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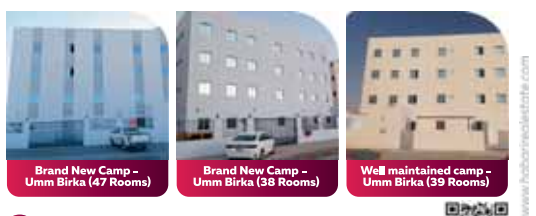


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Protecting journalists in areas of conflict is a priority for Qatar

QNA
New York

Qatar has called for strengthening mechanisms to protect journalists in conflict zones, including providing physical protection, legal support, safety tools, and enhancing co-operation among states and international bodies to ensure an effective global response against attacks on journalists.

This came in a statement delivered by Second Secretary of Qatar's Permanent Mission to the UN Sheikh Jassim bin Abdulaziz al-Thani before the fourth committee of the UN General Assembly in its 79th session under item 53 on Questions Relating to Information, at the UN HQ in New York.

He affirmed that the protection and safety of journalists is a priority for Qatar, which has undertaken concrete efforts both internationally and domestically. He noted Qatar's hosting of the International Conference on the Protection of Journalists in 2012, the launch of the International Conference on the Protection of Journalists, and the Doha Declaration on the Protection of Journalists in 2016.

Qatar also expressed pride in contributing \$7.5mn to support the UN's project to digitise historical documents and records during its two previous phases, facilitating the analysis of documents dating back to 1945. Qatar will continue to support this vital project in the future.



He highlighted the critical importance of accurate and reliable information for states, organisations, and individuals. He added that the Department of Global Communications and the UN's network of information centres play a key role in awareness, education, and engagement with partners across various sectors, supporting the UN's efforts and enhancing its credibility and reputation.

He emphasised that for this role to be effective, the department and the centres must operate with transparency, objectivity, accuracy, and impartiality. He also highlighted the role of the department's special information programme on the question of Palestine in shedding light on one of the oldest issues the UN addresses, especially given the critical juncture the Palestinian issue is currently facing.

He noted that the number of Palestinian casualties due to the Israeli war on Gaza has exceeded 43,000, including 322 relief workers killed to date, and at least 137 journalists and media personnel killed since the start of the aggression, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Majority of Gaza war dead children and women: UN probe

AFP
Geneva

The UN yesterday condemned the staggering number of civilians killed in Israel's war in Gaza, with women and children comprising nearly 70% of the thousands of fatalities it had managed to verify.

In a fresh report, the UN human rights office (OHCHR) detailed a raft of violations of international law since the start of war in the Gaza Strip on October 7 last year.

Many could amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and possibly even "genocide", it warned, demanding international efforts to prevent "atrocious crimes" and ensure accountability.

"Civilians in Gaza have borne the brunt of the attacks, including through the initial 'complete siege' of Gaza by Israeli forces," the UN said.

"Conduct by Israeli forces has caused unprecedented levels of killings, death, injury, starvation, illness and disease." It pointed to "the Israeli government's continuing unlawful failures to allow, facilitate and ensure the entry of humanitarian aid, the destruction of civilian infrastructure, and repeated mass displacement".

"Gaza is now a rubble-strewn landscape," Ajith Sunghay, head of the UN rights office's activities in the Palestinian territories, said via video-link from Amman.

"Within this dystopia of de-



A Palestinian woman who lost her leg when her family home was hit in an Israeli strike in the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, is carried down on Thursday.

struction and devastation, those alive are left injured, displaced and starving." Yesterday's report also found that Hamas and other armed groups had committed violations.

The report also tackled the contentious issue of the proportion of civilians among the nearly 43,500 people killed in Gaza so far, according to the health ministry in the Palestinian territory. UN agencies have been relying on death tolls provided by the authorities in Hamas-run Gaza due to lack of access. This has sparked harsh criticism from Israel but the UN has repeatedly said the figures are reliable.

The rights office said it had now managed to verify around 10,000 of the more than 34,500 people reportedly killed during the first six months of the war.

"We have so far found close to 70% to be children and women," Sunghay said, highlighting the stringent verification methodology that requires at least three separate sources.

He said the findings indicated "a systematic violation of the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law".

He said 4,700 of the verified fatalities were children and 2,461 were women.

The rights office found that about 80% of all the verified deaths in Gaza had occurred in Israeli attacks on residential buildings or similar housing.

Children between the ages of five and nine made up the largest group of victims, with the youngest victim a one-day-old boy and the oldest a 97-year-old woman, it said.

20,000 visitors at Qatar Boat Show

The visitor numbers for the inaugural Qatar Boat Show, which concludes today, is expected to reach about 20,000, organising committee chairman and Old Doha Port CEO Mohammed Abdullah al-Mulla said. He highlighted the show as a significant platform for forging a wide array of agreements within the marine services and industry sector. Al-Mulla noted that the event has attracted 75 companies from 11 countries, displaying 100 marine vessels. Around 60% of the exhibition space is dedicated to Qatari companies. (QNA)

Call for halting arms transfers to Israel



Qatar's Permanent Representative to the UN, HE Sheikh Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani, participated in a media stand organised by the group of countries signatories to the initiative calling for a halt to arms transfers to Israel, at the UN headquarters in New York. The group said the initiative reflects grave concern over the unprecedented escalation of violence and the blatant violations of international law in the Gaza Strip. The group urged immediate action to halt the flow of weapons and ammunition to Israel, which may be used in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. (QNA)

Israel's destruction of Unifil property 'a violation of international law'

The United Nations' peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon said yesterday that the Israeli military's "deliberate and direct destruction" of its property was a "flagrant violation" of international law. The 10,000-strong UN mission, known as Unifil, is stationed in southern Lebanon to monitor hostilities along the 'blue line' separating Lebanon from Israel.

Since Israel launched a ground campaign across the border against Hezbollah fighters at the end of September, Unifil has accused the Israeli military (IDF) on several occasions of deliberately attacking its bases, including by shooting at peacekeepers and destroying watchtowers.

In its latest accusation, it said the IDF used excavators and a bulldozer to destroy part of a

fence and concrete structure at a UN peacekeeping position in southern Lebanon on Thursday. Peacekeepers had also observed Israeli troops this week removing a barrel that marks blue line, it said.

"The IDF's deliberate and direct destruction of clearly identifiable Unifil property is a flagrant violation of international law and resolution 1701," Unifil said. (Reuters)

QF's Education City High School adopts open campus model

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Pre-University Education (PUE) is transforming secondary education through the establishment of the Education City High School by combining students from three of its schools. Qatar Academy Doha (QAD), Qatar Academy Sidra (QAS), and Qatar Academy for Science and Technology (QAST) are the schools working under this innovative and forward-thinking model.

Mehdi Benchaabane, executive director of QF International Baccalaureate (IB) Schools and director of QAD and Education City High School, in an interview published on QF website highlights that the open campus model is

central to the vision of Education City High School.

"The idea for Education City High School emerged three years ago as we looked at QF's multiversity strategy and the concept of an open campus. At the time, we saw an opportunity to foster collaboration between QAD and QAS with the aim was to pool our resources and create a more balanced educational experience," said Benchaabane.

"This model evolved further when QAST joined us, bringing the Advanced Placement programme with a focus on STEM education. The integration of these schools not only enriched the academic experience but also laid the foundation for Education City High School, which now operates with the core principles of resource-sharing, personalised pathways and an open campus

model," he explained.

According to the official, the Education City High School offers a range of academic pathways designed to accommodate students' varied interests, strengths, and aspirations.

"When we combined students from different schools to share resources, our main goal was to broaden the range of choices and tailor the learning experience to each student's needs.

"We began by expanding subject options within the IB Diploma programme, then introduced the IB Career-related Programme, which was authorised last year. When QAST joined, we added the STEM High School Diploma programme with Advanced Placement courses, providing a third pathway for students," continued Benchaabane.

Last year the school introduced



Mehdi Benchaabane

a fourth pathway through the collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, strengthening the high school diploma with external validation, to offer more flexibility for personalised learning.

According to Benchaabane, the Education City High School al-

lows students to access the vast resources of Education City, including universities, research centres, and innovation hubs. He noted: "This principle is built on the belief that learning should not be confined to a single school; instead, students should be immersed in an ecosystem where they can engage with higher education institutions, industry professionals, and cutting-edge research."

