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BUSINESS | Page 1

Qatar is looking at Finnish partnership in energy, renewables, finance sectors

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Qatar Airways World's Best MICE Airline

Qatar Airways announced that it has been voted the 'World's Best MICE Airline 2024' at the World MICE Awards held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam on September 4, 2024. The airline was also voted 'Middle East's Best MICE Airline 2024' by industry experts. The World MICE Awards honour industry leaders for furthering global Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism. This is the second consecutive year Qatar Airways has been lauded with this recognition. **Page 4**

Heat wave warning in US southwest

A punishing heat wave gripping California and parts of the southwestern United States was intensifying yesterday as forecasters warned of dangerous temperatures. An excessive heat warning has been extended into the weekend, with experts flagging a heightened risk of wildfires as the mercury soars and humidity levels plunge. Forecasters said temperatures could reach a sweltering 48 Celsius today.

Macron names Barnier as new French PM

After two months of political chaos following snap elections, French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday named as prime minister Michel Barnier, who pledged to co-operate across the political spectrum but gave few clues on his plans. The fates of Barnier - and Macron - rest with Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally (RN), which gave tentative support to Barnier's nomination. **Page 9**

US, China commanders to speak soon

The commander of the US forces in the Indo-Pacific will speak to a southern theatre commander of China's armed forces in the next few weeks, with the aim of preventing any military misunderstandings between the superpowers, the US ambassador to China said yesterday.

COMMUNITY

See Page: 6



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met with Prime Minister of Finland Petteri Orpo and held talks with him in Helsinki yesterday. **Page 2**



Amir, Finnish leaders explore avenues for enhanced relations

- Amir meets Finnish PM, parliament speaker
- Qatar, Finland sign 3 MoUs, letter of intent

QNA
Helsinki

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday with Prime Minister of the Republic of Finland Petteri Orpo at the prime minister's official residence, Kesaranta, in Helsinki.

During the meeting, they discussed prospects for enhancing and developing co-operation between the two countries, particularly in the fields of investment, energy, education and international collaboration.

Key regional and international issues of mutual interest, especially the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories were also discussed during the meeting.

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

From the Finnish side, the meeting was attended by a number of senior officials.

Qatar and Finland keen to expand the horizons of fruitful co-operation: Amir

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani affirmed that the extensive talks he held in Helsinki with President of the friendly Republic of Finland, Alexander Stubb and Prime Minister of Finland, Petteri Orpo, reflect common keenness to continue strengthening bilateral relations. His Highness the Amir said in a post on his official X account that he discussed, during an expanded session in Helsinki

with both the President Alexander Stubb and Prime Minister Petteri Orpo, ways to deepen the bonds of friendship, communication and co-operation between the two countries. His Highness the Amir stressed that these talks reflect common keenness to continue strengthening bilateral relations and expand the horizons of fruitful co-operation for the benefit of the two friendly peoples and countries. **(QNA)**

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday with Speaker of the Parliament of Finland Jussi Halla-aho, at the headquarters of the Parliament in Helsinki, Finland.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed bilateral relations and ways to enhance and develop them in various fields, in addition to topics of mutual interest.

Several members of the official

delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir attended the meeting. On the Finnish side, several members of the parliament attended the meeting.

On the margin of the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the friendly Republic of Finland, Qatar and Finland signed three memoranda of understanding (MoUs), in addition to a letter of intent between the Qatar Cham-



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday with Speaker of the Parliament of Finland Jussi Halla-aho in Helsinki.

ber and the Helsinki Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

An MoU in the field of peace, reconciliation and conflict resolution was signed by HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatir and Deputy Minister and Assistant Undersecretary at the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Outi Holopainen.

An MoU was also signed to establish the Joint Ministerial Committee for Economic, Commercial and Technical Co-operation. The MoU was signed by HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Qassim al-Thani, and Finnish Minister of Foreign Trade and Development, Ville Tavio.

A third MoU was signed for co-operation in the field of vocational and technical education and training between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Qatar and the Quality Assurance Committee for Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Finland. It was signed on the Qatari side by Director of the

Educational Training and Development Center at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Iman Salman al-Mohannadi and for Finland, by Chairperson of the Quality Assurance Committee for Vocational Education and Training, Mervi Jansson.

Moreover, a letter of intent was also signed between the Qatar Chamber and the Helsinki Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It was signed on the Qatari side by Chairperson of the Qatar Chamber, Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim al-Thani and Chairperson and CEO of Finland Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mats Mandrebacka.

Amir leaves Finland

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani left Helsinki yesterday after an official visit to the friendly Republic of Finland, concluding a tour that included the friendly Kingdom of Sweden and the friendly Kingdom of Norway.

His Highness the Amir was accompanied by an official delegation.

Exert real pressure on Israel to reach a deal, Hamas tells US

AFF
Gaza Strip

Palestinian resistance movement Hamas called on the United States yesterday to "exert real pressure" on Israel to reach a Gaza ceasefire agreement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces pressure to seal a deal that would free remaining captives, after Israeli authorities announced on Sunday the deaths of six whose bodies were recovered from a Gaza tunnel.

"If the US administration and its President (Joe) Biden really want to reach a ceasefire and complete a prisoner exchange deal, they must abandon their blind bias towards the Zionist occupation," Hamas's lead negotiator Khalil al-Hayya said, calling on the US to "exert real pressure on Netanyahu and his government".



People queue as Palestinian children are vaccinated against polio in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

Netanyahu insists that Israel must retain control over the Philadelphi Corridor along the Egypt-Gaza border. Hamas is demanding complete Israeli withdrawal from the area and said Netanyahu's position "aims to thwart reaching an agreement".

The Palestinian group says a new deal is unnecessary because they agreed months ago to a truce outlined by Biden. "We do not need new proposals," Hamas said in a statement.

"We warn against falling into the trap of Netanyahu... who uses negotiations to prolong the aggression against our people," the group said.

US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby nonetheless said that Washington believes a ceasefire deal is 90% agreed.

But he added that "nothing is negotiated until everything is negotiated, and the things that are still in play right now are very, very detailed... issues, and that's when things get difficult."



Amir holds talks with Finnish PM



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani held extensive talks with Finnish President Alexander Stubb and PM Petteri Orpo. His Highness stressed that these talks reflect common keenness to continue strengthening bilateral relations and expand the horizons of fruitful co-operation for the benefit of the two friendly peoples and countries.



Qatar, Finland sign agreements

On the sidelines of the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Helsinki, Qatar and Finland signed three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in addition to a letter of intent between the Qatar Chamber and the Helsinki Chamber of Commerce and Industry.



Amir meets Speaker of Finnish Parliament

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday with Speaker of the Parliament of Finland Jussi Halla-aho, at the headquarters of the parliament in Helsinki. The two sides discussed bilateral relations and ways to enhance and develop them in various fields, in addition to topics of mutual interest. Several of members of the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir attended the meeting. On the Finnish side, several members of the Finnish parliament attended the meeting. (QNA)



Education minister visits Netikumpu School in Finland

HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi has visited a school in Espoo, Finland as part of boosting education co-operation and exchange of expertise between the State of Qatar and the northern European republic. HE al-Nuaimi's visit to Netikumpu School, where Qatari teachers are now receiving training as part of the Qatari Teachers' Fellowship Program (Khebrat), aimed to learn about the school environment and groundbreaking pedagogy. Launched by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), Khebrat aims to offer Qatari teachers advanced teaching experiences and skills in countries with distinguished and pioneering education systems. (QNA)



Amir's visit reflects active co-operation in Qatari-Finnish ties: parliamentarian

QNA

Helsinki

Member of the Finnish Parliament and former minister for development co-operation and foreign trade of Finland Ville Skinnari stressed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Finland reflects the active bilateral co-operation relations during the past years, especially after the opening of the Qatari and Finnish embassies in both countries.

In remarks to Qatar News

Agency (QNA), Skinnari said that work has been done to strengthen the partnership between the two countries for decades, seeking to raise bilateral relations to the next level in all fields, including business, investment, education, foreign relations and security, especially since the State of Qatar plays a major role in the world today.

He noted the active level of Qatari-Finnish parliamentary relations, indicating that they are not just joint relations between the parliaments of the two countries, but extend beyond that, being

more diverse and co-operative, especially with regard to strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries on the one hand, and between working on the international arena and multilateral co-operation within the framework of the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) on the other hand.

The member of the Finnish Parliament stressed the importance of the roles played by parliaments in the world, especially at the political level, as they demonstrate a long-term commitment between countries and are important evi-

dence of the level of practical co-operation between them in various fields, pointing to the importance of Qatari-Finnish parliamentary relations and the need to strengthen them.

He praised the role of the State of Qatar and its active efforts in multilateral activities and events, including its support for the work of the UN in a challenging environment, expressing Finland's desire to co-operate and play similar positive roles, which would contribute to achieving positive results and solutions for the region and the world.

Regarding the situation in the Middle East, especially the war in the Gaza Strip, Skinnari said that what the region is witnessing is very unfortunate, adding that the only thing Finland and the EU should do is to send a strong message recognising Palestine as an independent state.

He said that Finland must follow the example of many other European countries that have recognised the State of Palestine, as this is a concrete step forward, stressing the importance of working to bring peace to the region and the world.

He underlined the need to look at the world based on international rules and the entire legislative framework when it comes to international law and the extent of commitment to it, expressing his disappointment at the EU's calm position regarding the events taking place.

Concluding his remarks to QNA, the member of the Finnish Parliament said that Nordic countries like Finland have really paved the way for recognising the State of Palestine, because that is the first step needed to achieve more sustainable solutions.

Official

Education ministry approves results of Secondary Certificate Exams 2nd round

HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi approved the results of the second round of the secondary certificate exams for the academic year 2023-2024. According to the results, the success rate for the scientific track (daytime) was 45.23%, for "adult education" 16.67%, for the arts and humanities track (daytime) 39.50%, for "adult education" 38.17%, and for the technological track (daytime) 37.59%.

The success rate for Qatar Technical Secondary School was 45.95% for "daytime" and 81.82% for "adult education". The success rate for Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys (daytime) was 66.67%, Religious Institute Preparatory Secondary Independent School for Boys (daytime) was 100%, Qatar Technical Secondary School (daytime) was 58.82%, for "adult education" was 46.43%, and for Qatar Banking Studies and Business Administration Secondary School (adult education), it was 00.00%. As for audio education schools, the success rate was 00.00% for the "daytime" and 37.89% for "adult education". (QNA)

QRDI Council, AJ+ collaborate for a pioneering video translation initiative

QNA

Doha

The Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation Council (QRDI) has launched a call for its new flagship program, Qatar Open Innovation (QOI), in its first-ever collaboration with AJ+, a pioneering digital news and storytelling platform operating under the Al Jazeera Media Network.

The objective is to streamline and automate the translation process using responsible AI to ensure that news stories are timely, relevant, and accessible to a global audience. The deadline for proposal submissions is Oct 30, 2024.

Selected proposals will work

directly with QRDI Council and AJ+ to implement and ensure that this solution is compliant with Al Jazeera's data privacy protocols and regulations to safeguard user information.

Program Manager at QRDI Council Dr Abdelhak Belaidi said: "In line with our commitment to the Qatar National Vision 2030, this opportunity comes aligned with the QRDI 2030 Strategy, which focuses on digital technology as one of its five priority areas of national importance.

AJ+ aims to leverage ethical AI to provide smart tools, that use machine learning. This initiative is crucial in the fast-paced world of digital news to ensure that stories have a significant impact, further solidifying Qatar's positioning as a global hub for RDI."

This initiative is crucial in the fast-paced world of digital news to ensure that stories have a significant impact

In turn, Executive Producer at AJ+ Alba Mora said: "In the fast-paced world of news, timeliness is crucial.

Delays in adapting our content mean that our stories lose their relevance and impact, which not only affects our audience reach and engagement but also hinders our competitive edge in the news industry.

In this collaboration with QRDI, we seek to create the next generation of content adaptations, where we'll custom-build multiple tools that naturally fit into our workflow and go beyond

simple translation. It's a fantastic step towards meeting our strategic goals: being the most widely available network in the media landscape, investing in AI, and nurturing a culture of innovation."

The Qatar Open Innovation program has been the primary platform for startups and innovators to engage with potential government and corporate buyers to co-create market-ready solutions that address the nation's most pressing challenges in the five national priority areas.

