

Qatari envoy in Oslo: Amir's visit reflects keenness to enhance bilateral relations

QNA
Oslo

Qatar's (non-resident) ambassador to Norway, Nadya bint Ahmed al-Sheebi, said that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to Norway reflects the keenness of both countries to develop and enhance their bilateral relations, as well as their joint commitment to growth and progress in various fields.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the ambassador said that the Amir's visit aims to strengthen co-operation and partnership between the two countries and foster close ties between the two regions.

She pointed out that the visit will highlight the strategic and political dimensions central to international relations under Qatar National Vision 2030, which reflects the state's continuous efforts to achieve its national objectives and contributes to establishing significant strategic partnerships.

The ambassador stressed that the visit is a crucial step by Qatar in building fruitful and robust partnerships, particularly as it comes at a time of significant global transformations, which are part of a broader shift in the international system and its institutions amid ongoing wars and conflicts, especially in the Middle East and Europe.

Al-Sheebi noted the importance of this visit in the context of strengthening the long-standing friendship between the two coun-



tries, which has been built on mutual co-operation and respect for over 50 years. The golden jubilee of economic relations between the two countries was celebrated in Doha in 2019, she said, adding that in 2023, the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations was also commemorated.

She explained that the Amir's visit will include high-level meetings, the most significant of which will be with King Harald V and an official discussion session with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store, pointing out that these meetings are expected to produce new understandings that will support the future of bilateral relations and cooperation on the international stage.

The visit will also include the signing of several MoUs covering various areas, including peace and reconciliation, innovation, defence, and commercial agreements between Qatari and Norwegian businesses, she said.

The envoy also said that the given Qatar's presidency of the 44th session of the Gulf Co-operation Council, discussions during the visit will address co-operation

between the Gulf countries and Northern European countries, adding that 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 in September, highlighting the importance of co-operation between the two regions on both regional and international levels.

She further stated that Qatar and Norway share many important characteristics and roles on the international stage, particularly in peace and conflict resolution, as both countries have a strong record in mediation and this similarity reflects their shared interest in promoting regional and international stability through advanced diplomatic means and their roles as impartial mediators in various global conflicts.

Regarding trade between Qatar and Norway, the ambassador said that the two countries enjoy strong economic, commercial, and investment relations, with Norway being Qatar's 35th largest trading partner as of 2023. The visit is expected to result in new partnerships given the mutual interest in enhancing investment, particularly since the Norwegian sovereign wealth fund (the largest in the world) invests in several sectors in Qatar.

She added that with significant reserves of oil and gas in both countries and their role as the largest exporters of liquefied natural gas in the world, there are great opportunities to enhance co-operation in this vital sector.

Norway, Qatar share common interest in stability and security of Middle East

Norwegian ambassador to Qatar (non-resident) Olav Myklebust said that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Norway highlights the longstanding and strong bilateral relations. In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), Myklebust added that the Amir's "visit will further strengthen our bilateral relations and co-operation in areas of common interest such as: economic co-operation, technological change and green transition, as well as multilateral co-operation, regional peace and stability, including conflict resolution", pointing out that Crown Prince Haakon's visit to Qatar in 2019 marked the successful and longstanding industrial co-operation between the two countries.

He explained that the Amir's visit comes at a critical time for the Middle East, and expressed his country's appreciation for Qatar central role in the push for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. "Norway and Qatar share a common interest in stability and security in the region. The visit will allow for dialogue on joint efforts for peace and reconciliation in the region and beyond," he said. The ambassador noted that the central topics to be discussed include regional challenges and security issues, as well as peace and conflict resolution, emphasising that both Qatar and Norway share a similar



approach to mediation and facilitation, and actively contribute to conflict resolution. "By strengthening our co-operation to promote peace we can achieve even better results," he stressed.

He also said: "Energy security and green transition are also important topics that will be addressed. There is a need for transforming the world's energy production to a achieve a greener future. Our countries are both important contributors to European energy security and we share similar interests in the energy sector, including developments related to the green transition," adding that there are currently ongoing talks about several different co-operation agreements in various areas. On the relationship between the State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Norway, the envoy said that the Norway and Qatar share a longstanding and strong bilateral relationship, and a long history of industrial co-operation. Norwegian business has been present in Qatar since Norwegian Hydro

(now Yara) established itself as a pioneer in the 1960s, he said, adding that "our joint ventures Qafco and Qatalum are success stories. Our relationship has continued on a positive trajectory in recent years, with several new areas of collaboration. There are good opportunities for further co-operation, especially in the areas of maritime technology, clean energy and the green maritime industry."

"The volume of trade and investment exchange between our countries has developed over time and continues to grow. The total value of Norway's exports to Qatar has grown over the past 10 years and investments have increased substantially over just the past few years. Seafood, and in particular salmon, is a major Norwegian export item to Qatar, with well over 1000 tonnes annually. Qatar Airways is also a crucial partner for Norwegian exports to other countries," he said.

He noted that Norwegian company Kongsberg Maritime is delivering top-class electronic steering systems to LNG ships being built for QatarEnergy and is increasing substantially its number of employees in Doha.

He pointed out that "energy transition and Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) are other areas where I see great opportunities for co-operation", stressing that Qatar and Norway have a lot in common.

Qatar, Sweden share significant alignment on multiple issues

QNA
Stockholm

The Secretary-General of the Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) Ingvar Mattson said that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Sweden is the most significant event in the history of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), he said that the visit is an important step towards improving and strengthening relations between the two countries, adding that the visit will open new doors for co-operation between Qatar and Sweden in various fields, particularly parliamentary co-operation.

He noted that Qatar and Sweden share significant alignment on issues related to international security and peace, trade and invest-

ment, climate crisis, energy and environment, transport, as well as parliamentary co-operation between the Shura Council and the Swedish Riksdag.

The secretary-general of the Swedish parliament praised Qatar's efforts as a mediator in international conflicts and disputes, and as a constructive partner in achieving international security and peace. He highlighted Sweden's desire to collaborate with Qatar in this capacity, noting that his country values the importance and necessity of mediation, especially in severe disputes where the conflicting parties cannot find pathways to peace and stability.

He emphasised the critical role Qatar plays in mediation and conflict resolution, stressing the importance of supporting and strengthening this role to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East.

He said that several members of

the Shura Council have been received at the Riksdag. During these meetings, various issues on the agenda were discussed, he added, noting the significance of these encounters in enhancing parliamentary co-operation for future discussions targeting key issues such as international peace and security, climate, and the development of business and investments between the two countries.

Ingvar Mattson concluded his interview with QNA by explaining that regional organisations in the Gulf region and Europe have found various ways to co-operate thus far, but there is still a significant ambition to improve and enhance this co-operation, particularly in areas where mutual benefits are substantial, especially in environmental, energy, climate, and security fields, as well as Mediterranean issues since the region is an important transportation route and environmental concern.



'Amir's visit significant step to enhance co-operation'

QNA
Stockholm

Chief of Defence Staff of the Swedish Armed Forces Gen Michael Claesson affirmed the importance of the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Sweden and its role in enhancing the horizon of co-operation in various fields, indicating that His Highness' visit embodies the distinguished relations between the two countries.

In an exclusive statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Gen Michael Claesson said that he had met with HE Chief of Staff of Qatar Armed Forces Staff Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad bin Aqeel al-Nabiti during his visit to Stockholm in early August.

The most prominent part of the meeting was the results, as both sides were able to exchange ideas and information on how to build the military forces, educational systems, the importance of developing defence industries, and more.

He pointed out the importance of his country joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato), indicating that this alliance represents a front for many different partnerships, especially those in which Qatar is a partner, within the framework of Nato's comprehensive perspective.

The Swedish Armed Forces Chief of Defence Staff explained that his country and Nato need



to take security concerns in other parts of the world into account and understand that security situations in the Middle East may be reflected in European or Atlantic perspectives. Based on the results of the discussions between the leaderships of the two countries and their recommendations during this visit, a future vision will be developed on ways to enhance military cooperation between the

State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Sweden, he said.

At the end of his statements to QNA, Gen Michael Claesson expressed his concern about the security situation in the Middle East and the ongoing conflicts in the region, as well as the danger of escalation, pointing out that all measures taken to support the preservation of humanitarian standards are highly appreciated by Sweden.

'Amir's first visit to Stockholm set to further cement relations'

QNA
Stockholm

Director-General at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Dag Juhlin-Dannfelt said that the official visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Sweden is a highly significant event, given that it will be His Highness' first visit to Stockholm, in addition to it coming at a time when Qatar is presiding over the 44th session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC).

The director-general told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that Qatar and Sweden have excellent bilateral relations, which will be further solidified by the visit of His Highness the Amir. Juhlin-Dannfelt noted that the visit will provide an opportunity to discuss ways to enhance and deepen co-operation in various fields, such as development co-operation, in which Qatar plays a crucial global role, in addition to bilateral co-operation with regards to Afghanistan, with Qatar and Sweden actively engaging there to find ways for collaboration.

The director-general at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs added that Qatar excels in mediation and resolving difficult issues between countries that have no agreements, thus, there will certainly be room to discuss such matters between both countries, especially the situation in Gaza amidst a conflict that everyone



hopes to see come to an end.

He said that the political consultations between Qatar and Sweden have facilitated the exchange of views, discussing prospects for joint co-operation, and resolving issues, with a future focus on means to increase bilateral co-operation and closeness.

Juhlin-Dannfelt expressed hope that the visit of His Highness the Amir will enhance bilateral relations and be an occasion to discuss co-operation in various fields, particularly in green transformation, climate change, and international peace and security. He pointed out that the visit is expected to see the signing of several memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and agreements in certain sectors.

The director-general at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs praised Qatar's prominent role in Afghanistan, including hosting talks between the Taliban and the United States, in addition to the existence of a Taliban embassy in Qatar, which enabled the

international community to engage with the group, with an important Qatari role in this regard.

Regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, he said that this massive war poses a significant threat to Sweden, which is the reason behind the country joining Nato. He highlighted the heavy focus on development co-operation efforts and military support for Ukraine, which is currently top priority at all levels. Juhlin-Dannfelt expressed Sweden's appreciation for Qatar's positions on the Russia-Ukraine crisis, including its significant efforts in reuniting Ukrainian children with their families and facilitating prisoner exchanges.

Juhlin-Dannfelt concluded by commending Qatar's historically important role in Gaza, noting that Qatar provided the funding that kept Gaza alive even before the current war, in addition to paying civil service salaries in coordination with various parties. He also said that Qatar is now the main negotiator for a ceasefire and peace there.

Amir holds talks with Swedish PM, Speaker of the Parliament



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson held a session of official talks at the seat of the government "Rosenbad" in Stockholm. (QNA)



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met with Speaker of the Parliament of Sweden (Riksdag) Andreas Norlen at the Riksdag headquarters in Stockholm yesterday. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations, ways to develop and boost them in various fields, and exchange expertise in related fields, in addition to a number of topics of mutual interest. (QNA)



Media City showcases 'Global Stories, Local Lens' in Venice

15 projects of education ministry's digital transformation initiative completed

QNA
Doha

Media City Qatar (MCQ) has presented its 'Global Stories, Local Lens' activation at a special event in Venice, Italy, in partnership with the Doha Film Institute, highlighting Qatar's emerging role as a hub for fostering intercultural understanding and creative collaboration through media.

During the function, MCQ unveiled 'The Bridge', a unique intercultural mask art installation created by Qatari artist Fatma al-Shebani and Italian artist Nicolò Galasso. 'The Bridge' symbolises the fusion of the traditional Venetian carnival mask and the Qatari 'battoulah'.

It reflects media, film, and art's universal appeal and ability to tell stories through the perspective of its teller, serving as an invitation to explore the world's rich cultures. The artistic creation embodies the core concept of bridging cultures and draws inspiration from both Venice and Doha.

MCQ chairman Sheikh Dr Abdullah bin Ali al-Thani said: "This activation is a conversation starter. It seeks to spark curiosity about the value we can offer to the growing number of international media



'The Bridge' symbolises the fusion of the traditional Venetian carnival mask and the Qatari 'battoulah'.

companies and professionals who recognise the potential of the Arab World and are interested in expanding into the Middle East. Our goal is to forge international partnerships and bridge cultures while promoting Qatar as a top destination for creators."

The event underscores deepening cultural ties with Italy and efforts by both organisations to position Qatar as a premier destination for content creators, en-

trepreneurs, innovators, and other creative talents worldwide.

Doha Film Institute CEO Fatma Hassan Alremaihi said, "The power of storytelling lies in its ability to bridge cultures and inspire a deeper reflection of our shared human values. Doha Film Institute has long championed the use of visual arts to bring communities together, offering authentic and inspiring stories that promote empathy and intercultural understanding.



"As the Venice Film Festival continues to honour Arab filmmakers, it reinforces the importance of diverse voices in cinema and underscores the genuine value of representation in the arts. We are proud to support 12 projects from the region at this year's Festival that not only allows us to engage international audiences but also affirms that our perspectives truly enrich the world of cinema."

As an emerging global media

hub, MCQ provides a supportive regulatory landscape, state-of-the-art business facilities, and attractive incentive schemes to ensure the success of emerging media ventures in Qatar. This multifaceted strategy is crucial for the sustained growth and development of the country's various creative industries, including broadcasting, traditional and digital news, gaming, user-generated content, AI, and other advanced technologies.

