phone call from US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan. During the phone call, they discussed the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. **(QNA)**

Gulf Family Day Forum starts in Doha

The Gulf Family Day Forum kicked off in Doha yesterday, under the slogan "Family is the Treasure of a Nation". Coinciding with the 10th meeting of the Committee of Ministers of Labour, Social Development and Civil Service, it is organised by the Family Affairs Council in co-operation with the General Secretariat of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC). **Page 15**

UK suspends arms export to Israel

Britain will immediately suspend 30 of its 350 arms export licences with Israel because there was a risk such equipment might be used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law, foreign minister David Lammy said yesterday. Lammy said the decision to suspend the licences did not amount to a blanket ban or an arms embargo, but only involved those that could be used in the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Attempted jail break at Kinshasa prison

The government in the Democratic Republic of Congo yesterday deplored a "loss of lives" after an attempted jail break overnight from the country's biggest Makala prison in the capital Kinshasa. Interior Minister Jacquemain Shabani reported a "loss of lives, several injured and mainly material damage" in a video shared with reporters. While witnesses spoke of having heard gunshots, authorities have not given any figures or information on prisoners who managed to escape.

Amir, Swedish FM discuss ties, Gaza



QNA
Stockholm

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday with Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden Tobias Billstrom, at the Amir's residence in Stockholm.

During the meeting, they discussed co-

operation relations between the two friendly countries and ways to develop them. They also discussed regional and international developments, especially the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories.

The meeting was attended by a number of members of the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir. From the Swedish side, the meeting was attended by a number of ministers and ranking officials.

Huge potential for deepening ties with Qatar: Swedish FM

QNA
Stockholm

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden Tobias Billstrom said that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Stockholm presents an opportunity to deepen and strengthen bilateral ties with Qatar, especially as it coincides with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), he said that the visit is the first by a Head of State from the Gulf region to Sweden and will make a strong, dynamic and important relation even stronger and open new horizons for enhancing co-operation in various fields. He also praised the current level of relations between the two countries.

He explained: "We highly value our bilateral relations with Qatar and see great potential in deepening our collaboration on multiple

fronts. One key area is issues of security where Qatar and Sweden have both much knowledge and many experiences to exchange. Qatar is a valued partner not only to Sweden but to Nato, which Sweden recently became a member of. This creates an even wider platform for collaboration."

His Highness the Amir's visit will also witness the signing of several MoUs between the two countries, he added.

Billstrom said that both Sweden and Qatar strive for and contribute to a more secure, sustainable and peaceful world, noting that Qatar is also a valued partner of the EU, and the EU-Gulf partnership is another excellent avenue for expanding co-operation on issues including trade, sustainability, and climate change.

The Swedish foreign minister noted that an important mechanism for enhancing the bilateral relations is the frequent visits and contacts between the two countries, expressing hope for an increase in the number of official visits exchanged. **To Page 15**

Sidra participating in global pharma clinical trials: CEO

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Making a tremendous impact on the re-education ecosystem of Qatar and emphasising the premier role of Sidra Medicine globally, at least 20 global pharmaceutical companies have contacted the hospital for clinical trials for new drugs, *Gulf Times* has learnt.

"Such a feat is very much unheard of and speaks volumes about the hospital and its healthcare advancements," Dr Iyabo Tinubu-Karch, CEO of Sidra Medicine said in an exclusive interview. Some of the clinical



Sidra Medicine CEO Dr Iyabo Tinubu-Karch talking to *Gulf Times*. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

cal trials are already at advanced stages and the outcomes can be expected very soon.

She explained: "We are doing Phase III clinical trials for

GT Exclusive

congenital hyperinsulinemia with one of the pharmaceutical companies. Hyperinsulinemia results in too much insulin, resulting in decreasing the sugar level. It is a life-threatening situation and babies born with the disease can even die."

"As we are doing these trials, it will allow us to release the drug much earlier, even before the drug is released globally. So we are the first one in Phase III trials. And when you get to Phase III trials in clinical research, it means that the drug is going to be launched. We will be the first one who is doing this," continued the official. **To Page 5**

Amir attends dinner banquet hosted by Sweden's PM



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani attended yesterday the dinner banquet hosted by Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden Ulf Kristersson, in honour of the Amir and the accompanying delegation at the prime minister's residence "Sager House" in Stockholm. The banquet was attended by Crown Princess Victoria of the Kingdom of Sweden and Speaker of the Parliament of Sweden (Riksdag) Andreas Norlen. The banquet was also attended by a number of members of the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir. From the Swedish side, it was attended by a number of ministers and ranking officials. **(QNA) Page 15**

PM launches education ministry's 2024-30 plan

QNA
Doha

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani inaugurated the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE)'s 2024-2030 Strategy at Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) yesterday, under the slogan "Igniting the Spark of Learning".

Following the official inauguration, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs toured the interactive exhibition, accompanied by a lineup of ministers, senior officials, and representatives of the education sector, receiving a detailed overview of the strategy's new programmes and objectives.

The MoEHE 2024-2030 Strategy aims to develop the education sector in Qatar through of-



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and other dignitaries at the inauguration of the education strategy yesterday.

fering high quality education, ensuring access to equal opportunities, constantly upgrading the teaching staff's skills, in addition to enhancing the learning environment in accordance with the latest educational practices. Speaking at the launch ceremony,

HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi said that this strategy aligns seamlessly with the objectives of Qatar's Third National Development Strategy (NDS3) and the Qatar National Vision (QNV) 2030. **Page 2**

Netanyahu not doing enough to secure Gaza deal: Biden

Reuters
Washington

US President Joe Biden said yesterday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was not doing enough to secure a deal for the release of hostages held in Gaza and the US was close to presenting a final proposal to negotiators working on a ceasefire agreement.

Biden when asked whether he thought Netanyahu was doing enough to reach a hostage deal with Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, Biden said "No". He did not elaborate.

Asked if he was planning to present a final hostage deal to both sides this week, Biden said: "We're very close to that."

"Hope springs eternal," he added when asked whether a deal would be successful. Biden and Vice-President Kamala

Harris also met with the US hostage negotiation team, during which the president expressed "devastation and outrage" at the hostages' murders, and they discussed the next steps in efforts to free the remaining captives, the White House said.

Biden's fresh criticism of Netanyahu comes as he and Harris, who has replaced the president at the top of the Democratic ticket for the Nov 5 election, face increased calls for decisive action to end the nearly 11-month-old war in Gaza.

The conflict has sown divisions among Democrats, with many progressives pressing Biden to restrict or at least place conditions on US weapon supplies to Israel.

Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said Biden's criticism of Netanyahu was "American recognition that Netanyahu was responsible for undermining efforts to reach a deal."



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani inaugurated the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's 2024-2030 Strategy at Qatar National Convention Centre yesterday. HE the PM toured the exhibition, accompanied by ministers, senior officials, and representatives of the education sector.



New education strategy in line with NDS3, QNV 2030: minister

HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi announced the launch of the ministry's new 2024-2030 strategy titled 'Igniting the Spark of Learning'.

She affirmed that this strategy aligns seamlessly with the objectives of Qatar's Third National Development Strategy (NDS3) and the Qatar National Vision (QNV) 2030.

Speaking at the launch ceremony, HE al-Nuaimi emphasised that the strategy aims to identify opportunities and overcome challenges in the coming years by fostering innovation and excellence in education. It focuses on enhancing and professionally developing teachers' skills while preparing a resilient generation capable of

confronting future challenges.

She highlighted the comprehensive nature of the new strategy, which encompasses all stages of learning from early childhood to post-secondary and vocational education. To elucidate its scope, she presented a detailed overview outlining the strategy's phases, core pillars, and the goals intended to be achieved through various associated programs and projects.

She underscored that investing in human education has always been a paramount priority for Qatar's wise leadership, which has consistently dedicated substantial human and material resources to this sector. She noted that the launch of the Third National Development Strategy earlier this year reaffirms education's role not only as a fundamental pillar

of human development but also as a crucial driver for achieving comprehensive and sustainable progress across diverse fields.

Describing the strategy as a guiding compass for Qatar's educational journey toward realising national aspirations, HE al-Nuaimi affirmed that to successfully 'Ignite the spark of Learning' that illuminates path to the future, it is a must to adhere to scientific and methodologies, demonstrate unwavering determination, and consistently keep motivations and objectives at the forefront.

Further detailing the strategic roadmap for the education sector, she outlined its goal to establish an inclusive and innovative educational environment that reinforces values, ethics, and skills. This environment is designed to nurture a

conscientious generation capable of contributing to a progressive society and a thriving economy.

Addressing early childhood education, she noted that the ministry aims to increase pre-primary enrolment rates, which currently stand at 44%, voicing resolve to double this percentage by 2030 through expanding public and private nurseries and kindergartens, enhancing their quality, and boosting family awareness about the importance of early education.

In support of this objective, HE the minister announced amendments to public school regulations to commence education at the age of three, alongside the opening of eight new classrooms dedicated to this age group. She affirmed the ministry's commitment to further expansion, aiming to incorporate

all public kindergartens within the next five years. Discussing primary and secondary education, she stressed that the ministry strives to cultivate positive learning attitudes among students, instil commendable values, and build strong character by providing a stimulating and secure educational environment that supports holistic growth socially, psychologically, health-wise, and academically.

She also mentioned the launch of the "My School, My Community" programme, designed to enhance students' quality of life through policies promoting positive behaviour, an ethical charter, and a broadened range of student activities at both local and international levels.

HE al-Nuaimi expressed immense pride in the exceptional ac-

complishments of Qatari students in international competitions across various domains, including scientific research and information technology, underscoring the nation's commitment to fostering academic excellence and innovation. HE the minister outlined the ministry's ambitious educational strategy aimed at elevating learning outcomes through curriculum development, the integration of digital learning tools, and the adoption of modern teaching methods. She highlighted the initiation of the first phase of this revamped strategy, launched this year, which focuses on strengthening essential life skills such as family education, financial literacy, self-development, entrepreneurship, and community service. **(QNA)**

'A comprehensive approach to improving education quality'

QNA
Doha

Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) Maha al-Ruwaili emphasised that the ministry will adopt, through the launch of its new strategy, a comprehensive and integrated approach to improving the quality of education in Qatar and expanding access to it, with a focus on ensuring sustainability and innovation in its educational system.

In her remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA) yesterday, al-Ruwaili described the strategy as ambitious, saying that it includes 14 goals to improve the quality of education and 24 strategic programmes within four axes related to the different stages of education.

Starting from pre-primary education and education from the first to the 12th grade, and then post-secondary education and continuing education, while the fifth axis focuses on supporting the education system through a set of its enablers.



Maha al-Ruwaili

She pointed out that the educational system's capabilities include strategic programs aimed at preparing national cadres, attracting and retaining distinguished talents, improving the overall governance of the education system, disseminating data, and strengthening local and international partnerships.

She indicated that stimulating investment in the field of education, in addition to using resources efficiently to achieve high-quality results are among the things targeted by these programs.

Al-Ruwaili noted that the ministry's strategy 2024-2030 will contribute to developing the edu-

cation system in Qatar through the strategic programs it includes, which in turn contribute to achieving several matters, including providing equal educational opportunities for all students in these grades

It will look to develop their cognitive abilities and skills in line with future requirements, enhancing curricula and aligning learning resources and methodologies with the skills and knowledge required to be mastered.

This involves upgrading academic and vocational guidance methodologies, including smooth educational paths for all students, accelerating the paths of the gifted and providing them with the possibility of early planning for the higher education stage.

Also, developing the performance of government schools to raise the level of education outcomes for all grades by updating the school supervision model and increasing the competencies of school leadership to improve operations management through support plans dedicated to each school according to its needs, while ensuring the availability of high-quality expertise.



Qatar hosts meeting of GCC officials

QNA
Doha

Doha hosted yesterday the 10th preparatory meeting of the Undersecretaries' Committee of the GCC Ministries of Social Development Affairs. The 10th meeting of the Committee of GCC Ministers of Social Development Affairs is due to be held under Qatar's chairmanship.

Assistant Undersecretary for Social Development Affairs, Fahd bin Mohamed al-Khayarin chaired the preparatory meeting, which was also attended by GCC Assistant Secretary of Economic and Development Affairs, Khaled bin Ali bin Salem al-Sunaidi.

Addressing the meeting, al-Khayarin said the meeting was being held amid social and economic developments that prompt intensified efforts and unified visions to confront the challenges, highlighting the significance of previous meetings in continuing GCC co-ordination to boost social stability and sustainable development. The agenda included main axes aimed at enhancing social integration in the GCC,



primarily the social development strategy and the joint Gulf action strategy 2024-2030, he added.

He added that the meeting highlighted the 7th Gulf Theatre Festival for People with Disabilities, as an important event to showcase the people with disabilities' creative potential, integrate them into society, and offer them equal opportunities. He added the meeting would discuss the third report on the prospects for implementing the rights of people with disabilities in the GCC countries.

Al-Khayarin thanked Oman for its fruitful ministerial meetings presidency the previ-

ous year, leading to remarkable progress in the intra-GCC social co-operation. Meanwhile, al-Sunaidi extended his thanks to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, who chairs the current GCC Supreme Council session, for Qatar's hosting of this meeting, and for His Highness's unrelenting support for the GCC joint work.

He added that the agenda included the discussion of the GCC Strategy for Joint Charitable and Humanitarian Work (2025-2030), the GCC Strategy for Joint Gulf Work for Women's Affairs (2025-2030), and other joint social work activities.

Qatar chairs GCC meeting of labour undersecretaries

QNA
Doha

Qatar chaired yesterday the 10th meeting of the Committee of Undersecretaries of Labour Ministries in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) in Doha, as a preparation for the upcoming meeting of GCC Ministers of Labour, set to take place in Doha next Wednesday.

The meeting was chaired by Sheikhha Najwa bint Abdulrahman al-Thani, Assistant Undersecretary for Expatriate Labour Affairs at the Ministry of Labour, and attended by undersecretaries of the GCC ministries of labour; Khaled bin Ali bin Salem al-Sunaidi, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Development Affairs at the General Secretariat of the GCC; and Mohamed bin Hassan al-Obaidli, Director-General of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Ministers of Labour and Ministers of Social Affairs in GCC.

The undersecretaries addressed enhancing collaboration in the labour sector, such as the strategy of the Committee of Labour Ministers, international co-operation, the UN Business and Human Rights Prin-

ciples, and the Gulf Framework for Combating Forced Labour and Human Trafficking in labour.

Sheikhha Najwa bint Abdulrahman al-Thani, Assistant Undersecretary for Expatriate Labour Affairs at the Ministry of Labour, emphasised the importance of annual meetings of GCC ministries of labour undersecretaries. These meetings allow for sharing experiences, ideas, and developing strategies to enhance co-operation on labour issues within the Gulf countries. Additionally, they aim to streamline initiatives and align the stances of GCC labour ministries in global and regional forums. She emphasised the need to strengthen labour market flexibility to address rapid changes and youth challenges by promoting international labour standards, improving regulatory labour laws, empowering women in the workforce, and creating new labour markets that rely on rapid technological advancement and digital transformation.

The Assistant Undersecretary for Expatriate Labour Affairs at the Ministry of Labour emphasised the plight of workers in Palestine, urging governments, organisations, and international labour unions to intensify their actions to end the suffering of workers in Gaza and the occu-

pied Arab territories. This includes addressing the massacres, severe violations, deteriorating economic conditions, as well as the closures and restrictions imposed on them, and advocating for the implementation of all international resolutions to end the occupation.

Khaled bin Ali bin Salem al-Sunaidi, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Development Affairs at the GCC Secretariat, praised the valuable efforts exerted by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the Chairman of the current session of the GCC Supreme Council, along with their fellow leaders of the GCC countries, for their support towards joint Gulf action.

The meeting covered various labour-related topics, including the Supreme Council's decisions and the GCC Labour Ministers Committee's strategic initiatives. Additionally, discussions were held on various other matters, and specific directives were issued to guarantee harmony and unity in the labour sector across GCC countries.

The meeting concluded with a several recommendations to be presented at the upcoming meeting of the Committee of the GCC Ministers of Labour on Wednesday.

Qatar's envoy presents credentials



Chief of Protocol at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark Nathalia Feinberg received a copy of the credentials of Mutlaq bin Majed al-Qahtani as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Qatar (non-resident) to Denmark. **(QNA)**

HMC launches new Neuro Vestibular Physiotherapy Clinic

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC)'s Qatar Rehabilitation Institute (QRI) has announced the launch of its groundbreaking Neuro Vestibular Physiotherapy Clinic, the first facility of its kind in the region.

This state-of-the-art clinic is dedicated to providing advanced care for patients suffering from central vestibular disorders, offering hope and healing for those affected by these debilitating conditions.

Deputy Chief of Rehabilitation, Long-Term Care, and Geriatrics, and Lead of Rehabilitation Therapy Services at HMC, Dr Hanadi

al-Hamad, who has been instrumental in establishing this clinic, expressed her enthusiasm for the new initiative.

"We are thrilled to introduce this unique service to our community. Central vestibular disorders can be life-altering, depriving individuals of their independence and quality of life. Our mission with this clinic is to provide comprehensive and compassionate care that empowers patients to regain their balance, mobility and confidence. This clinic is not just a new facility; it's a critical step forward in addressing a significant gap in healthcare



Dr Hanadi al-Hamad

for neurological patients in our region."

HMC said in a statement that the new Neuro Vestibular Physiotherapy Clinic at QRI is poised to become a beacon of hope for patients with these conditions. By offering specialised treatments tailored to individual needs, the clinic aims to restore balance, improve mobility and enhance the overall quality of life for its patients.