These include energy, health, resource sustainability, society, and digital technology, as outlined in the QRDI Strategy 2030, by identifying opportunities for innovation collaborations to drive economic prosperity.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الطَّيِّبَةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ الرَّحِيمِ وَتَعْلَمِي فِي عِبَادِي رَأْيِي رَأْيِي عَنِّي
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

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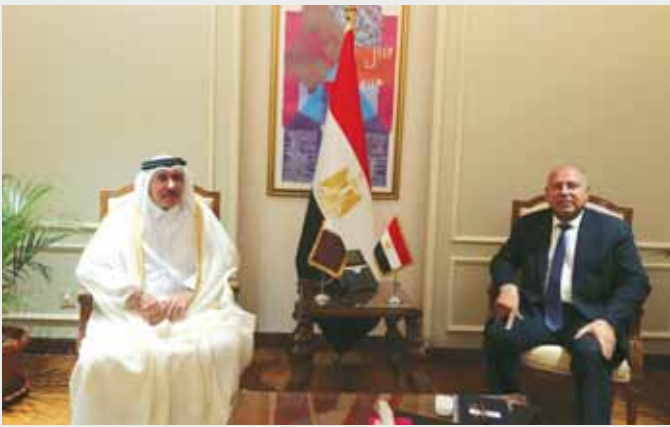
on the sad demise of his
Mother

May God rest the departed soul in peace
and give fortitude to the bereaved family
to bear this great loss.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Minister meets Egypt’s deputy PM

HE the Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti met yesterday with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Transport and Industry of the Arab Republic of Egypt Lt. General Eng Kamel El Wazir, on the sidelines of his participation in the Egypt International Airshow (EIAS 2024). The two sides discussed aspects of co-operation in the areas of transportation and ports, and ways to further develop them, particularly on the activities related to air transportation. Qatar’s ambassador to Egypt and permanent representative to the Arab League, Tariq Ali Faraj al-Ansari attended the meeting. HE the Minister also visited the Qatar Armed Forces’ pavilion at



the Egypt International Airshow (EIAS 2024), which concludes today. Representatives from over 100 countries, 300 exhibitors, and numerous aviation and space industry leaders from around the world are participating in the event, displaying some of the latest technologies, equipment, and most-advanced civil and commercial aircraft.

PM meets GCC ministers



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with the ministers concerned with municipal affairs at the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, who are participating in the ministerial meeting of Agriculture and Food Security in the GCC countries. HE the PM welcomed the guests, wishing them success in their meeting in Doha. (QNA)

Qatar chairs 36th meeting of food security committee of GCC nations

QNA
Doha

The Agricultural Co-operation and Food Security Committee of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries held its 36th meeting in Doha yesterday. The meeting was chaired by HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah, President of the current session, with the presence of Secretary-General of the GCC, Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi and the participation of the members of the Agricultural Co-operation and Food Security Committee of the GCC countries. Addressing the meeting, HE the Minister of Municipality stressed that food security has become one of the most important challenges facing our countries, especially in light of climate change, population growth pressures, and fluctuations in global markets, explaining that the heavy reliance on imports to meet food needs makes GCC countries vulnerable to external fluctuations, which highlights the importance of adopting comprehensive national and regional strategies to enhance self-sufficiency and ensure the sustainability of food resources. HE the Minister stressed the



importance of adopting policies that support sustainable agriculture, encouraging investments in the local agricultural sector, and developing modern agricultural technologies that contribute to increasing production and reducing resource consumption, in addition to the importance of paying special attention to initiatives that enhance co-operation between the GCC countries. He noted the remarkable progress witnessed in recent years in the field of food security in the GCC countries. He also commended the joint efforts between member states to achieve this goal by enhancing co-operation to ensure the transformation of national food systems into healthy, sus-

tainable systems capable of withstanding crises. HE the Minister highlighted the production leap achieved by Qatar during the past five years in terms of food security, in terms of significant growth in cultivated areas and quantity and production, in addition to achieving 100% self-sufficiency of fresh dairy products and their derivatives and fresh poultry. HE the Minister also highlighted the initiatives launched by the ministry to support all food security sectors. HE al-Attiyah also praised the new National Food Security Strategy, which is scheduled to be launched soon, and which comes in line with the Third National Development Strategy (2024-2030),

which eyes sustainability and reliance on modern technologies and innovation in the agricultural sector, in order to achieve Qatar National Vision 2030. He also praised the remarkable efforts made by the Sultanate of Oman during its presidency of the Committee’s last session, expressing appreciation to the GCC General Secretariat for its continuous efforts in enhancing joint Gulf action. For his part, Secretary-General of the GCC, Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, extended his highest gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Amir Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the President of the current session of the GCC Supreme Council, as well as



to his brothers, Their Majesties and Highnesses, the leaders of the Co-operation Council states, for their continuous support in enhancing the path of joint Gulf action in various fields, especially in agriculture and food security. Albudaiwi stressed that the GCC countries regard food security as a critical issue, one that concerns many nations and regional and international organisations, affirming that the GCC General Secretariat, through its strategic partnerships, places this issue at the top of its priorities, praising the excellent plans, distinguished programmes and significant steps taken by all the GCC states to ensure food security. The members of the GCC Ag-

ricultural Co-operation and Food Security Committee, discussed several important topics related to joint co-operation in agriculture, livestock, fisheries and food security among the GCC countries. A number of unified regulations and laws were also approved in the meeting, such as the Organic Inputs and Products Law, the Common Law for Exploitation and Protection of Living Aquatic Resources in the GCC States, the Executive Regulations of the Law on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the Executive Regulations of the Law on Fertilisers and Agricultural Soil Improvers. Additional relevant topics included in the meetings agenda were also discussed.

Minister bids farewell to Singapore envoy



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

Chief of staff meets Poland’s minister



HE the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Staff Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad al-Nabet met yesterday with Deputy Minister of Defence of Poland Pawel Bejda, on the sidelines of his participation in the 32 International Defence Industry Exhibition (MSPO 2024), held in Kielce, Poland. During the meeting, they discussed topics of common interest. They also discussed military co-operation between the two sides and ways to enhance and develop it. Ambassador of Qatar to Poland Saud bin Abdullah al-Mahmoud and a number of senior officers of the Qatari Armed Forces attended the meeting. (QNA)

Qatar Airways voted World’s Best MICE Airline for the second time

Qatar Airways announced that it has been voted the ‘World’s Best MICE Airline 2024’ at the World MICE Awards held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam Sep. 4, 2024. The airline was also voted ‘Middle East’s Best MICE Airline 2024’ by industry experts. The World MICE Awards honour industry leaders for furthering global Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism. This is the second consecutive year Qatar Airways has been lauded with this recognition. Qatar Airways Chief Commercial Officer Thierry Antinori, said: “Qatar Airways is proud to have

The World MICE Awards honour industry leaders for furthering global Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism

received the World’s Best MICE Airline and Middle East’s Best MICE Airline 2024 awards for the second year in a row. This recognition serves as a testament to our efforts in advancing the global MICE industry through our one-stop digital travel solution, QMICE, which offers exclusive fares, significant travel flexibility, and exclusive benefits for MICE professionals.”

“QMICE, along with our award-winning service as well as business class Qsuite and the highly-anticipated Qsuite Next Gen, ensures that we always offer our customers a stylish and convenient travel experience to over 170 destinations – both onboard and through our five-star award-winning hub, Hamad International Airport, which supports Doha as a leading venue for MICE,” he added. (QNA)

Chief of Staff attends MSPO opening



HE the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Staff Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad al-Nabet participated in the opening of the 32nd International Defence Industry Exhibition (MSPO 2024), held in Kielce, Poland. The exhibition is one of the most important defence events in Europe, bringing together more than 600 international companies specialising in defence and security from more than 38 countries to showcase their latest products and technologies. (QNA)

King of Denmark Frederik receives credentials of Qatar's ambassador



King Frederik X of Denmark has received the credentials of Dr Mutlaq bin Majed al-Qahtani as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Qatar (non-resident) to Denmark. Al-Qahtani conveyed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to King Frederik, and continued progress and prosperity to the government and people of Denmark. King Frederik entrusted al-Qahtani with his greetings to His Highness the Amir, wishing him good health and happiness, and Qatar continued progress and development. - **QNA**



Iranian minister receives copy of credentials of Qatar's envoy

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi received in Tehran yesterday a copy of the credentials of Saad Abdullah Saad al-Mahmoud al-Sharif as Qatar's ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Iran. - **QNA**



Qatar chairs GCC anti-terrorism meeting

Qatar chaired the 17th meeting of the Permanent Committee for Combating Terrorism in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, held on September 3-4 at the GCC General Secretariat headquarters in Riyadh. The meeting, according to a post shared by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) on X, was chaired by MoI National Counter-Terrorism Committee secretary Colonel Khalid Ali al-Kaabi, with Qatar's delegation led by Major Yasser Ali al-Malik, a member of the National Counter-Terrorism Committee Secretariat. The meeting discussed various agenda items and made appropriate decisions.

Germany's foreign ministry receives copy of credentials of Qatar's ambassador



Head of Protocol at Germany's Federal Foreign Office, Karin Marschall, has received in Berlin a copy of the credentials of Abdullah Ibrahim Abdulrahman Sultan al-Hamar as Qatar's ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Germany. - **QNA**



Azzam al-Mannai

Right: A picture taken by Azzam al-Mannai.



Huawei, Tasweer explore the future of photography

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Huawei Consumer Business Group, together with Tasweer Photo Festival Qatar, successfully hosted an exclusive HUAWEI XMAGE event that brought together some of Qatar's most celebrated photographers to delve into the future of photography. Held at the Huawei Exhibition Hall in UDC Tower, the event featured a panel discussion on *Future of Photography* led by Tasweer's head of programme and outreach Maryam Wahid and Cheng Lei, chief marketing officer for Middle East and Africa at HUAWEI Consumer Business Group, and a display of works by seven homegrown photographers: Abdulatif Jaidah, Khalid Eldoues, Mohammed Al-baker, Moamon Abdullah, Maryam al-Hail, Abdulla al Mushaifri, and Azzam al-Mannai. Four of these photographers participated in a panel discussion

on how mobile photography is revolutionising the art form, breaking down barriers between professional and amateur photographers, and fostering new avenues for creative expression through Huawei XMAGE technology. Alongside Tasweer Photo Festival Qatar under Qatar Museums, this event highlighted the synergy between cutting-edge technology and homegrown talent. The event was a significant step in supporting Qatar's Vision 2030, which aims to nurture a vibrant cultural landscape by integrating innovation and artistic expression. Maryam al-Misnad, the head of marketing and sponsorship for Tasweer Photo Festival Qatar, said: "We are honoured to join hands once more with Huawei to nurture the ever-growing local talent, and to develop our creative industry." "At Tasweer, we believe that photography as an art form is being shaped by innovation in the smartphone industry more than ever before," she said. "We are grateful for Huawei's support through

XMAGE Technology in providing new creative tools for our artists to explore. We look forward to seeing the outcome of their creativity and we hope their work inspires more emerging photographers." The event also marked the submission of the homegrown photographers' projects to HUAWEI XMAGE Awards 2024. This prestigious annual competition, celebrates excellence in smartphone photography and encourages participants to push the boundaries of creativity. Since its inception in 2017, the XMAGE Awards have attracted nearly 4mn entries from over 170 countries and regions, making it a truly global platform for showcasing innovative photography. On the sideline of the festival Qatari, wildlife photographer Azzam al-Mannai spoke to *Gulf Times* about his experience in using Huawei Pura 70 Ultra. "I focused on shots to reflect the nature of the country," he said. "I share four photographs in this venue, one of them illustrating the



Maryam Wahid

beauty of horses, at Al-Shaqab." "I am very happy with the results coming from this small pocket device," al-Mannai said. "It has a great digital zoom lenses that shows the details from afar," he added. "I personally do not see it competing with traditional photography lenses ... however, it is a great micro option with mind blowing results. It promises a great future for smart phones slash cameras." Maryam Wahid told *Gulf Times*: "We ... worked with eight local photographers to create photo projects using the Huawei Pura 70 Ultra to capture photographs." "As you can see ... the photos they have taken are in different modes, styles, variations, and different colours and different textures were used and showcased in the photographs," she said. "This is really a beautiful collaboration, not only to showcase the camera phone abilities but also to showcase the amazing talent we have in Qatar and the amazing photographers that reside here."



Safari Group supports Wayanad landslide relief

The Safari Group has donated Rs10mn, contributed by its management and employees, to the Kerala Chief Minister's Relief Fund to aid the victims of the landslide disaster in Wayanad's Maypadi Panchayat, a statement issued in Doha said yesterday. Safari Group of Companies chairman Aboobacker Madappat and managing director Zainul Abideen handed over the cheque to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at the Government Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram, in India's Kerala state. Kerala Waqf Board chairman M K Sakeer was also present on the occasion. Madappat stated that the Wayanad disaster was a profound shock and emphasised that it is the responsibility of every individual to extend support to those affected. The Safari Group has consistently lent a helping hand in numerous disasters, including the floods Kerala has faced in the past. The group also actively participates in charitable activities and socio-cultural initiatives both within and outside Kerala, contributing to various causes.