The school, with a capacity for 550 students, primarily serves those from QF schools but is expanding to welcome more external students. "This year, 25 non-QF students joined, and we aim for up to one-third of our capacity to be filled by them, enriching our community and broadening access to quality education. Admission considerations are the academic performance, behaviour, attend-

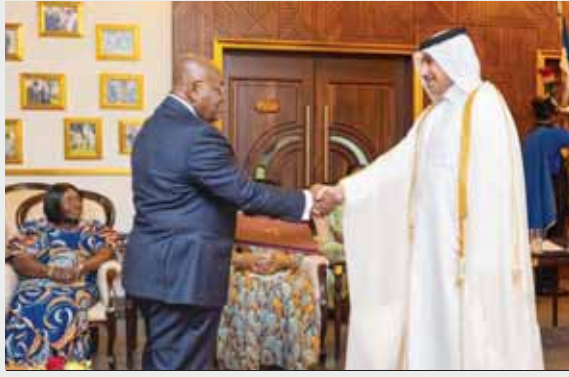
ance, and a student's commitment to personal development. Each academic pathway has specific requirements, and we work to place students in the programme that best aligns with their needs," highlighted the official.

"The open campus model allows students to move between buildings, fostering independence and preparing them for university life. Additionally, the model is physically represented in the way students move between buildings for their classes," he pointed out.

"Moreover, we plan to extend the benefits of this location to the wider community by offering after-school programmes and access to our facilities. This will allow students from other schools to experience life at Education City High School and take advantage of the unique resources available here," added the official.

President of Ghana receives credentials of Qatar's envoy

Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo yesterday received the credentials of Khalid bin Jabr al-Musallam, as Qatar's ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Ghana. The ambassador conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the president, and His Highness's wishes for good health and happiness, and for the government and people of Ghana continued progress and prosperity. For his part, the president of Ghana conveyed his greetings to the Amir of the country, wishing His Highness good health and happiness, and Qatar continued progress and development. (QNA)



Acting president of Pakistan meets Qatar's ambassador

Acting President of Pakistan Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani received Qatar's ambassador in Islamabad, Ali bin Mubarak al-Khater. The meeting dealt with discussing bilateral relations. (QNA)



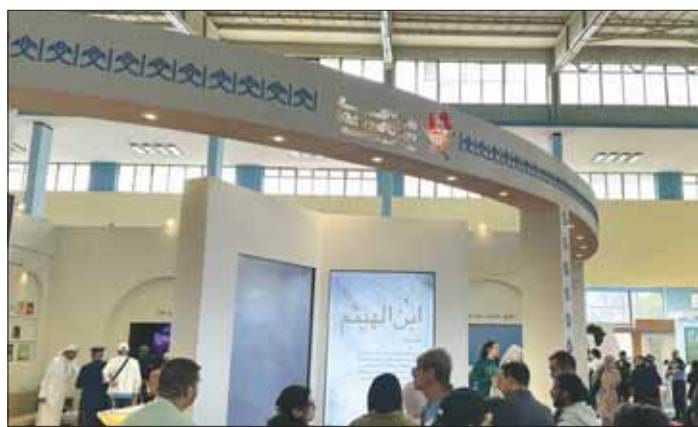
Culture ministry's pavilion at Algiers book fair sees large turnout

QNA
Algiers

The Ministry of Culture's pavilion participating in the 27th Algiers International Book Fair witnessed a great turnout from the Algerian public participating in the exhibition.

Mohammed Hassan al-Kuwari, Director of the Publications and Translation Department at the Ministry of Culture, said in a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the Algerian turnout at the Qatari pavilion exceeded expectations, as those in charge of the pavilion felt the Algerian people's love for everything Qatari, which reflects the strength and solidity of the close relations between the two countries and their brotherly peoples.

He added that the Qatari pavilion is rich in containing many publications and Qatari heritage and many activities carried out by Qatari writers and experts in the field of culture, pointing out the importance of direct commu-



nication with the Algerian reader to meet his desires and answer his questions related to Qatari culture.

The pavilion of the Ministry of Culture and the Qatari publishing houses participating in the exhibition attracted the attention of fair's visitors from academics, students and those interested in culture and knowledge.

This year's edition of the Algiers International Book Fair

includes about 1,007 participations from 40 countries around the world, including 290 local exhibitors, in addition to the participation of 350 guests from 24 countries within the framework of a comprehensive cultural programme that includes seminars, dialogues and meetings, in addition to allocating an integrated program for children that includes educational, educational and recreational activities.

Ministry organises lecture on heritage preservation

QNA
Algiers

The Ministry of Culture organised a lecture yesterday on the country's efforts in heritage preservation, as part of Qatar's participation as a guest of honour at the 27th edition of the Algiers International Book Fair (SILA 2024).

During the lecture, Mohammed Saeed al-Blooshi, a heritage expert from the Ministry of Culture, highlighted Qatar's experience in collecting and documenting heritage over nearly 60 years. He noted the contributions of various institutions and centres in Qatar that have worked to preserve this legacy and pass it on to future generations.



In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he emphasised the strong similarities and connections between Qatari and Algerian heritage, as both fall under the umbrella of shared Arab heritage.

He observed this connection through the enthusiastic interaction with Algerian visitors to the

Ministry of Cultures pavilion at the fair.

Meanwhile, Abdulrahman Ahmed al-Salama, a researcher in administrative affairs at the Qatar National Archives, shed light on the efforts and roles of the archives in preserving Qatar's documentary heritage and national identity.

In a statement to QNA, al-Salama noted the enthusiastic reception by Algerians at the ministry's pavilion and their warm welcome to Qatar as the guest of honour at the 27th Algiers International Book Fair. Qatars participation at the Algiers International Book Fair has been met with great appreciation from the Algerian public, who are actively visiting the Ministry of Culture's pavilion at the exhibition.

Algerian minister applauds Qatar's cultural contributions

QNA
Algiers

Algerian Minister of Culture and Arts Dr Soraya Mouloudji has praised Qatar's intellectual and cultural programme at the Algiers International Book Fair and its significant contributions to both Arab and global culture. Qatar is the guest of honour at the fair.

Speaking on the sidelines of the inauguration of cultural activities at the 27th edition of the Algiers International Book Fair, attended by Qatar's ambassador to Algeria Abdulaziz Ali al-Naama, Dr Mouloudji emphasised the importance of aligning the cultural programme with both national and international events.

In his remarks, ambassador al-Naama highlighted Qatar's appreciation for Algeria's rich cultural heritage and its contributions to Arab culture through its writers and thinkers. He noted that Qatar's participation as the guest of honour reflects a tangible effort to translate ideas into actions and symbolises the close cultural ties between the two countries. It also aims to bring Qatari literature and thought to Algerian readers, fostering closer connections between publishers from both countries.

The ambassador added that the book fair is a forum that encourages readers to acquire knowledge. He said it enables authors to present their latest publications,



ideas, and creativity to intellectuals and readers, expanding the scope for cultural dialogue and highlighting the role of thought in societal issues.

It also fosters interaction between distinguished publishers and generations of writers.

He underscored the importance of strengthening cultural relations between Qatar and Algeria, an aspiration shared by all intellectuals in both countries who believe in cultures role in fostering growth and progress. He expressed a desire to further activate these relations, enhancing cultural exchange and supporting joint efforts.

The Algerian Minister of Culture and the ambassador jointly honoured prominent literary figures during the official opening of

the cultural activities at the book fair. As the guest of honour, Qatar brings an extensive cultural programme to this year's fair, with the participation of numerous prominent figures in culture, literature, and art, alongside the most notable and influential publishing houses locally, regionally, and globally.

This year's edition of the fair includes about 1,007 participants from 40 countries, with 290 local exhibitors and 350 guests from 24 countries.

The fairs comprehensive cultural programme features seminars, discussions, and meetings, along with a dedicated programme for children that includes educational, learning, and recreational activities, such as theatre, art workshops, and competitions.

Msheireb Downtown showcased at World Urban Forum in Cairo

QNA
Cairo

The 12th World Urban Forum (WUF12), which was organised by the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), over five days, concluded yesterday in Cairo. Qatar participated in the event which was held under the title "Everything starts at home: Local actions for sustainable cities and communities".

HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad, represented Qatar in the forum, along with a delegation that included CEO of Msheireb Properties engineer Ali al-Kuwari, and

representatives from the ministries of municipality, environment and climate change, and Qatar Airways. The forum's activities highlighted Qatar's experience in developing cities, as Ali al-Kuwari reviewed in this regard the sustainable real estate development witnessed by the State, along with Msheireb Properties' visions in sustainable urban development.