4,500 Qatari students on multiple scholarships abroad: official



QNA
Doha

A total of 4,500 Qatari students are now on scholarships abroad studying teaching, medicine, programming, engineering and other majors, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE)'s Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs, Dr Hareb Mohamed al-Jabri (pictured), said

yesterday. Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the last day of the exhibition associated with the roll out of the 2024-2030 MoEHE Strategy, al-Jabri said the Qatari students on scholarships abroad include 1,114 male and female teachers, 450 doctors, 500 programmers, 1,000 engineers and other specialisations, all of them will feed the labour market in the coming years.

He said the MoEHE Strategy, launched under the theme "Igniting the Spark of Learning", is built

upon three main factors – providing higher education for all society segments including Qataris, residents and people with disabilities, boosting higher education infrastructure and potential to support the country's economic diversification, and providing the private and government sectors with national competencies.

Qatar now has 33 higher education institutions offering around 425 diploma, bachelor's, master's and PhD programmes and 34 vocational train-

ing programmes. According to the scholarship programme policy, each student must enrol in eight courses during the scholarship period, four of whom related to general skills, and four specialised training courses, he said.

Meanwhile, al-Jabri pointed to the Learn in Qatar project, a scheme aiming to attract international students to study in Qatari higher education institutions to further boost the country's economic diversification.

QC launches 'Baraem' to prepare 300 children for kindergarten

As the new academic year begins, Qatar Charity (QC) has launched the 'Baraem' programme, designed to support children unable to join kindergarten. The focus is on their psychological, academic, and behavioural development to prepare them for formal education in the upcoming school year.

The programme, which targets 300 children aged 4-6 years, primarily focuses on instilling values, teaching the alphabet, and

improving their skills in various fields, applying certain manners and behaviours. It also aims to improve children's reading and writing habits. QC's community development centres in Al Khor and Al Rayyan, along with its social development centre for expatriate communities, are continuing to implement the four-month-long 'Baraem' programme. Abdulrahman Mohamed al-Hajri, director of the Programmes and Community Development Department, stated

that 'Baraem' is part of QC's efforts to provide a supportive educational environment for children unable to attend kindergarten. By utilising a structured curriculum, the programme aids students in reading both Arabic and English letters, while also teaching them other subjects.

He explained that the programme has been running for 10 years, receiving substantial attention from parents, and graduating hundreds of children annually. He also em-

phasised the role of a dedicated team of qualified and experienced teachers skilled in working with children and providing them with a necessary educational foundation.

QC, under the slogan 'Prioritising their Education', has also launched a campaign to support educational projects in 25 countries. The campaign aims to provide school uniforms, cover tuition fees, build and furnish schools, as well as offer scholarships, and sponsor students.



French agricultural honour for Food Security Dept chief



France awarded the Order of Agricultural Merit at the rank of Knight to Director of the Food Security Department at the Ministry of Municipality Dr Masoud Jarallah al-Marri, in recognition of his contributions and efforts in enhancing technical co-operation between Qatar and France in agriculture and food security. The award ceremony was attended by HE the Minister of Municipality

Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah. French ambassador to Qatar Jean-Baptiste Favre presented the order to Dr al-Marri on behalf of the French government. Dr al-Marri expressed his appreciation for the honour, considering it a reflection of the ministry's efforts in developing the agricultural sector and enhancing food security in Qatar through co-operation with

all relevant entities and institutions in the country, as well as fruitful collaboration with concerned parties in sisterly and friendly countries. The Agricultural Order of Merit at the rank of Knight is a distinction granted by the French government to individuals who have made exceptional contributions in the fields of agriculture. (QNA)

Minister of Labour meets Bahrain, Oman counterparts, Jordanian ambassador



HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri met separately yesterday with his Bahraini and Oman counterparts Jameel bin Mohamed Ali Humaidan and Dr Mahad bin Saeed Baawin, respectively, on the sidelines of the GCC Ministerial Meetings on Civil Service, Labour, and Social Development Affairs in Qatar. During the two meetings, they discussed aspects of co-operation and ways to enhance them, especially enhancing the benefit from successful experiences and expertise among the GCC countries. (QNA)



HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri met yesterday with Jordan's ambassador Zaid Mufleh al-Lawzi. They discussed bilateral ties, ways to strengthen them, and other issues of common interest. (QNA)

Crendentials of Palestine, Cyprus, Peru envoys received



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received yesterday copies of the credentials of Fayeze Majed Abu al-Rab as ambassador of State of Palestine to Qatar (above), ambassador of Cyprus Andreas Nicolaides (above right) and Peru's ambassador Gonzalo Voto Bernales Gatica (right). HE al-Muraikhi wished the three ambassadors success in carrying out their duties, assuring them of providing all support to advance bilateral relations to closer co-operation in various fields. (QNA)



HMC physician contributes to WHO guideline for tobacco cessation

Dr Ahmad al-Mulla, director of Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC)'s Tobacco Control Centre - a World Health Organisation (WHO) collaborating centre for treating tobacco dependence - has contributed to the development of the WHO's clinical treatment guideline for tobacco cessation in adults. Dr al-Mulla was among 16 experts from around the world who collaborated on this project. The WHO recently released its first clinical guideline for tobacco cessation in adults which provides comprehensive recommendations and treatment methods to support individuals in quitting all forms of tobacco use. Dr al-Mulla received a letter of appreciation and recognition for the Tobacco

Control Centre and HMC's contribution to developing the clinical treatment guideline for tobacco cessation in adults. This participation highlights the important role of HMC and the Tobacco Control Centre in elevating Qatar's profile on the international stage, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean region, with their efforts to combat tobacco use and support the healthcare sector in providing the best treatment options for tobacco dependence. The release of the first WHO clinical treatment guideline for tobacco cessation in adults marks a significant contribution to global tobacco control efforts, given that there are approximately 1.25bn tobacco users worldwide.



Dr Ahmad al-Mulla

Chevrolet, Nissan, Porsche models recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Jaidah Motors & Trading Co, has announced the recall of Chevrolet Traverse 2014-2017 models, as a possible supplier manufacturing defect in the front-driver airbag inflator may result in inflator rupture during deployment. The MoCI, in co-operation with Saleh Al Hamad Al Mana Co, announced the recall of Nissan Xterra, Pathfinder, and Armada, 2008-2011 models, as a possible defect in the driver's airbag emblem may result in its detachment from its mounting. The MoCI, in co-operation with Porsche Centre Doha, Al Boraq Automobiles Co, also announced the recall of Porsche Cayenne, 2024-2025 models, as the trailing arm of the axle (front upper left) may break in the course of the vehicle's service life. A fracture in the trailing arm would cause impairment in steering, carried out.

Back-to-school event today

The Ministry of Municipality has invited the public for an event today at Place Vendome. Organised by Al Daayen Municipality as part of the back-to-school activities, the event under the topic 'How to prepare a balanced and healthy breakfast box' will be held from 9am until 11pm, a post on X said.

Farewell to Armenia envoy



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met yesterday with Armenian ambassador to Qatar Armen Sarkissian on the occasion of the end of his tenure. HE al-Muraikhi thanked the ambassador for his efforts in supporting and strengthening bilateral relations, wishing him success in his future duties. (QNA)

Qatar welcomes UK move to suspend arms export licences to Israel

Qatar welcomed yesterday the UK's announcement to suspend arms export licences to the Israeli occupation, including equipment used in the current war on the Gaza Strip, considering it an important step to protect Palestinian civilians, especially children and women. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasised the UK's announcement is in line with the resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly of the UN, and the International Court of Justice, calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Strip, providing full protection for civilians and civilian objects, and ensuring the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza without hindrance. The ministry also pointed out that the announcement would support the ongoing efforts to end the war in the Gaza Strip, reiterating Qatar's firm and permanent stance in supporting the Palestinian cause and the steadfastness of the fraternal Palestinian people, based on international legitimacy resolutions and the two-state solution. (QNA)

WAREHOUSE FOR RENT

- Warehouse for rent in Industrial area
- Warehouse 600 Sqm/1200 Sqm
- Municipality Approved
- Civil Defence Approved
- Secure Boundary Wall
- 24/7 Security

6672 2989

Qatar Foundation

INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee (QAR)	Tender Bond Value (QAR)	Bid Closing Date
QF-RFQ-607	CAFM / MARAFIQ License Renewal Services on Call-off Basis for 3 Years	1,000.00	100,000.00	6 th October 2024, 2:00PM
HBKU-RFQ-344	Provision of Supply of Print Services on Call-off Basis for 3 Years with an Option to Extend One More Year to Hamad Bin Khalifa University - Qatar Foundation	500.00	N/A	6 th October 2024, 2:00PM
QF-RFQ-611	Provision of ISO Internal Assessment Services to QF for 3 years with option to extend up to 1 Year	500.00	N/A	3 rd October 2024, 2:00PM

Qatar Foundation (QF) Procurement Directorate is inviting companies to participate in the above listed public tenders. To receive the tender documents, please follow the below steps:

- Supplier Registration** It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tender[s]. Only QF registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website at <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration> to complete the Supplier Registration process.
Tender Fee: Interested bidders can Sign in by visiting this link <https://suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract> and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferrable tender fee online.
All Tender Fees are to be paid using credit cards only.
Tender Fee Payment Dates: Payment of Tender Fee online will be from **4th September until 10th September 2024**.
- All bidders, who are registered and have paid the required tender fees online to QF, will then be granted access to download the Tender Document.
- Technical and commercial bids need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier Portal as per instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.
 - The commercial bid must be valid for **180 days** from Bid Closing Date.
 - The commercial bid must be accompanied by a bank guarantee (tender bond) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for **180 days** from the bid closing date (where applicable as per the Tender documents).
 - The successful tenderer will be required to submit a performance bond as prescribed in each of the above tender documents.
 - Qatar Foundation special qualifications, terms and conditions shall apply as stipulated in the tender document.

Note: All work instructions for Supplier registration and Supplier portal can be found in below link: <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration>

Qatar submits document of accession to Istanbul Convention on Temporary Admission of WCO



Qatar's ambassador to Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg Khalid bin Fahad al-Hajri submitted to the Secretary-General of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) Ian Saunders, the original document of Qatar's accession to Appendices (B2, B3, B5, B9) of the Istanbul Convention on Temporary Admission, at the organisation's headquarters in Brussels. During the meeting, the ambassador emphasised on WCO's crucial role in securing international trade exchange and protecting communities from fraud, as well as in promoting the exchange of customs practices among customs authorities worldwide. In turn, the WCO secretary-general praised Qatar's role as a key partner of the organisation and affirmed the significance of its accession to the mentioned convention appendices. — QNA



13th meeting of committee of GCC tax department heads concludes in Doha

QNA
Doha

The 13th meeting of the Committee of Heads and Directors of Tax Departments in the GCC countries, which was hosted by Qatar, represented by the General Tax Authority (GTA), concluded on Monday.

The meeting covered a broad array of topics related to enhancing tax policies and exchanging expertise across all GCC countries.

HE President of the General Tax Authority Khalifa bin Jassim al-Kuwari lauded the constructive collaboration among the member states, highlighting that "the meeting showcased the essence of Gulf co-operation and served as a platform to strengthen tax integration, share expertise, co-ordinate policies, and unify efforts to address shared tax challenges."

His emphasised Qatar's ongoing commitment to supporting Gulf co-operation, adding: "The discussions during the meeting significantly contribute to advancing GCC tax co-ordination, which, in turn, enhances the flexibility and efficiency of our



tax systems and helps develop a fairer and more transparent tax ecosystem."

Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Development Affairs at the GCC Secretariat Khaled bin Ali bin Salem al-Sunaidi praised the efforts, support and assistance Qatar provided to make the work of the GCC a success.

He pointed out that the meeting covered many topics related to tax policy that contribute to

the process of continuous joint work between the GCC countries.

The meeting concluded with GCC tax leaders praising Qatar's exceptional hosting. They highlighted the importance of regular gatherings to share knowledge, enhance co-ordination, and advance economic integration, with the aim of developing joint tax policies that best serve the interests of all GCC countries and nations.

Sidra Medicine to host precision medicine 2024 summit

Sidra Medicine, a Qatar Foundation entity, will host the Precision Medicine and the Future of Genomics 2024 Summit (PMFG 2024) from December 3-5 at the Qatar National Convention Centre.

PMFG 2024 will focus on three main pillars: Genomics for All, Precision Diagnostics, and Advanced Therapeutics. It will bring together leading experts, innovators, and stakeholders from around the world to explore the latest advancements in these key areas of personalised healthcare.

Dr Iyabo Tinubu-Karch, CEO of Sidra Medicine, said: "Qatar is at the forefront of precision medicine, thanks to local entities like Sidra Medicine, Hamad Medical Corporation, Qatar Foundation, Qatar Precision Health Institute and other partners. Our combined efforts highlight pioneering therapies and world-class research that have ultimately positioned Sidra Medicine as an experienced healthcare organisation on programmes related to genetic and genomic medicine, paediatric rare diseases and precision health."