Qatar joins Qur'an contest in Morocco

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs is participating in the ongoing Mohamed VI International Award for Memorisation, Recitation, Tajweed and Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an in Casablanca, Morocco. Mohamed Ahmad Muhammad Abdul Rahim al-Haram and Al-Nu'man Imran Abdul Hamid Abdul Qayyum Ahmed are representing Qatar in the competition at the Qur'anic School at the Hassan II Mosque. The competition started on Tuesday and will conclude today. Malallah Abdulrahman al-Jaber, director of the Department of Da'wa and Religious Guidance at Awqaf, said that Qatar's participation will be in two branches of the competition categories. The Qatar delegation is headed by Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Abdul Aziz al-Thani, head of the Religious Guidance section in the department.



Al-Nu'man Imran Abdul Hamid Abdul Qayyum Ahmed



Mohamed Ahmad Muhammad Abdul Rahim al-Haram

New group of experts takes legal oath at Ministry of Justice

A new group of legal oath experts was sworn in yesterday at the Ministry of Justice, becoming certified experts before the judicial authorities in the country, in accordance with the regulations outlined in Law No. (16) of 2017 regarding the organisation of expert work. The new batch includes 15 experts comprising national cadres and experienced individuals in various specialties, including accounting expertise, alternative energies, real estate valuation, social service, administrative expertise in public relations, marketing, event organisation, and animal wealth expertise (camels and sheep). Additionally, the batch included three experts from outside the experts' registry, authorised by the minister to perform specific missions, which included the fields of diamonds and jewellery, procedures for exporting used oils, and monitoring the activity of processing and recycling used oils and their disposal. These new specialties add to

the experts' registry and meet the demand in this field before the courts. The director of the ministry's Experts Department, Abdullah Abu Shabah al-Mari, congratulated the new experts on their swearing-in ceremony. He emphasised the importance of their role as assistants to the judges and as one of the pillars for achieving timely justice, based on their legal responsibility to present evidence and proofs regarding the technical aspects related to various cases, and the role that expert reports play in expediting the issuance of judgments and the resolution of cases. Al-Mari noted that the Ministry of Justice, based on the directives of HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi, is keen on strengthening the national cadre of experts and providing expertise that aligns with the comprehensive renaissance the country is witnessing in all fields. - **QNA**

Algerians head to polls tomorrow

Around 24mn Algerians are poised to head to the polls tomorrow for a vote in which experts say incumbent President Abdelmadjid Tebboune faces no real risk to his rule as he seeks a second term. Tebboune, 78, is the clear favourite to see off moderate Islamist Abdelaali Hassani and socialist candidate Youcef Aouchiche in the race to lead the country of 45mn. Tebboune is presented as an independent candidate. Hassani, a 57-year-old civil engineer, is the leader of the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP), Algeria's main Islamist party. Aouchiche, a 41-year-old former journalist and member of the Council of the Nation, the parliament's upper house, heads the Socialist Forces Front (FFS). - **AFP**

Six runaway elephants return to South African national park

Six elephants which escaped a renowned South African park through a river returned after a few hours of roaming neighbouring communities, the country's parks agency said yesterday. "The elephants returned overnight" to Kruger National Park, like Phaahla, a spokesman for South African National Parks told AFP. On Wednesday, the agency said that the large

mammals had left the reserve through a river running through the park whose water levels were low. "They went looking for food," Phaahla said. The park initially tried to drive the elephants back using a helicopter, but a large crowd of nearby community members blocked the animals from returning, the spokesman said.

"The communities are quite close to the fence and they have plenty of fruit trees which they (the elephants) can smell from a mile away," he added. The parks service said police had been deployed to control the situation between the elephants and the residents after it became "dangerous". - **AFP**

Amnesty urges war crimes probe over Israel levelling east Gaza

Amnesty International has urged a war crimes probe into Israel razing homes and farms in eastern Gaza to expand a so-called buffer zone between it and the Palestinian territory. "Using bulldozers and manually laid explosives, the Israeli military has unlawfully destroyed agricultural land and civilian buildings, razing entire neighbourhoods, including homes, schools and mosques," it said. The London-based rights group said the levelling since the start of the war on October 7 "should be investigated as war crimes of wanton destruction and of collective punishment". Israel has in several cases said it was destroying "terror" infrastructure to protect Israeli communities living on the other side of the border fence. It did not reply to a request from Amnesty for comment. An Amnesty investigation, which examined satellite imagery and videos posted by Israeli soldiers between October and May, showed "newly cleared land along Gaza's eastern boundary, ranging from

approximately 1-1.8km (0.6 to 1.1 miles) wide", the group said. The expanded buffer zone covers around 58sq km (22sq miles), or about 16% of the Gaza Strip, it said. More than 90% of buildings within that zone appeared to have been destroyed or severely damaged, it said. More than half of the agricultural land in the area showed "a decline in health and intensity of crops due to the ongoing conflict", it added. "Our analysis reveals a pattern along the eastern perimeter of Gaza that is consistent with the systematic destruction of the entire area," said Amnesty's Erika Guevara-Rosas. "The homes were not destroyed as the result of intense fighting. Rather, the Israeli military deliberately razed the land after they had taken control of the area." Amnesty investigator Barbara Marcolini said the level of destruction was unprecedented: "Once you analyse the context, you understand why these destructions should be investigated as war crimes." - **AFP**



Students excited at return to classroom

Teacher orientation at Ideal Indian School



Ideal Indian School organised a five-day orientation programme for teachers, to update them on the latest advancements in education and pedagogy. Through interactive sessions, workshops and expert-led discussions, teachers gained new strategies and tools to enhance their effectiveness and create a more dynamic learning environment for students. The programme began with principal Shaik Shamim Saheb leading a discussion on “Pedagogical Inclusivity and Life Skills for Teachers.” Junior section headmaster Sajid Shamim addressed the topic of “Leadership in Education.” The other presenters were Boys’ Section vice-principal Azam Khan, Girls’ Section vice-principal Dr Nazima Bi, and headmistress Khatija T. C. Datta, a representative from Mograsy Technologies, led a training session focused on mapping and data entry for the School Management System.

On the concluding day, Saheb led a session on “Reflection on School Internal Quality Assessment - Qatar National School Accreditation. Khatija and English Department head Anwar Sadath co-ordinated the orientation programme.

Noble International School



Noble International School welcomed its students back to campus on September 1 after summer break. The school premises and classrooms were beautifully decorated, creating a festive atmosphere. The students were greeted by their teachers. The children were excited to reunite with their friends and classmates.

MES Indian School



MES Indian School reopened on September 1 for a new session after the summer break. “Returning to school always excites students about meeting classmates and teachers, as classroom interactions and teachings infuse a lot of enriching and learner-centric activities,” principal Dr Hameeda Kadar said.

Week-long staff orientation at MES



To prepare educators for the new academic session and as a part of the institution’ Golden Jubilee celebration, MES Indian School organised a week-long staff orientation programme. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar, Magdalene Sylvia, Harleen Kaur, Tulika Mukharjee, Shyna Anil, Haroon, Rajendran, Souda Mohd. Jaleel, Uzma Fatimee, Vasantha, Hajeera Kausar, Muhsina Parveen, Mohammed Ilias, Supriya Chaudary, Shahana and Safwa gave presentations. The event was co-ordinated by Sibi Susan Thomas, Jency George, Mary Cynthia, Seena Ramachandran, Resmi Ajith Kumar, Meghna Pashine, Shari Lijo, Shameera Shameer, Hajeera Kouser and Afreena Mymoonath.



Doha teacher’s book launched

A book about Hindi in Qatar, written by Shalini Verma, Hindi department, DPS Modern Indian School, was launched by Mauritius Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, at ‘Vishwarang’, a Hindi conference titled Tagore International Literature and Arts Festival. Shalini, also a panellist at the three-day event in Mauritius last month, spoke on the topic, “Hindi in the global platform.” She shared the stage with senior writers and journalists. The event was attended by Mauritius President Prithvirajsing Roopun, Indian high commissioner Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Rabindranath Tagore institute director general Santosh Choubey and other dignitaries.

RPS hosts Metanoia 2024



Dr Aju Abraham addressing the event.

In a celebration of intellect and creativity, Rajagiri Public School, Doha, hosted the fourth edition of Metanoia, a conference dedicated to the forefront of educational innovation. The two-day event gathered together a constellation of educators, thought leaders, and visionaries.

The conference was inaugurated by the chief guest, board member Dr Aju Abraham. Administrative director Jinsu Aju, principal Joshy Abraham and vice-principal S Radhakrishnan were present.

Co-ordinated by Nisha Shahul Hameed, the conference featured 14 presentations on groundbreaking educational methodologies. Toastmaster M Freeda Lobo was the judge.

The valedictory function had closing remarks by Radhakrishnan who extolled the virtues of innovation in education.

The grand finale was graced by Jacob Mathew, principal of Olive International School, who served as the chief guest.

He lauded the presenters for their imaginative contributions and inspired them to continue their relentless pursuit of educational excellence.

Lobo, in her closing reflections, spoke about the art of effective presentation and appreciated the participants for their creativity and dedication. Four exemplary speakers were crowned as the best presenters and honoured with mementos and certificates.

Free medical camp at DPS-MIS

DPS Modern Indian School hosted a free medical camp for its staff. Organised by KIMS Health Medical Centre, the camp provided comprehensive health screenings, including blood pressure checks, wellness package, general health and dental consultations.



CRITICISM

Australia, Japan slam China action against Philippines

Australia and Japan yesterday criticised China for what they called “dangerous and coercive” acts against the Philippines in the South China Sea. “We expressed serious concerns over recent developments in the South China Sea, including an intensification of China’s dangerous and coercive activities towards the Philippines, which have occurred with high frequency,” the two countries said in a joint statement after a meeting of their foreign and defence ministers in Queenscliff. The two countries also agreed to continue discussions on how to involve Japan in the AUKUS security alliance consisting of Australia, the US and Great Britain, the statement added.

WEATHER

Chinese cities suspend schools as typhoon nears

Cities in southern China suspended schools and cancelled some flights yesterday as Super Typhoon Yagi headed towards the holiday island province of Hainan after strengthening from a tropical storm. The typhoon is expected to make landfall on Friday afternoon in either Hainan or neighbouring Guangdong. Work, school and local transport services were suspended from noon yesterday in Haikou, Hainan’s capital. Hong Kong’s weather observatory issued the third-highest typhoon warning at 6.20pm (1020 GMT), limiting public transport across the finance hub.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Cambodia says China to hand over two warships

Cambodia yesterday said China will soon hand over two warships to improve its defence capabilities, despite US fears about Beijing boosting its military influence in the strategic Gulf of Thailand. Cambodia is a close ally of Beijing and Washington has long harboured concerns about the Chinese-funded renovation of the kingdom’s Ream naval base. Maly Socheata, a spokeswoman for the Cambodian defence ministry, said China would send the two new so-called Type 056C corvettes next year, at the earliest. She said the vessels are being built specially for Cambodia, and “are expected to be completed and given to Cambodia in 2025 or later.”

OFFBEAT

Small meteor lights up Philippine sky

A small, bright meteor lit up skies over the northern Philippines early yesterday as it burned up entering the Earth’s atmosphere, the European Space Agency and witnesses said. The 3.3-foot space rock, named 2024 RW1, collided with the Earth’s atmosphere shortly after midnight and caused a “harmless” but “spectacular fireball” over the Philippines’ Luzon island, the ESA said. The meteor, discovered through the Catalina Sky Survey, is only the ninth meteor that humans have ever spotted before impact. Businessman Allan Madelar, 28, said he waited an hour in Gonzaga, a municipality in Luzon, to watch the meteor with a friend.

Malaysia not to stop South China Sea exploration: PM

Reuters
Moscow

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim yesterday said the country will not stop its oil and gas exploration in the South China Sea despite claims by Beijing that Malaysia was infringing on its territory. Anwar, speaking from Russia where he is on an official trip, said Malaysia’s exploration activities were within its territory and were not intended to be provocative or hostile towards China, with whom it has friendly relations. “Of course, we will have to operate in our waters and secure economic advantage, including drilling for oil, in our territory,” Anwar said in a televised press conference in Vladivostok. “We have never denied the possibility of discussion (with China). But it doesn’t mean we have to stop the operation in our area.” Malaysia’s foreign ministry said on Wednesday it would investigate the leak of a classified diplomatic note from the Chinese foreign ministry. In the note, which was carried by a Philippine news outlet, Beijing asserted that Malaysia’s oil and gas exploration in the South China Sea breached its territory. The Chinese foreign ministry said it was “astonished” by the Philippine media report, saying there was an “ulterior motive” to it. “As countries directly concerned in the South China Sea issue, China

and Malaysia have maintained close communication on properly handling their differences and disputes,” it said. Anwar said it was a matter of Malaysia’s “economic survival” that the exploration continued. China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, including parts of the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam, complicating energy exploration efforts by several of those countries. Under international law, an EEZ does not denote sovereignty, but grants a country sovereign rights to extract natural resources from those waters. Malaysian state energy firm Petronas, or Petroliam Nasional Berhad, operates oil and gas fields in the South China Sea within Malaysia’s EEZ and has in recent years had several encounters with Chinese vessels. Anwar said China has sent “one or two” protest notes to stop Malaysia’s oil exploration activities, without specifying details, but stressed that the government would continue to explain to Beijing its position. “We have said that we will not transgress other people’s borders. That is our stringent policy and principles,” he said. “They know our position.... They have claimed that we are infringing on their territory. That is not the case. We say no, it is our territory. “But if they continue with the dispute, then okay, we will have to listen, and they will have to listen.”