The clinic integrates cutting-edge technology with expert clinical care, setting a new benchmark in the treatment of central vestibular disorders. Patients will benefit

from personalised treatment plans, continuous support and the use of advanced tools such as wearable sensors and virtual reality to track and enhance recovery.

Healthcare Services Manager and Acting Director of Rehabilitation Physiotherapy at QRI, Al Madzhar J Ahmadul emphasised the potential impact.

"The launch of this clinic marks a significant advancement in our ability to treat vestibular disorders associated with conditions like stroke, multiple sclerosis and brain tumours. By leveraging the latest technology and evidence-based

practices, we are dedicated to delivering the highest standards of care. It is incredibly rewarding to witness patients reclaim their independence and significantly improve their quality of life."

The Neuro Vestibular Physiotherapy Clinic at QRI will cater to the adult population, while a specialised Geriatric Vestibular Physiotherapy Clinic at HMC's Rumailah Hospital will focus on the unique needs of the elderly, offering targeted interventions that significantly enhance their quality of life, allowing them to regain their balance and mobility. (QNA)

Ooredoo Group unveils inaugural GRI-2023 ESG report

Ooredoo Group has made a significant leap in its sustainability journey by releasing its inaugural GRI-2023 ESG report, a statement said yesterday.

Developed in reference to the latest GRI Universal Standards for reporting and the telecoms-specific SASB standards, the report marks the company's fourth year of ESG disclosures. The 2023 standalone ESG Report is the most comprehensive and transparent to date, it was explained.



Fatima Sultan al-Kuwari

Under the leadership of the Group Human Resources and Sustainability division, Ooredoo is in the final stage of establishing a dedicated ESG committee, ensuring a structured approach to overseeing and guiding sustainability initiatives and performance across the group.

These efforts contribute to both Ooredoo's regulatory and investor needs, integrating sustainability into the very fabric of the company.

With a detailed materiality analysis and an expanded level of disclosures, the report highlights Ooredoo's commitment to sustainable development across its operational footprint in Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Iraq, Palestine, Algeria, Tunisia, and Maldives.

Fatima Sultan al-Kuwari, Group Chief Human Resources and Sustainability Officer, Ooredoo, said: "As a community-focused company, Ooredoo is guided by a vision of using its services to enrich people's digital lives and stimulate human growth. We believe in the power of technology as an enabler

to bring about social and economic progress. This belief is at the core of our ESG efforts, and this inaugural GRI- ESG report is a reflection of our values and our dedication to a sustainable future."

For Ooredoo, sustainability is a key component of its digital infrastructure strategy. By focusing on energy efficiencies, the company anticipates significant cost savings.

This strategic focus is evident in Ooredoo's responsible initiatives to optimise network energy usage and transition to energy-efficient technologies. In 2023, the total Group direct (Scope 1) and indirect (Scope 2) GHG emissions decreased by 4.5% compared to 2022.

In recent years, Ooredoo also launched several renewable energy projects across its operations, exploring the potential to diversify its energy mix. These initiatives include installing solar panels at key facilities and investing in green

energy solutions to power its advanced network infrastructure.

Ooredoo's commitment to harnessing human potential without causing harm is reflected in its ethical approach to business, with the company's dedication to transparency and accountability demonstrated by enhanced reporting practices.

In 2023, Ooredoo saw a 1.5% increase in female representation across its workforce, bringing the total to 30%. In 2023, the group spent approximately \$35mn on community initiatives.

The company has earned ISO 20000-1 certification for IT service management systems and ISO 27001 certification for information security management systems, underscoring the strength and reliability of its systems.

Employees are at the heart of Ooredoo's sustainability initiatives. The company fosters a culture of awareness, engagement, and transparency, positioning itself as an equal-opportunity employer.

By prioritising sustainability, Ooredoo aims to remain an inclusive employer, while attracting global and specialised talents aligned with its values and mission. This commitment is evidenced through recent reporting initiatives and developmental programmes for employees, such as dedicated training academies, leadership development programmes, and targeted training in critical thinking, change management, wellbeing, and AI.

MGD to launch 20 showrooms in a month



Malabar Gold & Diamonds (MGD), the sixth largest jewellery retailer globally with over 355 showrooms across 13 countries, has unveiled the next phase of their global expansion plan, with the opening of 20 new showrooms during October.

The new showrooms are being planned across various locations in India, the GCC countries and the US, a statement said yesterday.

The expansion plan in India involves the launch of three showrooms in Uttar Pradesh, two each in Delhi, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan and one each in Odisha, Telangana, West Bengal and Punjab.

In the GCC region, a new showroom each will be opened Muweilah in Sharjah, Muaither in Qatar, and Nakheel Mall in Saudi Arabia. The brand's growing presence in North America will also be bolstered with the launch of two new showrooms, in Artesia, Los Angeles and Atlanta, Georgia.

Commenting on the occasion, Malabar Group chairman, M P Ahamed said: "While the opening of these 20 showrooms aligns with our long-term vision of becoming the world's No.1 jewellery retailer, the aggressive expansion we have charted is about growing sustainably and responsibly, ensuring that our expansion benefits not just our business, but also the society at large.

"Through our unwavering commitment to the causes of ethical business practices, responsible sourcing and sustainability, we are proud to call ourselves a Responsible Jeweller, having been awarded the prestigious India Gold Conference (IGC) Responsible Jewellery House Award for 2023-24.

"Our brand has always stood for trust, transparency, and quality, and these new showrooms will embody these values. With 5% of our profits set aside towards Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) initiatives in every region we operate in, we are also committed to bringing about a positive change in the community".

Every new showroom will showcase a wide range of jewellery collections, from traditional to contemporary designs. With a focus on customer comfort and satisfaction, the showrooms will host a wide range of amenities from customised jewellery designing facility to a luxurious lounge area.

"Our decision to open 20 new showrooms in such a short span reflects our robust growth strategy and confidence in the markets we serve. With a focus on both geographical diversification and strengthening our presence in existing markets, we are ahead of the curve in terms of market penetration. We are committed to offering not just jewellery, but an experience that delights and

inspires our customers, ensuring they find pieces that resonate with their personal style and cultural heritage," commented Shamla Ahamed, managing director - international operations, MGD.

Asher O, managing director of India operations, said: "With import duty on gold being slashed by the government, we firmly believe that India will witness a meteoric rise in demand for gold jewellery and with the charted expansion, we are well poised to cater to this need."

Abdul Salam K P, vice chairman of Malabar Group, revealed: "In addition to strengthening our presence in existing markets, we are also gearing up to expand into countries such as South Africa, Egypt, Turkiye, Bangladesh, France and New Zealand. We are also working towards broadening the scope of our product line through Arab Value Chain focused on 21K jewellery and Western Value Chain focused on 18K jewellery."

ESG has been the primary commitment of Malabar Group since its inception in 1993, with 5% of net profits set aside towards such initiatives in each country of operations. The key focus is in the areas of hunger-free world, health, housing, education, women empowerment, and environment. The ESG goals are periodically strengthened to remain a socially conscious and responsible organisation, the statement added.

Second Al Diwan Arabic book fair held in Berlin

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter



The Arab Cultural House "Al Diwan", affiliated with the embassy of Qatar in Berlin, organised the second Al Diwan Arabic book fair with the participation of more than 70 publishing houses and research institutes from Arab and European countries, according to what was mentioned on the official website of the Arab Cultural House.

A rich collection of books representing the Arab cultural, literary and intellectual heritage was presented.

The exhibition witnessed the attendance of literature and culture lovers over the course of three days (from August 30-September 1, 2024). The exhibition activities included discussion and intellec-

tual sessions with the participation of a number of academics to discuss the most prominent issues, and witnessed the strengthening of relations between the Diwan and various cultural institutions.

The exhibition was accompanied by discussion sessions with a group of the most important Arab writers.

Among the exhibition's programme was a seminar titled "The Reality of Literature in the Arab World: Novel Literature as a Model" with the participation of Algerian novelist Waciny Laredj with a paper on "The Reality of the Arab Novel" and Qatari researcher and short sto-

ry writer Ahmed Abdulmalik with a paper on "The Reality of the Gulf Novel: The Qatari Novel as a Model".

There was an event with Syrian composer and oud professor at the "Diwan Academy of Music" Marwan Alkarjousli, who composed many pieces, in addition to soundtracks for important cinematic and television series.

A session was held titled "Satirical Literature and Its Critical Role in Society: Comedy Drama in Television and Cinema", presented by Syrian writer and director Mamdouh Hamada and interviewed by Egyptian director Samir Nasr, followed by a seminar on the "Hamad Translation Award" in which academics Hanan al-Fayyad and Imtenan al-Samadi were the speakers. In addition a seminar titled "The Reality of International, Arab, and German Publishing: Current Challenges" was held.

Traffic Dept holds 'Back to School' awareness campaign



The General Directorate of Traffic, represented by the Traffic Awareness Department, held a 'Back to School' awareness campaign on Sunday. The annual campaign, according to a post by the Ministry of Interior on X, was organised as part of the directorate's efforts to raise awareness about traffic safety requirements and promote adherence to traffic rules and etiquette among school students.

Voting open for tourism influencer award

Set to take place at the end of this year, the Qatar Tourism Awards is returning for its second edition, a statement said.

Developed in partnership with UN Tourism, the initiative is designed to celebrate and recognise the remarkable contributions made by businesses in delivering outstanding and distinct tourism experiences in Qatar.

This year, Qatar Tourism Awards will have seven categories such as Service Excellence, Gastronomic Experiences, Iconic Attractions and Activities, World Class Events, Digital Footprint, Smart and Sustainable Tourism, and Community Leadership.

For the first time this year, the public are invited to vote



for their favourite 'Tourism Influencer (Content Creator) of the Year', as part of the Digital Footprint category. The short-listed nominees were selected through a rigorous assessment by the Qatar Tourism Awards Committee, based on established criteria that carefully

evaluated each individual's contributions to advancing Qatar's tourism industry.

To vote visit: <https://www.qatartourism.com/en/qatar-tourism-awards/influencer-nominees>. Voting ends on September 9. The shortlisted nominees: 1. Khalifa al-Haroon (iloveqatar), 2. Abdulaziz Ibrahim al-Ajail (zo-zoalajail), 3. A b d u l - l a Alghafri (QQQ), 4. Abdulhadi Saleh Salem Alwakean al-Marri (abdulhadi_7), 5. Fatimah Dhai (newindoha), 6. Abdullah Darabseh (abdallah-drbt), 7. Saoud al-Kuwari (shljadwal), 8. Osama al-Nassan (osamanasan), 9. Tourism in Qatar Platform (qt2030), 10. Noor Ahmad al-Mazroei (noor_almazroei).

Qatar participates in digital conference

QNA
Alexandria

The international conference on the role of digital transformation and artificial intelligence applications in achieving sustainable development goals in the Arab region kicked off yesterday.

Qatar is participating in the conference which is organised by the Arab Knowledge Management Foundation (AIKM) and the IFLA Regional Committee for the Middle East and North Africa (IFLA-Mena),

at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt.

The two-day conference witnessed the review of a number of working papers submitted by the participants, including the research presented by Major Dr Khalifa Ahmed Bu Hashem al-Sayed, Assistant Director of the Center for Security Research and Studies at the Police Academy, on Data management in security academic institutions and its role in achieving sustainable development goals: The Police Academy in Qatar as a model.

The conference, in which more than 220 participants representing 16 Arab countries are participating, aims to study the status of digital transformation in information institutions and its role in achieving sustainable development goals, and the impact of modern artificial intelligence applications on information institutions in the Arab region in terms of advantages and risks, in addition to presenting distinguished models of institutions in which digital transformation contributed to achieving sustainable development goals.



Al-Khulaifi meets Czech FM

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, met with Foreign Minister of Czech Republic Jan Lipavsky, on the sidelines of the GLOBSEC Forum, held in Prague, Czech Republic. The two sides reviewed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them in various fields, and discussed the developments of the situation in Gaza and



the occupied Palestinian territories, in addition to updates on the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. HE Dr al-Khulaifi also stressed that Qatar continues its efforts with international partners to reach an agreement to stop the war on the Gaza Strip. **(QNA)**

Interior minister meets Germany's police chief



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of Lekhwiya Forces Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met yesterday with the visiting Chief of the German Federal Police Force, Dr Dieter Romann. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between the two friendly countries and ways to bolster them, primarily in the security spheres. **(QNA)**

Al-Hammadi bids farewell to Armenian ambassador



HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi met yesterday with Armenian ambassador Armen Sarkissian, on the occasion of the end of his tenure. HE Dr al-Hammadi thanked the ambassador for his efforts in supporting and strengthening the bilateral relations, wishing him success in his future duties. **(QNA)**

Tunisian FM meets Qatar's envoy



Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration, and Tunisians Abroad Mohamed Ali al-Nafti met in Tunis on Sunday with Qatar's ambassador Zayed bin Saeed al-Kumait al-Khayarin. The meeting focused on the two countries' co-operation relations. **(QNA)**

Tanzanian FM meets Qatar's envoy



Tanzanian Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Co-operation Mahmoud Thabit Kombo met with Qatar's ambassador in Dar es Salaam Fahad Rashid al-Muraikhi. During the meeting, the two sides discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them. **(QNA)**

KMCC Qatar hands over fund to Qatar Charity to help Indian baby's treatment

Kerala Muslim Cultural Centre (KMCC) Qatar recently handed over the amount, raised to support the treatment of Indian baby Malakha Rouhi, to Qatar Charity (QC). According to a statement from KMCC Qatar, a total amount of QR677,850 was handed over to QC representatives Amir al-Bisri and Marwan Abu Lughod.

The amount was handed over by KMCC Qatar state committee president

Dr Abdul Samad and general-secretary Saleem Nalakath. The KMCC Qatar delegation received a certificate of recognition from QC.

The amount was raised through KMCC's two phased Biryani Challenge initiative reached around 14,000 benefactors across Qatar while amassing around QR170,000. Many benefactors also contributed money to QC upon the request made by the organisation.

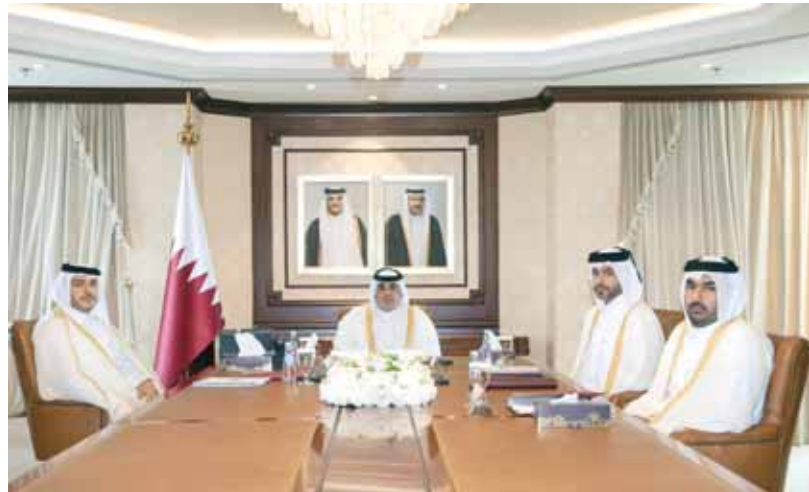
Around 400 volunteers, comprising professionals, businessmen and drivers, worked for the successful implementation of the drive, distributing biryani orders across the country.

KMCC functionaries K Mhamed Easa, Abdul Raheem Pakkanji, Sidheeq Vazhakkad, Ali Morayur, Thahir Thahakkutty, Salman Elayidam, V T M Sadhik and Shamsudheen Vanimel attended the event.

Preparatory meeting of GCC prosecutors

The State of Qatar's Public Prosecution chaired the 15th virtual meeting of Assistant Attorneys General and Prosecutors of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) member states. The meeting was held in preparation for the 16th meeting of Attorneys General and Prosecutors of GCC countries, to take place in Doha on October 29.

Prime Solicitor General and Director of Judicial Inspection Administration Ibrahim Abdullah al-Qubaisi chaired the meeting, in the attendance of several Deputy Public Prosecutors. The meeting discussed several items on the agenda, including: the potential of setting mechanisms and controls for conducting interactive seminars, honouring former Attorneys General and Prosecutors, exploring potential co-operation with legal and judicial institutes and centres in the GCC countries, in addition to finding a mechanism to enhance



co-operation in judicial assistance and legal aid in order to expedite their implementation. Additionally, the meeting

aimed to showcase the experiences of the public prosecution and prosecution offices in the GCC member states.



Qualifying course for Public Prosecution assistants begins

QNA
Doha

HE Attorney-General Dr Issa bin Saad al-Jafali al-Nuaimi inaugurated the fifth qualifying course for the assistants of the Public Prosecution 2024/2025, organised by the Criminal Studies Institute at the Public Prosecution.

HE the attorney-general addressed members of the fifth qualifying course, urging them to exert their utmost efforts in the courses work to achieve the best-desired result, which will be

positively reflected in their future work performance.

The fifth qualifying course for assistants of the Public Prosecution is the first course after the provisions of the Public Prosecution Law No 9 of 2023 came into effect.

The one-year course is divided into 6 months for theoretical training, and 6 months for practical training. It consists of 31 specialised training materials, with 428 hours that include areas, procedures and applications of the Public Prosecutions work.