Dr Ammira Akil, principal investigator and the lead of the Genetic and Metabolic Disorders Clinical Research Programme at Sidra Medicine and organising chair of PMFG 2024, said: "The future of precision medicine in Qatar will be showcased at PMFG 2024, a testament to the power of collaboration. We are bringing together the brightest minds in healthcare,



Dr Ammira Akil and Prof Khalid Fakhro.

research, technology, and policy to share knowledge, forge partnerships, and drive the next wave of innovation. PMFG 2024 will highlight advancements in precision medicine, including newborn genome sequencing, population genomics, precise diagnostics and breakthrough therapies."

With a focus on ethical considerations and real-world implementation, PMFG 2024 attendees will discover how early genomic information can personalise newborn care, explore large-scale genomic advancements and their integration into healthcare systems, and uncover targeted treatment breakthroughs for complex and rare diseases.

Prof Khalid Fakhro, chief research officer at Sidra Medicine, noted: "Over the past decade, we have witnessed incredible strides in precision medicine, and Sidra

Medicine continues to play a critical role in shaping the future of precision health in the Middle East. Thanks to our role in establishing a comprehensive well-characterised database of Arab genomic data and disease cohorts – we are increasingly becoming a source of knowledge, inspiration and collaboration for healthcare institutes from around the world."

Renowned physician-scientist, Dr Robert Green, who is a professor of medicine (Genetics) from Harvard Medical School, will be the opening keynote speaker at PMFG 2024. Dr Green is widely recognised for his leadership in the MedSeq and BabySeq Projects, which have provided crucial early data on the clinical utility and cost-effectiveness of comprehensive genomic sequencing in newborns.

Gulf, Arab journalists unite to confront malicious campaigns

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Press Centre (QPC) praised the statement issued on X by HE Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer al-Thani, the chairman of Qatar Media Corporation (QMC), in which he called for concerted efforts and tireless work at all official and civil levels to confront anonymous and offensive accounts that aim to spread discord and factors of division among the peoples of the Gulf. Stressing the unity and cohesion of the Gulf social fabric, in order to enhance the path of our Gulf Council, in a way that achieves security and prosperity for our Gulf countries and peoples.

The QPC stressed the importance of this call, which comes in light of the centre's continuous efforts and warnings of the dangers of misleading, false and offensive news, through various activities, seminars and reports that it has issued and published in various fields.

The QPC called on all Gulf and Arab journalists to unify their efforts, through various print, visual and audio media, and through their social media accounts, to show solidarity and co-operation in confronting malicious campaigns carried out by anonymous accounts.

While being keen to publish and circulate real news and information, and expose fake news, in a way that enhances trust between public opinion on the one hand, and journalists on the other hand.

The QPC also emphasised the importance of the



role of journalists in verifying the accuracy of news and information before circulating it, and the wide-ranging influence that journalists have in clarifying real news, exposing fake ones, and their effective role in limiting the targeted influence of fake accounts.

Hunting fans urged to respect nature

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change has urged hunting fans to abide by the regulations during the ongoing hunting season that runs until February 15, next year. The ministry posted on X reminders on the importance of following the guidelines to maintain the environment and the endangered species. Hunting is allowed only from sunrise to sunset. Hunters

must not approach or tamper with the birds' nests or their eggs. They must not attempt to harm the local meadows and the wild plants. Such restrictions are meant to sustain a healthy growth of the environment and its various components while allowing hunting fans to enjoy a fruitful season without any potential damage to the natural surroundings, the ministry added.

FREE VEHICLE RECALL

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



Nissan Xterra, Pathfinder, Armada

Manufacturing Year

2008 - 2011

DEFECT

Possible defect in the driver's airbag emblem that may result in its detachment from its mounting

PROCESS

Contact the dealer for the free required repair

CONTACT

Saleh Al Hamad Al Mana Co.
Phone: 8000505
shm.recall@shalmana.com

NISSAN

North Macedonia PM meets Qatar's charge d'affaires

Prime Minister of North Macedonia Hristijan Mickoski met with Charge d'Affaires of the Qatar's embassy in North Macedonia Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral co-operation between the countries. (QNA)



Tunisia Speaker meets Qatar's ambassador

Speaker of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People of Tunisia Ibrahim Bouderbala met with Qatar's ambassador to Tunisia Zayed bin Saeed al-Kumait al-Khayarin. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation between the two countries. (QNA)



Top experts gather for Int'l Space Radio Monitoring Meeting

◆ Communications Regulatory Authority hosts event in Doha

The Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) is hosting the 25th International Space Radio Monitoring Meeting (ISRMM) in Doha until tomorrow (Thursday).

The annual multilateral meeting is attended by participants from communications and spectrum management regulatory bodies engaged in satellite monitoring and measurements, and representatives from satellite communication companies, equipment manufacturers and other satellite-related organisations.

The three-day meeting will explore innovative strategies, address emerging challenges, and collaborate on solutions to ensure the effective and harmonious use of the radio spectrum.

The ISRMM includes a symposium for industry experts and a regulator's expert meeting. The sessions will provide insights from various sectors, including regulatory bodies, satellite industry, space agencies, monitoring agencies, and other stakeholders on advanced technologies related to space monitoring, geolocation, and interference mitigation, and discuss policies, regulations and recent experiences in this field.

Engineer Ahmad Abdulla al-Muslemmani, CRA president, emphasised the crucial role of space and satellite technologies in fostering a sustainable and inclusive digital society. "Qatar's



CRA president engineer Ahmad Abdulla al-Muslemmani addressing the event.

commitment to advancing space technology not only aligns with the nation's vision for sustainable development and economic prosperity but also positions Qatar as a pioneering force in the global space industry," he stated.

"By investing in these cutting-edge technologies, Qatar aims to drive significant technological innovation, diversify its economy, create new job opportunities, and enhance national security.

"These objectives are central to support the Qatar National Vision 2030, the Third National Development Strategy 2024-30, the Digital Agenda 2030, and the CRA strategy reflecting the country's strategic focus on harnessing space technology for long-term growth and global leadership," he added.

Space radio monitoring is crucial for identifying and resolving radio frequency interference (RFI), which can disrupt satellite communications. It ensures the safe operation of satellites by monitoring their orbits, preventing collisions, and supporting emergency responses with real-time data on satellite anomalies or failures.

Satellite communication services are essential for earth observation, weather forecasting, and monitoring climate change. These services require sufficient spectrum, and it is the collaborative role of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and telecom regulatory authorities around the world that keep these frequencies free of interference.

Transport minister attends Egypt International Airshow



Qatar's Minister of Transport HE Jassim Saif Ahmed al-Sulaiti, Egypt President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and other dignitaries at the opening ceremony of the inaugural edition of the Egypt International Airshow, yesterday.

HE the Minister of Transport Jassim Saif Ahmed al-Sulaiti has participated in the opening ceremony of the inaugural edition of the Egypt International Airshow (EIAS 2024), which opened at New Alamein City yesterday, under the patronage and in presence of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

A Ministry of Transport statement explained that representatives from more than 100 countries, 300 exhibitors and several aviation, space industry leaders from around the world are participating in the event, which runs until tomorrow (Thursday) at El Alamein International Airport. The airshow will showcase some of the latest technologies, products, and most-advanced civil and commercial aircraft.

The airshow aims at supporting the manufacturing and digitisation system in aviation, defence and space. The event serves as an international platform for the aviation industry and space agencies to discuss

achievements in space exploration, satellite communications, as well as civil and military applications in space technology. The event also features airshows, conferences and an exhibition of the newest services and products in aviation. Qatar's civil aviation industry has over the past few years seen a significant transformation with the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030 and reported record numbers this year. Aircraft movement at Hamad International Airport (HIA) rose 7% last July on a year-on-year basis, compared to July 2023. The number of passengers also climbed 10%.

The launching of the S-band radar system at HIA and the long-range radar system in north Qatar and the establishment of the Doha Flight Information Region (FIR) have contributed to enhancing the operations of the Qatari civil aviation industry and to keep pace with the global civil aviation systems, in step with latest universal technologies.

Officials praise education ministry's new strategy goals, programmes

Several officials at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) have praised the goals and programmes that the ministry's new strategy 2024/2030 seeks to achieve, describing the strategy as comprehensive and integrated.

They said that it seeks to develop the education sector in Qatar by providing high-quality education while ensuring equal opportunities and developing teachers' skills on an ongoing basis, and enhancing the educational environment according to the latest educational practices.

Director of the Public Relations and Communication Department at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Maryam Abdulla al-Mohannadi said in a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the ministry's new strategy 2024/2030 is comprehensive and includes five main axes: pre-primary education, education in grades one to twelve, post-secondary education, continuing education and educational system enablers.

Al-Mohannadi noted that the goal of this strategy is to establish an educational environment that enhances values and skills to build an advanced society and a prosperous economy.

She explained that the Public Relations and Communication Department at the ministry plays a prominent role in this strategy, as it leads a strategic programme, the "Communication" programme, through which it aims to improve communication mechanisms in the ministry as an institution and

external communication between it and the public. She noted that everyone is a partner in the educational process and has the right to learn about the ministry's activities and achievements, and that their involvement supports the ministry, trends and achievements.

Al-Mohannadi, who is the leader of the "Communication" programme, one of the strategic programmes in the field of educational system enablers in the strategy, explained that its goals include seeking to improve communication mechanisms and involving everyone and informing them of the ministry's activities and achievements.

Fatima al-Saadi, the national leader of the "My Special Path" programme and Director of the Special Education and Inclusive Education Department at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, reviewed in a similar statement to QNA the services and goals provided by the strategy for students with disabilities.

She noted that in order to provide and guarantee high-quality education for them, a student support services centre will be launched in co-operation between the Ministries of Education and Higher Education, Public Health, Social Development and Family.

She explained that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has launched an electronic service to activate the system of obtaining educational vouchers for Qatari students with disabilities, which is based on enhancing equal educational opportunities

and helping students achieve their potential in a comprehensive educational environment.

These educational vouchers are divided into three levels according to the type and intensity of the required services, so that the total value of the voucher at the first support level becomes QR43 thousand, the second support level at QR53 thousand, and QR78 thousand for the third support level, she said. She noted that work is currently underway to prepare and design training programmes according to the highest international standards of efficiency for special education teachers.

Director of the Training and Development Center at the ministry Iman al-Mohannadi, spoke in a statement about the main axes of the strategy, which include education from kindergarten until after graduation, and in joining the labour market.

She said that the "Excellence and Empowerment" programme, which she is responsible for, includes 13 projects to develop the skills of teachers and school leaders. It is noteworthy that on the sidelines of the launch event of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Strategy 2024/2030 under the slogan "Igniting the Spark of Learning", which will last for two days, the ministry is organising a series of discussion sessions with the participation of a number of partners and parties concerned, to shed light on the most prominent aspects of the new strategy, the projects and programmes that the ministry intends to implement within the framework of its operational plan. (QNA)

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, GREEZY ACOSTA RENTUAYA
holder of
PHILIPPINES Passport No. P5863104A
QID No. 28060806724
hereby change my name
from
GREEZY ACOSTA RENTUAYA
to
GREEZY RENTUAYA VEGA

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

Mercury's greatest elongation with sun in Qatar's sky on Thursday: QCH

Qatar Calendar House (QCH) has announced that the smallest planet in our solar system, Mercury, will reach its maximum elongation with the sun in the skies of Qatar on the morning of Thursday (Sept 5).

This is because Mercury will be at an altitude of 18 degrees above the eastern horizon at sunrise.

QCH astronomer Dr Bashir Marzouq said that the phenomenon of Mercury reaching its maximum elongation with the sun is an important astronomical phenomenon because it is a wonderful opportunity to observe Mercury from the Earth's surface for the longest period of time in the dawn sky, above the eastern horizon before sunrise. This phenomenon only occurs for the planets Mercury and Venus, because their



orbit around the sun is within the orbit of the Earth around the sun, he added.

Dr Marzouq explained that the residents of Qatar will be able to observe and see the planet Mercury during this phenomenon with the naked eye above

the eastern horizon of the country's sky at dawn on Thursday, after its sunrise in the country's sky, and even before sunrise on Thursday. He noted that the time of Mercury's sunrise in the Qatari sky will be at 03:56, while the sunrise on Thursday will be at 05:16 Doha local time.

The last time Mercury reached its maximum elongation with the sun above the eastern horizon was on Thursday (May 9), and it will reach it again on Dec 25, he added.

Elongation is defined as the maximum angle between the centre of the sun and the centre of the planet relative to the observer from the surface of the Earth, and it is divided into two parts: eastern elongation, which is above the western horizon, and western elonga-

QCH astronomer Dr Bashir Marzouq said the phenomenon of Mercury reaching its maximum elongation with the sun is an important astronomical phenomenon

tion, which is above the eastern horizon.

The planet Mercury is one of the inner planets in our solar system, and it is the smallest and closest planet to the sun, as it is an average distance of 58mm km away from it. (QNA)

Gaza schoolgirl longs to return to class as conflicts disrupts new academic year

Reuters
Gaza

Gaza schoolgirl Rama Abu Seif longs to return to a classroom to study but it is now a dormitory for families displaced by war.

Her books were burned to light fires in clay ovens. Her school bag is stuffed with clothes in case she needs to flee an Israeli bombardment quickly.