Demonstrators wave Bangladesh’s national flag during Martyr March, a rally organised by Students Against Discrimination to mark one month to the ousting of the country’s former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, in Dhaka yesterday.

Bangladesh ex-PM should ‘keep quiet’ until trial: Yunus

AFP
Dhaka

Bangladesh’s ousted premier Sheikh Hasina should “keep quiet” while exiled in India until she is brought home for trial, interim leader Muhammad Yunus told Indian media yesterday. Hasina, 76, fled to India by helicopter one month ago as protesters marched on her palace in a dramatic end to her iron-fisted rule of 15 years. An interim government led by Nobel laureate Yunus has been under public pressure to demand her extradition and trial over the hundreds of demonstrators killed during the weeks of unrest that ultimately toppled her. “If India wants to keep her until the time Bangladesh wants her back, the condition

would be that she has to keep quiet,” Yunus, 84, told the Press Trust of India news agency. “Sitting in India, she is speaking and giving instructions. No one likes it. It’s not good for us or for India.” Hasina has remained in India, her former government’s biggest patron and benefactor, since her August 5 overthrow, inflaming tensions between the two South Asian neighbours. She made a public statement the week after her arrival calling for Bangladeshis to gather in Dhaka to mark the 1975 assassination of her father, independence hero Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Hasina’s comments were seen as a provocative effort to galvanise members of her Awami League party and undermine law and order in the fragile first days after Yunus took office. The gathering was prevented by a counter-demonstration outside her childhood home in

the capital by a mob that beat suspected Awami League supporters with sticks and rods. Yunus did not say whether a formal extradition request had been made to India. His government has avoided committing itself to demanding her return. Hasina’s government was accused of widespread human rights abuses, including the mass detention and extrajudicial killing of her political opponents. Numerous criminal cases have been lodged against Hasina and senior Awami League figures over the deaths of protesters in a police crackdown on the student-led uprising that ultimately ousted her. Thousands attended a demonstration in Dhaka to mark one month since Hasina’s toppling and to remember those killed during the unrest, with some chanting demands for the hanging of the “killer Hasina”

Japan to resume trial removal of Fukushima debris

The operator of Japan’s stricken Fukushima nuclear power plant said it aims to carry out a trial removal of highly radioactive debris next week, after a previous attempt was suspended. Thirteen years after an earthquake and tsunami hit Fukushima-Daiichi in one of the world’s worst nuclear accidents, around 880 tonnes of extremely hazardous material remain inside. Late last month, Tokyo Electric Power Company had to suspend a removal procedure after a technical problem involving the installation of the necessary equipment. “It will take several days for us to prepare for a resumption... and we will be able to resume next week if all goes well as scheduled,” a Tepco spokesman said. Three of Fukushima-Daiichi’s six reactors were operating when a tsunami hit on March 11, 2011, knocking down cooling systems and sending them into meltdown in what became the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl.

Heavy rains lash Manila



Pedestrians waded through a flooded street in Manila yesterday, caused by heavy rains.

China assures Wellington after spy report concerns

AFP
Wellington

China yesterday insisted it did not pose a threat to New Zealand’s national security, after the country’s spy service singled out Beijing-backed groups as a “complex intelligence concern”. New Zealand’s security intelligence service levelled unusually candid criticisms at China in its annual threat report, released this week, saying ongoing foreign interference efforts were “complex and deceptive”. China’s embassy in New Zealand hit back yesterday, branding such claims “entirely baseless” and “a figment of imagination or sheer fabrication”. “There is no competition to speak of between the two countries, and China is not a threat

to New Zealand,” an embassy spokesperson said in a statement. Beijing was accused of infiltrating local groups, replacing authentic community views with those approved by the ruling party. In one example, a Chinese-language community news outlet was accused of regurgitating government talking points. “The report’s blatant attempts to discredit the Chinese diaspora and students are nothing but an effort to sow discord, create fear, and foster division,” replied China’s embassy spokesperson. “This is highly irresponsible, reckless, and deeply unfair to the Chinese community.” China’s embassy suggested external forces – likely a veiled reference to the US – had been meddling to undermine relations between the trading partners.

China nears peak emissions as climate envoy meets US counterpart

AFP
Beijing

As climate envoys from the world’s top two greenhouse gas producers meet in Beijing this week, experts say China’s emissions may finally be nearing their peak. US climate envoy John Podesta will be looking to solidify Beijing’s commitments – which include topping out its planet-warming emissions by 2030 – as he meets this week with counterpart Liu Zhenmin. But with Beijing installing renewable capacity at record speed,

and a construction slump dragging down emissions-heavy steel production, there are signs China could hit the peak early, though uncertainties remain. “So much clean electricity... is being added that China can peak its emissions right now, if those additions are maintained and if overall energy demand growth moderates,” said Lauri Myllyvirta of the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA). China is building almost twice as much wind and solar energy capacity as every other country combined, data showed earlier this year. That bottleneck installation saw

it hit a target for wind and solar capacity in August, six years ahead of schedule. And while coal remains king in China’s electricity system, there are signs the world’s second-biggest economy may be weaning itself off the fossil fuel. Coal power permits fell 83% in the first half of this year, and no new coal-based steelmaking projects were approved in the same period. China is the world’s top emitter and biggest consumer of coal, making its progress central to global climate goals, said Myllyvirta. “Whether China’s emissions growth continues or turns into a

decline is absolutely decisive for our ability to peak global emissions and start reducing them towards net zero,” he said. In addition to solar and wind, China’s clean energy mix includes a significant amount of hydro and nuclear power. China is the world’s fastest growing nuclear power producer, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency, and last month alone approved plans for 11 new nuclear reactors. But despite the growth in non-carbon energy sources, China’s demand for coal still jumped last year, helping drive a global increase. And coal-fired power generation

is projected to grow again this year in China, albeit at the lowest rate in almost a decade, according to the International Energy Agency. “However, there is significant uncertainty concerning the availability of hydropower and the growth in power demand,” it warned. Even as coal permits fell, construction began on more than 41 gigawatts of coal projects during the first half of 2024, CREA and Global Energy Monitor said. That nearly equalled 2022 levels and accounts for over 90% of new coal construction worldwide. The continued build-out reflects China’s “cautious approach

to its clean electricity transition,” said Muyi Yang, senior electricity policy analyst at energy think tank Ember. That strategy is “characterised by ‘establishing before breaking’; first building a robust clean electricity system before phasing down fossil fuels”, Yang said. China has already seen drought hit hydropower output, something that is likely to become more frequent with climate change. But as it builds out other renewable and non-carbon alternatives, its reliance on coal to plug gaps should decline, said Yang. “China is fast approaching this critical juncture.”



India’s GDP to expand 7.2%, says RBI chief

Reuters
Mumbai

Despite the moderation seen in India's first quarter gross domestic product growth (GDP), the South Asian economy is likely to achieve full year growth of 7.2% as projected, the Reserve Bank

of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das said yesterday.
India's economic growth slowed to 6.7% year-on-year in the April-June quarter, below the polled estimate of 6.9% and the Reserve Bank of India's projection of 7.1%, as a decline in government spending during national elections weighed.
“Fundamental growth drivers of

the Indian economy are not slowing, they are gaining momentum and this gives us confidence to say that the Indian growth story remains intact,” Das said in a speech at the annual FIBAC banking conference. Das said agriculture should perform better during the rest of the year due to a good monsoon and aid a further pick-up in rural demand,

while strong investment activity would also see a further boost from government capex picking up pace.
“It is evident that India is on a sustainable growth path. Consumption and investment demand, the two main drivers of growth, are growing in tandem. Overall, the RBI's projection of GDP growth at 7.2% for 2024-25 does not appear

out of place.” Das said currently the balance between inflation and growth is well poised but reiterated the need to maintain price stability to support growth over the medium to longer term.
The pace of disinflation has been frequently interrupted by volatile and elevated food inflation, the chief said. “It is the headline infla-

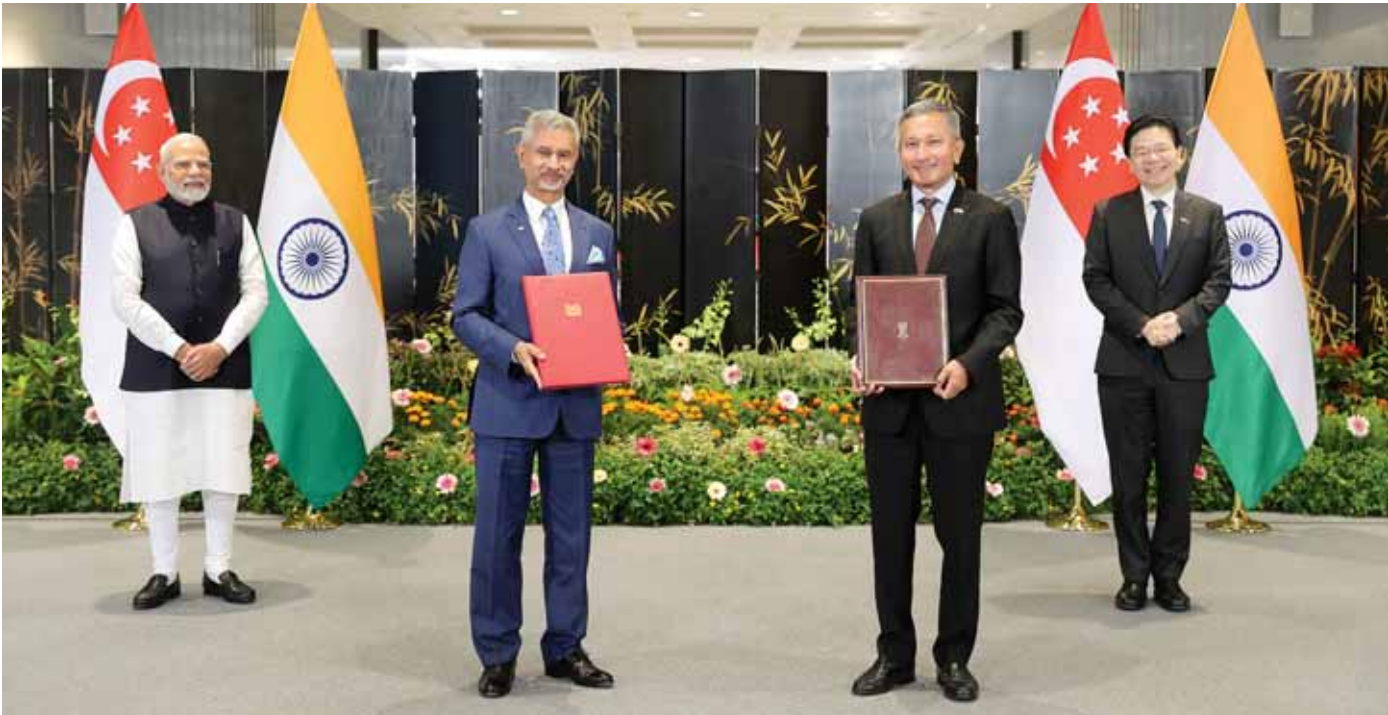
tion that matters. It is the headline inflation with food inflation having a weight of 46% that the people understand,” Das said.
He, however, added that with the monsoon progressing well there is greater optimism that the food inflation outlook could become more favourable over the course of the year.