Ali al-Kuwari gave a presentation on "Msheireb Downtown Doha" as a pioneering model for future cities, based on the element of sustainability as a fundamental element in the construction and development phase, stressing the importance of introducing environmentally friendly elements such as sustainability, green buildings and

smart technology as a key factor in building cities.

The activities of the World Urban Forum focused on localising sustainable development goals, exchanging ideas on innovative urban solutions, and local procedures and initiatives needed to reduce current global challenges, with the participation of representatives of UN member states, local governments, the private sector and civil society.

The World Urban Forum (WUF) is the world's first conference on sustainable urbanisation, established by the UN in 2001 to study the impact of rapid urbanisation and its repercussions on social, economic and environmental policies in communities, cities and towns.



Falcons championship at Marmi Sealine

The 6th Ras Laffan Falcons Championship, organised by Al Gannas Qatari Society and sponsored by Ras Laffan Community outreach Programme and the supporting companies, resumed its competitions yesterday morning. The number of qualifiers at Al Tala'a (release of falcons to hunt) rose to 11 falcons that qualify for higher rounds. Today (Saturday) morning the competitions will continue to determine the qualifiers for the finals. The competitions of the young and promising falconers will start today afternoon. The competitions will continue at Marmi at the Sealine Area until November 13.



The yards for selling local agriculture products at Al Wakra, Al Khor and Al Thakhira, Al Sheehaniya, and Al Shamal resumed their operations for a new season. These yards will be open Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 7am-3pm, with around 160 local farms expected to market their products. These yards across the country aim to showcase and promote local products, especially as specific standards and conditions have been set for the quality and safety of the vegetables and fruits on display.

The yards, which provide a direct sales channel for both producers and consumers, are a form of support provided by the State to the farm owners in the mission to boost agricultural production in the country and increasing self-sufficiency rates. More than 50% of local production is marketed through the yards, with the rest sold at the central markets and other commercial complexes. In particular, Al Wakra yard attracted a large number of shoppers during the opening day. The market showcased a wide variety of agricultural products, with strong sales activity from the early hours. The demand was high on the local produce available in the market, including zucchini, tomatoes, cucumbers, various leafy vegetables, Sidr honey, and fresh date molasses.

Local agri yards begin new season



MSDF holds panel discussion on parental education methods

The Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF) organised a panel discussion on parental education methods and learning through play. The session aimed to underscore the role of play in shaping children's behaviour and addressing challenges through playful interaction.

The event was attended by a gathering of researchers, specialists, and individuals interested in family affairs.

Hosted by the Family Counselling Centre (Wifaq), the event featured the launch of the "Benny Anthony Family Relations Scale" by Assistant Undersecretary for

Family Affairs at MSDF Sheikha Sheikhah bint Jassim bin Ahmed al-Thani.

This initiative seeks to enhance the understanding of family relationships from a child's perspective, providing an innovative tool to assess family dynamics. The scale offers crucial insights into emotional connections within families, supporting broader efforts to promote children's mental health and family stability.

Through the "learning through play" approach, children are encouraged to express their emotions and thoughts, offering parents and specialists a unique opportunity to

understand their needs and challenges more effectively.

Speaking at the event, Executive Director of Wifaq, engineer Jabr Rashid al-Nuaimi, emphasised that learning through play goes beyond mere entertainment. He described it as foundational for developing children's personalities, fostering positive interactions with their surroundings, and enhancing their capacity to thrive in environments based on cooperation and participation.

Al-Nuaimi affirmed Wifaq's commitment to creating a supportive environment for families aligned with societal values, con-

tributing to the building of a cohesive and resilient society.

The panel explored various themes in an interactive format, with contributions from experts in education and psychology. Topics included behavioural challenges in children such as stubbornness, inattention, and temper tantrums and positive strategies for addressing these behaviours. The panel also discussed "learning through play" as a tool for motivating children to learn and develop social skills, alongside examining the influence of electronic games on children's behaviour and national identity. (QNA)



New batch of lawyers celebrates graduation

The Ministry of Justice's Center for Legal and Judicial Studies (LJSC) celebrated this week the graduation of the 21st mandatory training course for new lawyers, and the 14th mandatory training course for trainee lawyers. The two courses brought together 118 legal professionals, including 22 trainee lawyers, who completed their specialised courses for 2024 at the LJSC.

HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi distributed certificates to the graduates, congratulating and wishing them thrilling professional careers. HE al-Mohannadi said the new batch is a qualitative boost to the Qatari legal cadres who can upgrade the legal system in a way that meets the needs of the state, the Third National Development Strategy requirements, and the goals of the human development

pillar of the Qatar National Vision 2030.

He stressed the Ministry of Justice's keenness to provide various national institutions and the government sector with qualified cadres to perform their duties professionally and responsibly in various legal fields and specialisations, in a manner that embodies the government's will to uphold the rule of law and consolidate the values of quality in work and excellence in performance.

Meanwhile, LJSC Director Dr Abdullah Hamad al-Khaldi congratulated the graduates and said the LJSC would enhance training and qualification programmes in accordance with the latest systems in force and successful experiences in this field, as part of the Ministry's development and modernisation vision.

He added the LJSC would also leverage the latest new technolo-



gies that support the legal sector through digital transformation programmes and artificial intelligence technologies, and will enhance its national partnerships to meet the training needs of various governmental and semi-governmental institutions in the country.

Al-Khaldi added that the LJSC is

working on reviewing training programmes to verify their quality, and is also seeking to create specialized programs in the governmental and semi-governmental sectors, in a way that ensures the achievement of the Ministry of Justice's strategic goals, primarily providing training needs for various govern-



mental and semi-governmental agencies across the country.

Trainee lawyers valedictorian Sheikh Tamim bin Mohammed al-Thani thanked the Ministry of Justice, represented by the LJSC, for the valuable experience and knowledge and values of integrity and commitment the trainees ac-

quired, that make them fully aware of their responsibilities. Thanks to these values, the trainees will effectively contribute to growth and prosperity of the society, and achieving Qatar National Vision 2030, and being part of a future in which justice prevails and noble values flourish, he said. (QNA)

Municipality ministry concludes training course on crop development, food security

Represented by the Agricultural Research Department, the Ministry of Municipality recently concluded a regional training course on methodologies and mechanisms for biotic stress examination, bioinformatics and genetic improvement of crops to achieve food security.

The ministry organised the course in co-operation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, with the participation of 30 trainees from Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

The course focused on providing participants with practical skills in using modern technologies to analyse agricultural data and develop crops to meet climate challenges, and to learn about the latest programs and technologies used globally in this field. Director of the Agricultural Research Department at the Ministry of Municipality, Hamad Saket al-Shammari, said that organising the training course was an important step towards enhancing food security in the region, indicating that the course brought together a group of researchers and specialists from eight Arab countries. Al-Shammari stressed Qatar's keenness to continue its role in supporting scientific research and developing the agricultural sector in the region. For



their part, participants expressed their satisfaction with the excellent level of the course and the knowledge and experience they gained, commending the level of organization and high-level facilities provided by Qatar.

This training course comes within the framework of the regional technical co-operation project to develop climate-smart crops, and reflects the country's commitment to supporting ef-

forts to achieve food security in the Arab region.

The course resulted in several important recommendations, including the need to intensify regional co-operation in the field of agricultural research, organise specialised courses in agricultural data analysis, and exchange expertise between Arab countries in the field of developing crops that are resistant to harsh climatic conditions. (QNA)

AETCGS training course to empower teachers with AI

Arab Educational Training Center for Gulf States (AETCGS) has organised a new training programme, under the theme of "artificial intelligence (AI) in education, empowering the teachers to prepare leaderships". The training will run until Dec 4 as part of a series of fall programs offered at the end of the 2024 academic year.