The 12-year-old missed grade six last year and will be deprived of grade seven as the war between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas group rages on.

“Of course, the children who are my age and younger than me, they all want to go back to northern (Gaza) and relive their school days, study and play at school, but all of that is gone and we lost two years because of the war,” she said.

There are no prospects for Rama and many other children to return to school any time soon in the Gaza Strip, which has been laid to waste by Israeli bombardments.

Since the conflict began in the first week of October, schools have been bombed or turned into shelters for displaced people, leaving Gaza’s estimated 625,000 school-aged children unable to attend classes.

Instead of playing sports and games in the school playground, Rama waits in long lines for her turn to collect water, which is often dirty and undrinkable.

And there is no end in sight.

Mediations have failed to reach a deal that would secure a ceasefire.

The latest bloodshed in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict was triggered last October when Hamas stormed Israel.

Israel’s subsequent assault on the Hamas-governed enclave has killed over 40,600 Palestinians, according to the local health ministry. Most of Gaza’s 2.3mn people have been displaced, triggering a hunger and health crisis in the enclave.

Rama and her classmates can only recall better days in an impoverished yet once vibrant Gaza, one of the most densely populated areas in the world.

Gaza and the occupied West Bank have inter-



A displaced Palestinian student, Rama Abu Seif, speaks during an interview with Reuters, at a school where she shelters with her family, as the conflict disrupts a new academic year, in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip.

nationally high literacy levels, and the under-resourced education system was a rare source of hope and pride among Palestinians.

Since the war erupted, Gazans have fled up, down and across the territory, often repeatedly, seeking safety and a place to sleep in schools like the one in Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza where Rama and her family live.

But nowhere is safe.

In early August, an Israeli airstrike on a Gaza City school compound housing displaced Palestinian families killed around 100 people, Gaza’s emergency services said.

“In the past we would open the bag and find the book in it, so we would take the book and study,” Rama said.

“But now we open the bag and find clothes inside it, clothes for displacement that we take with us wherever we go, from place to place.”



A Palestinian child cries during a polio vaccination campaign, amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

WHO says it surpassed early polio vaccination targets in Gaza

AFP
Geneva

The WHO said yesterday that its emergency polio vaccination campaign in Gaza has reached more children than expected, with 161,000 receiving their initial dose in the first two days.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) added that the first round of the vaccination drive would take another 10 days.

With Gaza lying in ruins and the majority of its 2.4mn residents forced to flee their homes due to Israel’s military assault – often taking refuge in cramped and unsanitary conditions – disease has spread.

After the first confirmed polio case in 25 years, a massive vaccination effort began on Sunday, with localised “humanitarian pauses” in fighting.

The campaign aims to fully vaccinate more than 640,000 children in the besieged territory, devastated by almost 11 months of war.

Mainly affecting children under five, polio can cause deformities, paralysis and in some cases death.

Rik Peepkorn, the WHO’s representative for the Palestinian territories, said it was vital to reach at least 90% coverage

to avoid the spread of the disease both within Gaza’s borders and beyond.

The campaign began in the central part of the densely populated Gaza Strip, where the WHO initially expected to vaccinate 156,500 children under the age of 10. “Our target for the central zone was an under-estimation,” Peepkorn said, adding this was probably due to more people being crowded into the area than anticipated.

He said the vaccination drive was expected to shift to southern Gaza tomorrow, with the aim of immunising some 340,000 children there.

It would then move to the north of the strip, where around 150,000 will be vaccinated.

“We still have 10 days to go at least” for the whole first portion of the campaign, Peepkorn said, and the rollout of the necessary second dose would begin in four weeks’ time.

‘EXTREMELY CONCERNED’

As he related his visit to a health centre handing out the vaccine, Peepkorn said he was “not even so surprised” the campaign had gotten off to a good start.

“There were so many – the fathers, mothers – bringing their children in, and children really proud and happy that they got vaccinated.” He pointed to

Gaza’s “high vaccination acceptance” with pre-war routine vaccine coverage of between 90 and 95%, “which is actually much better than a lot of high income countries.” But the WHO representative warned the agency was “extremely concerned” by Gaza’s wider health situation.

With only 16 of 36 hospitals operational, the strip has seen a “huge increase in infectious diseases”.

“We’ve seen more than a million, mainly children, diagnosed with acute respiratory infection,” Peepkorn said, adding that more than 600,000 children had suffered from diarrhoea. While polio vaccinations are best carried out in house-to-house campaigns, Peepkorn said that those are impossible in Gaza as “there’s very few houses left and people are everywhere”.

War has been raging in the Palestinian territory since an attack in Israel in the first week of October by fighters from the Palestinian Hamas group.

Vowing to destroy Hamas, Israel launched a military assault on Gaza which has so far killed at least 40,819 people there, according to the territory’s Hamas-run health ministry.

Most of the dead are women and children, the UN rights office says.

UNREST

At least 81 killed in Nigeria in suspected Boko Haram attack

At least 81 people died and several were missing after an attack by suspected Boko Haram militants in Nigeria’s northeastern Yobe State, local officials said yesterday, AFP reported from Kano. “Around 150 suspected Boko Haram terrorists armed with rifles and RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades) attacked Mafa ward on more than 50 motorcycles around 1600 hours on Sunday,” said Abdulkarim Dungus, a Yobe state police spokesman. “They killed many people and burnt many shops and houses. We are yet to ascertain the actual number of those killed in the attack.”

TRAGEDY

Six dead as ship sinks off Kuwait

Six crew members have died after an Iranian merchant ship capsized in Kuwaiti waters, Iran’s official news agency IRNA reported yesterday, AFP reported from Tehran. “The Arabakhtar I ship, whose six crew members were of Indian and Iranian nationality, sank on Sunday,” said Nasser Passandeh, head of Iran’s port and maritime navigation.

EU mission says ‘not safe’ to tow burning Red Sea oil tanker

AFP
Dubai

An operation to tow away a burning oil tanker attacked by Yemeni rebels in the Red Sea is too hazardous to proceed, a European Union naval mission said yesterday, warning of severe environmental risks.

The Greek-flagged oil tanker, Sounion, was hit by Yemen’s Houthis off the coast of Hodeidah on August 21 while carrying 150,000 tonnes of crude oil. “The private companies responsible for the salvage operation have concluded that the conditions were not met to conduct the towing operation and that it was not safe to proceed,” the mission said in a statement on X.

“Alternative solutions are now being explored by the private companies.”

The EU’s Aspides mission, which is protecting the tugs

involved in the operation, said it aimed to avoid an “unprecedented environmental disaster in the region”.

The United States has also warned of a potential ecological catastrophe involving one million barrels of oil, four times more than the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster off Alaska. Last week the Houthis released a video of masked men placing explosives on the Sounion and detonating them, causing several fires on board.

Aspides, which was formed in February to guard merchant shipping in the Red Sea following dozens of Houthi attacks, earlier said multiple fires were still ablaze.

“Several fires continue to burn on the vessel’s main deck,” it said, noting there were “no visible signs of an oil spill”.

The Sounion’s crew, made up of 23 Filipinos and two Russians, was rescued the day after the attack by a French frigate serving with Aspides.

Ugandan opposition chief ‘shot in the leg by police’

AFP
Nairobi

Ugandan opposition leader Bobi Wine, a leading critic of President Yoweri Museveni, was shot in the leg by police yesterday, a statement said.

A statement on Wine’s official account on X said the incident took place in Bulindo in central Uganda.

“He’s been rushed to hospital for urgent medical attention. We’ll keep the country updated on his situation,” the statement said. The circumstances surrounding the incident at Bulindo, around 20 kilometres north of the capital Kampala, were unclear.

Videos on social media

showed the 42-year-old pop star turned politician being carried by members of his NUP party with blood flowing from the left tibia.

Wine, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi, and his National Unity Platform (NUP) have been a thorn in the side of Museveni, who has ruled Uganda for nearly 40 years.

Wine challenged the 79-year-old head of state in presidential elections in 2021, when Museveni was re-elected for a sixth term with 58% of the ballot in a vote Wine denounced as a masquerade. The campaign was marked by intimidation, opposition arrests and violence.

Before that, at least 54 were killed during protests in November 2020 after Wine was arrested.

DR Congo jail break attempt leaves 129 dead

AFP
Kinshasa

An attempted jail break from DR Congo’s largest prison has left at least 129 people dead and led to women being physically abused, the interior minister said yesterday.

The circumstances around the bid to bust out of the Makala prison in the capital Kinshasa, which holds 10 times the number it is meant to house, in the early hours of Monday remain unclear.

On Monday, witnesses told AFP they had heard gunfire at around 2:00am which lasted for several hours in the area of the prison, a popular and residential neighbourhood. Democratic Republic of Congo Interior Minister Jacquemain Shabani in a statement released by video yesterday announced a provisional death toll of 129 people.

Seeking re-election, Algeria’s Tebboune touts gains

AFP
Algiers

Abdelmadjid Tebboune, who assumed Algeria’s presidency during mass pro-democracy protests, is touting his achievements as he seeks another term.

Yet, five years after the movement faded, some say real change remains elusive.

The Hirak protests, which led to the ousting of longtime president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 2019, aimed for a comprehensive political overhaul.

Tebboune, a minister under Bouteflika, took over as president in December that year after widely boycotted elections, as the movement was stifled and its leaders were imprisoned.

Now, as he campaigns for the September 7 election, Tebboune says he has succeeded in rectify-

ing the country’s past wrongs with broad achievements and is promising more if re-elected.

Despite more than 100 weeks of demonstrations, Tebboune “dismissed the democratic transition demanded by millions of citizens”, said Hasni Abidi, an Algeria analyst at the Geneva-based CER-MAM Study Center.

Abidi said a change in leadership alone was insufficient to bring about a “new era”, despite Tebboune’s frequent references to a “new Algeria”.

Even as his first term nears its end, Tebboune still faced the “difficulty of bringing about profound change”, he said.

Algeria-based political commentator Mohamed Hennad said this change should primarily be political.

“As long as political questions are not legitimately resolved, any economic, cultural, or diplomatic discourse is pure diversion,” he

said. The Hirak movement withered away with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with a sweeping crackdown on protesters. Hundreds were arrested, and dozens remain behind bars or are still being prosecuted, according to prisoners’ rights group CNLD.

Since taking office, Tebboune has claimed to have put Algeria back on track, frequently referring to Bouteflika’s last years in power as the “mafia decade” where control of the oil-rich country was concentrated in the hands of a “gang”.

During his tenure, several businessmen, ministers and political figures from that era, including Bouteflika’s brother Said, were convicted on corruption charges and imprisoned.

Tebboune also says he has successfully transformed Algeria into an emerging economy, now Africa’s third-largest.

Abidi, however, points out that



Algeria's President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

Tebboune’s success has been aided by a “favourable international setting”, with the Ukraine-Russia war driving up natural gas prices to the benefit of Algeria, the continent’s top exporter.

This economic windfall has allowed Tebboune to deliver “local-interest speeches steeped in populism”, said Abidi, with promises of free housing, raising the minimum wage and higher social pensions.

At a recent rally in Oran, Tebboune pledged to create 450,000 jobs and increase monthly unemployment benefits if re-elected. Launched in 2022, unemployment benefits now provide 13,000 dinars (\$97) to people aged 19 to 40, and Tebboune has promised to raise this to 20,000 dinars – currently the minimum wage.

Despite these pledges, critics have said social and economic progress under Tebboune has been slow.

But the president often defends his record by saying his achievements have come despite “a war against Covid-19 and corruption” following the Hirak movement.

Abdelhamid Megunine, a 20-year-old student in Algiers, recalls that period with bitterness.

“We suffered a lot,” he told AFP. “Prices and the cost of living have since increased.”

Although Algeria’s economy has grown at a rate of about four

percent over the past two years, with foreign exchange reserves reaching \$70bn, it remains heavily dependent on oil and gas.

Hydrocarbon exports account for about 95 percent of the North African country’s hard currency revenues, which are crucial for sustaining social assistance programmes.

On foreign policy, Tebboune’s tenure has seen a mix of successes and challenges.

Algeria gained international attention in January when it became a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, where it has been a strong advocate for Palestinian rights.

However, relations with neighbouring countries, have worsened, largely due to the ongoing dispute over Western Sahara.

Similarly, relations with France, already strained due to a history of colonialism, recently suffered a blow.



Venezuela issues arrest warrant for opposition leader Gonzalez

Reuters/AFP
Caracas

Venezuela's attorney-general's office said on Monday that a court has issued an arrest warrant for opposition leader Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, accusing him of conspiracy and other crimes amid a dispute over whether he or President Nicolas Maduro won a July election.

Attorney-General Tarek Saab shared a photo of the warrant with Reuters via a message on the application Telegram.

The United States, European Union and nine Latin American countries rejected yesterday the arrest warrant issued against Gonzalez Urrutia.

EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell wrote on X: "I categorically reject the arrest warrant."

"Enough of the repression and harassment of the opposition and civil society," he wrote. "The will of the Venezuelan people must be respected."

Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay said that they "unequivocally and absolutely reject the arrest warrant", in a joint statement released by the Ecuadoran foreign ministry.

The issue of an arrest warrant against Gonzalez would amount to a major escalation in Maduro's government's crackdown

against the opposition following the disputed election.