UK moves to oust hereditary peers from upper house

AFP
London

The UK government yesterday introduced legislation to axe seats in the House of Lords retained for hereditary law-makers as it moves to reform parliament's unelected upper chamber.
The bill will remove the 92 seats reserved for peers who inherited their position as a member of an aristocratic family.
They hold titles such as duke, earl, viscount and baron. Britain is an anomaly among western governments in having such lawmakers.
The move was a manifesto commitment of Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour party ahead of its landslide general election win in July, which returned it to power for the first time in 14 years.
It revives reform of the Lords that started under Tony Blair's Labour government in the late 1990s.
“This is a landmark reform to our constitution,” Constitution Minister Nick Thomas-Symonds said in a statement.
“The hereditary principle in law-making has lasted for too long and is out of step with modern Britain.
“The second chamber plays a vital role in our constitution and people should not be voting on our laws in parliament by an accident

of birth,” he added. The legislation will easily pass the House of Commons lower chamber due to Labour's massive majority before it will have to be approved by the Lords.
It is not clear when exactly it will become law.
Lesotho in southern Africa is the only other country in the world with a hereditary element in its legislature, according to UK officials.
The scrapping of the hereditary peers has been described by Labour as a “first step in wider reform”.
The government says it wants to ultimately replace the Lords with an alternative second chamber that is more representative of the UK.
The Lords comprises around 800 members, most of whom are appointed for life.
They include former MPs, typically appointed by departing prime ministers, along with people nominated after serving in prominent public- or private-sector roles, and senior Church of England clerics, including the Archbishop of Canterbury.
The primary role of the centuries-old chamber is to scrutinise the government.
It cannot override legislation sent from the popularly elected House of Commons, but it can amend and delay bills and initiate new draft laws.



Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi look on as Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyan Jaishankar and Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan pose with memorandums of understanding in Singapore yesterday.

India, Singapore sign deal to co-operate on semiconductors

Reuters
Singapore, City

The leaders of India and Singapore yesterday signed an agreement to partner and co-operate in semiconductors, in a deal aimed at giving Singaporean firms a greater role in supply chains in the Indian market, the two countries said.
A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Singapore, his fifth overall and first since 2018.
“Singapore and India will leverage complementary strengths in their semiconductor ecosystems and tap on opportunities to build resilience in their semiconductor supply chains,” Singapore's trade ministry said in a

statement. “This will include government-led policy exchanges on ecosystem development, supply chain resilience, and workforce development.”
Tiny Singapore has long punched above its weight in the sector, accounting for 11% of the global semiconductor market, with 20% of global semiconductor equipment manufactured in the country.
Semiconductors are a key plank of India's business agenda, with a \$10bn package in place to boost the industry's push to compete in future with countries like chipmaking heavyweight Taiwan. India expects its semiconductor market to be worth \$63bn by 2026.
In February, it gave the go-ahead to construction of three semiconductor plants worth over \$15bn by firms including Tata Group and CG Power, with plans to manufac-

ture and package chips for sectors including defence, autos and telecommunication.
Modi met Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and former premier Lee Hsien Loong during the visit. Three other agreements were also signed, on digital technologies, education and skills development and on health and medicine, according to India's foreign ministry. India and Singapore yesterday also called for the peaceful resolution of all maritime disputes in the South China Sea in accordance with international law, without use of force.
“Both sides also called on all parties to resolve disputes through peaceful means without threat or use of force and exercise self-restraint in the conduct of actions that could escalate tensions in the region,” they said in a joint statement.

Royal Navy says one killed in helicopter crash

Britain's Royal Navy yesterday said one person had been killed following an incident in which a helicopter was forced to ditch into the Channel during a training exercise.
“It is with great sadness that we must report a member of the Royal Navy has died following a training incident on Wednesday night,” the Navy said in a statement on X.
“A full investigation will take place. The incident involved a Merlin Mk4 helicopter in the English Channel near Dorset that ditched while conducting night flying exercises with HMS Queen Elizabeth. There were no other fatalities or serious injuries.”
Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was deeply saddened by the death and paid tribute to those involved in the search operation.
“My thoughts are with the family and loved ones during this painful time,” he posted on X.

Queen visits English National Ballet centre



Britain's Queen Camilla meets a member of staff at the English National Ballet's Mulryan Centre for Dance in London, Britain, yesterday.

UK retailer to bring back 100-year old price pledge

Reuters
London

British department store John Lewis is reintroducing its 100-year old “Never Knowingly Undersold” promise for customers on Monday, two years after it dropped it, hoping a revamped version of the price guarantee will help drive growth.
The employee-owned retailer, which also operates Waitrose supermarkets, returned to annual profit in March after three difficult years, and the new head of its department stores hopes the commitment to value will boost revenue.
“It gets us back on the front foot,” executive director Peter Ruis told reporters yesterday.
John Lewis has struggled in recent years after investing

heavily to compete with online rivals at a time when a cost-of-living crisis has affected the incomes of its typically more affluent customers.
But a turnaround effort is already underway, ahead of former Tesco executive Jason Tarry joining in mid-September as its new chair before incumbent Sharon White steps down.
Ruis said removing the price promise had caused customers to believe John Lewis had become more expensive.
Under the refreshed pledge, John Lewis will match prices on branded goods with 25 online and high street retailers including Amazon, Apple, Argos and rival department store House of Fraser.
If customers find the same product more cheaply elsewhere within seven days they can claim the difference back.

Indians demand justice in candlelight march for slain doctor

AFP
Kolkata

Vast crowds of Indians bearing candles marched through the streets of Kolkata early yesterday, demanding justice nearly one month on since the rape and murder of a doctor.
The discovery of the 31-year-old doctor's bloodied body at a state-run hospital in Kolkata on August 9 has stoked nationwide anger at the chronic issue of violence against women.
“We want justice,” read one message spelt out in flickering candles and clay lamps.

“Let there be light, let there be justice,” a sign held by protesters read.
The brutal murder has triggered protests across India – and repeated strikes by medics – demanding safer conditions for women.
While many protests and strikes have since calmed in the rest of India, regular demonstrations continue in the sprawling megacity of Kolkata.
Police said as many as 100,000 took part in the rally in Kolkata. Similar but smaller rallies were also held in the capital New Delhi.
“The heart of the entire nation is torn,” said protester Rubina Mukherjee.

Thousands gathered late on Wednesday evening, joining hundreds of doctors who are maintaining a strike, linking arms to form a human chain in a protest to “reclaim the night”.
Many lights were turned out for an hour, plunging a swathe of the city into darkness, with protesters bearing flaming torches lighting up the city's night sky like fireflies.
“We will take back the night, time and again, until justice is delivered,” said 35-year-old housewife Smita Roy.
Traffic ground to a halt in Kolkata's usually bustling main city streets, as women blocked the route with a mass sit-in, waving a sea of

Indian flags.
At times, crowds shouted in anger, chanting “We Want Justice”.
But they also paused in quiet reflection as the candles were lit, before softly singing.
The father of the murdered doctor also spoke at the rally outside the hospital where her battered body had been found, talking of his family's “broken hearts” and how they had been “shocked to the core” by the killing.
Demonstrators have given the murdered doctor the nickname “Abhaya”, meaning “fearless”.
One man has been detained for the murder, but West Bengal's government has faced public criticism

for the handling of the investigation.
The father spoke in fury at what he said had been “so much pressure” on his family to rapidly cremate her body.
“We wanted to keep her body... What was the hurry to cremate her? Mystery shrouds her death,” he said.
He also dismissed a state law passed on Tuesday – that could lead to the execution of rapists – as nothing “but a populist sham”.
The protests were largely peaceful, although in places, small scuffles between the protesters and supporters of West Bengal state's ruling party, the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), broke out.
“Justice delayed is justice denied”,

said schoolteacher Parbati Roy, 54, holding a candle.
“We are wanting to shed light on the investigation into the rape of the murder of the junior doctor.”
India's Supreme Court has ordered a national task force to examine how to bolster security for healthcare workers, saying the “horrific” killing had “shocked the conscience of the nation”.
The gruesome nature of the attack has invoked comparisons with the horrific 2012 gang rape and murder of a young woman on a Delhi bus.
It became a major political issue, and was seen as one factor in the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) subsequent success in elections.

Haiti's state
of emergency
now covers
entire territory

Haiti has expanded its state of emergency to cover the entire nation's territory, a spokesperson for Prime Minister Garry Conille said on Wednesday, as the Caribbean country battles violent gangs that have taken over much of the capital and started expanding into nearby regions.

Haiti's populous Ouest department, where the capital Port-au-Prince is located, was put under a state of emergency on March 3 under the administration of Conille's predecessor Ariel Henry, as a dramatic escalation in violence paralysed the capital and thousands of inmates escaped in two prison breaks.

The state of emergency was repeatedly renewed and other departments were later added, including the farming region of Artibonite that has suffered some of the worst violence, the Centre department and Nippes, on the southern peninsula.

Earlier on Wednesday, Conille said he had helped distribute materials and weapons for the Haitian army and national police in order to recover territories taken by gangs.

The announcement comes a day ahead of a planned visit to the Caribbean nation by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The US is the largest funder of a UN-backed security mission that Henry requested in 2022 to help fight the gangs and reclaim territory.

A first contingent of 400 Kenyan police officers arrived in June and July, while a handful of other countries have pledged at least 2,500 more troops.

These have yet to arrive and the mission's mandate is set to expire at the start of October.

Nearly 580,000 people have been internally displaced by the conflict, hundreds of thousands deported back to Haiti, and close to 5mn people are facing severe hunger. - Reuters

Brazil expects more
fires amid extreme
low humidity

More than a thousand Brazilian municipalities were on alert yesterday due to very low humidity as the country is gripped by a drought that has fuelled wildfires. Flames reached a protected forest on the outskirts of the capital Brasilia, which was enveloped in smoke for the second time in two weeks, and where it has not rained in 130 days.

The National Institute of Meteorology (Inmet) said in a report that Brasilia, as well as the southeast with its highly populated states of Sao Paulo and Minas Gerais, were among the worst affected by a "relative humidity of less than 12%".

This was a "very dangerous" situation due to the "great risk of forest fires".

Such low humidity also impacts residents' health and can cause pulmonary disease or headaches. In several dozen municipalities, the humidity level has fallen below the 10% threshold, even reaching 7%, a level "as low" as that seen in the Sahara, said Ana Paula Cunha, a researcher at the National Centre for Natural Disaster Monitoring (Cemaden). - AFP

Nicaragua releases 135 political prisoners after US negotiations

Reuters/AFP
Washington/Guatemala City

The United States has secured the release of 135 political prisoners in Nicaragua on humanitarian grounds, the White House said yesterday, adding that they will go to Guatemala before seeking to lawfully move to the United States or other nations.

The release follows "months of negotiations between the US and Nicaragua", the US and Guatemala said in a joint statement.

Those released are all Nicaraguan citizens, the White House said, and include members of a Christian evangelical organisation, Catholic lay people, and students.

Last year, more than 200 Nicaraguan political prisoners were freed and flown to the United States.

At the time, President Daniel Ortega - who has launched a crackdown on dissent

in recent years - described the release as a push to expel criminals who were working to undermine Nicaragua.

His administration did not immediately comment on the latest release.

The plane carrying the Nicaraguans arrived in Guatemala early yesterday morning, Guatemalan President Bernardo Arevalo's office said.

Those freed will stay in Guatemala, where they will have the opportunity to lawfully request to go to another country.

The US provided their transport and will feed and house them as well, it said in the statement with Guatemala.

"Thank you to everyone for my freedom. Long live a free Nicaragua!" Francisco Arteaga told reporters as he raised his fist from a bus window on landing in Guatemala City.

Arteaga said he had been jailed for his social media postings about Ortega's actions against the Catholic Church, which

the leftist leader has increasingly treated as a threat.

In 2021, Washington imposed sanctions and denounced Ortega's re-election as a "sham" after all of his top opponents were rounded up and detained by police in the months leading up to the vote, with journalists and religious figures also imprisoned.

Among the prisoners freed include 13 members of Texas-based evangelical organisation Mountain Gateway, the White House said.

According to Mountain Gateway, 11 of its pastors had been arrested in December 2023 and were convicted earlier this year on charges of money laundering, which the organisation denounced as baseless.

"It is heartbreaking to know that people who we consider family are sitting in prison for sharing the Gospel," Mountain Gateway President Jon Britton Hancock said in a March statement.

Ortega has accused church leaders of looking to overthrow his government after the Catholic Church tried to mediate talks between the administration and anti-government protesters in 2018.

The mass street protests were met with a violent counterattack from Ortega's security forces in which more than 300 civilians were killed, according to rights groups and international observers.

Since then, the government has arrested or expelled scores of Catholic priests and shuttered several thousand civil society groups, most accused of financial crimes.

Ortega, a 78-year-old former leftist guerrilla who battled US-backed forces in the 1980s, returned to power in 2007 and initially had been seen as more moderate.

However, he has since lifted presidential term limits and seized control of all branches of government and instituted a sweeping crackdown on groups seen as threats to his rule.

Madrid to ban
e-scooters
over safety
concerns, too

Madrid will ban e-scooters rented through mobile apps after the city's three licensed operators failed to implement limits on their clients' circulation or control their parking, Mayor Jose Luis Martinez-Almeida said in a statement.