The course is presented by an elite group of Public Prosecution members

and specialized experts. At the end of the meeting, HE the attorney-general handed over certificates to the assistants of the Public Prosecution who attended in the Microsoft 365 Training, which was organized by the Criminal Studies Institute in co-operation with the Community Service and Continuing Education Center at Qatar University (QU).

Over the course of two months, the 176 training hours included theoretical materials and comprehensive practical applications for all computer skills required by the work of members of the Public Prosecution.



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Hour and Hour programme’s fourth edition ‘a great success’

The Hour and Hour programme's fourth edition of cultural competition under the motto *Think and Answer*, held in collaboration with Msheireb Downtown Doha, was a great success, a statement said.

The competition, organised with the “Back to School” theme, enjoyed the participation and interaction of all categories of society, with puzzles and questions presented by media person Mohamed al-Marri.

The event also featured numerous workshops organised by schools and youth centres.

The Friends of the Environment Centre’s workshop on the heritage and historical significance of wild plants in Qatar, was followed by a karate demonstration.

Artist Laila Darwish conducted a painting workshop on *My Beautiful School*.

Al Jumayliyah Youth Centre’s workshop was on traditional games.

A taekwondo demonstration was overseen by instructors Saber bin Abdullah and Samah Hamoudi.

The youth team from Al-Sailiya Sports Club held a workshop on Arabic calligraphy, led by Tariq Abdulrahman.

Al Dana Girls Centre organised a workshop on traditional games, and Al Dhakhira Primary School for Girls presented a performance titled *Haji Lol* in collaboration with the Theatre Affairs Centre.

A traditional -style back-to-school greeting card workshop and a storytelling session titled *A Player’s Tale* were presented by Hessa Lahdan al-Muhannadi, alongside a national anthem performance by students from Al Khor Model School for Boys.

Hour and Hour chief executive Tamani al-Yafei said the events held in Msheireb in celebration of the back-to-school season were highly received by the community members, with attendance high from all age groups, including children, youth, and people with special needs.



The official noted that the “Think and Answer” competition was recently introduced to reinforce and preserve Qatar's authentic heritage through cultural and artistic visions, in collaboration with relevant entities.

The aim is to strengthen partnerships with various community institutions and nurture promising artistic talents through diverse events that clearly link culture with sports and education with heritage.

“The ‘Think and Answer’ competition will have upcoming editions, and we look forward to organising it in various parts across the country to ensure access to all parts of society and diversify the participants in the competition,” she added.

The media partners were Qatar Media Center, Al

Arab newspaper, *The Peninsula* newspaper, *Jassim* magazine, *Arrayah* newspaper, *Gulf Times*, *Arrayah* Lite Platform, *He & She* magazine, *Jamila* magazine, and *Lifestyle* magazine.

Sidra participating in global pharma clinical trials

From Page 1

Dr Tinubu-Karch said that it is a huge achievement for Qatar: “It is not happening in the US, not Europe, but Qatar is doing it.”

The official noted that Sidra Medicine, over the last five years, has become a regional expert in precision medicine, the next generation of healthcare.

“Precision medicine is essentially targeting specific therapies to specific people, based on unique information of that individual,” Dr Tinubu-Karch said. “We went with the research and now we are at the point to actually deliver diagnostic care. Because of our tripartite mission of research, education, and clinical care, we are now able to take care of those diseases.”

The official said that Qatar and Sidra Medicine will be perfectly positioned to begin therapeutic solutions for the rare diseases.

“And so it is an incredible trajectory. And the great thing is that it is not just Sidra Medicine,” she highlighted. “It is an ecosystem that has been fuelled by the Qatar Foundation and the incredible investment in research.”

Dr Tinubu-Karch said that Sidra Medicine is expanding genetic services to do more genetic and diagnostic testing.

“We can open up the testing to those who are now coming into Qatar for treatment,” she said. “We are expanding our rehabilitative services and embracing artificial intelligence to drive our precision health research.”

“10 years from now, Sidra Medicine will be a pioneer in the treatment of paediatric rare diseases and manufacturing groundbreaking gene therapy drugs,” Dr Tinubu-Karch added.

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), in co-operation with the Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC)) and the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), has launched the national campaign for oral health 2024, which will continue throughout September, under the slogan *Your teeth are the gateway to your health*.

The ministry said that the main focus of the campaign is the importance of caring for oral and dental health among all members of Qatari society.

The MoPH also noted that the campaign aims to raise awareness among all members of society, such as children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly, and to establish the concept of “a healthy mouth in a healthy body” and change negative habits that affect oral and dental health, such as “smoking, consumption of foods and drinks full of sugar” and increase awareness about the importance of daily care for oral health.

The ministry added that the campaign also aims to encourage a healthy diet to have a healthy mouth and teeth by reducing the percentage of sugar in foods and drinks and following a healthy diet, with the aim of reducing the rate of tooth decay in children.

It revealed that the percentage of tooth decay among children in the 2017 national survey for ages 4-8 years was approximately 85%.

The campaign, which is being implemented for the sixth consecutive year, includes the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), Ministry of Interior (MoI), QatarEnergy, Heart Hospital, Elderly Care Centre, Sidra Medicine, Aster Hospital, Ahli Hospital, Turkish Hospital, Doha Clinic Hospital, Al Emadi Hospital, Aman Hospital, and The View Hospital.

The campaign is part of the outputs of the National Oral and Dental Health Committee and includes the publication of educational awareness publications about oral and dental health in general, through the social media platforms of the MoPH and the social platforms of health sector partners, in addition to display screens at the public entrances of government and private hospitals and health centres, throughout the month of the event.

There will be virtual awareness lectures on the importance of oral health to all ministries and institutions in the country, with the aim of reaching the largest possible number of community members in Qatar.

An awareness event will be organised targeting all students of Qatar Foundation in the last week of September, to introduce students to the National Oral Health Campaign and the importance of taking care of oral and dental health in general. – QNA

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5	RUQAYA SHAREEDADAMES	71	EVELYN GARCIA.ALPERTO
6	HASSANMOHAMED HANAFYMOHAMED	72	K KHANAMASTHALI
7	FATMANASSER S NAL ATTIVAH	73	DARCY LAGADOLABANAN
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15	OWAIDA HAMAD AL MARRI	81	NOORA JASSIM AL KAABI
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45	GAYAN PRADEEPNAWARATHNAVIDANAGE	111	MANOJ DNADASON
46	ABDUL GEFOOR KUNNU	112	HAMAD ALI ALMARRI
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48	JONATHANSPSUBA	114	NAIMUDDINAHMAD
49	SALEEM P UMMER	115	UDESHKA DILHARAKUMARAGEPELI
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Philippines reaffirms ‘no placement fee’ for Qatar-bound OFWs

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The Philippine Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) reiterated its dedication to protecting the rights of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) by issuing a circular that underscores the strict enforcement of the “no placement fee” policy for Filipinos bound for Qatar.

This move aligns with Qatar’s existing labour laws, which prohibit recruitment agencies from charging any fees for recruitment, expenses or other associated costs, according to the Philippine embassy in Doha.

The announcement stressed that Qatar is classified as a non-placement fee labour-receiving



country. This means that licensed recruitment agencies are explicitly barred from collecting any form of payment related to recruitment fees from workers heading to Qatar.

The DMW circular, signed by Secretary Hans Leo J. Cadac, draws attention to Article 33 of Qatar Law No 14 of 2004, which clearly states that recruitment

agencies are not permitted to charge any sum for recruitment-related expenses.

This directive is further supported by Section 56 (b) of the DMW’s 2023 Department Circular No 01, titled “Promulgating the 2023 Department of Migrant Workers Rules and Regulations Governing the Recruitment and Employment of Landbased Overseas Filipino Workers”, which governs the recruitment and employment of land-based OFWs.

The DMW has warned that violators of the no placement fee policy will face serious administrative penalties, including the cancellation of their licenses as stipulated under Section 139 (m) Rule II, Part VI of the aforementioned rules and regulations.

Ministry permits brick use in barn complexes

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The owners of the barns within barn complexes can now use bricks for attachment buildings, including majlis (reception area), workers’ accommodation and storehouses.

The Ministry of Municipality posted on its X account that as part of protecting and maintaining private property, it has permitted willing barn owners to use bricks for such buildings according to certain standards and conditions.

The maximum allowed height above the ground is four metres, and the roof has to be insulated corrugated sheet of 7cm thickness. The ministry stressed that concrete and iron must not be used in the building process. The permit to use bricks in some specific buildings applies only to the owners of the barns within the barn complexes according to the building spaces permitted.

The numbers of livestock heads raised by



local barn owners have been steadily increasing over the past few years raising the share of local production of red meat and dairy products to unprecedented volumes within the local market. Qatar currently enjoys 100% self-sufficiency in dairy products, compared to only around 28% in 2016. Similarly, local red meat production is above 18% of the requirement while it was around 14% in 2016.

Accordingly, the prospects of the livestock industry looks positive despite the challenges that often encounter investors in these sectors, which mainly involve the high cost of business operations, including that of certain

types of fodder, veterinary services and drugs.

The Livestock Department at the Ministry of Municipality pays close attention to the demands of livestock owners and offers them various means of support and subsidies to help improve production. The registered barn owners get concentrated fodder and other types of subsidised fodder.

In addition, the ministry supplies them with drinking water and there is collaboration with the Ministry of Interior to facilitate recruitment of workforce for the barns. Besides, there are a number of initiatives in co-operation with various related entities to help livestock owners market their sheep and goats at competitive prices.

Most barn complexes have easy access to livestock marketing yards, public veterinary clinics and services market nearby. Free veterinary visits are conducted at these complexes.

According to a recent report, the number of livestock owners in the country was 8,151 with around 62% having sheep estimated at more than 813,941 heads and 27% goats, with more than 358,137 heads.

Awqaf opens new mosque at Al Uqdah

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Mosques, has opened a new mosque at Al Uqdah Area.

The Hilal Bin Mohamed Ibrahim Al Mohannadi Mosque has space for 1,135 male and female worshippers. Spread over an area of 3,467sq m, the mosque has houses for the Imam and Muezzin.

The new mosque, according to an official statement from Awqaf, was endowed by Ibrahim Hilal al-Mohannadi and built within Awqaf’s plan to expand the number of mosques and develop them in all regions of the country while keeping pace with urban and population growth. This is in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

With number MS 1402, the mosque has a main prayer hall with space for 850 worshippers, in addition to a daily prayer hall that can accommodate 180 worshippers. Also, there is a hall for women worshippers and this can accommodate 105 worshippers. The mosque also includes a spacious ablution place in addition to a large number of public parking lots, including those for persons with disabilities. The entrances and exits of the mosque are disabled-friendly.

The Department of Engineering Affairs at the ministry is concerned with fulfilling the needs of the regions in the country for mosques and prayer grounds while providing temporary mosques and supervising their preservation as well as preparing the annual plan for the maintenance of mosques and imams’ residences. These are in co-ordination with the competent authorities.

In mosque designs, the department takes into account the requirements of different areas along with



the guidelines for green and sustainable buildings. Also, the department focuses on the conditions for sustainability in the use of electricity and water, and preserving the aesthetics of heritage in design that reflect the authenticity of Qatari and Islamic heritage of the highest standards.

The Ministry of Endowments’ plans to build mosques also take into account the population density map along with engineering, architectural specifications and the heritage aspect within the framework of caring for the mosques to enable worship and to serve the worshippers.

Awqaf’s website provides the facility to search for mosque locations geographically, according to the global navigation system, through accurate and specific maps that facilitate access to mosque locations in all cities across the country.

Submissions open for seventh Katara Prize for Prophet’s Poets

The Cultural Village Foundation - Katara announced the opening of submissions for the 7th Katara Prize for Prophet’s Poets from September 1-November 30.

The award’s jury will select 30 contestants to compete in the final rounds through three qualifying stages. The first round will feature 15 participants competing in the Classic Poetry Category and 15 participants competing in the Nabati Poetry Category. At the end of the stages, the jury will select five participants from each category to qualify for the semi-final round where three winners will be selected from the Classic Poetry Category and Nabati Poetry Category. The ranking of the three winners in the two categories will then be announced and the first-place winner in each category will be crowned with the title at the award’s closing ceremony.

The committee of the Katara Prize for Prophet’s Poets will print and publish the winning poems as well as create CDs in Katara Studios with the voices of the winning poets. The annual Katara Prize for Prophet’s Poets, first launched in 2015, aims to deepen the love of the Prophet in the hearts of the current generation, encourage, refine and develop young talents, support youth to translate their talent into poems that serve Islam, emphasise the importance of poetry in the unity of the Islamic and Arab nation, and to revive Islamic poetry and modern poetic genres within a competitive and interactive space.

The total value of the prizes for the award is QR3.8mn (USD1.04mn) in the Classic Poetry Category and Nabati Poetry Category (three prizes for each category). The first-place winner will receive QR1,000,000, the second-place winner will receive QR600,000, and the third-place winner will receive QR300,000. (QNA)

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Preventive Health:

The Vital Role of Laboratory Diagnostics



Udhayakumar Natraj
Chief Operating Officer
Micro Health Laboratories

In today's world, healthcare is rapidly evolving, and laboratory diagnostics are becoming increasingly important in preventive health. The saying "prevention is better than cure" holds true now more than ever. With the advancement of diagnostic technologies, healthcare is shifting its focus from treating diseases to preventing them. Laboratory diagnostics are at the forefront of this shift, playing a key role in identifying risk factors, detecting diseases early, and guiding personalized preventive measures.

Early Detection and Risk Assessment

One of the most valuable contributions of laboratory diagnostics to preventive health is the early detection of diseases. Many conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, and some types of cancer, may not show any symptoms in their early stages. However, routine blood tests, genetic screenings, and biomarker analyses can detect these issues before symptoms appear. This early detection allows for timely intervention. For example, a lipid profile test can indicate a person's risk of heart disease, while checking HbA1c levels can help diagnose diabetes early by providing insight into long-term blood sugar control.

Personalized Preventive Strategies

Laboratory diagnostics make it possible to develop personalized preventive strategies tailored to each individual's specific health needs. By analyzing genetic predispositions, lifestyle factors, and biomarker data, healthcare providers can create customized health plans. These plans might include specific dietary recommendations, exercise routines, and regular monitoring. This personalized approach not only makes preventive measures more effective but also empowers patients to take charge of their health. Patients can make informed decisions and adopt lifestyle changes that best suit their health needs.

Monitoring and Managing Chronic Conditions

For individuals already diagnosed with chronic conditions, laboratory diagnostics are essential for monitoring disease progression and managing treatment plans. Regular testing helps doctors adjust medications and interventions to prevent complications. For example, people with high blood pressure can benefit from regular blood tests to monitor kidney function and blood pressure levels. This can help prevent more severe conditions such as kidney disease or stroke. Consistent monitoring allows for proactive management of health, reducing the risk of complications and improving the quality of life for patients.

Public Health Impact

Laboratory diagnostics also play a significant role in public health by helping to identify and track trends in disease prevalence. This information is vital for health authorities to implement preventive measures at the community or national level. For example, during public health campaigns, widespread testing can identify populations at risk for certain conditions, such as Vitamin D deficiency. Once identified, targeted measures can be taken to address these issues, such as providing supplements to those in need. By doing so, public health initiatives can be more focused and effective, ultimately reducing the overall burden of disease.

Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite the crucial role of laboratory diagnostics in preventive health,

several challenges need to be addressed. Accessibility, cost, and lack of awareness are major barriers. Not everyone has easy access to diagnostic testing, especially in remote or underdeveloped areas, where healthcare infrastructure might be limited. Additionally, the cost of certain diagnostic tests can be prohibitive, preventing individuals from seeking regular health screenings. Furthermore, a lack of awareness about the importance of preventive health measures often results in people neglecting regular health checks. To overcome these barriers, public health education campaigns are essential to raise awareness about the importance of early detection and preventive care. Additionally, innovations like point-of-care testing, which allows tests to be conducted at the time and place of patient care, and telemedicine, which enables remote consultations, are making diagnostics more accessible and affordable. These advancements are paving the way for broader adoption of preventive health measures, ensuring that more individuals can benefit from early diagnosis and intervention.

Conclusion

Laboratory diagnostics are not just tools for diagnosing illnesses; they are a cornerstone of preventive health. By enabling early detection, guiding personalized care, and supporting public health initiatives, laboratory diagnostics are reshaping healthcare. As technology continues to advance, the role of diagnostics in preventive health will become even more significant. This progress will lead to a future where maintaining good health takes precedence over simply treating diseases. By focusing on prevention, we can improve health outcomes, reduce healthcare costs, and enhance the quality of life for everyone. Ultimately, the integration of laboratory diagnostics into everyday healthcare practices will empower individuals to take control of their health and lead healthier, longer lives. This proactive approach will foster a more health-conscious society, encouraging people to prioritize their well-being through regular check-ups and preventive care measures. With the continued evolution of diagnostic technologies, we are moving towards a healthcare model that is more predictive, personalized, and preventive, ensuring a healthier future for all.

Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som launches summer wellness for Qatar residents

Qatar Residents relax and revive with the all-inclusive Zulal Discovery Reconnect Retreat.



The multi-award-winning Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som, the first and largest wellness destination in the Middle East invites wellness seekers to invest in lasting holistic health this summer. Valid on stays until 30 September 2024, the Summer Wellness is open to all residents of the Qatar and GCC in search of rest and renewal away from the stresses of city life.

With a generous 25% off Discovery Reconnect Retreat and rates starting from QAR 1140 per night based on single occupancy, guests receive a personalised health and wellness consultation upon arrival, one daily treatment per night of stay, three wellness cuisine meals per night of stay, full access to the resort's state-of-the-art facilities and they can join a host of scheduled group classes and activities.