Venezuela's national electoral authority and its top court have said that Maduro was the victor of the July 28 election with just over half of the votes, but tallies shared by the opposition show a resounding victory for Gonzalez.

The warrant follows weeks of comments from top government officials saying Gonzalez and other members of the opposition should go to jail.

"This man has the nerve to say he doesn't recognise laws, he doesn't recognise anything. What's up with that? That's unacceptable," Maduro said in a broadcast on state television. "Citizens agree that laws have to work and that officials do their job."

The opposition, some Western countries and international bodies like a United Nations panel of experts have said the vote was not transparent and demanded publication of full tallies, with some outright decrying fraud.

A Gonzalez spokesperson said they were awaiting any notification of a warrant but made no further comment.

The opposition has always denied any wrongdoing.

"They have lost all notion of reality," opposition leader Maria Corina Machado said on X. "Threatening the President-elect will only achieve more cohesion and increase the support of Venezuelans and

Venezuela's newest news agency says AI anchors protect reporters amid government crackdown

By Maria Paula Laguna
Reuters

One of Venezuela's newest news anchors sits on a stool, dressed in a flannel shirt and chinos as he delivers the day's headlines.

He goes by "El Pana", Venezuelan slang for "friend". Only, he's not real.

El Pana, and his colleague "La Chama", or "The Girl", are generated using artificial intelligence (AI), though they look, sound and move realistically.

They were created as part of an initiative dubbed "Operation Retweet" by Colombia-based organisation Connectas, led by director Carlos Huertas, to publish news from a dozen independent media outlets in Venezuela and in the process protect reporters as the government has launched a crackdown on journalists and protesters.

"We decided to use artificial intelligence to be the 'face' of the information we're publishing," Huertas said in an interview, "because our colleagues who are still out doing their jobs are facing much more risk."

At least 10 journalists have been arrested since mid-June and eight remain imprisoned on charges including terrorism, according to Reporters Without Borders.

"Here, using artificial intelligence is ... almost like a mix between technology and journalism," Huertas said, explaining the project looked to "circumvent the persecution and increasing repression" from the government as there would be no one who could face arrest.

The country's opposition and human rights groups have said recent arrests of protesters, opposition figures and journalists



An image shows avatars generated through artificial intelligence (AI) technology by CONNECTAS with the headline reading *La Chama, El Pana*, Venezuelan slang for the girl and the friend. - Reuters

are part of a government crackdown meant to quiet a sometimes violent, month-long election dispute.

Venezuela's communications ministry did not respond to a request for comment about the AI journalism initiative.

No official has responded to repeated requests for comment by Reuters about the arrests of journalists in recent weeks.

Both the opposition and President Nicolas Maduro claim victory in the July 28 election.

the world for Edmundo Gonzalez."

The opposition has published what it says are copies of over 80% of ballot box-level tallies on a public website, while the electoral council says a cyber attack on election night has prevented its publication of the full tallies.

The warrant request appeared to be the government's latest salvo in what the opposition says is a crackdown on dissent.

Saab has also launched criminal probes into Machado and the opposition vote tally website itself and detentions of opposition figures and protesters have continued in the weeks since the vote.

Protests have led to at least 27 deaths and some 2,400 arrests.

Gonzalez ignored three summons to

testify about the website, allowing a warrant to potentially be issued for him in that case.

The warrant was issued after prosecutor Luis Ernesto Duenez requested Gonzalez be arrested for usurpation of functions, falsification of public documents, instigation to disobey the law, conspiracy and association, all allegedly committed against the Venezuela state.

Lawyers consulted by Reuters said that Venezuelan law does not allow those over 70 to serve sentences in jails, instead requiring house arrest.

Gonzalez Urrutia, who turned 75 last week, is married and has two daughters; one in Caracas and the other in Madrid.

The US has drafted a list of about 60

Venezuelan government officials and family members who could be sanctioned in the first punitive measures following the election, two people close to the matter told Reuters.

Since the vote, the ruling party-controlled national assembly passed a law tightening rules on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and unions denounced alleged forced resignations of state employees espousing pro-opposition views.

The warrant request came hours after the Biden administration said an aircraft used by Maduro had been confiscated in the Dominican Republic after determining that its purchase violated US sanctions, a move the Venezuelan government slammed as an act of "piracy".

Hispanic voters give Harris edge on healthcare, climate, poll shows

Reuters
Washington

Kamala Harris has neutralised Donald Trump's edge on the economy among Hispanic voters, and her 13-percentage point lead within that group reflects the fact they vastly prefer her approach to healthcare and climate change, Reuters/Ipsos polling shows.

On those latter issues, Hispanics favour Democratic Vice-President Harris's approach over Republican former president Trump's by wide margins - 18 points for healthcare and 23 points for climate change.

A diverse and fast-growing slice of the US electorate who are swing voters, Hispanics are an attractive target for both candidates in a contest that was shaken up in July when Democratic President Joe Biden folded his flagging re-election campaign and passed the torch to Harris.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll, conducted on August 21-28, showed

that the top issues for Hispanic registered voters ahead of the November 5 election largely track those of the country at large, with the economy, immigration, healthcare and climate change standing out as the group's top priorities.

While registered voters overall favour Trump's approach to the economy over Harris's by 45% to 36%, Hispanic registered voters viewed them equally, with each drawing 39% support.

That reflects an improvement for Democrats, after a Reuters/Ipsos poll in May showed Biden trailing Trump by four points on the economy in Hispanic voters' eyes.

Hispanic voters preferred Harris on healthcare policy, by 46% to 29%, and on climate change, with a 46% to 23% lead, bigger leads than she held among the broader electorate, which also favoured her on those two issues.

Trump held the advantage on immigration policy, with Hispanic voters preferring him over Harris 42% to 37%, narrower than



Harris boards Air Force 2 for departure at Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport. - Reuters

his 46% to 36% lead among the broader electorate.

"The Latino vote is probably the most pure swing group of voters in America right now and will be for a long time," said Chuck Rocha, a Democratic strategist who advised Bernie Sanders's 2016 campaign, including on Latino outreach.

Trump leads on the economy among men and voters aged 35 and older, while he and Harris are closely matched among women and younger Americans, the new Reuters/Ipsos poll showed.

Harris has a strong lead on the economy among black voters.

The poll was conducted nationally and gathered responses from

4,253 US adults, including 3,562 registered voters and 412 Hispanic registered voters.

It had margins of error of about two percentage points for voters overall and about four points for Hispanics.

Hispanics made up about 14% of voting age US citizens in 2022, up from 9% in Census Bureau estimates for 2005-2009.

Biden won the Hispanic vote by 21 points in 2020, according to an exit poll analysis by Pew Research, so Harris's current 13 point lead among registered Hispanic voters, should it hold through Election Day, would signal an improvement for Trump.

US reports 28th Takata air bag inflator death since 2009

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) said yesterday that it had confirmed the 28th death in the United States stemming from a defective Takata air bag inflator since 2009.

The issue has prompted the largest-ever recall in US history.

Over the past decade, more than 100mn vehicles fitted with Takata airbag inflators have been recalled worldwide, including 67mn in the United States.

The agency said the confirmation was based on new information submitted by Honda Motor.

The death involved a Honda vehicle and occurred in 2018 in Alabama, resulting in fatal injuries to the driver.

The NHTSA said that even "minor crashes can result in exploding Takata air bags that can kill or produce life-altering, gruesome injuries".

Hundreds of injuries have also been reported in various automakers' vehicles since 2009 from Takata air bag inflators that can explode,



This 2015 picture shows a technician holding a recalled Takata airbag inflator. - Reuters

unleashing metal shrapnel inside cars and trucks killing or injuring drivers or other vehicle occupants.

Honda said that it has now confirmed 20 US deaths in Honda and Acura vehicles.

The company said it has replaced or account-

ed for more than 95% of recalled Takata inflators but "remains committed to replacing or accounting for all that remain".

The air bag problems have been blamed on propellant that can break down after long-term exposure to high-temperature fluctuations and humidity.

A number of automakers have urged owners of older vehicles this year to stop driving them until they get Takata air bag inflators replaced.

In May, Nissan warned owners of nearly 84,000 older vehicles to not drive certain older vehicles recalled in 2020 but have not been fixed.

Chrysler parent Stellantis last year issued warnings to owners of 29,000 2003 Dodge Ram pickups to immediately stop driving, pending repairs, after one person was killed when a Takata air-bag inflator exploded.

Toyota in January urged owners of 50,000 older Corolla and RAV4 vehicles to get Takata inflators replaced. - Reuters

After water quality improves, scientists find sea turtles in Brazil get healthier

By Renato Spyrró
Reuters

Sea turtles in the Guanabara Bay of Rio de Janeiro are getting healthier after struggling for years with a tumour disease that hampers their movement, sight and feeding, and ultimately leads to their death.

Scientists said it came after authorities made an effort to clean up the water of the natural harbour that shapes the identity of the region.

Research has linked fibropapillomatosis, a benign tumour in sea turtles, to both a virus and environmental factors.

Kassia Coelho, a professor of veterinary pathological anatomy at the Federal Fluminense University, said that samples taken from the animals and the water pointed to a much healthier environment.

"It's about analysing health by collecting blood and tumours from these turtles, and also biometrics of the animals, seeing their growth over the years and monitoring these animals from one year to the next," she said.

"Many of these turtles are recaptured and we can assess whether they've grown, whether they're heavier, whether they've lost weight, whether they have more tumours or fewer tumours,"

the scientist explained.

Surrounded by a dense urban population, Guanabara Bay was once a nursery for marine life but has over the years suffered from sewage and other garbage being dumped there.

In 2022, scientists found that three-quarters of sea turtles there were carrying the tumours.

While research is still ongoing, Gustavo Baila, an oceanographer and professor at the Federal University of Rio Grande, said that sea turtles have been healthier since 2023.

"These are very important species for marine conservation," he said. "We had observed a high incidence of sea turtles

with tumours, with deformities that ended up being very serious for the development of these animals."

Brazil is home to five of the seven species of sea turtles that exist worldwide.

However, their natural habitat is sometimes severely impacted by humans.

Conservationists have called for stricter measures to protect these animals.

Alexandre Bianchini, a vice-president at Brazilian water and sewage treatment company Aegea, said some 2bn reais (\$356.42mn) had been invested into cleaning up the water in the area.

"Now, nature responds," he said.



Biologist Thayana Giao holds a Green Sea turtle during an intentional capture to monitor turtles' health, weight and pollution level, by Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), in the Guanabara Bay. - Reuters

TRAGEDY

Eleven dead after school bus hits students, parents in China

Eleven people were killed in China's eastern Shandong province yesterday after a school bus lost control at a busy pedestrian junction, broadcaster CCTV reported, with disturbing footage showing bodies lying on the road and trapped under the vehicle. Six parents and five children were killed in the incident while one remained in critical condition. More than two dozen were injured, CCTV said. Dongping Police Department said a vehicle picking up students lost control at a junction in Dongping County, yesterday morning. The accident is under investigation, it added. In July, a motor vehicle ploughed into pedestrians in Hunan province, killing eight people.

DECISION

New Zealand nearly triples levy on international tourists

New Zealand will nearly triple entry fees for tourists, the government said yesterday, spurring criticism from the key tourism sector the higher levy will deter visitors. The government said it would increase the international visitor and conservation and tourism fees starting October 1 to NZ\$100 (\$62.20) from NZ\$35 to "ensure visitors contribute to public services and high-quality experiences while visiting New Zealand." Like many global tourism spots, New Zealand has struggled with the impact of tourists on the natural environment. The \$35 fee was introduced in July 2019, but this was not sufficient to cover the costs associated with so many visitors.

WILDLIFE

Thailand nets 1.3mn kg of invasive blackchin tilapia fish

Thailand has netted more than 1.3mn kg of highly destructive blackchin tilapia fish, the government said yesterday, as it battles to stamp out the invasive species. Shoals of blackchin tilapia have been found in 19 Thai provinces, damaging ecosystems in rivers, swamps and canals by preying on small fish, shrimp and snail larvae. As well as the ecological impact, the government is worried about the effect on the kingdom's crucial fish-farming industry. Fishing authorities caught 1,332,000kgs of blackchin tilapia between February and August 28, according to Nattacha Boonchaisawat, vice-president of a committee set up to tackle the spread of the fish.

ACCIDENT

India searches for coastguard crew after helicopter crash

India yesterday deployed four ships and two aircraft to trace three missing coastguard members after their helicopter crashed into the Arabian Sea during a rescue operation. The coastguard helicopter was trying to rescue an injured crew member on an Indian-flagged tanker, about 45kms off the coast of India's western state of Gujarat late on Monday. "The helicopter had to make an emergency hard landing and ditched into the sea," the Indian Coast Guard said in a statement. "One crew member recovered, the search for the remaining three crew members is in progress". The wreckage of the helicopter had been found, it added.

China to launch anti-dumping probes into Canada products

AFP
Beijing

China yesterday said it would launch an anti-dumping probe into Canadian canola and chemical products, in apparent retaliation for Ottawa's new restrictions on imports of Chinese electric vehicles (EVs).

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau last month announced tariffs of 100% on Chinese EVs, accusing Beijing of "not playing by the same rules as other countries" in areas like environmental and labour standards.