This training is offered by AETCGS in collaboration with the Doha-based Global Studies Institute (GSI) as part of a memo-

randum of understanding signed between the two sides. Since this programme keeps up with the current requirements and cutting-edge technologies, it primarily intends to discuss an array of themes, beginning with an introduction to AI, the current and future trends, leveraging AI in creating educational content, the strength of AI, redefining educational assessment and analysis and AI tools in reinforcing the academic research in the digital age, as well as facilitating teacher AI-powered adminis-

trative functions. Additionally, the programme aims to help teachers utilise AI in enhancing teaching techniques and offering an opportunity to explore state-of-the-art AI tools and employ them effectively in designing educational curricula and data analysis. The programme is held in person at the premises of GSI in Doha, and after 15-hour training, trainers receive accredited certificates from AETCGS and GSI that would enable them to combine advanced technology in education. (QNA)

WCM-Q hosts 7th edition of Lifestyle Medicine Week

The Institute for Population Health (IPH) at Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q) recently hosted the 7th edition of Lifestyle Medicine Week, a dynamic initiative that aims to promote awareness of the critical importance of adopting healthy lifestyle practices.

The annual initiative featured a diverse array of activities, including workshops, competitions, and interactive sessions focused on demonstrating positive lifestyle habits that help prevent, treat, and manage chronic diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and hypertension, while also improving overall health and wellbeing.

Titled 'Kick-Off a Healthier Lifestyle', a one-day event was held at WCM-Q's world-class premises, with the official inauguration led by Dr Ahmad al-Mulla, a senior consultant in public health and disease control and the director of the Hamad Medical Corporation Tobacco Control Center, a World Health Organisation collaborating centre.

Attendees participated in several activities promoting key aspects of Lifestyle Medicine, including physical activity, healthy diet, stress management, restorative sleep, social connectedness, and cessation of tobacco and other risky substances.

To emphasise the importance of social connections for emotional resilience and overall health, another activity, the 'Get Connected Trivia Quiz', encouraged participants to form teams and engage in a lively quiz. Big Red Fitness, a student club at WCM-Q, teamed up with IPH for the 'Step Up Challenge'.

The activity invited participants to compete for the highest step count over the course of a month, the last day coinciding



Attendees participated in several activities promoting key aspects of Lifestyle Medicine, including physical activity, healthy diet, stress management, restorative sleep, social connectedness, and cessation of tobacco and other risky substances

as photos, infographics, memes, and posters, with the chance to win prizes. Both activities garnered huge interest, with IPH receiving many submissions from the community.

Dr Ravinder Mamtani, WCM-Q professor of population health sciences and vice-dean for population health and lifestyle medicine, said: "Lifestyle Medicine Week is designed to raise awareness at the community level of how lifestyle changes can positively impact one's health. By encouraging the adoption of responsible lifestyle choices, we can prevent, treat, and even reverse chronic lifestyle diseases."

Commenting on the importance of the initiative, Dr Sohaila Cheema, associate professor of clinical population health sciences and assistant dean at IPH, said: "We are delighted to mark the 7th edition of Lifestyle Medicine Week and welcome so many members of the community. Lifestyle Medicine Week is a crucial platform that offers the general public valuable insights to adopt healthier lifestyles and engage in positive behaviors that help enhance their overall health and wellbeing." (QNA)

QYH holds second edition of 'Youth at Hostel' forum

The second edition of the international forum 'Youth at Hostel', organised by Qatar Youth Hostels (QYH) under the umbrella of the Ministry of Sports and Youth and in partnership with the UN Children's Fund (Unicef), was held earlier this week at the Lusail Multipurpose Hall.

The forum was attended by 22 young men and women from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Italy, Sudan, Morocco, Bahrain, Egypt and Palestine, to work towards making recommendations on addressing the phenomenon of climate change and its effects on the world.

The team had worked hard to organise an exceptional version of this forum in a way that reflects Qatar Youth Hostels' commitment to its role in supporting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by including them in its annual activities and programmes, said Head of Public Relations and



Communications at Qatar Youth Hostels, Abdullah Saad noting that the forum sought to empower sustainable development goals and consolidate environmental care.

The forum featured several workshops with the participation of various governmental and private entities, including: the Ministry of Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the Ministry of Municipality, the National Planning Council, Qatar University,

the International Youth Hostel Federation, AquaSports Company and Al-Hedaya School for Boys with Special Needs - Al Mesila.

The forum organised tours for the participating delegations to introduce the archaeological, tourist and historical landmarks and sites to the Qatar National Museum, Souq Waqif, and the Museum of Islamic Art, in addition to a sea tour in Al-Sanbouk and the Flag Square in the Old Doha Port. (QNA)



Qget celebrates 'Keralolsavam' with traditional grandeur

Qget (Government Engineering College, Thrissur Alumni, Qatar chapter) celebrated Keralolsavam 2024 with an event that captured the spirit of Onam and Kerala's cultural legacy.

The event, marking both Onam and Kerala Piravi, showcased traditional Kerala festivities with grandeur and flair, drawing members and families together in a colourful celebration.

The programme commenced with a welcome address by treasurer Varghese Varghese followed by a presidential address by Tomy K V. Formal inauguration was done by lighting a traditional lamp by senior members John E J, Rajan C K, Tomy K V, Dr Gopal H Rao, vice-president, Keralolsavam's overall co-ordinator and cultural secretary Shahna Zubair in the presence of all management committee members.

To the rhythmic beats of Chenda Melam by Melam Doha, the mythical King Mahabali made a



grand entry, symbolising the spirit of Onam.

The cultural performances included dances by both adults and

children, an Onam-themed fashion show by the youngest members, and a medley of songs. A performance by the band Ekkoz and

fun games were among the other highlights.

Qget general secretary and Keralolsavam executive co-ordinator

Gopu Rajasekhar thanked the sponsors, programme co-ordinators, participants and audience whose support was instrumental

in the success of the event. The next highlight on Qget calendar is a bowling competition on November 14, a statement added.

Filipino forum holds breast cancer, mental health awareness event



The Las Damas de Rizal (LDR) Doha chapter, in collaboration with Aster DMH Qatar and Aster Volunteers and with the support of the Philippine embassy in Doha, hosted a breast cancer and mental health awareness seminar recently.

The aim was to educate attendees about critical health issues that predominantly affect women, in addition to fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between mental health and breast cancer.

Vice-Consul Monica Remy S Calangian attended the event, which marked World Mental Health Day and Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Qatar. In her speech, she underlined the

importance of raising public awareness on these health issues, reinforcing a message that resonates not only within the Filipino community but also across broader societal contexts.

Dr Rani Susan Abraham from Nexsolve LLC & Eunoia, led a session on mental health awareness, titled 'Managing Work-Life Balance and Preventing Burnout'. She emphasised the importance of recognising mental health as a vital component of overall well-being.

She also explored various strategies for maintaining mental well-being amidst personal and professional challenges, highlighting the necessity of achieving a healthy work-life

balance to prevent burnout.

Dr Tisha Rachel Jacob (specialist in psychiatry); Dr Lorelyn Dino (Otolaryngologist - ENT) and Dr Hema Rajeev (specialist in obstetrics and gynaecology) participated in a panel discussion moderated by Dr Noemi Formaran, head of the LDR Education Committee. LDR president Dr Anne Binondo cited the significance of the seminar in enhancing health literacy and promoting preventive health measures within communities.

The LDR, in partnership with the Knights of Rizal Doha chapter, remains steadfast in its mission, vision, and advocacy efforts to address pressing health issues, a statement added.

RPS students in educational trip to Nasa



A team of 43 students from Rajagiri Public School (RPS) recently concluded a ten-day educational odyssey to the US, with a primary focus on a rocketry camp at Nasa Space Centre. The young minds were ignited with the fundamentals of rocket science, fostering a deep appreciation for space exploration and scientific inquiry. The enriching experience not only broadened students' horizons but also instilled in them a lifelong passion for learning and innovation. The team also visited Niagara Falls, the United Nations headquarters, and Disney World.

RPS shines in youth festival

Rajagiri Public School (RPS) topped the Qatar Indian School Youth Festival, Kalanjali 2024, with 603 points, from a wide range of competitions. Deva Priya was crowned 'Kalathilakam' in the sub-junior category, while Gurshaan Singh was honoured as 'Kalaprabha' in the senior category. Principal Joshy Abraham congratulated the students and team leaders Davis Paul and Susan Binu for the achievement.



Gurshaan Singh



Deva Priya



KMCC launches poster for upcoming lecture

Qatar Kerala Muslim Cultural Centre (KMCC) Kasaragod District Committee will host a lecture on 'Muslim League and Community Organisations: History and Present' on November 29, delivered by esteemed orator Basheer Vellikoth.