Away from the hustle and bustle of Doha, Zulal Wellness Resort is located on the most northern tip of Qatar a one-hour drive from the city. In the hot summer months Zulal Wellness Resort enjoys temperatures between 5 and 10 degrees cooler

than the rest of Qatar and the Summer Wellness presents the ideal opportunity for families, couples and solo wellness seekers to spend time on their health on a rejuvenating journey that's close by, yet far away enough to completely switch off.

The all-inclusive package applies to stays at the Zulal Discovery and ensures a comprehensive wellness experience. Zulal Discovery welcomes guests of all ages, particularly families, offering the perfect place to reconnect and explore the joys of healthy living through a wellness lifestyle. Guests can extend beyond the wellness inclusions of their retreat and avail of an additional 20% off à la carte spa and wellness treatments.

The Summer Wellness Offer also gives guests full access to shared fitness, wellness and leisure activities. From wellness talks, fitness classes to aqua activities, mindfulness practice and specialised workshops with leaders and experts from the world of wellness, Qatar residents can escape the ordinary and embrace

transformative wellness just a short haul from home.

Summer Wellness rates start from 1140 QAR per night for single occupancy, and 1718 QAR per night for two people sharing. This offer is valid until 30 September 2024 on the Discovery Reconnect Retreat at Zulal Discovery for Qatar residents only (guests must present a valid Qatar resident ID upon check-in to avail of this offer.) Terms and conditions apply, and the offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotional offers

For more information or reservations, please email Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som at reservations@zulal.com, call/WhatsApp +974 4477 6555 or visit zulal.chivasom.com



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Qatar Charity Opens and Launches a Series of Development Projects in Ghana

Qatar Charity has inaugurated a series of significant development projects in Ghana during an official visit by a Qatar Charity delegation led by Mr. Abdulaziz Jassim Haji, Director of the Development Operations Department. The visit also included His Excellency Mr. Hamad Al-Suwaidi, Chargé d’Affaires at the Embassy of the State of Qatar, alongside several Ghanaian government officials and prominent community leaders.

The projects included the opening of a multi-service center in Inswanu in the Eastern Region, an orphanage and school in the Prampram district, and the launch of the Dar Al Salam Model Village. Additionally, the delegation laid the foundation stone for Qatar Charity’s permanent headquarters in Ghana.

Multi-Service Center

In the Enesuanu District of the Eastern Region, Qatar Charity opened a multi-service center that has significantly improved the lives of the local community, benefiting thousands of vulnerable individuals.

The facility includes a clinic, a school, housing for teachers and nurses, a water well, and a mosque. The clinic is equipped with male and female wards, an outpatient department (OPD), and a maternity unit designed to support safe childbirth. The school features three classrooms, a library, a principal’s office, and a staff common room, providing a comprehensive learning environment.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by the National Grand Imam, Dr. Alhaji Osman Nuhu Shaributu, who officially inaugurated the facility, the President of Enesuanu, Nana Barimah Aheyah Boateng, the Member of Parliament for Enesuanu District, Hon. Teddy S. Addy, and the Chief Executive Officer of Enesuanu District, Josephine Iwako Ansah Inkom.

Hon. Teddy S. Addy expressed his deep appreciation to Qatar Charity, noting that the project is the first of its kind in the village.

Mr. Abdulaziz Jassim Haji reiterated Qatar Charity’s commitment to supporting the development of Enesuanu. He thanked local leaders, the Member of Parliament, the District Chief Executive, and donors for their cooperation, which was crucial to the success of the project.

He emphasized Qatar Charity’s ongoing commitment to the people of Enesuanu, especially in supporting orphans and highlighting the importance of education, food, and shelter.

The National Imam, Dr. Alhaji Osman Nuhu Shaributu, expressed his gratitude for the collaborative efforts of local and international partners in advancing development in rural communities. Nana Barima Aheyah Boateng, President of Enesuanu, thanked Qatar Charity for its significant contribution to community development.

Donor Jibril Mohammed explained that he donated the land to Qatar Charity to support societal advancement. He thanked the Qatari people and Qatar Charity for the successful completion of the project and emphasized the need to link the facilities with relevant authorities to ensure effective use, particularly in providing education, healthcare for pregnant mothers, and public health services.

Qatar Charity Headquarters

During the visit, the Qatar Charity delegation laid the foundation stone for its permanent headquarters in Ghana on land valued at over one million dollars, donated by Ghanaian Haji Hakim. The development complex will include various facilities, such as a shopping mall, a sports academy, a food court, and shops, providing means for entertainment and social activities.

Ithmar Orphanage

As part of its commitment to supporting orphans, Qatar Charity inaugurated the “Ithmar” orphanage and school in the Ningo Prampram District. This initiative aims to meet the basic needs of orphans, contributing to their well-being and future by providing them with a decent life.

The project features a school, a dormitory for students, an automated water system, and residential accommodations for staff and management, creating a supportive environment for the sponsored children.

Eng. Hassan Ali Odeh, Director of Qatar Charity’s Ghana Office, thanked community leaders for their support and highlighted the comprehensive nature of the project, which includes health care, education, nutrition, sports activities, and vocational training. The orphanage will accommodate 110 children.

Dar Al Salam Model Village

The Qatar Charity delegation also inaugurated the “Dar Al Salam Model Village,” a project covering 25 acres and designed to address various community needs. The village includes a school, clinic,



mosque, housing for teachers and nurses, and a two-story orphanage with capacity for 120 orphans.

The village is equipped with water and sanitation facilities and features income-generating projects such as animal farms to ensure the project’s sustainability.

Mr. Abdulaziz Haji expressed his

appreciation for the support from local leaders and the community, stressing Qatar Charity’s ongoing commitment to rural development and the implementation of projects to enhance people’s lives.

Mr. Mohammed Hassan, representing land donor Isaac Akina Boko, expressed satisfaction with the successful completion

of the village, describing it as a historic achievement. He explained that “Dar es Salaam,” meaning “Land of Peace,” aims to improve the quality of life for the rural poor through holistic development.

Nana Osabirema Osei, Head of Kadiwaso District, praised the successful partnership between the people of Kadiwaso and Qatar

Charity, which led to the establishment of the Dar AL Salaam Model Village. She called for the continuation of this partnership and the preservation of the village facilities, expressing deep thanks to the charitable people of Qatar for their support of such significant projects in Ghana

Key issues discussed as Qatar chairs GCC unified terrorist list meeting



Qatar chaired the 15th meeting of the Gulf committee for the GCC unified terrorist list, which concluded yesterday at the GCC Secretariat General in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Member of the National Counterterrorism Committee Secretariat at the Ministry of Interior Major Yasser Ali al-Malik chaired the meeting. The meeting discussed several topics on the agenda and made appropriate decisions. (QNA)



Hassan Bin Mohammed Center for Historical Studies releases new volume on Gulf history

The Hassan Bin Mohammed Center for Historical Studies (HBMC), in co-operation with Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press, has published the third volume of the series on the translation of British documents preserved in the Indian Archives, entitled Qatar and the Arabian Gulf countries – Selections from the Records of the Mumbai Government”.

This archive covers the historical period (1876-1881), as it deals with various historical topics and events that the Arabian Gulf region experienced during those years, and its relationship with regional and international powers, such as the British government, the British Indian government, and the Ottoman government. The centre's interest in translating those documents stems

from its efforts to provide various historical sources to researchers interested in the history of Qatar and the Arab Gulf states, and to open new horizons for them that allow them to view documents that carry different viewpoints and narratives of the historical events witnessed by the region, and the international powers that succeeded it and played a role in its history. (QNA)

Ford, Isuzu, MINI models recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Almana Motors Company, has announced the recall of Ford F 150, 2014 model, as in some of the affected vehicles, an intermittent Output Shaft Speed Sensor failure may result in an unintended downshift into first gear. Depending on vehicle speed at the time of the downshift, an abrupt wheel speed reduction may occur, which could cause the rear tyres to slide or lock up until the vehicle speed slows. This condition could result in the loss of vehicle control. The MoCI, in co-operation with Jaidah Motors & Trading Co, also announced the recall of Isuzu D-max, 2023 model, as a possible interference between the fuel hose and the bracket of the engine oil level gauge

may cause a fuel leak. The MoCI, in co-operation with Alfardan Automobiles, also recalled MINI Cooper Countryman, 2024 model, as the screw connection of the coolant pump holder may not be installed correctly, which may cause a rattling noise. 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 urged all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, which processes complaints, inquiries 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.

GU-Q opens applications for Fall 2025 admissions

Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) has announced the opening of its Fall 2025 application cycle.

For the first time, prospective students can apply through either the Early Action or Regular Decision pathways.

At GU-Q, students will pursue the Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service degree, globally respected for its academic standards and focus on preparing students for leadership roles in international affairs.

The curriculum is designed to sharpen writing and critical thinking skills across a broad range of disciplines, including history, governance, economics, literature, art, science and philosophy. As they progress, students can choose a major in Culture and Politics, International Economics, International History, or International Politics. Joseph Hernandez, assistant dean, Admissions and Strategic Enrolment Management, said: “Whether you’re looking to join us as a first-year student or a transfer, we’re here to support you at every step.” Early action deadline is November 15, 2024 (decisions released by December 15, 2024). Regular decision deadline: January 15, 2025 (decisions released by April 3, 2025).



Prospective students can apply through either the Early Action or Regular Decision pathways.

The early action programme offers an opportunity to receive an admissions decision early in their senior year. This non-binding option allows students to explore other choices while knowing they have a spot at GU-Q. The regular decision pathway is designed for students

who wish to have more time to finalise their application materials, including senior year grades and additional achievements. This option also caters to transfer students continuing their education at GU-Q. GU-Q welcomes applications from transfer students who have completed up to 60 credit hours at a community college or university. Transfer applicants are encouraged to apply through the regular decision cycle.

QU Alumni Psychology chapter honours programme participants

Qatar University (QU) Alumni Psychology chapter held a ceremony to honour the participants of the second season of the “You Are the Challenge” programme.

The initiative focuses on empowering community members to prioritise mental health and recognise the crucial mind-body connection. Prominent figures, guests and programme participants’ families attended the ceremony.

Roaa El-Otif, chairperson

of the Psychology chapter, said: “The programme aims to highlight the importance of mental health and the strong connection between mind and body. The first season, launched two years ago with a simple concept, made a significant impact on 60 participants during a ten-day experience with mental health specialists, leading us to expand the programme this season.”

Hussein El-Ayan, programme director, remarked: “The efforts of the specialists with the par-

ticipants are truly remarkable, as they have achieved results that have astonished us all. The outcomes reflect high levels of performance, indicating the programme’s effectiveness and the participants’ deep engagement.”

Mohamed al-Hayder, a psychologist and guest of honour, discussed the psychological challenges he personally faced and the importance of mental health awareness within the community. “In the past, I’ve put enormous pressure on myself to perform, but I’ve learned it’s crucial to stay true to oneself. Part of my journey, which I share here, involves dealing with anxiety and recognising the importance of self-care,” he explained.

Al-Hayder added: “Qatar University was instrumental in my early speaking engagements and has been a part of my path in understanding mental health not just as a science but as a journey of personal discovery and resilience.”



Kia Middle East and Africa Marks Official Regional Launch of Kia EV5 in Morocco

Kia Middle East and Africa announces the official regional launch of the Kia EV5, held in Rabat, Morocco. The event marked a significant milestone in Kia’s journey towards advancing sustainable mobility solutions in the region, witnessing the presence of over 100 media representatives and fleet companies from 9 markets across the region.

The launch event in Morocco underscored the country’s commitment to sustainable transportation solutions and its potential as a thriving market for electric vehicles (EVs). Attendees were given an exclusive test drive experience with the Kia EV5, a mid-size SUV that combines cutting-edge technology with an eco-friendly design, signalling a new era for Kia’s electric vehicle line-up.

Developed around three core pillars - robust SUV design, zero emissions coupled with superior performance, and spacious interiors. Its sturdy, boxy design stands out as the only true SUV EV model in its class, offering a unique blend of practicality and style.

SooHang Chang, President, Regional HQ, Middle East & Africa, Kia, commented: “The successful launch of the Kia EV5 in Morocco is a testament to our dedication to becoming a Sustainable Mobility Solutions Provider. This launch signifies a major step towards a greener future, not just for Morocco but for all nine markets represented here today, and the many more where the EV5



will be available soon.”

The Kia EV5 boasts key features, including zero emissions and high performance. With a powerful 310 hp engine, up to 550km on a single charge, and a fast-charging capability that reaches 80 per cent in just 27

minutes, the Kia EV5 showcases its potential to transform the driving experience for EV enthusiasts.

The vehicle also features a spacious interior with numerous comfort and convenience features, including relaxation seats

with massage functions, a bench-type front seat, a cooled and warmed trunk box, and a versatile rear table, marking a spacious and comfortable interior.

Chang added: “Kia is committed to developing a comprehensive EV lineup that

caters to diverse lifestyles. The EV5 embodies this commitment, seamlessly blending practicality and eco-conscious design to offer an impressive combination of performance, sustainability, and style. It’s the ideal entry point for many EV customers, providing an accessible yet advanced option for those transitioning to electric vehicles.”

Kia EV5: Delivering advanced practicality and eco-conscious innovation

Built on Kia’s advanced platform, the Kia EV5 offers both 2WD and AWD configurations. It features two LFP battery options, 64.2 kWh and 88.1 kWh, delivering an estimated range of up to 550 km. The EV5’s impressive acceleration allows it to go from 0 to 100 km/h in just 6.1 seconds. Additionally, the vehicle supports ultra-fast charging, allowing for a 30 per cent to 80 per cent charge in just 27 minutes, making it one of the most efficient and user-friendly electric SUVs on the market.

The newly launched vehicle is equipped with a comprehensive ADAS package, featuring advanced Forward Collision-Avoidance Assist (FCA) 2.0, Remote Smart Parking Assist 2(RSPA2), and 360° parking sensors and a double 12.3 panoramic display. It also offers the latest in safety and durability with its LFP battery and various interior and exterior colour options.

Jae Yeoun Park, Senior Exterior Designer at Kia, said: “The Kia EV5 is a pioneering design outcome of our dedication to innovation and development. Embodying a robust and boxy design, the Kia EV5 prides itself on being a unique SUV EV model in the MEA region today. The EV5 stands out with its distinctive, rugged shape, complemented by a spacious interior that elevates compact SUV standards. Our design approach emphasizes strength and reliability, making it an ideal choice for those seeking both style and performance in an electric vehicle.”

Kia’s dedication to sustainability is evident in the EV5’s use of eco-friendly materials, such as Bio PP/PU and recycled PET, along with BTX-free paint. The high-tech interior includes a wide touch screen 30 inch, a new control layout, and wide mood lighting, creating a futuristic and comfortable cabin environment.





70% of UNRWA schools in Gaza ‘damaged’

QNA
New York

UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said that more than 70% of UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip have either been destroyed or damaged, with the vast majority of them now serving as overcrowded shelters to hundreds of thousands of displaced families, which means that they cannot be used for learning.

Lazzarini warned in a post on X yesterday saying: “The longer children stay out of school, the higher the risk of a lost generation.” On the occasion of the start of the back-to-school season in the region, minus Gaza, the UNRWA commissioner-general said: “More than 600,000 children there are deeply traumatised,



UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini.

living in the rubble. They continue to be deprived of learning and schooling. Half of them used to be in UNRWA schools.” Lazzarini added that in the absence of a ceasefire in Gaza, children are likely to fall prey to exploitation, as is the case too often in conflicts

around the world, calling for this not to be allowed to happen in Gaza.

Last week, the UNRWA commissioner-general accused Israel of purchasing Google ads to discredit UNRWA and to discourage donations to it. (QNA)

Palestinian dies in detention amid troops’ West Bank operation

Reuters
Ramallah

Israeli troops handed the body of a Palestinian man arrested hours earlier in the occupied West Bank to Palestinian health authorities yesterday, as a major operation in the flashpoint city of Jenin continued for a sixth day. The Palestinian Red Crescent said it had received the body of 58 year-old Ayman Rajeh Abed from the village of Kafr Dan, just outside Jenin after he was arrested around dawn yesterday. The director of the Wissam Bakr hospital in Jenin said the body bore signs of beatings and torture.

The Israeli military said Abed had been detained during counterterrorism operations and experienced a “cardiac event” on arrival at a detention facility. He was given initial treatment by medical staff from the military, before being evacuated to the hospital in Jenin. “The IDF is aware of reports that the suspect died during his evacuation by the Red Crescent,” it said in a statement, adding that details of the incident were under review.

The incident occurred as Israeli forces extended their operations in Jenin to villages around the city, where bulldozers con-



Mourners carry the body of 58-year-old Palestinian Ayman Abed, who died while in Israeli detention, during his funeral in Kafr Dan near Jenin in the occupied West Bank, yesterday.

tinued to dig up streets and major thoroughfares to find roadside bombs.

Israel launched the operation, one of the largest in months, last Wednesday, saying foreign-backed fighter groups were planning to attack civilian targets.

Hundreds of troops backed by drones and helicopters have taken part in the operation which has caused extensive damage to houses and infrastructure in Jenin and the densely packed refugee camp adjacent to the city.

At least 29 Palestinians have been killed, most of whom have been claimed as members by armed factions including Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Another 121 people have been wounded, according to Palestinian health authorities.

Late on Sunday, a man was killed west of Jenin city.

Yesterday, the Palestinian Red Crescent said a man had been hit in the chest by gunfire in Qabatiya near Jenin. His condition was described as serious.