The US and the European Union have also respectively slapped tariffs of 100% and 36% on Chinese EVs, arguing that Beijing unfairly subsidises domestic producers whose products then flood foreign markets and undercut local competitors.

China has repeatedly criticised the imposition of levies and launched a series of its own investigations in response.

Its commerce ministry said in an online statement yesterday it "will initiate an anti-dumping investigation into canola imported from Canada, in accordance with the law".

The ministry said domestic industries had recently reported that Canadian canola exports to China "have increased significantly", reaching US\$3.47bn in 2023 while prices "have continued to fall".

It added that Canadian exporters were "suspected of dumping"

products into the Chinese market and that "China's domestic canola-related industries have continued to incur losses under the influence of unfair competition by the Canadian side".

The statement also said Beijing was "strongly dissatisfied and resolutely opposed" to the Canadian tariffs and planned to raise the issue with the World Trade Organisation's dispute resolution mechanism.

China would also launch a similar probe into "relevant Canadian chemical products, based on applications by domestic industries", according to the ministry.

"China... will take all necessary measures to defend the legitimate rights and interests of its enterprises," it said.

Ottawa's EV surtax, on top of existing import duties of 6.1%, will be imposed from October 1.

It will target Chinese electric and certain hybrid passenger automobiles, trucks, buses and delivery vans.

Canada will also limit eligibility for EV incentives to those made in countries with which Canada has free trade deals, which would exclude China.

A separate surtax on imports of steel and aluminium products from China will be effective from October 15.

Canada is among the world's top producers of canola - an oilseed crop that is used to make cooking oil, animal feed and biodiesel fuel - and China has historically been one of its largest customers.

Philippines storm death toll climbs to 13



Volunteers and rescuers remove debris on a hill while searching for missing residents, whose houses were swept during a landslide caused by Tropical Storm Yagi, locally known as Enteng in San Luis, Antipolo, Rizal province, Philippines, yesterday. At least 13 people have died in the Philippines due to tropical storm Yagi, while schools and government offices were closed in Manila and nearby provinces yesterday because of expected bad weather.

New Zealand spy report calls out China for interference

AFP
Wellington

New Zealand's spy service branded China a "complex intelligence concern" yesterday and warned the Pacific nation was vulnerable to foreign interference.

In an annual threat report, the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service said several countries were undertaking "malicious activity" on its shores, but called out China's attempts as "complex and deceptive".

In particular, Beijing was accused of using front organisations to connect with local groups to replace authentic and diverse community

views with those approved by the ruling party.

In one example, a Chinese-language community news outlet parroted Beijing's talking points, it said.

"These front organisations will often appear to be community-based... but their true affiliation, direction and funding sources are hidden," the report said. The unusually blunt language comes as New Zealand's recently elected centre-right government tilts the country's foreign policy more closely toward traditional Western allies. This comes after years of growing economic ties with China - New Zealand's biggest trade partner.

In March, Wellington publicly said a Chinese state-sponsored group was behind a 2021 mali-

cious cyber attack that infiltrated sensitive government computer systems.

China dismissed allegations of hacking and accused New Zealand critics of being puppets of Washington.

New Zealand's spy agency said the country's geographical position and role in the Pacific region made it "vulnerable" to other countries striving for greater influence.

That included Russia, which "likely monitors the public statements and social media accounts" of people.

In another case, an unnamed country contacted a local New Zealand council and offered to pay for a community event if they agreed to restrict a particular religious group.

Indian police kill nine Maoist rebels

Indian police killed at least nine Maoist rebels during a gunfight yesterday, officials said, with security forces still searching the forest for more remains and weapons. The clash is the latest in India's long-running Maoist insurgency that began in the 1960s and has cost tens of thousands of lives. The battle took place in Bailadila mountain range in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh, deputy inspector general of police Kamal Lochan Kashyap said. "Authorities have recovered automatic, semi-automatic and other weapons," he added. Kashyap said the bodies of nine rebels had been recovered and that security forces were still searching the forest for more remains and weapons.

The government has deployed tens of thousands of forces to battle the rebels across the insurgent-dominated region known as the "Red Corridor", which stretches across several central, southern and eastern states.

Pope arrives in Indonesia



Pope Francis (centre, in wheelchair) is welcomed during his arrival at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in Jakarta yesterday. Pope Francis arrived in Indonesia yesterday for the first stop of a four-nation tour in the Asia-Pacific that will be the longest of the 87-year-old's papacy.

West Bengal law seeks death penalty for rape

AFP
Kolkata

An Indian state, shaken by weeks of protests demanding justice after the rape and murder of a doctor, passed a law yesterday that could lead to the execution of rapists.

Protests erupted in West Bengal after the discovery of a 31-year-old doctor's bloodied body at a state-run hospital in the local capital Kolkata on August 9.

The law, passed by the state assembly but yet to be approved by the president, expresses outrage at the chronic issue of violence against women.

The new West Bengal law is largely symbolic because India's criminal code applies uniformly across the country.

However, presidential approval could make an exception and see it become state law.

The law raises punishment for rape from the current sentences of at least 10 years to either life imprisonment or execution.

The doctor's murder sparked strikes by medics and rallies backed by thousands of ordinary citizens across India, although many doctors have since returned to work.

Protests in West Bengal have since transformed into clashes between rival political party loyalists, including the ruling All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The Hindu-nationalist BJP holds power nationally but sits in opposition in West Bengal. It and the AITC both backed the new state law.

Record UK renewables auction gives boost to offshore wind

Reuters
London

Britain's offshore wind sector got a boost yesterday from the best-funded renewables auction yet, with Orsted and Iberdrola emerging among the winners, after a sale last year failed to secure any offshore wind projects.

The Labour government's plans to decarbonise the electricity sector by 2030 require a big increase in renewable power capacity such as wind and solar.

Energy Secretary Ed Miliband issued a statement saying the Labour administration, in power

since July, had "inherited a broken energy policy" and the auction yesterday, which awarded a record number of projects, marked progress it would build on.

The auction supported a total of 131 wind, solar and tidal projects capable of generating almost 10 gigawatts (GW) of capacity, which would be enough to power around 11mn homes, Miliband said.

The auction's budget was the biggest yet at £1.5bn (\$1.97bn), which the government increased from £1bn pounds after calls from industry.

Previous auctions have secured more capacity, hitting a peak of 11GW in 2022, however, and ana-

lysts said yesterday's result was not enough to meet the country's target of expanding offshore wind capacity to 60GW by 2030 from around 15GW now.

"With next year's (seventh auction) being the last chance to procure capacity for delivery before 2030, an additional 31GW of offshore wind capacity is needed to meet the target," Pranav Menon, a research associate at Aurora Energy Research, said.

Orsted's giant offshore wind project Hornsea 4 secured the largest contract by capacity at 2.4GW.

Iberdrola also won contracts for its East Anglia Two and East Anglia Three offshore wind projects.

RWE UK Country Chair Tom Glover said it was positive to see offshore wind projects in the auction, but he was disappointed two thirds of "the eligible pipeline" had been omitted when the government has said it wants to accelerate the sector.

RWE is developing the Norfolk Vanguard West and East offshore wind projects it bought from Vattenfall last year that have a combined capacity of 2.8GW.

The company did not confirm whether it had entered them into the latest auction.

RWE won contracts for a total of 218 megawatts of capacity across five onshore wind and solar

projects. Through the auctions, held annually, the government invites renewable project developers to bid for government-backed price guarantees for the electricity produced, called Contracts for Difference (CfDs).

When wholesale electricity prices are lower than the minimum, the government covers the difference, if they go above, producers pay back the difference to the government.

The fifth auction held in 2023 failed to attract any offshore wind projects as developers deemed the incentives offered too low.

In yesterday's sixth auction result, the electricity price contracts

for offshore wind were £54.20 to £58.90 per megawatt hour (MWh) in 2012 prices, government data showed.

This was significantly higher than the £44 per MWh offered in for offshore wind in last years auction.

Analysts at Jefferies estimated the price awarded yesterday would be worth between £82.60 and £89.70 /MWh in 2027 prices - when the first projects would be expected online - when including inflation.

Spot electricity prices in Britain are volatile but the day-ahead contract currently trades around £92.

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GULF TIMES

Election outcome highlights Germany’s Ukraine war problem

Regional elections in Germany have laid bare a swell of opposition to the government’s stance on the conflict in Ukraine at a time when Berlin is already under pressure over its aid for Kyiv.

Sunday’s elections in the former East German states of Saxony and Thuringia saw big gains for the far-right AfD, which has long been accused of links with Russia and is a vocal critic of Germany’s support for Ukraine.

A new far-left party, BSW, also made a big impact in the polls, having run on a ticket of peace negotiations with Russia and opposition to the planned stationing of US missiles in Germany.

Although the elections were regional, they have been widely interpreted as a backlash against Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s fractious coalition government in Berlin.

That includes the government’s support for Ukraine as it battles Russia’s invasion, already under scrutiny as it has been at the centre of a protracted row over the 2025 budget.

The signal from German voters also comes with Kyiv facing worrying signs from several other allies, including the United States and France.

Germany has been the second largest contributor of aid to Ukraine after the US, with Scholz repeatedly pledging to keep up the support for “as long as it takes”.

But a growing sense of discontent has emerged over Berlin’s support for Kyiv, with many Germans fearing that the war could spill over and affect them directly.

In a survey by the Insa pollster in late August, 45% of respondents said they were said they were either “very” or “quite” afraid of such an escalation.

The proportion was higher at 55% in eastern Germany, where memories of the Cold war still loom large.

The AfD had also made the conflict in Ukraine a big part of its election campaign, calling for peace negotiations and an end to weapons deliveries

In June, when Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky visited Berlin to give a speech to the German parliament, the AfD and BSW both boycotted the event.

Sahra Wagenknecht on Monday said her BSW party’s success in the regional elections was down to the fact that “a big issue in the election campaign was, of course, the question of war and peace”.

“Half of the people in Germany are afraid of being dragged into a major war,” she said.

The AfD had also made the conflict in Ukraine a big part of its election campaign, calling for peace negotiations and an end to weapons deliveries.

“The weapons we are supplying there are not a solution,” said Joerg Urban, the AfD’s leader in Saxony, ahead of the vote, accusing Berlin of “fuelling” the conflict.

Since Germany’s regional parliaments have no say in foreign policy, the election result “will not have an immediate impact” on Ukraine, Hans Vorlaender, a political scientist at the Dresden University of Technology (TU Dresden), told AFP.

“Ukraine policy is a matter for the federal government...so in my opinion the result of the elections will have no direct effect in the first instance,” he said.

But the results were already causing a ripple effect beyond Germany on Monday.

Italy’s La Repubblica newspaper warned that “the seeds of Putinism are growing even in structured countries”; while the US Wall Street Journal said “anti-establishment populism is on the rise in Europe”.

Hungarian far-right Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s political director said Thuringia and Saxony had “sent a message to Brussels and Berlin: no migration, no gender (politics), no war”.

“Today’s German state elections have triggered a political earthquake. The forces governing Germany in a pro-war, pro-migration and pro-gender (politics) coalition received a combined 15% of the vote,” Balazs Urban wrote in a Facebook post.

Ukraine’s ambassador to Germany, Oleksii Makeiev, also responded to the election result in a post on social media platform X.

“The BSW and AfD’s promises of peace are hot air... A just peace requires support for Ukraine to fight for it,” he said.

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Qatar - Norway ties: Burgeoning partnerships, shared aspirations

QNA
Doha

Qatar and Norway share a long history of a solid relationship that reflects remarkable progress in bilateral co-operation. This includes multi-faceted aspects of political, economic, and trade co-operation, in addition to sharing knowledge and expertise in a multitude of fields.

The visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Norway is the first of its kind and underscores Qatar’s commitment to reinforcing its global partnerships and expanding the scope of co-operation with friendly nations. The visit is also a crucial step towards broadening Qatar’s political and economic relationships.

Norway is undoubtedly an attractive model whose economy relies on oil and gas and has evolved over the years into an economy with diverse incomes and robust investments in the industrial and tourism sectors. This evolution is underpinned by Norway’s Government Pension Fund Global (GPF), the first global fund established in 1990, with financial assets worth about \$1.6tn, as per World Bank global classifications.

Norway is renowned for its international role in sponsoring mediations, resolving a variety of international crises, and hosting political consultations; in fact, it is the same role played by Qatar. Additionally, the capital, Oslo, frequently forges agreements among countries that have territorial disputes or conflicts and does not hesitate to advocate for humanitarian issues and stand with nations and their just causes. The latest stance was Norway’s official recognition of the State of Palestine, alongside Ireland and Spain, on 28 May 2024, a decision welcomed by Qatar as a critical step forward to support the two-state solution and achieve peace and stability in the region.

Qatar shares a growing relationship with Norway, as demonstrated on January 17, 2024, when King Harald V of Norway received the credentials of Nadia bint Ahmad al-Sheebi as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Qatar (non-resident) to Norway. The ambassador conveyed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani’s greetings to the Norwegian monarch.

In August 2024, HE Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces, Staff Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad bin Aqeel al-Nabit, visited Norway and held separate meetings in Oslo with State Secretary of Defence of Norway Anne Marie Aanerud and Norway’s Chief of Defence General Eirik Kristoffersen to discuss military co-operation between the two sides.