The poster for the event was officially unveiled by Sadiq Paikara, a member of the Muslim League State Council and advisory member of the KMCC Qatar State Committee. The Muslim League has played a pivotal role in the educational and social progress of Kerala's Muslim community, strengthening communal unity, religious harmony, and promoting the advancement of under-

represented communities.

This programme aims to guide the society towards a renewed vision, a statement said.

The event was presided by District President Lukman Thalankara. KMCC state vice-president Adam Kunhi Thalagara, district officials Siddique Maniyampara, Nasir Kaitakkad, Shanif Paika, Ali Cherur, Sadiq K C, Media Wing chairman Abdul Rahiman Eriyal and Mandal-Panchayat office-bearers Salam Habibi, Rafiq Mangad, Abid Udinur, Nawaz Mogral, Mansoor Thrikaripur, Abdul Rahiman E K, Rahim Chowki, Naushad Paika and Yusuf Marpane.

Toastmasters Divisions D and G host training session



Toastmasters Divisions D and G hosted a training session for their members. Thayalan, Christopher and Carla were the trainers. Dennis, Nagila and Akash co-ordinated. Feroz, Babu, Bindu, Zakky and Venu were the role players. Sampath, Philip, Pradeep and district pathway manager Naila were present. The training was organised by division directors Shoba Raj and Smitha.

Qatar Toastmasters Club marks anniversary



Qatar Toastmasters Club, part of District 116, celebrated its 27th anniversary at a grand function. President Eman Salameh welcomed the attendees. Sudhir Gujar introduced the meeting's theme, '27'. Past district directors Raghavan N V, Thayalan Kailayapillai and past club leaders Shoaib Kassem, Johnny Abou Zeid, Rajesh Nair and Rukhsana Khan were honoured. Educational module was conducted by Abhishek Chattopadhyay followed by a quiz.

IPhAQ observes World Pharmacists Day

The Indian Pharmacists Association Qatar (IPhAQ) celebrated World Pharmacists Day 2024 under the theme 'Pharmacists: Meeting Global Health Needs'.

The event, aligned with The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), showcased the vital role of pharmacists in healthcare both in Qatar and globally.

The event began with networking and registration, followed by the national anthems of Qatar and India. IPhAQ general secretary Suhail Konnakkot welcomed the gathering, emphasising the value pharmacists bring to healthcare. President Ashraf K P, noted the association's mission to support pharmacists and enhance patient care



through training and mentorship. Indian ambassador Vipul, the chief guest, lauded the Indian pharmacists for their dedication. Dr Moza al-Hail from Hamad Medical Corporation appreciated IPhAQ's commitment to advancing pharmacy through educational initiatives, promising

support to enhance pharmacists' skills. The programme included a role-play by the IPhAQ Academics and Research team, highlighting pharmacist-patient interactions, along with expert presentations on pharmacists' expanding roles in clinical trials and healthcare policy

by Dr P V Abdulrouf and Prof Zaheer Babar. Leaders from various Indian community organisations, including Hisham Abdulrahim (IBPC) and Shanavas Bava (ICBF) delivered felicitation speeches honouring pharmacists' efforts.

IPhAQ secretary Mohd Umer Farook proposed a vote of thanks. Programme convener Dr Binny Thomas thanked the organising team, especially Anvar Sadat, Sooraj Sreekumar, Dr S K Vyas, Jyothi, and Riyas for their support in the event's success.

GCC commends pivotal role of UNHCR during emergencies



The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries commended the pivotal role played by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its efforts to provide protection for refugees and life-saving assistance during emergencies, especially in a time when the world is witnessing an increase in forced displacement and crises.

This was conveyed in a statement delivered by Second Secretary of Qatar's Permanent Mission to the UN Sheikhha Maha Mubarak al-Thani, on behalf of the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly during its 79th session on general discussion of item 60 "Report of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees," at the UN headquarters in New York.

She added that the GCC countries express deep concern over the complexities of conflicts highlighted in the High Commissioner's report, noting that new and worsening conflicts have displaced millions, and ongoing crises have prevented the return of millions more. By the end of

2023, 117.3mn people remained displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations, representing an 8% increase compared to 2022.

The GCC countries have consistently provided relief and assistance to refugees and have worked to alleviate the suffering of civilians, refugees, and displaced persons, driven by the principles of Islam, which emphasise brotherhood, compassion, and tolerance. She noted that the GCC states continue to provide support through bilateral channels with host countries or via the UN, and remain committed to their humanitarian efforts in partnership with other organisations, supporting all international and regional efforts addressing the root causes of these issues.

She added that the Gaza Strip is facing an unprecedented humanitarian disaster due to the escalating Israeli aggression for over a year, which continues to target civilians and enforce policies of starvation and forced displacement. She said that the GCC renewed their condemnation of the severe human rights

violations in the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as in Lebanon, which constitute blatant violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. She also said that the GCC called on the international community to take all necessary measures to end the cycle of violence, reject the forced displacement of civilians in Gaza, and ensure unhindered access to humanitarian aid. She added that resolving the Palestinian refugee issue is an integral part of a comprehensive, fair, and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict. Our countries will continue efforts to find solutions to crises and conflicts in our region, in accordance with international law and international consensus.

She stressed that the GCC commends the efforts of all member states supporting, aiding refugees and appreciates the nations that have taken on significant burdens beyond their capacity in hosting refugees and alleviating their suffering. She emphasised the need to focus efforts on providing medical, food support to refugees and forcibly displaced persons through ongoing co-operation with the UNHCR. In conclusion, she noted that peacebuilding worldwide and achieving development requires the international community to find urgent political solutions to conflicts and crises, address their root causes, and intensify international efforts to alleviate the plight of refugees, which also includes enhancing measures and initiatives aimed at building communities where respect, protection, and fulfilment of human rights are at the core. (QNA)

Yemenis gather in solidarity with Palestinians, Lebanese



Yemenis rally to show solidarity with Palestinians and Lebanese, in the capital Sanaa, yesterday.

Western states support belligerents by arming Israel: HRW chief

Reuters
Geneva

The head of Human Rights Watch (HRW) said yesterday that states supplying weapons to Israel as it pursues conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon despite evidence of violations of international law are empowering belligerents elsewhere.

Tirana Hassan, HRW's Executive Director, said that countries like the US, Germany and Britain could influence Israel's actions and should do so by ending arms sales.

"If there continues to be military support to the Israeli Defense Force and they (Western governments) know that these weapons are being used in the commission of war crimes, then that should be enough for weapons sales and transfers to stop," she told Reuters in an interview.

"At this stage, the parties that could have some sort of influence and curb the behaviour of the warring parties, when it comes to Israel, it's the US, it's the UK, and it's Germany, and it's through weapons sales and transfers," Isra-

el says it takes care to avoid harming civilians and denies committing abuses and war crimes in the conflicts with Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

It says its enemies are fighting amongst civilian populations, making its operations more difficult, and that it is acting in self-defence. Reuters has asked the Israeli authorities for comment on Hassan's remarks. Hassan said that when states which abused rights saw there were no consequences, they felt emboldened to continue. Governments supplying them with weapons were undermining their own credibility as defenders of international law and human rights as well as the credibility of the international system, she said. "It sends a message that these rules apply differently to us and our allies as they do to others, and that has really serious consequences," she said.

This contradiction when Western countries were demanding accountability for Russia's invasion of Ukraine was being exploited by countries like Russia and China, she said. "They are very quick to point out double standards from the West and are trying to use that

to undermine the system."

Hassan spoke to Reuters as the UN rights office released a report on the death toll in the Israel-Hamas Gaza war where it said nearly 70% of verified fatalities were women and children.

Palestinian authorities say that more than 43,500 people have been killed in Gaza in the 13-month war triggered by Hamas storming of southern Israel in the first week of October in 2023.

"This should now motivate the world into action. There is really no justification for the killing of children," Hassan said.

On Oct 13, Washington imposed a deadline for its ally Israel to improve the humanitarian crisis in Gaza or face potential restrictions on US military aid.

Asked about the likely impact of the election of Donald Trump in the US, she said there was "little assurance" of his commitment to international law during his previous tenure as president.

"Now we have seen in some of the statements on the campaign trail threats of mass deportation of millions of people and this sends a very worrying message," she added.

Khamenei aide warns against impulsive Iran response to Israel

AFP
Tehran

An adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has warned against launching an "instinctive" response to Israeli air strikes on the Islamic republic last month.