Saudi tanker, another oil ship attacked in Red Sea

Reuters
London/Athens

A Saudi-owned crude tanker and a Panama-flagged oil ship were attacked yesterday in the Red Sea off Yemen, two sources familiar with the matter said, although it was unclear if the vessels were hit by Yemini Houthi fighters.

The sources said the Saudi-flagged Amjad and Panama-flagged Blue Lagoon I were sailing in waters near to each other when they were hit, although the tankers were able to continue their voyages with no major damage assessed or any casualties.

The Amjad’s owner, Saudi national shipping group Bahri, did not immediately respond to a re-

quest for comment. The super-tanker has a maximum capacity of 2mn barrels.

The Greek manager of the Blue Lagoon I, Sea Trade Marine SA, was not immediately available for comment. The suezmax tanker has a maximum capacity of 1mn barrels.

One of the sources said the Amjad was unlikely to have been directly targeted.

Saudi Arabia, the world’s top oil exporter, has watched with alarm as Houthi missiles have been fired over its territory to target ships in the Red Sea. Saudi Arabia has tried to extract itself from a messy war in Yemen and a destructive feud with the Houthis’ principal backer in the region.

The Houthis first launched

aerial drone and missile strikes on the waterway in November in what they say is solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza war. In more than 70 attacks, they have sunk two vessels, seized another and killed at least three seafarers.

The Joint Maritime Information Center (JMIC), run by international naval forces to track Houthi attacks, said three ballistic missile attacks hit the Blue Lagoon I tanker yesterday 70 nautical miles northwest of the northern Yemeni port of Saleef.

“JMIC assesses that M/V Blue Lagoon I was targeted due to other vessels within its company structure making recent port calls in Israel,” it said in a report.

“All crew on board are safe. The vessel sustained minimal damage but does not require assistance.”

Tunisia election body ignores court in presidential vote

AFP
Tunis

Tunisia’s electoral board said yesterday it approved three candidates for an October 6 presidential election, ignoring court rulings that had granted appeals by three other hopefuls who had been rejected.

The three dismissed candidates were among 14 potential contenders to be turned down by the electoral board, ISIE, last month for not obtaining enough endorsements to challenge President Kais Saied.

Last week, the three hopefuls unexpectedly won appeals at the administrative court against ISIE’s decision, in a verdict the

court called “definitive”.

But yesterday, ISIE chief Farouk Bouasker said the board’s initial list of candidates was also “definitive” and “not subject to appeal”.

Bouasker said the ISIE was maintaining the initial list because “the administrative court did not officially communicate its decisions within a 48-hour deadline, as per the law”.

Saied, the incumbent and election frontrunner, was democratically elected in 2019 but orchestrated a sweeping power grab in 2021 and has since ruled by decree.

Former parliamentarian Zouhair Maghzaoui and businessman Ayachi Zammel are now his only challengers in next month’s poll.

Israeli strike kills two in southern Lebanon

AFP
Beirut

An Israeli strike on a vehicle in south Lebanon killed two people yesterday, the health ministry said, nearly 11 months after increased violence between the Hezbollah movement and Israel.

The United Nations Force in Lebanon said one of those killed worked for a cleaning company contracted by UNIFIL.

Hamas ally Hezbollah has exchanged near daily cross-border fire with Israeli forces since the Palestinian group stormed Israel in the first week of October.

“The Israeli enemy’s strike targeting a car in Naqura left two dead,” the health ministry said.

A spokeswoman for UNIFIL said “a vehicle driven by an employee of a cleaning company was targeted by a strike on the Tyre-Naqura road,” adding that the company was contracted to the peacekeeping force.

“Attacks on civilians are violations of international humanitarian law. They must stop. Once more, we urge all actors to put down their weapons,” she said.

A security source earlier told AFP on condition of anonym-



Fire fighters and rescue teams inspect a charred car that was hit by an Israeli drone strike on the road leading to the southern Lebanese coastal town of Naqura on the border with Israel yesterday, as Hezbollah and Israel continued to exchange shelling.

ity that the two victims were “an employee of this company and his cousin, both from Naqura” on the border.

“The cousin, who lives in an African country, arrived in Lebanon two days ago,” the source added.

Hezbollah’s Al-Manar television channel also reported that the two dead in Naqura were civilians.

Lebanon’s official National News Agency (NNA) reported a drone strike on the Naqura road, without elaborating.

There was no immediate Israeli comment about the attack.

Israel has said it targets military infrastructure and Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon’s south and east, while the movement says it is mainly targeting military positions in northern Israel.

South Africa’s Ramaphosa asks China’s Xi for better-balanced trade

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa told China’s Xi Jinping yesterday he wanted to narrow his country’s trade deficit with Beijing, days before the Chinese leader is due to urge a summit of 50 African nations to buy more Chinese goods, Reuters reported from Beijing. Ramaphosa’s remarks point to the challenge Xi may have in convincing African leaders gathered in Beijing to absorb more of the production

powerhouse’s wares, particularly after China did not meet a pledge from the last Forum on China-Africa Co-operation Summit in 2021 to buy \$300bn of African goods. With Western curbs on Chinese exports such as solar panels and electric vehicles looming, finding buyers for items that the US and European Union maintain Beijing has overcapacity in is a top priority for the Chinese leader.

Mpox patients lack medicine, food in east DR Congo hospital

Reuters
Kavumu

Dozens of feverish patients lay on thin mattresses on the floor of a makeshift mpox isolation ward in east Democratic Republic of Congo, as overstretched hospital workers grappled with drug shortages and lack of space to accommodate the influx.

Congo is the epicentre of an mpox outbreak that the World Health Organisation declared to be a global public health emergency last month.

Vaccines are set to arrive within days to fight the new strain of the virus, while Congo’s President Felix Tshisekedi has allowed a first \$10mn disbursement to fight the outbreak.

But at the hospital complex

in the town of Kavumu, where 900 symptomatic patients have been taken in over the past three months, health workers are desperate for support.

“We run out of medicine every day,” said head doctor Musole Mulamba Muva.

“There are many challenges we struggle to overcome with our local means,” he said, noting that donations from international organisations rapidly dwindled.

Last week there were 135 patients in the mpox ward, children and adults combined, crammed between three large plastic tents pitched into damp earth without a floor cover.

Relatives that usually provide the bulk of meals in underfunded public facilities such as the Kavumu hospital were banned from visiting the mpox ward to avoid contamination. “We do not have



Suspected mpox patients wait for consultation at the mpox treatment centre at the Kavumu hospital in Kabare territory, South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

anything to eat,” said Nzigire Lukangira, the 32-year-old mother

of a hospitalised toddler.

“When we ask for something

to lower our children’s temperature, they do not give us anything,” she said, coaxing honey into her daughter’s mouth.

The head of Congo’s mpox response team, Cris Kacita, acknowledged that parts of the vast central African country lacked medicine and that dispatching donations, including 115 tonnes of medicine from the World Bank, was a priority.

TRADITIONAL REMEDIES

Mpox causes flu-like symptoms and pus-filled lesions and, while usually mild, it can kill. Children, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems are all at higher risk of complications.

Like other mothers in the Kavumu mpox ward, Lukangira had started improvising with traditional remedies to ease her baby’s pain. They dipped their

fingers in potassium bicarbonate or salty lemon juice and popped their children’s blisters. Adult patients did the same to themselves.

Most cases came from the town itself and surrounding villages. Two other makeshift mpox wards have been set up in the area.

Local health ministry representative, doctor Serge Munyau Cikuru, called on the government to continue pushing for vaccines.

Kacita said high-risk contacts and nine priority areas had already been identified for the first vaccination stage.

There were 19,710 suspected cases of mpox reported since the start of the year in Congo by Aug 31, according to the health ministry. Of those, 5,041 were confirmed and 655 were fatal.

US seizes Maduro's plane in Dominican Republic, flies it to Florida

Reuters/AFP
Washington

The United States has seized a plane used by Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and flown it from the Dominican Republic to Florida after determining that its purchase violated US sanctions, the US Justice Department said yesterday.

The seizure of the aircraft came amid continuing pressure on Maduro at home

and abroad over a contested July 28 election that he claimed to have won, while the opposition said its vote tallies showed its candidate to have soundly defeated him.

Maduro, his associates and the Opec member-state's vital oil sector are under heavy US sanctions, and his handling of the election has raised the prospects that further measures could be imposed.

US Attorney-General Merrick Garland said in a statement that the Dassault Falcon 900EX aircraft was illegally purchased for \$13mn through a shell company and

smuggled out of the US "for use by Nicolas Maduro and his cronies".

"Let this seizure send a clear message: aircraft illegally acquired from the United States for the benefit of sanctioned Venezuelan officials cannot just fly off into the sunset," said Matthew Axelrod, the US Commerce Department's Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement.

US officials said the seizure, which was first reported by CNN, was carried out working closely with the Dominican Republic.

Aircraft tracking site Flight Radar 24 showed that the jet flew from Santo Domingo to Fort Lauderdale yesterday morning.

The Venezuelan government did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"This is an important step to ensure that Maduro continues to feel the consequences from his misgovernance of Venezuela," said a spokesperson for the White House National Security Council.

A wide range of independent sources

has shown that Maduro and his representatives "have tampered with the results of the July 28 presidential election, falsely claimed victory and carried out widespread repression to maintain power by force", the spokesperson added.

The United States, the European Union and several Latin American countries have refused to recognise Maduro as having won without seeing detailed voting results.

Violence that accompanied the protests following the election left 27 people dead and at least 192 wounded.

Trump says he had 'every right' to interfere in 2020 election



Reuters
Washington

Former US president Donald Trump (**pictured**), who faces federal and state charges for allegedly trying to overturn his 2020 election loss to President Joe Biden, insists that he had "every right" to interfere in the election.

"Whoever heard you get indicted for interfering with a presidential election where you have every right to do it?" he said in a Fox News interview that aired on Sunday.

A federal indictment accuses Trump of defrauding the United States by preventing Congress from certifying Biden's victory and depriving voters of their right to a fair election.

He faced a revised federal indictment last month accusing him of illegally trying to overturn his 2020 election loss.

Trump faces similar charges in Fulton County, Georgia, where he was also charged with racketeering, which is used to target members of organised crime groups and carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison.

That case, which is on hold while a state appeals court weighs the district attorney's role, stems from a January 2, 2021, phone call in which Trump urged Georgia's top election official, Brad Raffensperger, to "find" enough votes to reverse his narrow loss in the state.

Raffensperger declined to do so.

Trump, who is the current Republican nominee for president, has not said whether he would unconditionally accept the results of the November 5 election if his Democratic rival, Vice-President Kamala Harris, wins.

Biden, Harris to make first joint campaign appearance

AFP
Washington

President Joe Biden and Kamala Harris (**pictured**) hit the campaign trail together for the first time yesterday, in a public display of unity after she replaced him as candidate and revived Democratic election hopes.

The 81-year-old president bowed out in late July under mounting pressure after his disastrous debate performance against Donald Trump.

His rapid endorsement of Vice-President Harris, 59, saw her quickly shore up party support and she became the formal Democratic nominee last month.

Riding a wave of fresh enthusiasm, she has held packed rallies in key swing states across the coun-

try and raked in cash donations for the final two-month stretch of the campaign.

Polls show her entry improving the party's chances at defeating Republican Trump, but with the race still neck and neck.

Harris last appeared with Biden after his speech two weeks ago at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

As she works to define her platform, the vice-president has sought to promise changes, while avoiding criticism of Biden's tenure.

With Monday being the national Labour Day holiday, Biden and Harris were expected to argue that she would be better for workers than Trump, choosing the union-heavy city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania as the backdrop.

"The most pro-labour administration in history, under Presi-

dent Biden and Vice-President Harris's leadership, support for union membership has grown to its highest level in half a century," her campaign said in a statement previewing the day's events.

Pennsylvania is one of a handful of states that will decide the election, and is viewed as possibly the one on which the outcome will hinge.

Harris and Biden will speak at a union hall where they will meet local members.

Harris is expected to say that US Steel - which Japan's Nippon Steel is seeking to buy - should remain domestically owned, a campaign official said.

During a campaign tour last week in swing-state Georgia, Harris held her first in-depth interview since becoming the party standard-bearer, accompanied by her running-mate, Minnesota

Governor Tim Walz.

Harris aimed to stake out a centrist position in the CNN sit-down, insisting that she will be tough on illegal immigration and support oil and gas fracking - but not abandon her long-time liberal values.

In her 2020 campaign, Harris had pledged to ban fracking - a major source of income in Pennsylvania.

Yesterday's joint appearance with Biden is also seen as launching the two-month sprint to the November vote, with Labour Day marking the traditional end to the US summer.

Before the Pittsburgh rally, Biden and Harris received a briefing at the White House on ceasefire negotiations in the Israel-Hamas war.

The meeting was added to their schedules late on Sunday after



six hostages died in Gaza over the weekend, including a US citizen.

After the briefing, Harris headed to Detroit, Michigan for another event with union leaders, before joining Biden in Pittsburgh.

Walz was separately to hold an event in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, while Trump and his VP pick JD Vance had stops scheduled for later in the week.

Brazil's Supreme Court panel confirms X suspension

AFP/Reuters
Sao Paulo

Brazil's Supreme Court has ratified the decision by one of its judges to suspend Elon Musk's X social network for alleged judicial transgressions.

Access to the network in the country has been blocked since Saturday morning, hours after judge Alexandre de Moraes ordered the suspension of the platform.

Moraes's ruling came after Musk failed to comply with an order to name a new legal representative for the company in Brazil - a requirement that X has rejected as "illegal".

Moraes and Musk have been locked in a high-profile feud for months as the judge has vowed to fight disinformation and Musk claims the supremacy of free speech.

Yesterday five Supreme Court judges, including Moraes himself, voted in a virtual session to uphold his ruling.

"Elon Musk demonstrated his total disrespect for Brazilian sovereignty and, in particular, the judiciary, positioning himself as a true supranational entity, immune

to the laws of countries," Moraes said in the new ruling.

His colleague Flavio Dino added that "freedom of expression does not excuse repeated violations of the legal system".

Chief Justice Luis Roberto Barroso, who was not on the review panel, said that removing legal representatives to avoid complying with court decisions "is a behaviour that would not be acceptable anywhere in the world".

Three of the justices on the panel said the suspension could be reversed if the platform complied with previous rulings.

Yesterday Musk replied "Exactly" to a post that described the suspension as an attack on freedom of expression and Brazilians' rights.

Musk, who also owns Tesla and SpaceX, reacted with fury to last Friday's order, branding Moraes as an "evil dictator cosplaying as a judge" and accusing him of "trying to destroy democracy in Brazil".

The standoff began when Moraes ordered the suspension of several X accounts belonging to supporters of Brazil's former far-right president Jair Bolsonaro.



This picture taken on Saturday shows the blocked X account of Elon Musk after Brazil suspended access to the social network in the country. - Reuters

of Musk, accusing him of reactivating some of the banned accounts.

Musk is also the subject of a separate investigation into the alleged use of public money to orchestrate disinformation campaigns in favour of Bolsonaro and those close to him.

The suspension of X came just over a month before municipal elections are to be held in Brazil.

In August, X announced it was shuttering its offices in Brazil due to the Moraes's actions, but assured clients they would still have access to its services.

Until Friday, X counted about 22mn users in Brazil, according to the site DataReportal.

As X remained inaccessible for most users in Brazil, local telecom regulator Anatel told Reuters that Starlink, a satellite Internet provider also controlled by Musk, was not blocking X.

Starlink was refusing to do so until a freeze on its Brazilian bank accounts was lifted.

Moraes last week froze Starlink's accounts after X did not pay fines imposed for failing to turn over documents.

Lopez Obrador gives final report as opponents, US fret

AFP
Mexico City

Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (**pictured**) presented on Sunday the final report of his government, defending his legacy a month before turning power over to his successor - along with a congressional supermajority and a highly controversial judicial reform plan.

In the Zocalo, Mexico City's sprawling central square, Lopez Obrador bade farewell to thousands of enthusiastic followers, buoyed by what polls say is a lofty 73% approval rating as his six-year term winds down.

"We are living in a true democracy, building a new homeland" and "laying the foundations to begin a new stage," he said in a speech that lasted nearly two hours.

A party-like atmosphere pervaded the square, which was filled with supporters - and animated by musical groups and folk dancers - two hours



before the speech began.

Some attendees ate snacks under umbrellas, seeking relief from a hot sun, as they waited for Lopez Obrador, widely known by his initials AMLO.

"I came because it is the farewell of one of the most historic presidents in the country," Jose Luis Diaz, a 39-year-old entrepreneur, told AFP. "We won't see another president like him for 100 years."

Daniela Barrera, a 27-year-old who says she comes from an "Obradorist" family, said Lopez Obrador's greatest achievement was generating hope for Mexico.

The presidential report is a tradition

in Mexican politics, an annual review of governmental progress not unlike a US president's State of the Union address.

On October 1, Lopez Obrador will hand power to a fellow member of his Morena party, Claudia Sheinbaum.

Elected June 2 by an overwhelming 60% of Mexico's 36mn voters, she will be the country's first woman president.

Sheinbaum will also inherit a package of constitutional reforms initiated under Lopez Obrador, including a controversial reform of the judiciary that opponents see as a worryingly autocratic move by the governing party.

At the heart of that reform is a proposal to elect judges and magistrates by popular vote.

The leftist government argues that the judiciary now serves the political and economic elite, not the public.

However, detractors say the plan will dangerously politicise the justice system, compromising its independence.