In addition, HE the Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces visited the Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace facility and met with the CEO of the facility Geir Hao.

Regarding the economic aspect, Qatar Chamber (QC) hosted the Qatar-Norway Business Meeting on June 12, 2022. The meeting was co-chaired by QC’s First Vice-Chairman Mohamed bin Twar al-Kuwari and Manager of Innovation Norway in the Middle East and Head of the Norwegian delegation Epsen Teksum.

Al-Kuwari underlined that Qatar and Norway share rock-solid co-operation ties and investments in the two countries, which reached approximately QR195mn during 2021, emphasising the importance of collaborative work of private sectors in both countries to stimulate trade exchanges.

For his part, Epsen Teksum called on Qatari businessmen to explore investment opportunities available in Norway and invest in multiple sectors, such as energy, maritime industries, food security, and others. He highlighted that the Qatari-Norwegian trade ties have been ongoing for more than 60 years and that there are shared investments between the two countries in gas, oil, and defence sectors, as well as other fields.

The first round of political consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in the two countries was held in November 2019,



with the two nations signing a memorandum of understanding to establish political consultations between the two foreign ministries. The consultations were co-chaired by HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi and Norway’s State Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Audun Halvorsen.

Minister of Trade and Industry of Norway Torbjorn Roe Isaksen visited Doha on November 13, 2019, with accompanying delegates from professional Norwegian energy firms to attend the golden jubilee celebration of Qatar Fertiliser Company (Qafco) and the 50th anniversary of its co-operation with the Norwegian Yara International company.

Torbjorn Roe Isaksen said the investments of the Norwegian firms in Qatar reached up to \$10bn, hoping that trade ties between the two sides would significantly evolve to elevate these investments. He noted the co-operation prospects between the two sides in an array of sectors, such as maritime technology and defence industries, especially since the Norwegian firms were as successful as Qafco and Qatar Aluminium Manufacturing Company, predicting a meteoric rise in the Qatari-Norwegian partnerships in the future, particularly in maritime industries and energy sectors.

The visit featured the celebration of four major Norwegian companies, alongside Qafco, on the 50th anniversary of the burgeoning industrial relationship among them and Qatar. Approximately, 250 Qatari and international dignitaries attended the event, particularly Crown Prince of Norway Haakon Magnus; HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs, and President and CEO of QatarEnergy Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi; Norwegian Minister of Trade and Industry Torbjorn Roe Isaksen; and Qafco Chief Executive Officer Abdulrahman M al-Suwaidi. Qafco represents the most important investment between the two countries, with 25% from the Norwegian Yara International and 75% from Industries Qatar, with Qafco running six integrated factories that produce Ammonia and Urea.

Additionally, it plays a pivotal role in the global fertiliser market and is one of the largest exporters of Urea, with an annual production capacity of 3.8mn metric tonnes of Ammonia and 5.6mn metric tonnes of Urea.

President and Chief Executive Officer of Yara International Svein Tore Holsether affirmed that half of the world’s population depends on food production fertilisers, with Qafco significantly contributing to enhancing global food security and exporting its products to all parts of the world.

He underscored the company’s commitment to working with Qafco to ensure the sustainable production of mineral fertilisers, highlighting that his company works to develop digital agriculture tools for precision agriculture, thus lending impetus to food production by Qatar.

For her part, CEO of Hydro Hilde Merete Aasheim said in the past 50 years Hydro had succeeded in engaging in the activities of numerous world-class industrial projects in Qatar and is the first industrial partner for Qatar. She added that Hydro primarily focuses on making aluminium as part of the solution for the most overwhelming challenge in this age, chiefly reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions when used in vehicles, transport, construction, packaging, and other applications, since aluminium can be repurposed without being recycled.

Within the framework of the same visit, then Minister of Commerce and Industry HE Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari held separate meetings in Doha with Crown Prince Haakon Magnus, and Norway’s Minister of Trade and Industry Torbjorn Roe Isaksen.

On the sidelines of the visit, Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) pointed out that the size of trade exchange between Qatar and Norway reached roughly QR160.1mn during 2018, equivalent to \$43.86mn.

The two countries have so far signed an agreement on avoiding double taxation and preventing fiscal evasion with respect to income taxes. Qatar ratified this agreement with the Norwegian government in Oslo on January 10, 2010.

Russian strike kills dozens in Poltava

AFP
Poltava,

At least 51 people were killed and hundreds wounded yesterday in a Russian missile attack on the Ukrainian city of Poltava, authorities said, in one of the single deadliest strikes of the two-and-a-half-year war.

Kyiv said the strike hit a military training facility and a nearby hospital, though authorities did not say how many of the victims were military or civilians.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed to hold what he called “Russian scum” accountable, while rescuers worked to clear the rubble.

“According to the information available now, this Russian strike killed 51 people,” Zelensky said in his evening address.

“The number of injured is 271. We know that there are people under the rubble of the destroyed building. Everything is being done to save as many lives as possible,” Zelensky said.

Berlin, London and Washington all condemned the strike.

US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said the attack was “another horrific reminder of (Russian President Vladimir) Putin’s brutality”, adding that the United States would

send more military aid to Kyiv in the coming weeks.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy called it a “sickening act of aggression”, while German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said Putin’s brutality “knows no limits”.

The strike triggered anger on Ukrainian social media after unconfirmed reports said it had targeted an outdoor military ceremony, with many blaming reckless behaviour from officials who allowed the event to take place despite the threat of Russian attacks.

Zelensky said he had ordered a “full and prompt investigation into all the circumstances”.

Two Russian ballistic missiles hit the hospital and educational institution, partially destroying one of the buildings, Zelensky said.

The strike took place in the morning in Poltava, a city with a pre-war population of around 300,000 people, some 300km east of Kyiv.

“The window blew open. Dust was everywhere. I just had time to tell my sister that a rocket was flying,” said Yevgeniya Chyryva, a resident in a building damaged during the attack.

The defence ministry said that the time between the alarm and the arrival of the missiles was “so short that it caught people in the middle of evacuating to the bomb



A view shows residential buildings heavily damaged during a Russian military attack in the frontline town of Chasiv Yar, in Donetsk region, Ukraine. (Reuters)

shelter”. The Poltava military communications institute, founded in the 1960s when Ukraine was part of the USSR, specialises in training telecommunications specialists.

“One of the institute’s buildings was partially destroyed, and many people were trapped under the

rubble,” the defence ministry said.

An AFP journalist on the scene saw several ambulances heading towards the affected site shortly after the attack on the military institute.

Rescuers were still at work after managing to save 25 people, in-

cluding 11 trapped under the rubble, the defence ministry said.

Official channels and local media shared messages urging locals to donate blood to help treat the wounded.

At the same time criticism of Ukrainian officials swirled online.

“Poltava... How can such a large number of people gather at such a facility?” said one blogger, Sergey Naumovich.

There had been some reports from Russian military bloggers that the strike targeted an outdoor ceremony.

Poltava’s governor, Philip Pronin, said his administration could not provide more details of the circumstances of the strike “for security reasons”.

“The enemy is using any means to bring Ukraine more pain and disorientate Ukrainians. Please trust only reliable sources,” he said.

Ukrainian MP Maria Bezugla, who regularly criticises the country’s military leadership, accused high-ranking officials of endangering soldiers by allowing such events.

“These tragedies keep repeating themselves. When will it stop?” she posted on Telegram.

The attack follows another recent scandal for Ukraine’s army command after a US-made F-16 fighter jet crashed in combat last week, killing the pilot.

The crash of the F-16 was a high-profile setback for Kyiv, which had lobbied the West to send the advanced fighter jet for months, and triggered the dismissal of the country’s air force chief, Mykola Oleshchuk.

World sees record August heat for 2nd year running

AFP
Paris

The world saw record average temperatures in August for the second year running, according to preliminary data from the EU’s climate monitor seen by AFP yesterday.

While the exact average temperature for August 2024 is not yet known, the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) has already established it will be above the then-record 16.82 degrees Celsius (62.28 Fahrenheit) measured in August last year.

Scientists warn that these unprecedented temperatures are in large part driven by man-made climate change, which is causing more frequent and intense extreme weather events.

Australia, Japan, several Chinese provinces and Norway’s Svalbard Arctic archipelago all experienced their hottest August on record, according to various meteorological agencies.

It continues a near-unbroken 15-month streak where each month eclipsed its own temperature record for the time of year, according to the C3S.

Only July 2024 was measured by C3S to be slightly cooler than July 2023, though the US NOAA weather agency believes July 2024 to be the hottest month on record.

Either way, 2023 was the world’s warmest year since weather data keeping began in the 19th century, according to the various climate monitors.

And at the beginning of August, C3S had already warned that it was “increasingly likely” 2024 would surpass it. It said that July 2024 was 1.48C (34.66F) warmer than the estimated average temperatures for the month during the period 1850-1900, before the world started to rapidly burn fossil fuels – the biggest contributor to climate change.

Climate researchers dedicated to studying the weather in the period before the advent of meteorological instruments believe the current high temperatures to be unseen in at least 120,000 years.

12 migrants die trying to cross Channel to UK

AFP
Boulogne-sur-Mer (France)

At least 12 migrants died off the northern French coast yesterday trying to cross the Channel to England in the deadliest such disaster this year, the French government said after a major rescue operation.

Announcing the death toll on X, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin also said that two migrants were still missing.

Several were injured after their boat carrying dozens ran into trouble off Wimereux, a town some 5km from Boulogne-sur-Mer on the French coast.

A source close to the investigation said the dead included three minors.

According to the Boulogne-sur-Mer prosecutor, Guirec Le Bras, the migrants who died were mostly from Eritrea. Ten of them were female and two male, he said. Half the total were minors.

Crew on a French government-operated ship, the Minck, were the first to become aware of the emergency and to respond, naval officer Etienne Baggio told AFP.

French navy helicopters, fishing boats and military vessels were mobilised for the operation, he said.

It was the deadliest such disaster this year which has already seen 25 people die in migrant crossings, up from 12 in 2023.

The French and British governments have for years sought to stop the flow of migrants, who pay smugglers thousands of euros per head for the passage to England from France aboard small boats.

UK interior minister Yvette Cooper called the deaths yesterday “horrifying and deeply tragic”.

She criticised the “gangs behind this appalling and callous trade in human lives”, adding they “do not care about anything but the profits they make”.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer



Firefighters, a police officer and a doctor of the SAMU emergency unit stand next to bags containing the bodies of migrants who died after the sinking of a migrant boat attempting to cross the English Channel to England, in Boulogne-sur-Mer, northern France, yesterday. (AFP)

and France’s President Emmanuel Macron had earlier this summer pledged to strengthen “co-operation” in handling the surge in undocumented migrant numbers.

But on Monday alone, 351 migrants crossed in small boats, with 21,615 making the journey this year, according to UK government statistics.

The crossing often proves perilous, and in November 2021, 27 migrants died when their boat capsized in the deadliest single such disaster to date.

French authorities seek to stop migrants taking to the water but do not intervene once they are afloat except for rescue purposes, citing safety concerns.

Darmanin, who rushed to the site of the tragedy yesterday, told reporters that the EU and Britain needed to negotiate a new treaty on migration.

The European Union should seek to “re-establish a traditional migration relationship with our British friends and neighbours”, he said, adding that British

payments to France to prevent irregular migration covered only “a third of what we are spending”.

The numbers of migrants crossing the Channel in small boats from France to England have been a major bone of contention in post-Brexit relations between Paris and London.

Former British prime minister Rishi Sunak, under pressure to reduce the numbers crossing, forged a deal with Macron in March of last year increasing British payments to fund more French police along the coast.

Under the deal, London agreed to step up funding to France to total €541mn (\$575mn).

But Darmanin said yesterday that “the tens of millions of euros that we negotiate every year with our British friends” were not sufficient to stem the flow of migrants, many of whom he said wanted to reach Britain to reunite with families or “to work in conditions that would not be acceptable in France”.

Vegan Nutella to hit European shelves

Food giant Ferrero yesterday announced the imminent launch of a vegan version of its popular hazelnut spread Nutella in Italy, France and Belgium, saying the move was in response to changing consumer tastes.

Vegan Nutella will no longer contain any dairy ingredients, which are to be replaced with chickpeas and rice syrup, Ferrero said in a statement. “No compromises” were made concerning the taste of Nutella, launched 60 years ago and marketed in around 170 countries, the Italian company said.

The new product is to become available from today, it said.

“More and more consumers are opting to reduce, or cut out, animal products,” it said.

Lactose-intolerant people should, however, be careful about eating plant-based Nutella as it was being made in factories where dairy ingredients were used for other products, said Ferrero, which also owns the Kinder, Tic Tac and Ferrero Rocher brands.

Along with other food companies, Ferrero has come under criticism for using palm oil to make Nutella, thus encouraging the clearing of tropical forests to establish palm oil monocultures.

The company has since created a “segregated” chain for palm oil, which it says allows the tracing of its palm oil to the mills, “guaranteeing that it does not come from plantations subject to deforestation”.