Israel is engaged in conflicts with the Hamas in the Gaza Strip and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Israeli warplanes struck military sites in Iran on October 26 in retaliation for a large Iranian missile attack on Israel at the start of the month.

"Israel aims to bring the conflict to Iran. We must act wisely to avoid its trap and not react instinctively," the adviser, Ali Larjani, told state television late Thursday. Iran said it fired 200 missiles

at Israel on October 1 in response to the killing of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in a strike on Beirut and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh while he was in Tehran. After Israel hit back, it warned Iran against any counterattack, but the Islamic republic has vowed to respond. "Our actions and reactions are strategically defined, so we must avoid instinctive or emotional responses and remain entirely rational," Larjani added.

The former parliament speaker also praised Nasrallah for accepting a ceasefire during the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war rather than making an "emotional decision".

On Sunday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said a potential ceasefire between Tehran's allies and Israel could affect Iran's response to the Israeli strikes.

Buried for 14 hours after air strike, Lebanese toddler makes recovery

AFP
Sidon

Rescuers did not expect to find two-year-old Ali Khalifeh alive after an Israeli strike on southern Lebanon killed his entire family and left him trapped under the rubble for 14 hours.

Amputated, bandaged and hooked to a respirator in a hospital bed that was way too big for him, "Ali is the sole survivor of his family," said Hussein Khalifeh, his father's uncle.

The toddler's parents, sister and two grandmothers all perished in the strike on October 29, weeks after Israel intensified its attacks on Hezbollah fighters.

The strike on Sarafand, some 15 kilometres

south of the coastal city of Sidon, flattened an apartment complex and killed 15 people, many of them relatives, according to residents. "Rescue workers had almost lost hope of finding anyone alive under the rubble," 45-year-old Khalifeh said from the hospital in Sidon where his two-year-old relative was being treated.

But then "Ali appeared among debris in the shovel of the bulldozer, after we all thought he had died," he said. "He emerged from the rubble, barely breathing, after 14 hours." Israel has been at war with Hezbollah since late September, when it broadened its war focus from fighting Hamas fighters in Gaza to securing its northern border with Lebanon. An escalating Israeli air campaign, after nearly a year of low intensity cross-border fire, has killed more than 2,600 people across Liba-

non since September 23, according to health ministry figures. Signs of the violence were apparent even at the hospital in Sidon where Ali was rushed to following the strike on Sarafand.

The toddler, under a medically induced coma after doctors amputated his right hand, has since been transferred to a medical facility in the capital Beirut where he is due to undergo pre-prosthetic surgery.

"Ali was sleeping on the couch at home when the strike hit. He is still asleep today... we were waiting to complete his surgeries before waking him up," said the relative Hussein Khalifeh.

Other family members were also fighting to stay alive after the Sarafand strike.

One of Khalifeh's nieces, 32-year-old Zainab, was trapped under the rubble for two

hours before being rescued and transferred to the nearest hospital, said the man. It was there that she was later informed that her parents, her husband and three children, aged between three and seven, had all been killed. The strike left her with only one, severely injured eye.

Zainab said she "did not hear the sounds of the missiles that rained down on her family's home," according to Khalifeh. "She only saw darkness and heard deafening screams," he said. Ali Alaa El-Din, a doctor treating her, said that "the psychological scars that Zainab suffered are much greater than her physical injury". He has also tended Zainab's sister Fatima, 30, who was wounded in the same strike. Both had injuries "throughout their bodies, with fractures in the feet and damage to the lungs," said the doctor.

Foes trade accusations as fighting rages in centre, west of Sudan

AFP
Port Sudan

Sudan's warring parties traded accusations of deadly attacks on civilians as fighting raged in the centre and west yesterday between the regular army and paramilitaries.

The army-backed government accused the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of causing at least 120 civilian deaths over two days in Al-Jazira state, Sudan's pre-war breadbasket where fighting has raged since last month.

The RSF in turn accused the regular armed forces of killing 60 people in an air strike in North Darfur, where they have

been battling to retain a foothold in the western region otherwise controlled by the paramilitaries. The conflict in Sudan pits the regular army, under Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, against the RSF, led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

It has led to the deaths of tens of thousands of people since April 2023 and displaced more than 11mn more, according to the International Organisation for Migration.

"The Janjaweed militia (paramilitaries) committed a new massacre in the town of Hilaliya in Al-Jazira state over the past two days," the foreign ministry of the army-backed government said in a statement late Thursday.

Vintage vehicles expo in Kuwait



Visitors look at cars at the Historical, Vintage, and Classic Cars Exhibition at Marina Crescent in Kuwait City, yesterday.

Gaza Strip 'turns into completely destroyed area'

Director of the UN Human Rights Office in the occupied Palestinian territories Ajith Sunghay said yesterday that the Gaza Strip has turned into a pile of destruction, pointing out the failure of the Israeli occupation army to adhere to the standards of international humanitarian law.

The UN official said in statements, "the Israeli occupation forces are deliberately targeting the economic resources of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip," pointing to the repeated Israeli attacks on hospitals, patients and civilians in northern Gaza, and issuing orders to evacuate areas in the north with the aim of displacing people to the south.

"The Israeli occupation forces are deliberately targeting the economic resources of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip"

He also noted the suffering of UN agencies since October first week to enter northern Gaza, stressing that Gaza has become a completely destroyed area.

The Ministry of Health in Gaza announced, earlier yesterday, that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Strip had risen to 43,508 martyrs, and 102,684 wounded. (QNA)

Canada adds fewer jobs than expected in October, wages rise

Reuters
Ottawa

Canada added a fewer-than-expected 14,500 jobs in October and wages of permanent employees rose, data showed on Friday, as the economy struggled to absorb the slack built up due to a rapidly increasing labour force.

The unemployment rate stayed unchanged from September but hovered around a 34-month high of 6.5%, Statistics Canada said.

Analysts polled by Reuters had estimated a net addition of 25,000 jobs and the unemployment rate to edge up to 6.6%. Canada's

■ Canada's economy adds 14,500 jobs in October
■ Wages of permanent employees rise by 4.9%
■ Unemployment rate stays unchanged at 6.5%

business investment and hiring have been muted even after four rounds of rate cuts as high interest

rates and inflation have throttled demand, and as the labour force has continued to grow, fuelled by immigration, which crossed 7% of the overall population in the third quarter, an all-time high.

This has increased the number of people in the labour force seeking jobs and not landing any, resulting in a steady fall in the employment rate, or the number of people employed out of the total working age population of 15 years and above. Canada's labour force has swelled by 2.4% since last year but the employment rate shrunk to 60.6% in October, its sixth consecutive monthly decline, Statscan said.

"The October jobs report is very

much consistent with an economy that is still grinding out modest growth, and wage gains that are slightly hot for comfort," Doug Porter, chief economist at BMO Capital Markets, wrote in a note.

Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem said last month after the rate cut decision that layoffs had remained modest but business hiring had been weak, and that has hit young people and newcomers to Canada.

However, Macklem expressed hope that continued interest rate cuts would help to grow the economy and increase employment. The jobless rate amongst those aged 15-24 fell 0.7 percentage point in October to 12.8%,

the statistics agency said, adding that the employment rate for this group rose for the first time since April.

The Bank of Canada (BoC) has reduced its key policy rate by a cumulative 125 basis points to 3.75%, with a super-sized cut of 50 basis points last month, in a bid to prop up economic growth and absorb the excess labour supply. Financial market bets for a rate cut of 50 basis points on Dec 11 fell to 58% from 62% before the jobs report was released.

The Canadian dollar extended losses and weakened by 0.41% to 1.3918 to the US dollar, or 71.85 US cents. Yields on two-year government notes rose 0.3 basis point to

3.072%. The average hourly wage growth of permanent employees rose to an annual rate of 4.9% in October from 4.5% in September, the agency said.

The wage growth figure is closely watched by the BoC and a rise could dissuade against another deeper cut next month, economists said.

There will be one more jobs report, inflation and GDP data before the next rate decision. The increase in jobs came entirely from full-time employment, while part-time employment shrunk.

The additions were broad based with both the goods-producing sector and services sector showing healthy growth.

Trump at 301 electoral votes

The final state calls are coming in for the US presidential election, with President-elect Donald Trump at 301 electoral votes, well past the 270 needed for victory, and Democratic Vice-President Kamala Harris at 226, US networks said. Nevada was the latest to be called Friday, with six electoral votes going to Trump - yet another flip of a swing state that voted for Joe Biden in 2020. US media have declared Trump the winner in more than half of the 50 states, including key battlegrounds Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, all of which voted Democratic in the last election.