The proposal has already sparked a strike by affected workers, and thou-

sands of students marched against it on Sunday in the capital, chanting slogans like "wake up Mexico, we are your defence" and "justice is not something you vote on".

For the United States - Mexico's principal trade partner, buying 83% of its exports - the reform represents a risk for democracy and a threat to the free trade agreement linking the two countries and Canada, according to US ambassador Ken Salazar.

In response, Lopez Obrador has decreed a "pause" in relations with Salazar - though not with the administration of President Joe Biden.

Although the reform plan reached Congress months ago, it will only be debated or voted on by the new legislature, which was formally seated on Sunday.

In the new congress, the governing Morena party and its allies will enjoy the supermajorities they achieved in the June elections, controlling two-thirds of seats in the lower house and nearly the same proportion in the Senate.

Logger operating near isolated Peru tribe has certification suspended

An international forestry group has suspended the sustainability certification of a logging company operating on land near an uncontacted tribe in Peru's Amazon, the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Survival International said yesterday, handing an initial victory to groups demanding a stop to logging in the area.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) withdrew its certification of the Canales Tahuamanu company for eight months after members of the Mashco Piro tribe were seen in late June in a remote area of the Madre de Dios region of Peru, the NGO said.

It said the FSC certification would be suspended from September 13 while the forestry group investigates the case and meets with Peruvian authorities to "understand the land classification issues" in the Andean country.

Peru's government and Canales Tahuamanu did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

The Mascho Piru are fleeing their shelters to escape from loggers who have forestry concessions granted by the authorities, according to indigenous organisations in Peru.

According to the FSC and Peru's Forest and Wildlife Resources Supervisory Agency, the Canales Tahuamanu logging company has concessions on almost 53,000 hectares of forest in Madre de Dios where it extracts cedar and mahogany. - Reuters

WEATHER

Swathes of China, Japan log record summer temperatures

Swathes of China logged the hottest August on record last month, the weather service said, as Japanese authorities announced that this summer had been the joint warmest since records began. China's weather service said average air temperatures last month in eight provinces, regions and cities "ranked the hottest for the same period" since records began. Extreme heat has seared much of East Asia this summer, with Japan saying yesterday that its long-term average temperature between June and August was 1.76C above the standard value - equalling the level seen in summer 2023 - the highest since statistics started being kept in 1898.

REALTY

Australia home prices nudge higher in August

Australian home prices nudged higher in August, posting a 19th straight monthly rise, though the pace of growth showed some signs of slowing, data showed yesterday. Figures from property consultant CoreLogic showed national home prices rose 0.5% in August, slightly above the downwardly revised 0.3% rise in July. Prices, which have continued to hit record highs since bottoming out early last year, are up 71% from a year ago. Rates of increase across the cities remained diverse as prices rose 2% in Perth, followed by a 1.4% increase in Adelaide and 1.1% in Brisbane. Sydney rose a mild 0.3%, while prices dipped in Canberra, Melbourne, Darwin and Hobart.

CORPORATE

Murdoch looks to buy UK property website Rightmove

REA Group, the Australian online real estate business majority-owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation empire, said yesterday it is mulling a multi-billion-pound takeover of British peer Rightmove. Shares in Rightmove soared by 22% in afternoon deals on London's top-tier FTSE 100 index, giving it a market value of around £5.4bn (US\$71bn). In a statement published on the London Stock Exchange, REA Group did not reveal what it would be prepared to pay for Rightmove. Following media speculation, it confirmed "that it is considering a possible cash and share offer" for all of the British company. Rightmove had yet to comment on the news.

HEALTHCARE

South Korea denies hospital emergency rooms collapsing

South Korea's health ministry yesterday said it was deploying military doctors to assist in some hospital emergency rooms due to a shortage of medical staff, but disputed a warning by some physicians that the system was on the verge of collapse. A strike by young doctors has increased strain on the medical system, but Vice Health Minister Park Min-soo said that while some hospitals had shortened the hours of emergency room operations and were working with fewer doctors reports that some hospitals had suspended ER operations were false. The government plans to initially send 15 military doctors to badly affected emergency rooms.

China urges EU to be 'objective, fair' on South China Sea issue

Reuters
Beijing

China urged the European Union to be "objective and fair" and careful with words and actions on issues in the South China Sea, after the bloc remarked on an incident that occurred over the weekend.

China said it was "strongly dissatisfied" with the European Union's "accusations" against it on the issue, a statement by the Chinese mission to the EU showed.

"The European Union is not a party to the South China Sea issue and has no right to point fingers on the issue," it said.

It also said the EU's repeated "hyping up" on the freedom of navigation issue "has no benefits to the EU's own interests and international credibility".

China and the Philippines exchanged accusations of intentionally ramming coastguard vessels in disputed waters of the South China Sea on Saturday, the latest in an escalating series of clashes.

The collision near the Sabina Shoal was their fifth maritime confrontation in a month in a long-standing rivalry over the vital waterway.

The EU said in a statement on Sunday that it condemned the "dangerous actions by China Coast Guard vessels against lawful Philippine maritime operations" in the

sea. In the statement, the EU External Action Service said the recent incidents between Chinese and Philippines authorities "endanger the safety of life at sea, and violate the right to freedom of navigation and overflight to which all nations are entitled under international law". Asked about the Chinese response, an EU spokesperson yesterday said the bloc has "a big stake in peace and security in Asia".

"A large portion of the EU's foreign trade passes through the South China Sea," the spokesperson added.

"The European Union calls for de-escalation of tensions and remains committed to supporting its partners seeking to exercise their legitimate rights, in the region and beyond."

Beijing yesterday insisted it was defending its "rights" in the South China Sea, after the Philippines released footage appearing to show a Chinese coast guard vessel ramming one of its ships during the at-sea confrontation.

Footage released by the Philippine coast guard of the incident appeared to show the Chinese vessel coming up from behind the ship and ramming it.

Another clip also showed what appeared to be a deliberate collision.

Asked about the footage yesterday, foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning reiterated Beijing's claim the Philippines had "deliberately rammed" the Chinese vessel.



A man wades through a flooded street after heavy rains brought by tropical storm Yagi, locally known as Enteng, in Baras, Rizal province, Philippines, yesterday.

11 dead as storm triggers landslides in Philippines

AFP
Manila

Floods and landslides killed 11 people after a fierce tropical storm dumped heavy rain on the Philippines for a second day, officials said yesterday.

Tropical Storm Yagi slammed into the main island of Luzon yesterday after brushing past the Bicol region southeast of Manila overnight Sunday, with more heavy rain forecast which the state weather service said could cause flooding and more landslides.

As a precaution, schools and government offices across the capital were shut for the day,

ferry services in some areas were suspended and 29 domestic flights were cancelled due to the weather.

Three people, including a pregnant woman, were killed in a landslide yesterday in Antipolo, near equally rain-soaked Manila, city information officer Rely Bonifacio said.

He said the bodies of four other people, all drowning victims, were recovered yesterday in three other areas of the hilly community, hours after creeks overflowed overnight.

The Bicol city of Naga was also hard-hit, with a man electrocuted as floodwaters rose and a baby girl drowning, rescuers said.

"The floods were above head height in some areas," Joshua Tuazon of the city's public safety

office said, adding that hundreds of residents had been rescued. More than 300 people were at evacuation camps yesterday, with local officials saying the floodwaters in the city of 210,000 people were slow to ebb.

Two landslides killed two people and damaged five houses in the central city of Cebu on Sunday, the local disaster office there said.

The storm also unleashed strong currents and big waves that wrought chaos in Manila Bay yesterday, hurling a barge and an oil tanker onto the seawall and causing another barge to run adrift, the coast guard said.

A tug and a small passenger ship also collided while both were anchored, causing a fire aboard the second vessel, it said in a statement.

Oasis fans' fury sparks UK government review of dynamic pricing

The British government has said it will probe surge pricing after furious Oasis fans faced huge hikes in ticket prices for the Britpop band's much-anticipated reunion. Fans were left frustrated on Saturday when sales websites crashed due to sheer weight of demand. But many who eventually made it to the front of the online queue hours after sales began were also dismayed to find their tickets had more than doubled in price. Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy called the inflated prices "depressing" on Sunday, adding that the practice would be reviewed as part of the government's upcoming consultation on consumer protections in ticket sales and re-sales. "We will include issues around the transparency and use of dynamic pricing, including the technology around queuing systems which incentivise it," Nandy said.

Heavy rains wreak havoc in India



People take shelter on higher grounds as others wade through a flooded street after heavy monsoon rains, in Vijayawada yesterday. Intense monsoon rains and floods in India's southern states have killed at least 25 people, with thousands rescued and taken to relief camps, disaster officials said yesterday.

Manipur insurgents launch drone attack

Reuters
Beijing

Insurgents in India's Manipur state have carried out a deadly attack on security forces, using drones to drop explosives in what police called a "significant escalation" of violence in the restive northeastern region.

A 31-year-old woman was killed and six people were wounded on Sunday in what police said was an "unprecedented attack" by rebels who used drones to drop the heads of rocket-propelled grenades.

Fighting broke out in Manipur in May 2023 between the Meitei and Kuki community, an ethnic conflict that has since killed at least 200 people.

Rival militias have set up blockades in parts of the state,

which borders war-torn Myanmar.

Longstanding tensions between the two groups revolve around competition for land and public jobs, with rights activists accusing local leaders of exacerbating ethnic divisions for political gain.

"While drone bombs have commonly been used in general warfare, this recent deployment of drones to deploy explosives against security forces and the civilians marks a significant escalation," Manipur police said in a statement on Sunday.

The attack outside the state capital Imphal was carried out by "alleged Kuki" rebels, the statement said.

Those injured included an eight-year-old girl - the daughter of the woman who was killed - as well three civilians and two police officers.

Final report may not bring justice, say Grenfell Tower fire victims

Reuters
London

Seven years on, Shah Aghlani still remembers clearly the call in the middle of the night from his distressed aunt who was trapped with his disabled mother in a 23-storey social housing block in west London that was on fire.

The two women in their late 50s and 60s both died, alongside 70 others, inside Grenfell Tower - Britain's deadliest residential fire since World War II and the subject of an inquiry that will publish its final report tomorrow.

The rapid spread of the blaze was

blamed on cheap flammable cladding, and the sight of the huge Grenfell Tower engulfed in flames, in one of the richest parts of London, in June 2017 came to symbolise the inequality that exists in Britain.

Survivors and the families of victims have since campaigned for the material to be stripped from tower blocks in Britain and across Europe, where similar fires have broken out, including in the Spanish city of Valencia this year.

They have focused on that while having to contend with a lack of justice, as the inquiry has delayed any criminal proceedings. Police said in May that any charges would not be announced until late 2026, and sus-

pects might only face trial in 2027, a decade after the blaze.

"It's very painful for us, who lost a loved one, to see their death going in vain. It actually stops us from coming to a closure," Aghlani, 55, said, standing in front of a vivid mural near the tower bearing the message: "truth will not be hidden".

Tomorrow's report is expected to provide answers on the choice of cladding materials used in the tower's 2016 refurbishment carried out by the council of Kensington & Chelsea, the London borough where the building was located.

Witnesses included representatives of the architects, contractors and sub-contractors who carried

out the refurbishment, and from the makers and sellers of the cladding.

The government has said the inquiry will get to the truth of what happened, and provide justice for the community. The fire triggered widespread outrage in Britain, and the cladding - highly flammable aluminium composite material (ACM) - is now banned. The former Conservative government also took action to remove and replace existing ACM panels, which use polyethylene in their core, but progress has been limited.

As of July 2024, 4,630 buildings standing at 11 metres or higher still had unsafe cladding, with remediation work yet to start on half of

them, government data showed.

After a fire engulfed a multi-storey building in east London last week, Angela Rayner, deputy prime minister of the new Labour government, said officials had to move faster.

Guillermo Rein, fire science professor at Imperial College London, said the world needed to learn from Grenfell, as the UK was the only nation that has identified buildings that use ACM cladding, as many others don't want to know.

The Grenfell Next of Kin group called for a global ban on unsafe cladding following the fire at a block of flats in Valencia, that killed 10 people.

Rein added that criminal prosecutions would send a warning to the construction sector.

Kimia Zabihiyan, from the Grenfell Next of Kin group, said the inquiry would provide very valuable information, but it had delayed justice.

"It actually got in the way of criminal prosecution," she said, noting that an inquiry looks into the facts and causes of an incident and often makes robust recommendations, but it is not a criminal court.

Aghlani said he was running out of energy to fight for justice for his mother and aunt but he still hoped authorities would not "water down the prosecution" when the time comes.

Scholz urges parties to isolate the far-right

AFP
Berlin

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz yesterday urged mainstream parties to avoid working with the far-right, after record gains by the AfD in two regional polls sent alarm bells ringing a year before a general election.

In the former East German state of Thuringia, the anti-immigrant, anti-Islam AfD became the first far-right party to win a regional election since World War II, taking around 33% of the vote on Sunday.

The AfD was also headed for a close second place in neighbouring Saxony, just behind the conservative CDU.

Scholz, whose deeply unpopular three-party coalition received a slapdown in both states, called the results “bitter”.

“All democratic parties are now called upon to form stable governments without right-wing extremists,” he said in a message on Facebook.

“Our country cannot and must not get used to this. The AfD is damaging Germany. It is weakening the economy, dividing society and ruining our country’s reputation,” he said.

Coalition governments are the norm in Germany at federal and state levels, and mainstream parties have consistently ruled out collaboration with the far right.

But AfD co-leader Alice Weidel said she



SPOTLIGHT: Germany’s Alternative for Germany (AfD) party co-leaders Alice Weidel (left) and Tino Chrupalla during a press conference in Berlin yesterday after state elections in Saxony and Thuringia. (Reuters)

believed the “undemocratic firewall” was untenable given the party’s electoral success in both states, while fellow leader Tino Chrupalla said there would be “no politics without the AfD”.

In Thuringia, where the Nazi party first came to power in 1930, the AfD’s large share of the vote means it will have a “blocking minority” in the regional parliament, giving

it special powers including the right to block judicial appointments.

In the city of Erfurt in Thuringia, 22-year-old pharmacy student Marius Guender said he felt “really depressed” at the outcome, adding that he wanted “a Germany that is there for everyone”.

But Siegfried Koehler, 67, complained of “too many migrants”.

“They easily get money (from the state), and us pensioners need pensions to go up,” he told AFP.

The conservative CDU, the only centrist party to perform strongly on Sunday, reiterated that it would not open coalition talks with the AfD despite the complicated electoral maths now looming.

The CDU only narrowly edged out the AfD with 32% of the vote in Saxony, and came second in Thuringia.

The conservatives hold hopes of leading the next government in Thuringia, with their lead candidate Mario Voigt appealing for a “reasonable government” in a coalition led by the CDU.

The AfD’s controversial local leader, Björn Hoecke, meanwhile declared that his party was the “people’s party in Thuringia” and that “change will only come with the AfD”.

Hoecke has often caused outrage with his outspoken statements and was fined twice this year for deliberately using a banned Nazi slogan.

Sahra Wagenknecht, who heads the far-left BSW, said her party “cannot work together” with Hoecke and has long ruled out a coalition with the AfD.

The BSW, formed earlier this year as a breakaway from the ex-communist Linke party, was the other big winner on Sunday.

The tough-on-migration upstart secured vote shares in the teens in both regional polls and is seen as a key building block in

any coalition. The BSW however has serious differences with the more established parties that will likely complicate negotiations, including a dovish stance towards Russia and opposition to the planned stationing of US missiles in Germany.

Wagenknecht said yesterday voters in Thuringia and Saxony had sent a signal to Berlin that showed the “unhappiness with the federal government” ahead of the September 2025 national election.

Scholz’s Social Democrats (SPD) suffered their worst-ever regional result in Thuringia, falling to just 6.1%. The SPD scored just over 7% in Saxony.

The chancellor’s partners in a fractious coalition - the liberal FDP and the Greens - struggled even more.

The FDP fell below the 5% threshold for seats in both elections, while in Saxony the Greens only scraped in.

The results were “nothing to celebrate”, Social Democrats party chair Lars Klingbeil said, adding that the party had to be “better”.

The run-up to Sunday’s elections was dominated by a bitter debate over immigration stirred up by a suspected Islamist knife attack a few days before the vote that left three people dead.

The AfD, which seized on the stabbing to criticise the government’s asylum policies, is also expected to perform strongly in a regional election in the eastern state of Brandenburg on September 22.

Pakistanis tried for incitement in Wilders plot

Two Pakistani men stood trial in absentia yesterday at a high-security court in The Netherlands over alleged attempts to incite the murder of far-right and anti-Islam Dutch leader Geert Wilders. Dutch prosecutors have charged 56-year-old religious leader Mohamed Ashraf Jalali for calling on his followers to kill Wilders and promising they would be “rewarded in the afterlife”.

Another man, Saad Hussain Rizvi, leader of the Tehreek-e-Labbaiq Pakistan (TLP) party, is suspected of urging followers to kill Wilders after Pakistani cricketer Khalid Latif was sentenced for incitement to murder him.

“This case has had a huge impact on me and my family,” said Wilders, dressed in a dark suit, white shirt and maroon tie.

“I’m asking this court to send a strong signal...that calling a fatwa in this country is unacceptable,” he added.

The trial took place at a highly secure courthouse near Amsterdam’s Schiphol airport. Dutch authorities asked Islamabad for legal assistance to question the suspects and demand they appear in court. However, no treaty exists with Pakistan for mutual legal assistance and the two men did not appear in the dock. Neither man had legal representation present.