Traditional Nutella contains sugar, palm oil, hazelnuts, milk, cocoa, lecithin and vanillin, according to Ferrero. The spread has a cult-like following across the world, with American blogger Sara Rosso in 2007 launching World Nutella Day, celebrated every February 5 when fans share pictures and recipe ideas.

Among Nutella-inspired initiatives was a challenge to make a record-length Nutella pizza in Sydney earlier this year, stretching for a continuous 100m.

Russian court orders to keep French researcher in jail as trial starts

A Moscow court yesterday ordered a French researcher accused of breaching Russia’s “foreign agent” law be held in jail until February next year, at the start of a trial that comes amid tensions between Russia and the West over the Ukraine conflict.

Laurent Vinatier, who worked for a Swiss conflict mediation NGO before he was arrested in Moscow in June, is one of several Western citizens who have been held in Russian prisons in recent years on charges that the West says are baseless.

At the opening of the trial in Moscow’s Zamoskvoretsky court yesterday, the judge ruled to extend Vinatier’s detention until 21 February 2025.

The judge also set the next hearing in the case for 16 September, AFP journalists reported from the courtroom, granting Vinatier’s request for more time to prepare.

Vinatier was held in a metal

cage for defendants during the proceedings.

Wearing a blue shirt and dark trousers, he smiled as he spoke with his lawyers ahead of the start of the trial.

The 48-year-old faces a five-year prison sentence if convicted.

France has urged Russia to release Vinatier, saying he has been “arbitrarily detained”.

Russian authorities say he was collecting information on Russia’s military without being registered as a “foreign agent”, as required by law.

The law has more often been used to target Russians and domestic critics of the Kremlin, rather than foreign citizens.

Russian investigators also say Vinatier collected military information that could be used against Moscow by foreign states – raising fears he could face further charges later.

Russia has previously used “foreign agent” charges to arrest people before levelling more



Laurent Vinatier listens to his lawyers from inside a defendants’ cage during a hearing in Moscow’s Zamoskvoretsky district court yesterday. (AFP)

serious accusations at them.

Tensions between Moscow and Paris are running high after France charged Russian-born Telegram founder Pavel Durov last week over illegal content on the popular social media

platform, with the Kremlin warning Paris not to turn Durov’s case into “political persecution”.

In previous court hearings Vinatier has acknowledged violating the Russian law and apologised, explaining that he

was unaware he should have registered as a “foreign agent”.

Vinatier is an adviser with the Geneva-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and a researcher on Russia and other post-Soviet countries.

The centre “works to prevent and resolve armed conflicts around the world through mediation and discreet diplomacy”, it says in a statement on its website.

According to sources interviewed by AFP, the Frenchman had been working for years on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, before Russia launched its full-scale offensive in February 2022.

Humanitarian Dialogue said in June that it was doing “everything possible to help” Vinatier, who “lives in Switzerland and travels regularly for his work”.

Married and the father of four children, he has been in pre-trial detention since his arrest,

with his repeated requests to be placed under house arrest rejected.

“I always wanted to adequately present the interest and position of Russia on international relations in my work,” he said at a hearing in early July.

“I love Russia, my wife is Russian, my life is linked with Russia,” he told the court.

In recent years, several Westerners, particularly Americans, have been arrested in Russia and charged with serious offences.

Washington has accused Moscow of arresting US citizens on baseless charges to use them as bargaining chips to secure the release of Russians convicted abroad.

On August 1, Russia freed US reporter Evan Gershkovich, former US Marine Paul Whelan and more than a dozen others – including Russian opposition politicians – in its biggest prisoner swap with the West since the Cold War.

Visa Service Office opened for Qatar’s free zones

The Qatar Free Zones Authority (QFZ) and the General Directorate of Passports at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) have jointly inaugurated the new Ras Bufontas Free Zone Visa Service Office, which will address the evolving needs of the growing business community in Qatar’s free zones and create a more conducive investment environment while facilitating the completion of operating companies’ procedures.

QFZ chief executive Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Faisal al-Thani and Major-General Mohamed Ahmed al-Atiq al-Dosari, the director-general of passports, jointly inaugurated the new Visa Service Office in a ceremony attended by senior officials from both organisations.

The opening of the service office represents a new achievement in the QFZ’s efforts to empower the investors and company community in the free zones by helping them finalise all transactions easily and conveniently, a statement said.

The office offers a comprehensive range of services, including residence permit renewal, issuance, and extension, work visas, family visits, multi-entry visas, and employer change among other services.

Additionally, investors and companies can conveniently issue or renew their company registration using just their residence or visa number.

The office will also feature a dedicated traffic services section for issuing, renewing, and transferring driving licences effortlessly.

“The launch of the visa office is a key step in our ongoing efforts and strategy to create a more attractive investment environment in Qatar’s free zones,” Sheikh Mohamed said.

“By streamlining processes and enhancing services, we aim to facilitate business operations for companies and investors, supporting their growth and expansion both regionally and internationally,” he said. “This aligns with our commitment to sustainable economic development and Qatar National Vision 2030, reinforcing the appeal of our free zones as a prime global investment destination.”

“This visa service office will establish a new standard for the approval process, ensuring faster turnaround times for investors’ requests, as it will operate from 7.30am-1pm, taking into account the possibility of extending working hours according to the operational needs and free zones work requirements,” said Maj-Gen al-Dosari.

The office is equipped with state-of-the-art technology and machines to provide unique services and will have experienced teams to accommodate investors and companies in the free zones.

In addition, there will be specialised staff and technicians to facilitate fingerprinting and eye scanning.

The collaboration between the QFZ and the General Directorate of Passports at the Ministry of Interior comes as part of the QFZ’s ongoing efforts to create a



QFZ chief executive Sheikh Mohamed bin Hamad bin Faisal al-Thani, Director-General of Passports Major-General Mohamed Ahmed al-Atiq al-Dosari, and other officials at the inauguration of the new Visa Service Office.

conducive business environment for investors supported by essential services.

With over 600 companies already licensed to operate in its free zones in Qatar, the authority remains committed to providing exceptional services and competitive advantages to attract more investors and businesses.

It is also committed to promoting investment by focusing on fostering growth in key business sectors such as emerging technology, logistics and trade, manufacturing and consumer products, Marsa maritime development, aviation and defence, food and agritech, and biomedical sciences, the statement added.

College of Nursing hosts white coat ceremony



The ceremony honoured 24 students.

Qatar University (QU)’s College of Nursing hosted its annual White Coat Ceremony to mark a milestone for the students into the next phase of their nursing education.

Dean Dr Majeda El-Banna and other officials were present along with guests from the Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and families of the students.

The ceremony honoured 24 students, including one male student, who put on their white coats as a symbol of their readiness to embrace the responsibilities that come with the nursing profession.

The pledge taken during this ceremony extends beyond graduation, empowering students to engage effectively with patients and collaborate with the healthcare team.

“In 2014, recognising the critical role nurses play in healthcare, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the Gold Foundation expanded the tradition of the White Coat Ceremony to include nursing,” said Dr El-Banna.

“Since then, it has become a vital ritual in nursing education, emphasising our dedication to compas-

sionate, collaborative, and evidence-based patient care,” she said. “This ceremony marks a significant milestone in nursing students’ journeys, symbolising not only a new chapter in their education but also their subscription to a culture of commitment and excellence.”

Noof al-Kuwari, the assistant dean for student affairs at the College of Nursing, highlighted: “The purpose of this event is to prepare first-year students, who have completed their foundation year where they studied the basics of nursing, to transition into their second year where they begin their clinical training in hospitals.”

“We hold this event at the start of the academic semester to celebrate their progress and to prepare them for the real-life nursing environment in hospitals,” she said.

The White Coat Ceremony not only serves as a formal event but also leaves a lasting impact on the students as they reflect on the responsibilities that come with their chosen profession, a statement added.

Katara inagurates ‘Migrants’ exhibition by Saudi artist

The “Migrants” exhibition by Saudi artist Saleh al-Qassim has been inaugurated at Katara – the Cultural Village’s Building 18 by general manager Prof Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti.

The event was attended by Saudi Arabia’s ambassador Prince Mansour bin Khalid bin Farhan al-Saud, alongside representatives from diplomatic missions in the country, art enthusiasts, and artists.

The exhibition, which runs until September 14, features 30 paintings through which al-Qassim shares his experience with migration using an impressionistic and abstract expressive style.

He employs colours and shapes that evoke nostalgia for the past, sincerity to nature, and a love for place, making the artwork visually appealing.

Prof al-Sulaiti said that the exhibition represents an important addition to the diverse and distinguished art exhibitions presented by Katara, which enriches the local and regional artistic and cultural scene.

Katara builds bridges of communication between cultures and peoples through arts and literature, with visual arts being among the most expressive forms of art, he added.

Al-Qassim expressed his gratitude to the organisers at Katara and pointed out that humans have migrated from one place to another since ancient times, and leaving a place filled with memories and connections is one of the most challenging and emotional experiences a person can endure.

He added that he has employed styles of various artistic schools to express this idea and explore diversified values, especially patience, giving, and loyalty.

Born in 1968, al-Qassim has experimented with various artistic schools such as realism, surrealism, abstraction, and impressionism. He has had numerous solo exhibitions since his first in 2003, where he presented more than 40 works.

At each subsequent exhibition, he has introduced distinctive ideas and themes that resonate with the shared human entity.



Snapshots from the opening ceremony.

‘Damascus Room’ at MIA offers a glimpse into Ottoman-era luxury

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The Museum of Islamic Art (MIA)’s new addition to its permanent collection – a fully restored and re-assembled 19th-century reception room from Damascus, Syria – offers visitors a glimpse into the opulent world of Ottoman-era luxury.

According to Qatar Museums (QM), the “Damascus Room” is now a permanent fixture at the MIA’s galleries dedicated to the arts of Ottoman provinces.

This interactive exhibit, titled “The Art of Hospitality: The Damascus Room”, was meticulously assembled by a team of experts from the QM after years of research and restoration.

The room, produced by the Department of Digital Experience and the MIA, showcases 427 individual pieces, including intricate wood carvings and stonework, painstakingly brought back together to create a portal through time.

Originally completed in 1816/1817 CE, the room was discovered in 25 crates in a remote storage area in Doha in 2016.

It provides a window into the life of Damascus during a period of significant trade and cultural exchange.

The city, situated at the crossroads of major trade

routes, was a vibrant hub for merchants, pilgrims, and cultural influencers.

The QM noted that the room demonstrates how opulent homes were not merely private, but also functioned as semi-public spaces for economic and social life.

The interior decoration reflects the city’s unique urban design aesthetic, blending Ottoman traditional patterns with Indo-Persian and European Rococo influences.

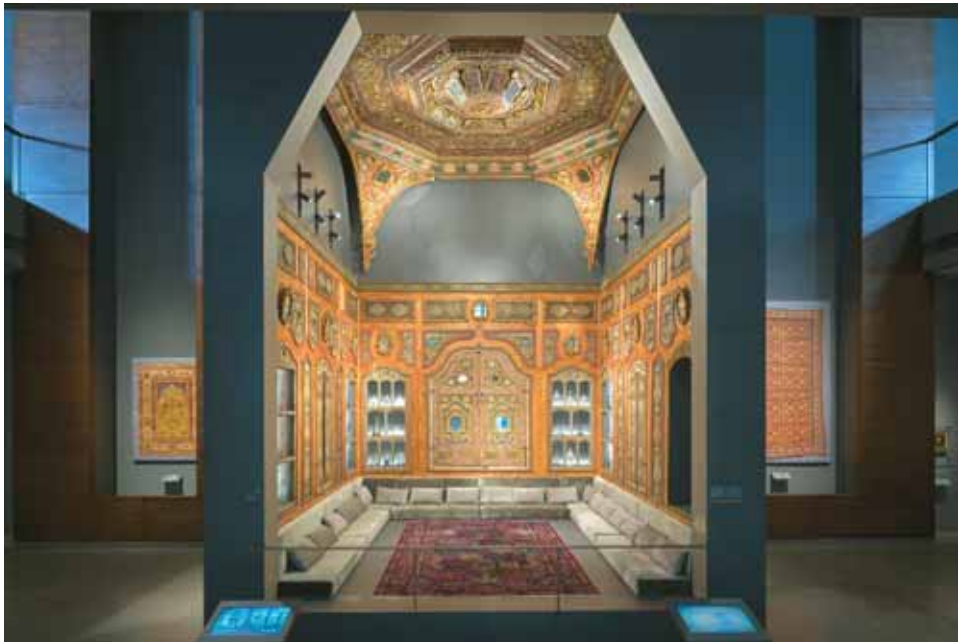
The QM added that this exhibit allows visitors to immerse themselves in the rich history and culture of Damascus, a chance to experience the craftsmanship and artistry of a bygone era.

One of the highlights of the Damascus Room is the original ceiling, which conservation expert Dr Anke Scharrahs discovered was partially redecorated with 11th century AH/17th century CE paintings on the back of some panels.

This resourceful practice was common at the time, providing a way to modernise homes.

The room also features a raised seating area, furnished with low mattresses and cushions, and adorned with calligraphic inscriptions featuring poetry and the Beautiful Names of Allah.

The intricate decorations, created using gold leaf, tinfoil, precious pigments, lacquers and mirrors, offer a glimpse into the artistic techniques and aesthetic preferences of the time.



The room showcases 427 individual pieces.