-AFP

Trump makes his first cabinet appointment

AFP
Washington

US President-elect Donald Trump yesterday made his first cabinet appointment after his decisive election win, while signalling his intent to ditch the outgoing administration's policies by talking to Vladimir Putin. Trump's campaign manager Susie Wiles will serve as his White House chief of staff, the first woman to be named to the high-profile role and the Republican's first appointment to his incoming administration.

Trump's crushing defeat of Democrat Kamala Harris is already shaking up US and world politics, just two days after Election Day and two-and-a-half months before he returns to the White House.

Putin, the Russian president, hailed Trump as "courageous" for the way he handled himself following an assassination attempt at a rally in July, and said he was "ready" to hold discussions with him. Billionaire Trump later told NBC News that he had not talked to Putin, the authoritarian leader whom he has repeatedly praised over the years, since his victory but "I think we'll speak".

It marked a seismic shift from the icy silence that has existed between Biden and Putin since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, and underscored Trump's criticism of US support for Kyiv. The president-elect has previously said he would push through a peace deal in that conflict - but Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who spoke to Trump on Wednesday, said calls for a ceasefire were "dangerous".



Trump shakes hands with his senior adviser Susie Wiles as he speaks, following early results from the 2024 US presidential election in Palm Beach County Convention Center, in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Chinese President Xi Jinping had earlier joined the list of foreign leaders congratulating Trump, who was criticised by Harris during the election campaign for being too friendly with autocrats.

Trump doubled down on his plans for mass deportations of undocumented migrants, telling NBC he had "no choice" and that there could be "no price tag" that was too much.

As Trump began to work at his Florida resort on his transition team, Biden pledged a peaceful and "orderly" transfer of power.

Biden, 81, urged Americans in a solemn televised address to "bring down the temperature", in stark contrast to Trump's refusal to accept his 2020 election defeat.

The Democrat has invited Trump for talks at the White House. But Biden's spokeswoman said Trump's team had not yet signed key documents allow-

ing the legal transition process to start. In his speech from the Rose Garden of the White House, Biden called for unity while urging Democrats not to lose hope, saying: "Remember, a defeat does not mean we are defeated."

Yet finger-pointing has already erupted in the party over Biden's initial decision to run for a second term despite his age, before dropping out at the last minute in July and handing the reins to Harris, his vice-president. Trump won or was leading all seven battleground states, including Nevada, which was the latest to be called for the former president by the networks.

The White House denied Biden had any regrets. "He believed it was the right decision to make at that time," Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said. Trump's election in the face of a criminal conviction for fraud, two impeachments and the fact that he is the oldest-ever elected president

at 78 reflected voters' desire for change from the Biden years.

Voter concerns over the economy and migration drove Trump's victory. Trump's first cabinet pick Wiles enjoys wide support within his team and was notably called on stage during his victory speech on Wednesday morning. "Susie is tough, smart, innovative, and is universally admired and respected. Susie will continue to work tirelessly to Make America Great Again," Trump said of the steely 67-year-old Florida native.

The other frontrunners for a place in the Trump 2.0 administration reflect the disruptive shape it is likely to take. Robert F Kennedy Jr, a leading figure in the anti-vaccine movement for whom Trump has pledged a "big role" in health care, told NBC News on Wednesday that "I'm not going to take away anybody's vaccines."

But the former independent candidate reiterated that the Trump administration would recommend removing fluoride - a mineral US authorities say aids dental and skeletal health - from public water supplies. The world's richest man, Elon Musk, could also be in line for a job auditing government waste after the right-wing SpaceX, Tesla and X boss enthusiastically backed Trump.

Trump is expected to wield the axe on many of Biden's signature policies. He returns to the White House as a climate change denier, poised to take apart Biden's green policies with his pledge to "drill, baby, drill" for oil.

He may find it hard to dismantle some of Biden's investment legislation, which pumps money into many Congressional districts where members would be loath to see it go.



SpaceX CEO Elon Musk.

Trump victory expected to boost Musk's Mars dream

Reuters
Washington

Elon Musk's dream of transporting humans to Mars will become a bigger national priority under the administration of US President-elect Donald Trump, sources said, signalling big changes for NASA's moon program and a boost for Musk's SpaceX.

NASA's Artemis programme, which aims to use SpaceX's Starship rocket to put humans on the moon as a proving ground for later Mars missions, is expected to focus more on the Red Planet under Trump and target uncrewed missions there this decade, according to four people familiar with Trump's burgeoning space policy agenda. Targeting Mars with spacecraft built for astronauts is not only more ambitious than focusing on the moon, but is also fraught with risk and potentially more expensive. Musk, who danced onstage at a Trump rally wearing an "Occupy Mars" T-shirt in October, spent \$119mn on Trump's White House bid and has successfully elevated space policy at an unusual time in a presidential transition. In September, weeks after Musk endorsed Trump, the latter told reporters that the moon was a "launching pad" for his ultimate goal to reach Mars.

"At a minimum, we're going to get a more realistic Mars plan, you'll see Mars being set as an objective," said Doug Loverro, a space industry consultant who once led NASA's human exploration unit under Trump, who served as US president from 2017-2021.

SpaceX, Musk and the Trump campaign did not immediately return requests for comment. A NASA spokeswoman said it "wouldn't be appropriate to speculate on any changes with the new administration." Plans could still change, the sources added, as the Trump transition team takes shape in the coming weeks.

Trump launched the Artemis program in 2019 during his first term and it was one of the few initiatives maintained under the administration of President Joe Biden. Trump space advisers want to revamp a program they will argue has languished in their absence, the sources said. Musk, who also owns electric-vehicle maker Tesla and brain-chip startup Neuralink, has made slashing government regulation and trimming down

■ Musk wants to send humans to Mars in a matter of years
■ Trump echoed Musk's goal after billionaire's endorsement
■ Mars missions fraught with costs, risks, experts say

bureaucracy another core basis of his Trump support.

For space, the sources said, Musk's deregulation desires are likely to trigger changes at the Federal Aviation Administration's commercial space office, whose oversight of private rocket launches has frustrated Musk for slowing down SpaceX's Starship development.

The FAA did not immediately respond to a request for comment. NASA under Trump, the sources said, is likely to favour fixed-price space contracts that shift greater responsibility onto private companies and scale back over-budget programs that have strained the Artemis budget.

That could spell trouble for the only rocket NASA owns, the Space Launch System rocket (SLS), whose roughly \$24bn development since 2011 has been led by Boeing and Northrop Grumman. Cancelling the program, some say, would be difficult since it would cost thousands of jobs and leave the US even more dependent on SpaceX. Boeing and Northrop did not immediately return a request for comment.

Musk, whose predictions has sometimes proven overly ambitious, said in September that SpaceX will land Starship on Mars in 2026 and a crewed mission will follow in four years' time. Trump has said at campaign rallies that he has discussed these ideas with Musk. Many industry experts see this timeline as improbable.

"Is it possible for Elon to put a Starship on the surface of Mars in a one-way mission by the end of Trump's term? Absolutely, he certainly could do that," said Scott Pace, the top space policy official during Trump's first term.

"Is that a manned mission on Mars? No," Pace added. "You have to walk before you run."

White House, NAACP decry racist texts targeting Black Americans

Reuters
Washington

The NAACP civil rights group and the White House condemned racist text messages referencing slavery that were sent anonymously to Black Americans this week as a contentious US election drew to a close in the United States.

The messages urged recipients in multiple states, including Alabama, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Virginia, to report to a plantation to pick cotton, the NAACP said on Thursday.

The message is an offensive reference to past enslavement of Black people in the United States.

High school and college students were among the recipients,

The FBI said it was in touch with the US Justice Department and other federal authorities about the offensive, racist messages

the Associated Press reported. Some school districts warned students about the racist messages and urged them to report any such texts received to school staff or local authorities.

Federal and state authorities were investigating, the White House said on Friday. The FBI said it was in touch with the US Justice Department and other federal authorities about the offensive, racist messages.

"These actions are not normal. And we refuse to let them be normalized," NAACP President Derrick Johnson said in a statement

from the organisation, which advocates for racial justice and rights for Black Americans. Johnson said the messages were a reflection of Republican Donald Trump's presidential election victory over Vice-President Kamala Harris, a Democrat, on Tuesday, which sent shockwaves through Black American communities.