In September last year, judges sentenced Latif to 12 years behind bars for incitement to murder Wilders after the firebrand lawmaker sought to arrange a competition for cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Wilders cancelled the cartoon contest after protests broke out in Pakistan and he was inundated with death threats. He has been under 24-hour state protection since 2004.

The planned competition “caused a lot of unrest within the Muslim community. He (Wilders) received hundreds, if not thousands of death threats,” said the judge, who asked not to be identified.

Furore after principal fired over ‘smartphone ban’ in Hungary

AFP
Budapest

Thousands demonstrated in central Budapest yesterday after the head of a renowned high school was sacked for not implementing a government-mandated “smartphone ban”.

A decree, adopted in August, requires schools to collect students’ phones and smart devices at the start of the day.

The move has reignited simmering tensions between nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban, in power continuously since 2010, and teachers, who have protested over poor working conditions in the past two years.

On the first day of the school year, thousands packed the square at the headquarters of the Interior Ministry, which has supervised public education since 2022.

“I found it outrageous that the measures were taken without prior consultation overnight,” Katalin Elteto, a 71-year-old retired teacher told AFP.

“I think this protest is not just about the restriction of mobile phones, but the state of the public education in general,” she added, saying she is saddened by the lack of public debate over the issue, which is designed to “cover up the failing system”.

The main teachers’ union PDSZ criticised the regulation – dubbed “smartphone ban” by some media – as “poorly thought out” and “unrealistic”, urging the government to let schools come up with their own solutions.

Budapest’s Imre Madach high school announced in mid-August it would not take away digital devices.

In a statement to parents, the school faculty said its “pedagogical goal” is to “educate pupils in the correct use of digital culture”.

It cited a part of the regulation, which allows institutions to authorise the use of restricted items.

A week later, the Interior Ministry fired the principal, Csaba Meszaros, saying that a “leader who does not abide by the law and openly defies it cannot run a public institution”.

Zita Nemethy-Csato, 17, said she finds the policy “discouraging” and “unnecessary”.

“Instead, we should be taught how to use smartphones sensibly,” she told AFP, echoing placards held up by young demonstrators calling for the state to educate “thinkers, not slaves”.

Mate, also 17, a student of Imre Madach high school, who did not want give his full name, called the dismissal of Meszaros “injustice”.

“He was an excellent principal for 24 years...educating students to think freely and building a completely child-centred school,” he said.



SMARTING: People take part in a demonstration in Budapest yesterday after the principal of a leading public high school was dismissed for disagreeing with a new government policy about banning students from using mobile phones in schools. (Reuters)

Former Polish premier’s close associate detained in London

Reuters
Warsaw

A former top Polish official who worked closely with ex-prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki was detained in London yesterday, a spokesperson for the Polish prosecution said, adding that prosecutors were seeking his swift extradition to Poland.

The man, identified by prosecutors as Michal K, faces accusations in Poland of taking part in an organised criminal group and of failing to fulfil his duties as a public servant in order to obtain financial gain. He has previously denied the accusations against him.

Polish law does not allow for the publication of the last name of a person accused in criminal proceedings. Michal K, who was detained under an international

arrest warrant, is the former head of Poland’s Strategic Reserves Agency.

“A decision must be taken quickly on his temporary arrest for the purpose of these extradition proceedings, and then there will be a procedure to surrender him based on this warrant, but this is a decision of the British court,” National Public Prosecutor’s Office spokeswoman Anna Adamiak said.

Poland’s pro-European government has made a priority of holding to account officials from the previous nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) administration it suspects of wrongdoing.

Morawiecki has repeatedly praised Michal K for his work, including organising a military hub at the Rzeszow airport in eastern Poland after the war in neighbouring Ukraine began, and has said the charges against him were political.

Polish media reported that the agency he had headed signed several contracts with a private clothing company without holding tenders for items ranging from protective equipment during the Covid pandemic to power generators for Ukraine.

There was no immediate comment from Morawiecki yesterday but PiS condemned Michal K’s detention.

“This is a political attack on the head of an agency who supported Ukraine by providing it with necessary equipment,” PiS said in a statement emailed to Reuters.

The detention comes days after Warsaw asked the European Parliament to strip another former top aide of Morawiecki, Michal Dworczyk, of his immunity as an EU lawmaker, in a separate case involving alleged obstruction of justice.

Belgium taps FM for EU post

Belgium yesterday named foreign minister Hadja Lahbib as its candidate for the next European Commission, bolstering EU chief Ursula von der Leyen’s push to get more women on her team.

The European Union (EU)’s member states have been putting forward their picks for the top jobs in the next EU executive after elections in June. Belgium was the last of the bloc’s 27 countries to make its nomination, as its politicians are locked in negotiations to form a coalition government.

Von der Leyen has been pressing countries to name both a man and woman for the job in a bid to reach gender parity. But most member states have ignored her plea, meaning she appears on course to fall short of reaching the target.

Belgium’s choice of candidate fell to Lahbib’s Reformist Movement party after it made a strong showing in the recent elections. “This designation reflects a desire for feminisation and renewal,” party leader Georges-Louis Bouchez wrote on X.

One dead as Czech police find 30 migrants in truck

AFP
Prague

Czech police said they had found around 30 migrants, one of whom died, in a semi-trailer on a motorway between Prague and the southern German city of Dresden yesterday.

A helicopter was deployed to look for several of the migrants who had run away from the truck with foreign licence plates that police had stopped after 1800 GMT.

Police also closed the D8 motorway 18km north of the capital Prague.

“All these persons have been detained,” police said on X later. “We have no information suggesting someone has managed to escape.”

The migrants appeared to be travelling through the Czech Republic toward another destination, they said adding, “and unfortunately the first information we got from the site mentions one deceased person.”

A private emergency service present on the site said on X it had treated a woman aged about 30, who was unconscious.

“A doctor declared her dead after resuscitation lasting dozens of minutes,” the emergency service said.

The other migrants did not require hospital care, but they were “in poor health”, the emergency service added.

The Czech Republic, an EU and Nato member of 10.9mn people, is a transit country for migrants heading to wealthier European states like Germany.

CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar

 editor@gulf-times.com

 44350478 (News),

 44466404 (Sport),

 44466636 (Home delivery)

 44350474

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TIMES

India needs more big businesses

At a time of growing doubts about China’s economic prospects, India’s rise has been attracting increasing attention, with some predicting that the country will become the developing world’s next economic superstar. Whether you believe India can be the “next China”, however, may depend on whether you subscribe more to “young” or “old” Schumpeterian logic.

The twentieth-century economist Joseph Schumpeter is best known for the concept of “creative destruction”, which describes how new innovations transform the economy partly by making older technologies obsolete. But Schumpeter’s ideas about economic dynamism and development were not static: whereas he initially emphasised the role of entrepreneurship above all, he later recognised the importance of big businesses.

So, in assessing India’s prospects, the “old” Schumpeter might look at the number of big businesses the country has produced. India lags well behind China on this front, with just eight Fortune Global 500 companies, compared to its neighbour’s 135. (To put this in perspective, the United States has 136 Fortune Global 500 companies, and South Korea has 18, despite having a much smaller population.) China has achieved this lead over India in just a few decades: in the early 1990s, China had three Fortune Global 500 companies, and India had one.

China has also pulled well ahead of India in terms of per capita income. In 1978 – just before China initiated the “reform and opening up” that enabled its “economic miracle” – both countries’ per capita income amounted to about 5% of the US level. By the early 2010s, Chinese incomes had reached about 20% of the US level, compared to just 10% for India. Today, Chinese and Indian per capita income relative to the US stands at 33% and 13%, respectively.

The fact that China has been far more successful than India in generating world-class big businesses might help to explain this divergence. Big businesses contribute significantly to economic growth. By contrast, a larger number of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) is only correlated with faster growth, indicating that it may be growth that fuels the proliferation of SMEs, not the other way around.

One reason for this – as “old” Schumpeter might note – is that big businesses tend to execute high-end and high-value-added activities, such as research and development and marketing, at home, while carrying out low-value-added activities abroad. Though the latter can boost growth and facilitate knowledge transfer, latecomer countries must translate this into locally owned, innovative big businesses if they are to break into high-end segments of the global economy.

The “young” Schumpeter might be more impressed by India. That is because India has proved more than capable of generating “unicorns” – private companies with a valuation above \$1bn – boasting 91 such companies, as of last year. To be sure, China far outstrips India here, too, with 368 unicorns. But India remains in the top four globally, behind the US (1,524) and the United Kingdom (153), but ahead of countries like Germany (64), Brazil (30), and South Korea (29).

Yet the discrepancy between Fortune Global 500 businesses and unicorns in India is notable. In 2020–23, that ratio amounted to just 0.1 in India, compared to 0.4 in China, 0.5 in Germany, and 0.25 in Brazil. The ratio in South Korea – whose economy is notoriously dominated by big businesses – is particularly high, at 0.6, implying that big businesses actually facilitate the rise of unicorns.

This likely happens through a few channels. One is the transmission of relevant skills and know-how through employment. To cite one example, the founders of Naver – essentially the “Korean Google” – used to work for Samsung. Another is direct investment: the Chinese tech giant Tencent supports hundreds of startups as an equity investor.

The older Schumpeter would probably argue that, if India wants to become an economic superpower on par with China, it should devote more attention to generating big businesses. In fact, without homegrown big businesses to drive growth and investment, India is likely to lose its innovative startups to acquisitions by foreign giants.

To avoid this kind of “brain drain,” efforts must be made to help startups grow quickly within India, so that they can become the flagship companies of tomorrow. South Korea and Taiwan became high-income economies by growing a few large firms, such as Samsung and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), not by having thousands of SMEs. Creating a sound institutional or investment climate to nurture startups can take decades. It takes less time to concentrate resources and competencies among a few firms so that they may grow into leading flagship companies. – Project Syndicate

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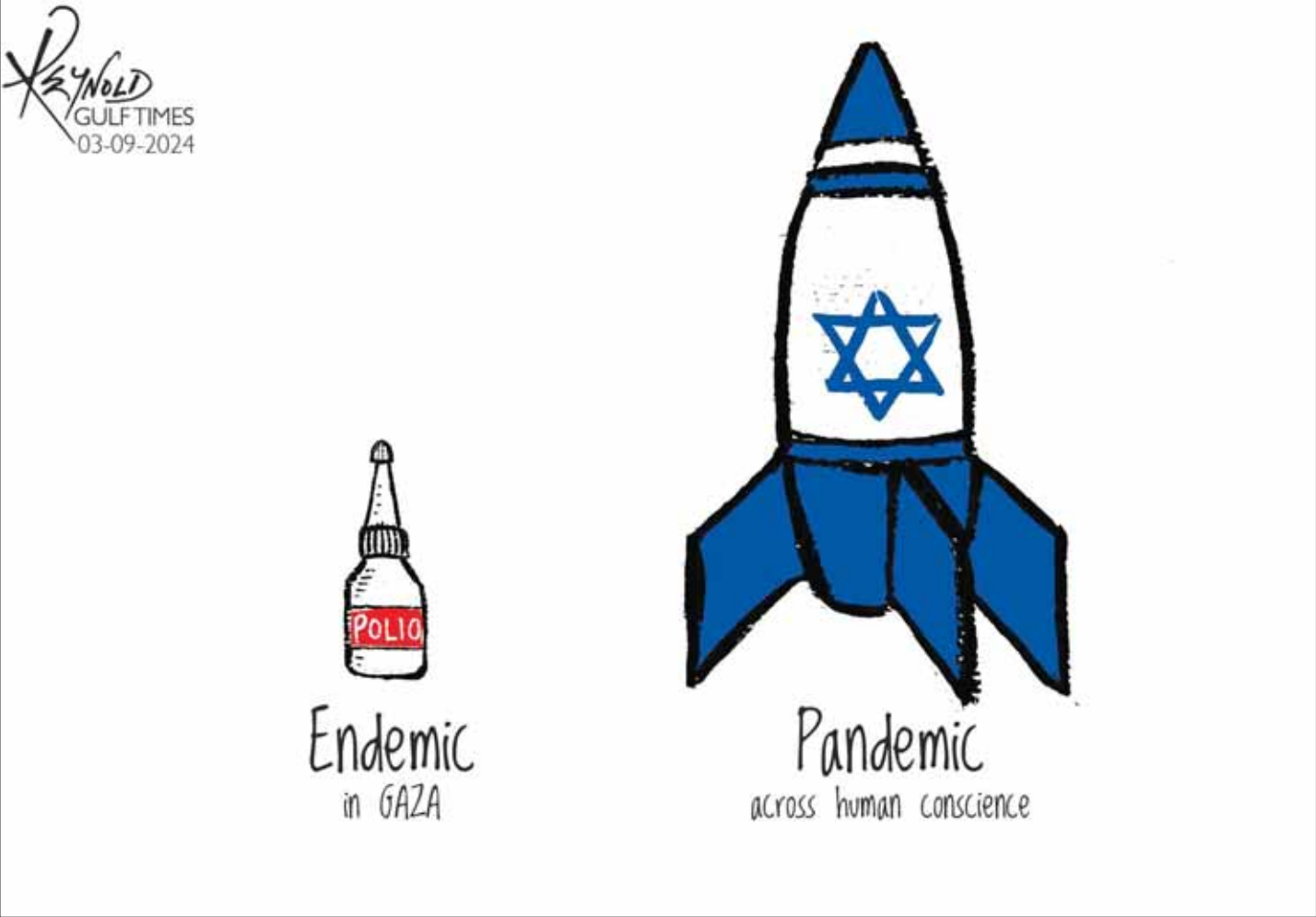
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Alarm as Trump threat to US democracy has grown

By Daron Acemoglu
Boston

An overhauled Democratic ticket has re-energised the party and eliminated the widening polling lead that former US president Donald Trump had over his successor, Joe Biden. There is much to admire in Kamala Harris and Tim Walz’s backgrounds, careers, and recent campaign speeches, which have focused on fighting poverty, improving the lot of working people, reclaiming patriotism from Republicans, and strengthening democracy. But even setting aside these virtues, there are good reasons to support the Democratic ticket. After all, the alternative is Trump, who poses such a serious threat to US institutions that any halfway decent candidate running against him would deserve strong support.

Trump threatens American democracy in part because US institutions were not designed to deal with an autocratic populist who is willing to break norms and even laws. As I pointed out in 2017, American voters and civil society are ultimately the only forces that can stop such a figure. Although American democracy withstood Trump’s presidency in 2017–21, he exploited every institutional weakness he could find, deepened the divisions of an already polarised society, and tried to overturn the result of a free and fair election that he lost.

The Democrats successfully reclaimed the White House in the 2020 election, despite Trump’s coup attempt on January 6, 2021, because they had a major advantage: his own incompetence. Although

long-standing political norms had been severely damaged, democracy survived.

Trump’s incompetence as president had two dimensions. First, he was incapable of demonstrating any consistency. His only real agenda was to concentrate power in his own hands and elevate and enrich his family and cronies, but he lacked the discipline and focus to see it through. The terrifying implication, of course, is that somebody more disciplined could have done far more damage. Second, Trump failed to win the unconditional personal loyalty of many of his underlings, and that ultimately meant that most of his wildest schemes and decisions were exposed or blocked from within.

Unfortunately, Trump poses a far greater threat to American democracy today for five key reasons. First, he has grown only angrier, which means he will be more determined to concentrate power in his own hands and deploy it against his enemies (real and perceived). If he returns to the White House, he will be not only more vicious but also potentially more consistent in pursuing his personal agenda.

Second, Trump and his ideological fellow travellers will have put much more thought and vetting into high- and mid-level appointees, as they have already done for his implicit governing agenda: the Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025. Although Trump claims to renounce this comprehensive policy blueprint, it has already become a valuable tool for identifying potential administration personnel. Supporting the Heritage Foundation’s dark vision is a litmus test, ensuring that no whistleblowers or defenders

of democracy can serve as the “adults in the room” this time around.

Third, the GOP is now Trump’s personal cult, which means that local Republican officials across the country will be willing to do whatever he commands. Some may go so far as attempting to rig elections and seize control of local law enforcement and public services. If Trump once again demands that local election officials “find” more votes in his favour, he might just get what he wants.

Fourth, owing to a variety of mistakes by intellectual elites and Democratic Party leaders – such as advocating extreme “woke” positions like open borders, defunding the police, and so forth – many right-leaning, moderate, and non-college voters have concluded that Democrats are left-wing extremists. Those who see the Democrats as lacking patriotism will be much less likely to break with Trump, even though Harris and Walz are taking steps to appeal to them.

Fifth, for all these same reasons, effective civil-society action against Trump has become more difficult. After years in which the left has applied its own ideological purity tests and shamed anyone who falls short, fewer independent voters and moderate Republicans will be willing to join a big-tent anti-Trump coalition. Progressive Democrats could end up standing alone against his unconstitutional or anti-democratic behaviour, and that would not be enough.

For all these reasons, Trump’s threat to US institutions must be taken seriously. Once again, the only way to defend American democracy is to use democratic means to defeat him. Democracy thrives when it delivers real-

world results and helps people fulfil their aspirations. In practice, that means promoting economic prosperity, security, fairness, competent governance, and stability. The latter is especially important for withstanding periodic shocks and challenges, including threats to democracy itself.

Trump is not the first anti-democratic demagogue to attract a strong following, and he will not be the last. US institutions became stronger after withstanding a proto-fascist challenge from Father Charles Coughlin in the late 1930s; resistance to Black civil rights in the Jim Crow South of the 1950s and 1960s; the segregationist George Wallace’s 1968 presidential run; and Watergate. If Trump is defeated this November, US institutions will emerge stronger once again.