"Our priority is the ... safety of the people of Madrid," he said.

Martinez-Almeida said the licences of Lime, Dott and Tier Mobility would be cancelled from October and that the city has no plans to grant new licences to any other operators.

"The market was found to be incapable of meeting the requirements set by the mayor's office to ensure the highest level of safety for citizens," he said yesterday.

The so-called scooter sharing system has raised opposition in cities around the world due to reckless driving by users on streets and sidewalks and haphazard parking that often leaves public spaces cluttered.

Since May 2023, the Madrid city council had regulated the rental e-scooter market, only authorising Amsterdam-based Dott, Germany's Tier Mobility and US-based Lime, whose scooters are available on Uber's app.

They were authorised to rent 2,000 scooters each.

The three operators were supposed to give the mayor's office access to its data and were ordered to implement technology forcing their customers to leave the scooters only in authorised areas and preventing them from hiring them in pedestrian-only streets or near historic parks.

They failed to meet those conditions, the statement said, adding that they have 20 days to appeal.

Dott, Lime and Tier did not respond to requests for comment.

In just two decades, electric scooters have grown into a world-wide market worth tens of billions of dollars a year.

However, Madrid follows cities such as Paris, Montreal and Melbourne which have banned rented electric scooters after allowing them for a time.

Other cities have imposed limits on their use, such as limiting the number in circulation or banning them from pavements. - Reuters/AFP

Trump would tap
Musk to lead govt
'efficiency' panel

Donald Trump announced yesterday that if elected president he would appoint billionaire Elon Musk to lead an audit of government spending and implement "drastic" reform.

Trump said that at Musk's suggestion, he would "create a government efficiency commission tasked with conducting a complete financial and performance audit of the entire federal government", with the Tesla chief executive as its head.

Trump, who is known for hyperbole, told the Economic Club of New York the effort could save "trillions and trillions of dollars".

"This commission will develop an action plan to totally eliminate fraud and improper payments within six months," Trump said.

Musk - who has said he previously voted for Democratic candidates - has thrown his weight and considerable wealth behind Trump since a gunman tried to assassinate the former president at a rally in July.

Musk has a history of sparring with regulators, as when the Securities and Exchange Commission required vetting of his Twitter posts following 2018 tweets that the agency characterised as "false and misleading". - AFP

Harris accepts rules to debate Trump, including muted mics

Reuters
Washington

The campaign of Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris has accepted the rules of next week's debate against Republican Donald Trump, including microphones being muted when it is not a candidate's turn to speak, a source familiar with the matter said on Wednesday.

The debate would be the first between Trump and Harris, who took over as the Democratic candidate from President Joe Biden following the latter's decision to step aside on July 21 after a faltering debate performance in late June against the former president.

The source, who declined to be identified, said the Harris campaign was still



hoping for moments where ABC News, which will host the September 10 debate, is forced to unmute the mics and let the candidates respond.

Harris's rise to the top of the Democratic ticket has re-energised a Democratic cam-



paign that had harboured doubts about Biden's chances.

Polls showed that Trump had built a lead over Biden but Harris has since edged ahead of the Republican candidate in some national opinion polls.

can state attorneys-general filed a lawsuit on Tuesday over a proposed Education Department rule in April that would benefit an estimated 27.6mn borrowers with federal student loans.

The state attorneys-general said they had obtained documents showing that the department had instructed federal loan servicers to begin cancelling hundreds of billions of dollars of loans as soon as this week, before the rule was finalised.

At least \$73bn in loans could be cancelled overnight, their lawsuit said, and billions in further debt relief could follow.

The states argue that the Education Department has no authority to carry out such debt forgiveness.

Hall, an appointee of Republican former president George W Bush, said that he decided to "hastily" issue the order pausing the policy pending a September 18 hearing in order to preserve the status quo.

"Plaintiffs show a substantial likelihood of success on the merits given the rule's lack of statutory authority," he wrote.

The Education Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment. - Reuters

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GULF TIMES

Small-island solidarity and climate common sense

While efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change will remain a top international priority for decades to come, the most urgent risks from global warming require immediate action and new ideas. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres said at the Pacific Islands Forum in Tonga last month, “If we save the Pacific, we save the world.”

Since the Paris climate agreement was signed eight years ago, much progress has been made to create a more sustainable economy, with new technological solutions allowing countries to maintain strong growth while also reducing carbon-dioxide emissions. Governments, businesses, and households are increasingly determined to support climate investments. Renewable energy is becoming businesses’ first choice for electricity generation. Innovation is boosting the competitiveness of green alternatives. And financial institutions are allocating more than \$1tn each year to green projects.

In this context, sustained and concerted action at a global level will be the key to success. Yet the progress has been too slow for the world’s most vulnerable regions. For people living on small islands and grappling with rising sea levels, extreme weather, and ocean warming, climate change is already an existential threat. Despite their minimal carbon footprints, these regions are at the forefront of the problem. Their challenges today will become the global crises of tomorrow.

For small islands, adaptation is critical. Caribbean and Pacific Island states, along with parts of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, face many more severe climate-related problems than other parts of the world. They also are more vulnerable financially. Whether borrowing money to recover from natural disasters or investing to strengthen their resilience

Sustained and concerted action at a global level will be the key to success

Under the EU’s Global Gateway investment strategy, we have put our money where our mouth is, because our commitment reflects both genuine solidarity and common sense.

We know that the costs of a disorderly green transition would far exceed the costs of investing in climate adaptation and mitigation right now. The gradual, credible changes that we make today are what will spare us the massive economic, social, and environmental damage caused by unchecked climate change. A few recent examples illustrate our commitment. In Kiribati, a small island state in the central Pacific, rising sea levels may render many islands uninhabitable within a few decades. So, the EU and its financial arm, the European Investment Bank, are working with the World Bank and other international financial institutions to study the possibility of building a new seaport, which will help relocate people from smaller islands to safer ground. Such projects can be a beacon of hope for vulnerable populations everywhere.

In the Caribbean, where violent storms and rising temperatures are straining water infrastructure and the surrounding seas and marine ecosystems, an EU-backed water management and clean oceans programme will provide expert support to launch water projects in 15 Caribbean countries. This work will improve water security, sanitation, solid-waste management, and flood protection, as well as helping to preserve our oceans. The EU and EIB are also pooling resources to transform the way Cabo Verde (an island country off the coast of West Africa) uses and produces energy. This ambitious project will assist the government’s plan to phase out fossil fuels by 2040. By focusing on renewable energy and storage, it will cut pollution and significantly benefit Cabo Verde’s water sector, which relies heavily on desalination – a highly energy-intensive process. With far-reaching environmental and economic benefits, such investments will make Cabo Verde a model for sustainable development across the region.

Finally, in Barbados, we are supporting investments to help deal with floods and hurricanes. One project, in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank, will improve sewage treatment and groundwater management, and we are also supporting a system to recycle wastewater for agricultural use. To enable these investments, we are funding a “debt for climate conversion” programme that responds to Barbados’s particular financial needs in the bond market.

These projects demonstrate what meaningful support for small island states looks like. The Global Gateway programme is helping not only with adaptation and water security, but also with renewable energy, digital innovation, education, health care, and green transportation. – Project Syndicate

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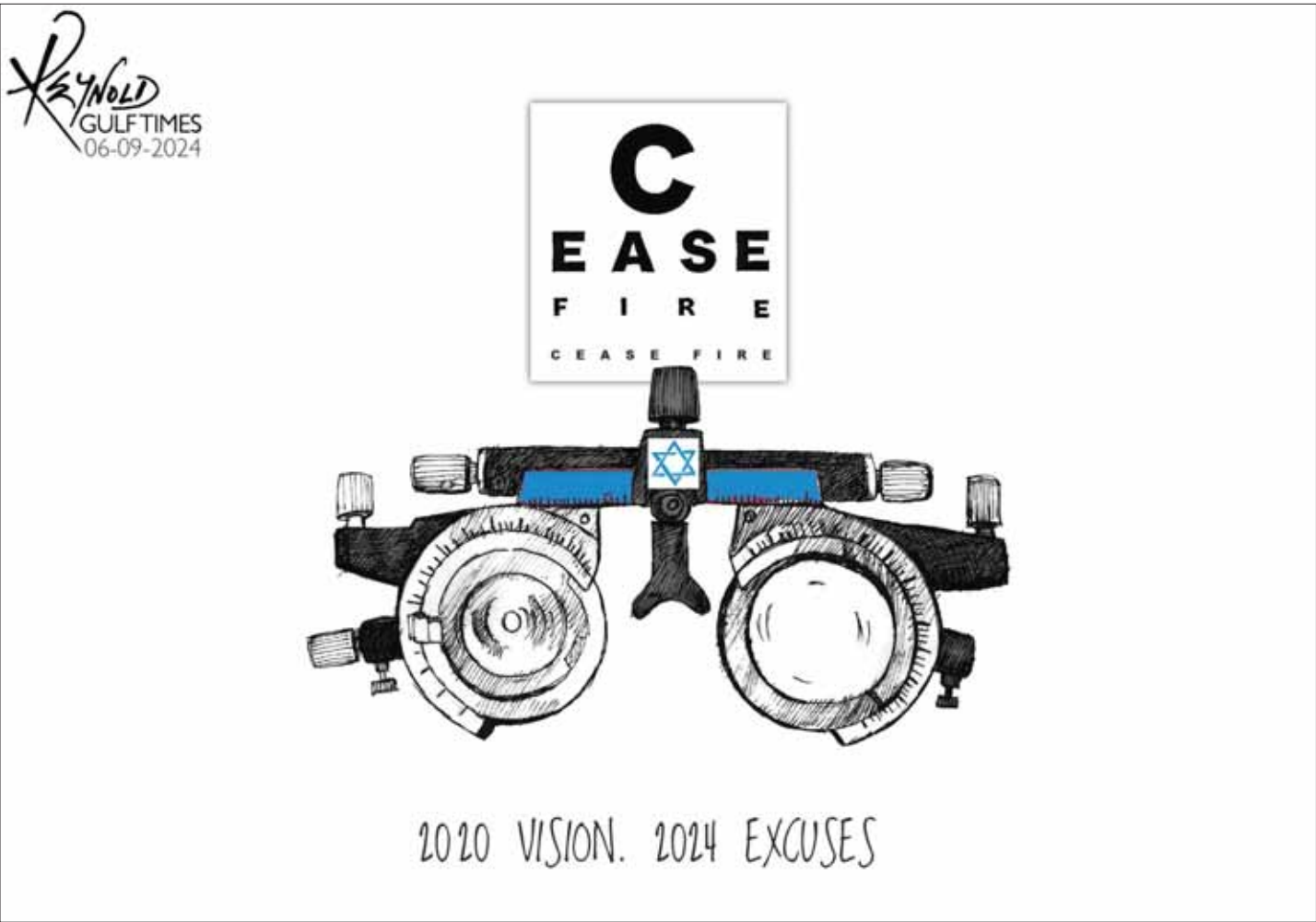
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What a Trump victory would mean for the US economy

By Joseph E Stiglitz
New York

The US presidential election in November is critical for many reasons. At stake is not just the survival of American democracy, but also sound stewardship of the economy, with far-reaching implications for the rest of the world.

American voters face a choice not only between different policies, but between different policy objectives. While Vice-President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee, has yet to detail her economic agenda fully, she likely would preserve the central tenets of President Joe Biden’s programme, which include strong policies to maintain competition, preserve the environment (including reducing greenhouse-gas emissions), reduce the cost of living, maintain growth, enhance national economic sovereignty and resilience, and mitigate inequality.

By contrast, her opponent, former president Donald Trump, has no interest in creating a more just, robust, and sustainable economy. Instead, the Republican ticket is offering a blank check to coal and oil companies and cozying up to billionaires like Elon Musk and Peter Thiel. It is a recipe for making the US economy weaker, less competitive, and less equal.

Moreover, while sound economic stewardship requires setting goals and designing policies to achieve them, the ability to respond to shocks and seize new opportunities is no less important. We already have a sense of how each candidate would perform in this regard. Trump failed miserably in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic during his previous administration, resulting in more than a million deaths. At a

time when the United States was desperately in need of leadership, he suggested that people should inject bleach.

Responding to unprecedented events requires difficult judgment calls based on the best science. In Harris, the US has someone who would be thoughtful and pragmatic in weighing the trade-offs and devising balanced solutions. In Trump, we have an impulsive narcissist who thrives on chaos and rejects scientific expertise.

Consider his response to the challenge posed by China: a proposal to introduce blanket tariffs of 60% or more. As any serious economist could have told him, this would increase prices – not just for the goods imported directly from China, but also for the innumerable other goods containing Chinese inputs. Thus, lower- and middle-income Americans would bear the brunt of the cost. As inflation rises and the US Federal Reserve is forced to raise interest rates, the economy would be hit by the triple whammy of slowing growth, rising inflation, and higher unemployment.