But for democracy to withstand such challenges, there must be good alternatives on the ballot. People must be able to cast a vote for politicians with good track records of solving problems, inspiring people, and defending free institutions. The Harris-Walz ticket looks like it fits the bill. Now begins the hard work of mobilising people and restoring support for democracy. But the even harder work will be to deliver on the promises of democracy, by combating poverty and inequality, reducing polarisation and extremism from both sides, and demonstrating that government does work for the common people. – Project Syndicate

• Daron Acemoglu, *Institute Professor of Economics at MIT, is co-author (with Simon Johnson) of Power and Progress: Our Thousand-Year Struggle Over Technology and Prosperity.*



Former US president and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump dances to a song as he leaves a rally at 1st Summit Arena at the Cambria County War Memorial in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, last week. (AFP)



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani arrived yesterday in Stockholm, on an official visit to Sweden. His Highness the Amir was welcomed upon arrival at Stockholm Arlanda Airport, along with his accompanying delegation, by Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom, ambassador of Qatar to Sweden Nadia bint Ahmad al-Sheebi, ambassador of Sweden to Qatar Gautam Bhattacharyya, and the Qatari embassy staff. (QNA)

Huge potential for deepening ties with Qatar: Swedish FM

From Page 1

The Swedish foreign minister commended Qatar's efforts to decrease regional tensions and mediate to end the war in Gaza, affirming that Sweden fully stands behind efforts to reach a ceasefire and a process that leads to a two-state solution.

"Qatar and Sweden share a strong commitment to upholding international peace, law, and security. We are also two countries that are greatly affected by regional and international developments, not least in our immediate neighbourhoods. As such, we are very appreciative of Qatar's role....in peace and mediation efforts-not only in relation to the war in Gaza, but around the world," he said.

Billstrom said that the world faces interconnected challenges that can only be addressed

through unity and co-operation, including climate change and increased environmental pollution.

"We have a common responsibility to maintain peace and stability, and a safe, prosperous and sustainable world. The UN Charter must be respected. International law, sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and human rights are principles and fundamentals which we all depend on," he said.

The minister reaffirmed that the UN is and should be central to how we address our shared problems and solve conflicts. However, to improve our ability to address these challenges, global governance must become more effective, he explained, adding that we must take steps to reform necessary parts of the UN so that they are fit for the challenges of the 21st century.

Qatar's ambassador: Amir's visit to Sweden culmination of 50 years of historical relations

QNA
Stockholm

Qatar's ambassador in Stockholm Nadya bint Ahmed al-Sheebi (pictured below) underlined that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's official visit to Sweden is the culmination of 50 years of historical relations between the two countries established in 1974, and reflects the depth of ties and the joint achievements made over decades.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ambassador said that the Amir's visit will focus on the strategic, political and economic dimensions to push for close partnerships that achieve mutual benefit.

She noted the significance of the Amir's visit to Sweden in highlighting the depth of bilateral relations and enhancing the strong partnership between the two countries, indicating that the visit comes at a very important time in light of the rapid global transformations.

The ambassador stressed the importance of diversifying the network of bilateral relations and activating it to serve all parties, in light of the current economic crises in the world, especially in the fields of energy, in addition to the challenges of climate crisis, drought, desertification, and water.

His Highness the Amir's visit is a valuable opportunity to activate co-operation frameworks and explore new horizons with the Nordic countries, based on the great

confidence enjoyed by Qatar and its prominent role in the regional and international arenas, the ambassador added.

Al-Sheebi the visit will include a session of official talks with the Swedish prime minister, covering a host of prominent topics at the bilateral and international levels, mainly in the fields of politics, economic and trade cooperation, sustainable projects, scientific research and innovation, as well as regional and international issues.

The ambassador said that the visit will promote political understandings and the exchange of views on how to address common challenges, noting that world countries see Qatar as a reliable international partner and seek to enhance international cooperation with it in various fields.

The visit will also contribute to consolidating understanding between the leaderships of the two countries to explore ways to enhance co-operation in the economic and trade fields, thus contributing to developing the bilateral relations and expanding opportunities for cooperation, the ambassador added.

In light of Qatar's presidency of the 44th session of the GCC Supreme Council, and the Kingdom of Sweden's presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2024, the visit will discuss areas of co-operation between the Gulf states and the Nordic countries, as the first high-level ministerial meeting between the Gulf Co-operation Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers will be held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly next September.



His Highness the Amir attending dinner banquet hosted by the Swedish prime minister in Stockholm yesterday.



Qatar, Sweden: Promising prospects for future

QNA
Doha

Within the framework of the policy of openness, co-operation and friendship pursued by Qatar with various brotherly and friendly countries and people, as well as its keenness to push its foreign relations to new horizons in various fields, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani begins his European tour with a visit to Sweden, out of several Scandinavian countries.

During the visit to Sweden, His Highness the Amir will meet with King Carl XVI Gustaf and Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, to discuss developing and strengthening relations between the two countries in various fields in a manner that serves the mutual interests and aspirations of the two countries and peoples. The discussions will also include several international issues and topics of mutual interest.

The Amir's visit is expected to contribute to developing relations between the two countries as well as opening new horizons for co-operation between them in may sectors.

The two countries have had good

relations with steady growth in various fields since the establishment of diplomatic relations between them. The first Qatari ambassador to Sweden presented his credentials as a non-resident ambassador in 2011, while the Qatari embassy in Stockholm was inaugurated in December 2014.

Relations between Doha and Stockholm have been strengthened in various fields as a result of mutual visits and agreements signed between the two countries, which include, among other things, UN activities and humanitarian aspects.

In 2019, Qatar and Sweden signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to hold political consultations between the foreign ministries of the two countries.

Qatar signed an MoU for co-operation and exchange of expertise in several work areas with both Sweden and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), to enhance co-operation in the areas of occupational health and safety at work, as well as corporate social responsibility through institutional co-operation and exchange of expertise.

In the educational sector, there is a co-operation agreement between Qatar University (QU) and Lund University in Sweden in joint

research projects, exchange of academic materials, joint conferences, seminars and workshops, and student exchange.

There are regular political consultations between the foreign ministries of the two countries. There is co-ordination between the two countries in international forums considering that they share visions on the idea of assuming responsibility in global crises.

Within the context of mutual visits, HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater visited Sweden. The visit included meetings with several senior Swedish officials, during which the two sides discussed ways of co-operation, especially in the field of development as well as joint efforts in the areas of security, peace and humanitarian aid, and ways to enhance co-operation between relevant Qatari institutions and the Swedish Institute of International Affairs.

At the parliamentary level and within the context of exchanged visits between Doha and Stockholm, HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti visited the Swedish Parliament in July 2022, during

which the Qatari delegation was briefed on the Swedish Parliament's experience in parliamentary work with the aim of exchanging expertise in this field.

At the commercial level, trade discussions are held between Qatar and Sweden on a regular basis, and trade and economic relations between the two countries have developed in recent years. Trade exchange between the two countries has witnessed a growth of 79% in 2023, reaching roughly QR1.55bn, compared to QR866mn in 2022.

In May, Qatar Chamber (QC) discussed trade and industrial co-operation relations with Sweden, and ways to enhance partnership, especially in the sectors of food, agriculture, energy, information technology, and others. During that meeting, Chairperson of QC Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim al-Thani met with a delegation of Swedish businesspersons and urged Swedish companies to invest in Qatar, highlighting its position as a leading global hub for investment and business, given that Qatar owns a world-class infrastructure, a pro-investment environment, and stimulating economic legislation that allows non-Qatari investors to own 100% capital in most economic sectors.



Gulf Family Day Forum kicks off in Doha

The Gulf Family Day Forum kicked off in Doha yesterday, under the slogan "Family is The Treasure of a Nation".

Coinciding with the 10th meeting of the Committee of Ministers of Labour, Social Development and Civil Service, the forum is organised by the Family Affairs Council in co-operation with the GCC General Secretariat.

Assistant Undersecretary for Family Affairs at the Ministry of Social Development and Family HE Sheikha Sheikha bint Jassim al-Thani affirmed everyone's commitment to strengthen and support the family as a fundamental element in building the societies in the GCC countries, noting that the family is not just a social unit but the foundation on which the future of the generations is built. It is the first incubator of values and principles that guide the behaviour of individuals and establish strong and sustainable community relations, she said.

She explained in this regard that the slogan of this forum, "Family is The Treasure of a Nation", is not just a slogan but a tangible reality that we live every day, as long as the family is considered the first nucleus of society. Through it, we instil the values of belonging and citizenship and enhance the spirit of co-operation and solidarity among individuals so that supporting the family is an investment in the future of our nations and peoples, she added.

She pointed out that the societies are currently facing many challenges that affect the stability and cohesion of families ranging from economic and social changes to the effects of modern technology, all of which require close co-operation and joint efforts to overcome them, considering that the forum is a golden opportunity to exchange experiences and best practices between the countries to develop innovative strategies



that guarantee stability and prosperity for the families.

She stressed the importance of this forum as a station for thinking and planning for the future in order to discuss and exchange ideas and initiatives that can contribute to strengthening the role of the family as a source of real wealth in the societies, while hoping for tangible results that translate into policies and programmes to support the family and enhance its position in the society.

For his part, HE head of the human and environmental affairs sector at the GCC General Secretariat engineer Abdullah bin Ali al-Rubaie praised the efforts of the GCC leaders, their wise directives and their support and assistance for all matters related to the GCC family, which is the basic building block for preparing and raising a righteous generation that contributes to the advancement and development of the GCC countries.

Al-Rubaie appreciated the ministry's efforts in presenting the initiative to celebrate the Gulf Family Day and organising the Gulf Family Forum 2024.

He pointed out that the GCC countries approved September 14 of each year as the Gulf Family Day.

Al-Rubaie said the leaders of the GCC countries attach great importance to family affairs in all its

categories, and they ordered that a study be conducted to evaluate the reality and programmes of children's culture and how to develop them, in addition to their directives to give attention to women who are the backbone of the family entity as well as to pay attention to the elderly and provide all means of comfort that guarantee them a decent life.

He explained that the GCC countries are in continuous development and keep pace with the goals of sustainable development in all fields, especially in the field of the family in all its categories, noting that the GCC countries have focused on caring for the child who is the basic building block for the advancement of the GCC countries.

He stressed that the GCC countries are keen to provide basic services in their schools for free, including the Internet, textbooks, computers for educational purposes, an appropriate infrastructure for students with disabilities, and basic health facilities, while revealing that the percentage of schools that provide these services reached 100% in all GCC countries and in all services, except for the service of providing infrastructure for people with disabilities, which reached 60% of the total schools in the GCC countries.

Director of the Family Development Department at the Ministry

of Social Development and Family of Qatar Dhabia Hamdan al-Maqbali said that the forum seeks to achieve the required integration and enhance the status of the Gulf family and its developmental role by involving those interested in social affairs, universities, research centres and centers concerned with the family, in addition to the most prominent figures at the local and Gulf levels, and experts in Gulf and international organisations concerned with the family to discuss future opportunities and challenges for the family, as well as the impact of family values in preparing a more effective generation to face the future challenges of the Gulf family.

For her part, acting secretary-general of the supreme council for family affairs in Kuwait Iman Saleh al-Enezi stressed that the Gulf family is facing modern development that represents a challenge to the cohesion of the family and its traditional function as a source of social and educational support.

Executive Director of the Me-deem initiative in the United Arab Emirates Mona Majid Mohamed al-Mansouri addressed the UAE's initiative in the Emirati Family Growth Support Programme through the initiative, which was launched within the framework of the Abu Dhabi Family Wellbeing Strategy.

During the session held on the sidelines of the Gulf Family Day Forum, head of the family development department, department of centres, family and childhood development at the Bahraini ministry of social development Maryam Hassan Yousef, and head of the women's committee at the family affairs council in Saudi Arabia Lana bint Hassan bin Saad bin Saeed reviewed the importance of the initiatives and qualitative efforts made for the sake of family development, confronting all challenges and finding appropriate solutions, in addition to empowering family groups. (QNA)

86 selected for Doha Debates Ambassador programme

A total of 86 emerging leaders from around the globe have been selected to participate in the latest edition of the Ambassador Programme offered by Doha Debates.

Additionally, 16 alumni have been selected to mentor the new cohort and contribute to the curriculum.

Ambassadors in the newest cohort represent 33 countries across five continents, including Afghanistan, India, Iran, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ukraine, the US, and Qatar.

Many are students or alumni of Qatar Foundation (QF) partner universities such as Georgetown University in Qatar, Northwestern University in Qatar, Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar, Texas A&M University at Qatar, and other universities such as the American University of Afghanistan and University of Doha for Science and Technology.

Throughout the programme, ambassadors work with facilitation and systems-thinking experts to develop advanced communication skills, engage in productive dialogue around complex global issues, and work collaboratively to envision their ideal future.

As part of preparations for the pro-



The new cohort of ambassadors.

gramme, the incoming ambassadors completed Doha Debates’ online self-guided course, “Introduction to the Majlis”, learning to counter polarisation with solutions-based dialogue rooted in the Arab tradition of the majlis.

Beyond developing intercultural communication skills, ambassadors form lifelong connections with one another and stay engaged with Doha Debates after

the programme concludes, participating in the organisation’s debates, podcasts, town halls, and other special events.

Programme alumni most recently took part in Doha Debates’ town hall on the topic of *Narrative power: Is the West promoting global justice?*, appearing onstage at the Bradford Literature Festival to ask questions of panellists Fatima Bhutto, Steve Clemons, and Konstantin Kisin

about the impact of Western narrative on the world’s perceptions of justice and free speech.

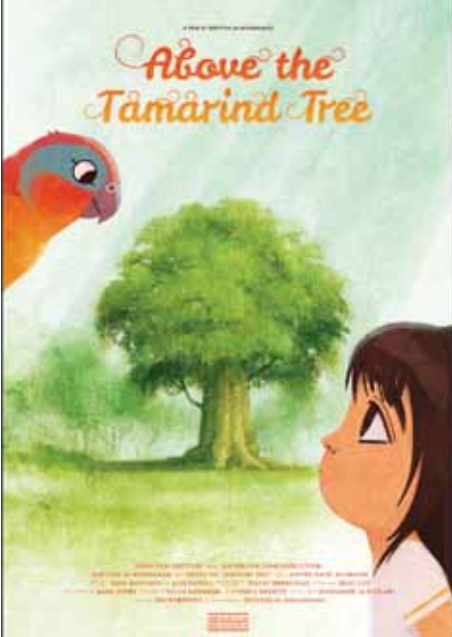
Furthering Doha Debates’ mission to empower young people to bridge differences and build consensus through debate, the programme hones participants’ facilitation and negotiation skills as they discuss critical issues like climate change, global governance, and ethical artificial

intelligence (AI) with peers who have diverse world-views.

“Since its launch in 2021, the Ambassador Programme has equipped young emerging leaders from all across the globe with the solutions-oriented discussion and negotiation skills that are absolutely critical in this increasingly polarised era,” said Doha Debates managing director Amjad Atallah.



The 81st Venice Film Festival is screening DFI-supported films.



Angelina Jolie with Fatma Hassan Alremaihi and others at the film festival.

Films backed by DFI making waves in Venice

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The 81st Venice Film Festival is shining a spotlight on filmmakers from the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia, featuring films supported by the Doha Film Institute (DFI).

This year’s festival, running until September 7, showcases the work of regional filmmakers, many of whom have received backing from the DFI’s Grants Programme.

A record number of DFI-supported films are being screened across various festival departments, including the prestigious Orizzonti and Orizzonti Shorts sections, as well as sidebar events like Critics Week and Giornate degli Autori.

This year, the DFI has curated a special exhibition, “Your Ghosts Are Mine: Expanded Cinemas, Amplified Voices”, which explores themes of memory and identity through 40 films and installations by creatives from the region.

The exhibition has been a highlight of the festival, drawing attention from international film industry professionals and notable figures like Academy Award-winning actress, filmmaker, and rights activist Angelina Jolie, who was joined by DFI chief executive Fatma Hassan Alremaihi.

The festival has seen a diverse selection of DFI-supported films from countries including Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, and Yemen.

The selection highlighted the DFI’s commitment to fostering a diverse and

inclusive film landscape, promoting new voices, and bringing unique stories to the global stage.

The DFI’s presence extends to the Venice Production Bridge, where a special screening of award-winning short films by Qatar-based filmmakers was took place yesterday.

This showcases the burgeoning talent within Qatar’s film industry and further underlines the DFI’s commitment to supporting local filmmakers.

The “Your Ghosts Are Mine” exhibition, co-organised by the DFI, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, and the future Art Mill Museum and supported by Media City Qatar in Venice, offers a powerful platform for dialogue about the complex realities of the region and the diverse narratives it holds.



Mol’s Public Transport Security Department stages mock drill



The Ministry of Interior (MoI)’s Public Transport Security Department recently conducted a mock drill at the Doha Metro train depot in Al Wakra. The exercise, according to a post by MoI on X, aimed to enhance readiness, strengthen co-operation and co-ordination, and review the procedures in place for securing the railways.

Representatives of several entities participated in the exercise, including the Operations Department of the General Directorate of Civil Defence, the General Directorate of Traffic, the Southern Security Department, the Al Fazzaa Police Unit, and the Central Operations Department, in addition to the Ambulance Service of Hamad Medical Corporation and Qatar Rail.