Making matters worse, Trump has adopted the extreme position of threatening the Fed’s independence (which is not surprising, considering his committed efforts to undermine the independence of the judiciary and the civil service). Another Trump presidency thus would introduce a persistent source of economic uncertainty, depressing investment and growth, and almost certainly increasing inflation expectations.

Trump’s proposed tax policies are equally fraught. Recall the 2017 tax cut for corporations and billionaires, which failed to stimulate additional investment and merely encouraged share buybacks. Although Republicans have never seen a tax cut for the rich that they didn’t love, a few at

least recognized that the policy would increase budget deficits, and therefore added a sunset clause, which begins to take effect in 2025. But Trump, ignoring the evidence that “trickle-down” tax cuts don’t work and don’t pay for themselves, wants to renew and then deepen the 2017 cut in ways that would add trillions of dollars to the national debt.

While populist demagogues like Trump do not care about deficits, investors in the US and abroad should be worried. Ballooning deficits from non-productivity-enhancing spending would further add to inflation expectations, undercut economic performance, and exacerbate inequality.

Equally, repealing the Biden administration’s signature Inflation Reduction Act would not only be bad for the environment and US competitiveness in critical sectors vital for the country’s future; it also would eliminate provisions that have lowered the cost of pharmaceuticals, thus increasing the cost of living.

Trump (and the business-oriented judges he appointed) also wants to roll back the Biden-Harris administration’s strong competition policies, which – again – would increase inequality and weaken economic performance by enshrining market power and stifling innovation. And he would scrap initiatives to increase access to higher education through better designed income-contingent student loans, ultimately diminishing investment in the sector that the US most needs to meet the challenges of a twenty-first-century innovative economy.

This brings us to the features of Trump’s agenda that are most troubling for America’s long-term economic success. First, another Trump administration would slash funding for basic science and technology, the source of America’s competitive advantage and rising

living standards over the past 200 years. (It should go without saying that the country’s economic strength does not lie in casinos, golf courses, or gaudy hotels.)

During his previous term, Trump proposed major cuts to science and technology almost every year, but non-extremist congressional Republicans blocked these budget reductions. This time, however, would be different, because the Republican Party has become Trump’s personal cult. Worse, the party has declared a jihad against US universities, including leading institutions that advance the frontiers of knowledge, attract the best talent from around the world, and sustain the country’s competitive advantage.

Even worse, Trump is committed to undermining the rule of law, both domestically and internationally. Trump’s long track record of refusing to pay vendors and contractors speaks to his character: he is a bully who will use whatever power he has to rob whoever he can. But it becomes an even bigger problem when he openly supports violent insurrectionists. The rule of law is not just something which we should treasure for itself: it is critical for a well-functioning economy and democracy.

Heading into the fall of 2024, it is impossible to know what shocks the economy will face in the next four years. But this much is clear: the economy of 2028 will be much stronger, more equal, and more resilient if Harris gets elected. – Project Syndicate

• Joseph E Stiglitz, a former chief economist of the World Bank and former chair of the US President’s Council of Economic Advisers, is University Professor at Columbia University, a Nobel laureate in economics, and the author, most recently, of The Road to Freedom: Economics and the Good Society.



The book *Save America* is displayed on a book shelf at a Barnes & Noble store in Austin, Texas, on Tuesday. (AFP)



Islamic position on contagion, pessimism

By Saalih Aal Ash-Shaykh

Believers in Allah and His messenger! Fear Allah and glorify Him as He deserves to be. Know that this life is nothing except a very short period of time, so act righteously herein. He who does so will have a great and pleasant consequence by the mercy and favour of Allah and he who is neither conscious nor fearful of Allah will not have a way out of his hardships and will have an evil end.

Servants of Allah! Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “No contagion, no pessimism, no *Haammah* and no *Safar*.” (Bukhari). The meaning of this *Hadith* is as follows: *Haammah* is a type of bird; the pre-Islamic Arabs used to think that whenever this bird landed on anyone’s house, somebody who lived in that house would definitely die. This is of course a type of superstition. As for *Safar*, this is another type of superstition; one group of Islamic scholars held the view that the pre-Islamic Arabs were highly superstitious regarding the month of *Safar* while another group held the view that *Safar* is in fact a worm which used to dwell in the bodies of some animals (as a disease) and that this disease was contagious.

In this *Hadith* the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, negated and refuted the prevalent belief of the disbelievers at that time. These false beliefs would affect the hearts of the people so greatly that it would weaken their reliance on Allah and lead them to doubting Him and even attributing evil to Him. Also, these beliefs would lead people to attribute deficiencies to Allah, either by them claiming that He has incapacities or by them ascribing partners to Him in acts of worship, or in controlling destiny.

So the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, was addressing all those who truly believe in Allah and in His control over everything by saying: “No contagion, no pessimism, no *Haammah* and no *Safar*.” The words “No contagion” mean that contagion is not independently effective, because the pre-Islamic Arabs used to believe that contagion was itself a characteristic of a disease and that it had no external control over it. They also believed that there was nothing that could prevent contagion from occurring and that nothing could eliminate it.

When the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said, “No contagion” he certainly did not mean that contagion itself does not exist, nor did he mean that diseases and sicknesses do not spread from one person to another due to them coming into close contact, rather, this is something that obviously occurs. However, what the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, was doing was refuting the belief that



The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Mosques, has opened a new mosque at Al Uqdah Area. The Hilal Bin Mohamed Ibrahim Al Mohammadi Mosque has space for 1,135 male and female worshippers. Spread over an area of 3,467sq m, the mosque has houses for the Imam and Muezzin.

the disbelievers had which was that if a sick person happened to come close enough to a healthy person, then sickness would definitely be passed onto the healthy person. The disbelievers used to believe that this transfer was beyond the control and will of Allah and that it was bound to happen. Therefore, what the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, was explaining was that sickness does not spread simply by mixing healthy people with sick ones, rather, it happens with the decree and command of Allah; contagion may or may not occur because it is not necessarily the case that every contagious disease will spread from a sick person to a healthy one unless and until Allah permits this to occur. If Allah does not permit it to happen then it cannot and will not ever occur, because that is by the decree and command of Allah.

Contagion is nothing but a means that will only have an effect if Allah decrees for it to occur, it is not something that necessarily takes place. Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “A sick one should not go into the presence of a healthy one, nor should a healthy one go into the presence of a sick one.” (Muslim) He, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said this regarding camels because allowing them to mix is a means of spreading disease among them. Therefore, in this *Hadith*, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, proves that contagion actually exists, but he, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, only proved its existence as a means and not as an end.

This is exactly the same as saying, for example, that if a person were to do something that could result in his death, then by doing it, he would die – if Allah decreed



that to happen. It is also the same as saying, for example, that if a person were to eat and drink then he would satisfy his hunger and quench his thirst. In reality, these actions are nothing but means to an end that will only occur if Allah has decreed it to do so.

Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Run away from a person with leprosy as you would run away from a lion.” (Ahmad and Bukhari). This is because mixing with such a person is a means of spreading the sickness from a person with leprosy to a healthy one. So this *Hadith* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, explains that although these are nothing but means and that their effect will not take place without the decree of Allah, we still have to exert our utmost efforts in avoiding these means that may result in disease, destruction or tribulations. Moreover, we must rely on Allah in all cases.

This is why on one occasion the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, sat next to a man who had

leprosy and ate with him from the same plate, he even put his hand in the same food that the man was eating from to prove to people that diseases spread only if Allah wills for them to do so. He, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, also did this to show that it is not a must that contagious sicknesses will spread and that it is only Allah who gives the ability for these means to take effect. Then, after eating, he said: “No contagion and no pessimism.”

He, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “No pessimism” because during *Jaahiliyyah*, or the pre-Islamic period of ignorance, the disbelievers were extremely pessimistic about everything. Ibn Mas’ood, may Allah be pleased with him, said that “Each one of us had this (i.e., pessimism), but Allah replaced it with our reliance on Him.” (Abu Daawood & Tirmidhi) This saying means that at that time, the people’s hearts were full of pessimism. For example, people used to feel pessimism when they felt the wind blowing strongly, or if some of them intended to set out on a journey and subsequently saw something

that they disliked, they would be sure that they would meet a calamity or even death during the forthcoming trip, so they would be overcome by pessimism.

However, a believer must completely rely on Allah as Ibn Mas’ood, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “Allah replaces pessimism with reliance on Him.” Pessimism is a false and futile concept; it has no effect in determining events because they are all under the control and decree of Allah. This is why the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, used to hate pessimism and love optimism; for one who is always optimistic has a high opinion of his Lord, which the believer is commanded to have. As for pessimism, this leads a person into thinking evil of his Lord, which was the belief of the people during *Jaahiliyyah*. Due to these reasons, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, forbade us from being pessimistic by saying: “No pessimism.”

Then, he, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said “No *Haammah*” which refers to the bird already mentioned which the disbelievers had false beliefs about. For example, they believed that a person who was murdered would have this bird in his grave screaming for revenge. They also thought that the *Haammah* bird contained the soul of a dead person and flew it between different neighbourhoods. There were countless other false beliefs which were prevalent at that time, so the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, had to refute and negate them because these beliefs were contrary to the sound creed that a Muslim is commanded to have. The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, clarified the concept that everything occurs due to the decree and command of Allah and nothing else.

Another falsehood which the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, wanted to eliminate from its roots was regarding the month of *Safar*. Many scholars are of the view that *Safar* was a month in which the pre-Islamic Arabs were particularly pessimistic. Therefore, when the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said, “No *Safar*”, this was an indication that he *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* wanted to refute and negate all the false beliefs that the disbelievers used to harbour regarding that month. The disbelievers used to think that during the month of *Safar*, all problems, disasters, calamities and other evils would occur. Therefore they would avoid getting married in this month as they thought that such a union would be doomed; nobody would trade during this month as they thought that it would be fruitless; they also thought that all other endeavours during that month would end in problems, hardships and even death. These are the types of beliefs that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, countered due to their falsity.

Safar is just one of 12 months that Allah has given us; nothing happens in this month except what Allah has decreed to happen within it, Allah did not specify a certain month of the year where all difficulties, hardships and calamities would afflict people. In fact, if one looks at history, he will discover that many conquests and victories occurred during the month of *Safar* for the Muslims; it may be that some people are ignorant of this and therefore it becomes incumbent on us to pay attention to facts like these and convey them to the masses. By doing this we are going back to the fundamentals and bases of these false concepts and cutting them off from their roots.

Therefore, in this particular case, we know that believing that *Safar* as an “unlucky” month is a false and frivolous belief, both from the words of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, and by practical experience of the fact that there has been a lot of goodness in this month throughout history. Therefore, all forms of pessimism regarding minutes, hours, days and months are negated by Islam - our faith must be sound and distinct from that of the disbelievers.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, exerted all possible efforts in explaining these concepts to us. He, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, made it clear that we need to purify our hearts from thinking evil of our Lord or being pessimistic regarding places, times or dates. For example, we must refute and negate the belief that some have which is to think that Wednesday is a day on which all evil takes place, so they avoid doing certain things on that day.

Dear believers! We must pay close attention to such matters, our belief must be sound and correct, and we must not allow our hearts and minds to be invaded by such falsities. We must not be pessimistic regarding specific times and places because the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, forbade us from doing this. Also, it goes against the sound belief that we are required as Muslims to possess. I ask Allah to guide me and you all and to make us among those who always think highly of their Lord.

Also, we must know that favours and bounties cannot be attained except by being obedient to Allah and that hardship, calamities and problems can be reduced if not terminated by supplicating to Allah or by being obedient to Him. Therefore, whoever relies on Allah, He is sufficient for him. Allah says that which translates as: “...And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him of his matter ease.” (*At-Talaq*: 4). Nothing can avert the decree and command of Allah except supplication. Destruction and calamities cannot be stopped except through obedience to Allah.

Why do we delay repentance?

Repentance is ultimately the goal that we all seek. All sane people are conscious of their numerous sins, and those who believe in Allah and His Messenger, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), recognise that they will be held accountable for their sins, and therefore desire to be free of the evil consequences of their misdeeds. Islam offers man the ideal way by which he may be released from the burden of his sins.

The word *Tawbah* (repentance) in Arabic literally means ‘to return’. In an Islamic context, it refers to the act of leaving what Allah has prohibited and returning to what He, Almighty, has commanded.

The subject of repentance is one that concerns all people who believe in Allah, and is vital for the Muslims to understand because our salvation in the Hereafter depends on our repentance to Allah, as Allah commands (what means): “...And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, that you might succeed.” [Qur’an 24:31]

Allah also Says (what means): “...Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves.” [Qur’an 2:222]

One may have a real intention to repent, but there may be some obstacles to the path of repentance. If this is the case, then he needs to act without hesitation and remove those obstacles to clear the way to a happy soul.

The postponement of repentance may be the result of either a deliberate desire to prolong the illicit pleasure derived from the sin, or doubt on the part of an ignorant sinner whether or not Allah would accept his repentance.

However, we have to be certain that Allah will guide us to success and safeguard us against our malice. We also must be confident that Allah forgives our sins and

that He, and only He, can judge us. It is only His Judgment that is worthy of our worry and anxiety. So we should fear Him only because sincere repentance removes all sins and disobedience.

The door of repentance is always open, until...

The door to repentance is always open and will not be closed in the face of any repentant person, regardless of his sins. Expect this gate to have two locks: death and the approach of the Day of Judgment. The first was mentioned in the *Hadith*: “Allah accepts a slave’s repentance unless his death approaches.” [At-Tirmithi]

The other was mentioned in the *Hadith*: “Whosoever turns to Allah in repentance before the sun rises in the West, Allah will forgive him.” [Ahmad]

Allah Says in the Qur’an what means: “But repentance is not [accepted] of those who [continue to] do evil deeds up until, when death comes to one of them, he says: ‘Indeed, I have repented now,’ or of those who die while they are disbelievers...” [Qur’an 4:18]

O heedless soul! Hasten to repent before the knock of death sounds and the time of repentance runs out. Do not get caught dying in a state of disobedience to your Most Merciful Lord. Satan gives you long hope and empty promises; he delays your repentance until your heart becomes as callous as a rock by being adamant in sin and disobedience, and you would therefore meet your Lord in a wretched state. If the door of repentance is closed to you, it will never open to you again.

What keeps us from repenting?

1. Taking sins tightly:
The problem with many of us today is that we do not fear Allah, which means that we do not think seriously about

disobeying Him and therefore fall into sin, without giving any real thought to it. Hence, we should think about the statement which Ibn Mas’ood, may Allah be pleased with him, made: “A believer sees his sins as if he were sitting under a mountain which he is afraid may collapse on him, whereas the wicked person considers his sins as flies passing over his nose which he just drives away like this (and he waved his hand across his face to illustrate this).” [Al-Bukhari]

The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Take caution against minor sins, because such sins are like a group of people who temporarily settled in the middle of a valley. Then, they decided to make a fire, so each one of them brought a stick until they were able to make it, so they baked their bread. Thus, minor sins (when they accumulate) may destroy the one who commits them.” [Ahmad]

2. “What is the point? I will only end up doing it again”

Such an approach is the result of a misunderstanding. Indeed, one of the conditions of repentance is having a real intention not to return to the same sin. This, however, does not mean that Satan will never tempt you to commit the same sin again. Thus, if you have failed yourself, and you returned to the same sin, it does not mean that your first repentance was a lie. You should hasten to make additional repentance, with a real intention not to return to this sin, keeping in mind that Allah’s mercy extends over everything.

3. “Allah is forgiving, so let me sin”

When reminded of repentance and the hideousness of disobedience, some people would respond that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. An atheist once said in sarcasm: “You should commit as many

sins as you can because you are heading towards the Lord who is Most-Generous.” There is no doubt that such a view is complete ignorance of the religion of Allah, because Allah’s mercy is close to the righteous and not to the wrongdoers.

4. “I am destined to be a sinner”

Some people may choose to blame Al-Qadr (fate) for their sins. For example, if you ask any of them, “Why do you not perform the Prayers? Why do you not fast? Why do you drink or smoke? Why do you not repent from your disobedience?” They would respond by saying: “This is Allah’s *Qadr*” or: “I am doomed to do this.”

This is definitely a grave misconception and an evasion of the truth. Believing in *Al-Qadr* does not mean that one is destined to commit sins. It is true that Allah has written all human beings’ deeds, good or bad, and only He knows the unseen, but the believer is not forced to perform a good deed, nor is he forced to commit any disobedience. Instead, he has been granted the ability to reflect, reason and then make a decision freely. *Al-Qadr* is only responsible for the calamities and blessings that an individual may confront because he can do nothing about them. For example, if a couple were to marry and have three children, then this is their *Qadr*. It is impermissible to fault *Al-Qadr* for our sins and disobedience because doing so is akin to being in confrontation and showing dissatisfaction with Allah.

Repentance wipes out all sins, major and minor:

Being confused, some people may think that repentance is only required for major sins. It should be noted that repentance from all sins is obligatory.

Even the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa*

sallam, who was sinless, asked Allah to forgive him on a daily basis. The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, is reported to have said: “O people! Make repentance to Allah. I swear by Allah that I make repentance to Him more than seventy times every day.” [Al-Bukhari]

Therefore, we all need to fear Allah, ask His forgiveness and be aware that there is no sin that is minor with persistence, and no major sin with seeking Allah’s forgiveness (i.e. if the minor sin is repeated many times it becomes a major one.) Thus, sincere repentance wipes out all committed sins.

Never despair!

Someone might say: “I want to repent but my sins are too many.” But Allah Says what means: “Say: ‘O my slaves who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.” [Qur’an 39:53]

Therefore, we should never lose hope or stop asking for Allah’s forgiveness. Its importance is shown to us in the *Hadith* in which the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “O people! Turn to Allah in repentance and seek His forgiveness, for I make repentance to Him a hundred times every day.” [Muslim]

Repentance is such a great act of worship that doing it can erase all our sins altogether, as the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “One who repents from sin is like one without sin.” [Ibn Maajah]

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MoCI honours entities for supporting price reduction initiatives

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has honoured the entities that participated in the various initiatives to support the reduction of prices for consumer goods, including sheep meat during the holy month of Ramadan, and sacrificial animals during Eid al-Adha celebrations, launched this year.

The event was attended by MoCI assistant undersecretaries as well as several officials and company owners, a statement said yesterday.

Speaking at the ceremony, Dr Mohammed Mubarak al-Amri, the director of the MoCI's Department of Specialised Licensing and Market Monitoring, lauded the efforts by those responsible for the Ramadan and Eid al-Adha initiatives,



highlighting their vital role in supporting and encouraging local production and enhancing the availability of consumer goods.

The official also expressed his appre-



ciation for the efforts of the public and private entities participating in these initiatives, and acknowledged their commitment to "social responsibility".

He emphasised that the MoCI will con-

tinue to support and encourage initiatives aimed at benefitting Qatari society.

Dr al-Amri also noted the important role that these initiatives play in fostering co-operation and partnership be-

tween the public and private sectors for the benefit of consumers, and encouraged individuals and companies to participate in such initiatives in the future.

The ceremony included a visual presentation that explained the nature and objectives of the initiatives.

During the event, the participating entities were honoured as a token of the ministry's appreciation for their outstanding contributions to the success of these initiatives, which was the result of combined and co-ordinated efforts.

These initiatives contributed to stabilising the prices of essential consumer goods during Ramadan and ensured the full availability of red meat during the entire month and Eid al-Adha, the statement added.

ConteQ Expo 2024 to feature global tech giants, experts

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

ConteQ Expo 2024 will see the participation of more than 60 speakers and 250 exhibitors and partners with the attendance of global tech giants such as Google, Microsoft, Siemens, Huawei, and IBM.

The exhibition from September 16-18 at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) is expected to attract more than 15,000 visitors.

The event will showcase advancements in technologies such as 3D printing, robotics, drones and artificial intelligence (AI) that are transforming the construction and services sectors.

Engineer Salem al-Shawi, the head of the Organising Committee for ConteQ24 and Technical Office manager at the Public Works



Officials announcing details of ConteQ Expo 2024 yesterday. PICTURE: Thajudheen

Authority (Ashghal), said yesterday that the expo has attracted the world's largest companies to one of

the most important sectors: technology and construction.

"The exhibition offers a prom-

ising opportunity to explore the latest developments in technology and identify new ways to improve construction and project delivery," he said.

"Bringing global experts and consultants together with industry counterparts and leading leaders in the construction, manufacturing and retail sectors in Qatar will result in benefits including the adoption of modern initiatives and technologies to lead in all areas of project implementation, the development of the construction sector in Qatar," al-Shawi added.

Hamad Mohamed al-Nasser, manager at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI)'s Trade Development and Investment Promotion Department, said that the expo represents Qatar's commitment to the development of technology in the construction and service industry by providing the latest innovations, technologies and innovative solutions, and the continuous pursuit of innovation and development in this sector.

Khalid Aljumaily, manager at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT)'s Public Relations and Communication Department, said that the expo reflects the ministry's continued commitment to achieving the objectives of the Digital Agenda 2030 while transforming the economy into a digital economy based on innovation and advanced technology.

He said that the MCIT believes that technology is not only a tool for improving day-to-day activities, but a driving force behind inclusive and sustainable transformation across sectors and institutions.

Through its participation, Aljumaily said, the MCIT seeks to highlight innovative technological solutions.

Dr Noora al-Hajri, manager at the Ministry of Labour (MoL)'s



ConteQ Expo 2024 app, official mascot launched

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

The Organising Committee of ConteQ Expo 2024 has unveiled the new ConteQ Expo B2B Matchmaking Tool and mobile app.

The innovative platform will facilitate connections between the event participants, allowing them to schedule meetings in advance, access interactive floorplans and interact directly with exhibitors and speakers in addition to various benefits.

A ceremony yesterday marked the launch of the media lounge which will be powered by Media City

Qatar while providing a cutting-edge environment for media professionals and innovators.

Kholoud Yousuf al-Saai, the head of Events Management, said that Media City Qatar is dedicated to nurturing innovation and creativity within Qatar's media and technology sectors through its partnership with ConteQ Expo 2024.

Media City Qatar offers a dynamic environment for media and technology companies, leveraging Qatar's stable economy and exceptional global connectivity.

The committee also unveiled the Mascot of ConteQ Expo24 and the schools that won the Official Mascot Design Competition, launched in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.



Geekend awaits with 'thrilling' weekend

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Geekdom is set to host its latest edition of Geekend event from September 12-14 at Lusail Boulevard, offering a thrilling weekend of entertainment, community engagement, and competition.

Featuring activities such as the unique Snoonu Hackathon, a Jumbo Gaming challenge, and eSports tournaments with more than QR60,000 in prizes, the event promises an unforgettable experience for both participants and spectators.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Geekdom founder Abdulla al-Mosallam highlighted the uniqueness of this Geekend, citing the diverse range of artists and vendors, as well as newcomers, who will bring fresh energy to the growing community event.

"Every Geekend event, we try to make it unique and special by adding a different variety of artists, vendors, and experiences. What's great about it is the overwhelming interest from the community," he said. "We receive triple the number of applicants that we can accommodate, so we always strive to offer variety and give newcomers a chance to participate."

He noted that Geekend is expected to be even more inclusive, with many first-time participants showcasing their work.

"We have a lot of newcomers this time, and it's going to be a great opportunity for them to interact with their audience in person, especially since many are used to selling online," he said.

Al-Mosallam underlined the Snoonu Hackathon as one of the event's key attractions, with details to be unveiled on Thursday.

The competition is expected to draw a significant number of digital artists, with

hopes of delivering outstanding results.

Al-Mosallam noted that another major attraction is the Jumbo gaming challenge, featuring a Qatari-developed mobile game by Khalifa al-Kuwari.

Players will compete on a large screen to earn top scores and secure a place on the leaderboard.

The event will also host several eSports tournaments, which have also become a highlight of Geekend.

"What's interesting is that we also have many people coming from neighbouring GCC countries, not just Qatar, to compete here," al-Mosallam said.

Geekend will feature a variety of activities designed to engage all attendees.

The Geekend Market, a celebration of creativity and community, will offer a platform for local and regional artists and vendors to display and sell their unique creations.

For those looking to relax, the Geekend

Lounge provides a comfortable retreat where visitors can unwind, socialise with fellow fans, and soak in the vibrant atmosphere of the event.

Nearby, the Geekdom Cafe will serve refreshments, offering attendees the perfect spot to recharge between activities.

Organisers noted that gaming enthusiasts can look forward to the Board Game Area, which will feature a wide range of classic and modern games, catering to players of all skill levels.

One of the weekend's most exciting competitions will be the Quoridor Tournament, hosted by Majlis Shabab.

This two-day event will see 32 participants compete in a single-elimination format, with the final rounds taking place on the main stage on September 14.

The tournament promises intense, strategic gameplay as participants vie for the title of Quoridor champion.

For those with a sense of adventure,



Abdulla al-Mosallam

Geekdom's Side Quests will offer an opportunity to unleash their inner detective.

Participants will race against the clock to solve puzzles and uncover hidden treasures in a thrilling escape game.