Many Black Americans say they anticipate a rollback of civil rights after Trump pledged to end federal diversity and inclusion programs. A spokesperson for the president-elect did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Thursday and Friday. The president-elect denies he is racist and has said his economic agenda will benefit all Americans.

An exit poll conducted by Edison Research on Election Day showed

Harris winning 85% of the Black vote nationwide while Trump won 13%, up 1 percentage point from an exit poll in 2020 when he lost to Joe Biden. "We strongly condemn these hateful messages and anyone targeting Americans based on their ethnicity or background."

Robyn Patterson, a White House spokesperson for President Joe Biden said in a statement on Friday. "Racism has no place in our country. Period." The run-up to Tuesday's election included the biggest rise in US political violence since the 1970s, including some racist attacks on Harris supporters, according to cases identified by Reuters. Harris, the first woman of colour at the top of a major party ticket, also faced personal attacks, including by Trump, over her race and gender.

11 bodies found in Mexico truck were of missing group: prosecutors

The 11 people, including two minors, found dead in a pickup truck in southern Mexico were part of a group reported missing last month, authorities in Guerrero state said Friday. The victims, aged between 13 and 53, were part of a group of 17 people reported missing days ago in the town of Chilpancingo. They were reported to be travelling merchants.

Their bodies were found on Wednesday night in a pickup truck on an avenue in Guerrero's capi-

tal Chilpancingo, whose mayor was beheaded last month less than a week after taking office. Two women, four minors and five adult men from the community of Chautipan, an hour's drive west of Chilpancingo, "who were being sought by this office, have been identified," the state's prosecutors said in a statement.

General Pedro Nieto, head of the armed forces in the region, said they were believed to have been kidnapped by the Los Ardillos

drug cartel. The military had been deployed to search for them. The vehicle was found on a highway to Acapulco, the former beachside playground of the rich and famous now blighted by criminal violence.

The bodies had been dismembered, complicating efforts to identify them. On October 22, ten of the victims disappeared, with the remaining seven going missing four days later when they went looking for their loved ones. Guerrero has endured years of blood-

shed linked to turf wars between drug cartels, with residents often getting caught in the middle. Criminal gangs in Mexico often use so-called "hawks" who identify and pursue strangers in the territory they control. Last week, three other dismembered bodies were found in a vehicle in Chilpancingo. Spiraling violence, much of it linked to drug trafficking and gangs, has seen more than 450,000 people murdered in Mexico since 2006. -AFP



CLOSE CALL

Qantas plane lands safely in Sydney after engine failure

A Qantas Airways plane bound for Brisbane suffered an engine failure after take-off yesterday and circled for a short period of time before returning safely to Sydney Airport, the Australian airline said. Passengers heard a loud bang from one of the aircraft's two engines, Australian media reported. A journalist with national broadcaster ABC was on the flight and said there was a "sharp shudder" on the plane after the loud noise, his news outlet reported. "It was apparent something had happened with one of the engines, then the plane seemed to labour to get off the ground or get any altitude," ABC journalist Mark Willacy said.

WARNING

Rakhine faces famine with 2mn people at risk: UN

Myanmar's war-ravaged Rakhine state could face imminent famine according to a United Nations report, which estimates that more than 2mn people could be at the risk of starvation. Rice production in Rakhine, a western state that borders Bangladesh, has declined due to shortages of seeds and fertilisers, severe weather and the displacement of people who can no longer farm, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Aid agencies including the Red Cross have faced severe difficulties in assessing humanitarian needs and delivering aid due to restrictions from Myanmar's military government.

CRISIS

Thousands evacuated as Indonesian volcano spews ash

Indonesia's Mount Lewotobi Laki-laki erupted several times yesterday, belching volcanic ash that rose up to 10km into the sky, officials said, following a big eruption on Sunday night that killed nine people. The eruption on the island of Flores has damaged more than 2,000 houses and caused thousands to evacuate. Abdul Muhari, spokesperson for the country's disaster mitigation agency, said the eruptions were "pretty significant" due to ash rains and sand-falls that reached far into the surrounding areas. About 6,000 of the more than 16,000 people living in areas nearest the volcano had been evacuated to other villages.

DECISION

Malaysia's ex-PM ordered to pay \$300,000 to politician

A Malaysian court yesterday ordered former prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin to pay more than \$300,000 to another politician in a defamation case, adding to the opposition leader's legal troubles. Muhyiddin, who was premier for 17 months between 2020 and 2021, is also charged with sedition for allegedly insulting a former king and is accused of corruption and money laundering in separate cases. He denies wrongdoing. The Kuala Lumpur High Court ordered Muhyiddin to pay \$308,078 in damages for defamatory remarks against former finance minister Lim Guan Eng in a series of Facebook posts in March 2023, news agency Bernama reported.

Manila defines sea routes to defend interests

AFP
Manila

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos yesterday signed laws defining the country's sea waters and imposing fixed lanes for foreign ships, sparking a sharp riposte by China which summoned Manila's envoy.

The Maritime Zones Act marks out waters that fall within Manila's territory as well as areas outside of it to which it has maritime entitlements, as agreed by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

They include some waters contested by China, which claims most of the South China Sea including areas close to the shores of the Philippines.

A second law, the Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act, authorises the president to impose fixed sea and air routes through which foreign ships or planes may pass "without compromising our national security", Marcos said at the signing ceremony. "By defining and asserting our maritime zones, we project to the international community that we are staunchly committed to nurturing, cultivating and protecting our maritime domain," he said.

It ensures that "all Filipinos can rightfully enjoy the riches of our seas," Marcos added.

The foreign affairs committee of China's top legislature body, the National People's Congress, expressed its "strong condemnation" of the "so-called" laws, which it said were a "serious infringement upon China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights", according to state media.

China's foreign ministry sum-

moned the Philippine ambassador to Beijing "to lodge solemn representations" over the passage of the laws.

"China strongly condemns and firmly opposes this," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told reporters in Beijing.

"Should the Philippines take any infringing or provocative actions in the South China Sea based on this law, China will respond resolutely," Mao said.

The Philippine foreign ministry did not immediately comment on the Chinese action.

Beijing has brushed aside an international ruling that its claims to most of the South China Sea has no legal basis.

In recent months, it has deployed navy and coast guard vessels to bar the Philippines from reefs and islands that Manila says are located within its exclusive economic zone in the sea. Philippine Senator Francis Tolentino, chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Maritime and Admiralty Zones, said tensions "will not instantly be diluted" with the laws. But he told reporters that he believes they would "really fortify our sovereignty as an independent republic".

Under the second Philippine law, foreign ships and aircraft exercising the right of archipelagic sea lanes passage "shall not engage in threat or use of force against the sovereignty, territorial integrity, or political independence" of the Philippines.

It also forbids the foreign vessels from fishing, conducting war games, intelligence-gathering, surveillance, research, making "covert transmissions"; or interfering with telecommunications systems.



Houses and fields in Buguey town, Cagayan province, Philippines, were flooded after Typhoon Yinxing hit the province.

Philippines cleans up after typhoon slams north coast

AFP
Manila

Authorities cleared uprooted trees and debris in the northern Philippines yesterday as Typhoon Yinxing blew out to sea after pounding the coast overnight, ripping roofs from homes and forcing thousands to seek shelter.

But while nearly 30,000 people took cover in government-run facilities in the days and hours before Yinxing made landfall, there were no reported casualties from the typhoon, which came just two weeks after a major storm killed more than 150.

Yinxing's 175km per hour winds knocked down power lines, tore trees from the ground and shattered windows as it slammed into the country's north coast on Thursday, the nation-

al weather agency, residents and rescuers said. Officials reported 242.6 millimetres of rain dumped in a 24-hour window.

"Many trees were uprooted. There was also soil erosion in some areas. We are lucky they were not full-blown landslides," said Cagayan province disaster chief Rueli Rapsing, whose agency has so far reported no casualties.

In the province's Pamplona municipality, strong winds sent roofs flying through the air and residents scrambling for shelter.

"The fierce wind that we experienced last night was the strongest I've ever felt and seen in this town," 35-year-old resident Patrick Maquiraya said.

"The roof of the house that was being constructed in front of our home suddenly went flying."

Maquiraya said friends who sought shelter at a gymnasium had to relocate to a nearby church

after strong winds shattered the building's glass windows.

A live video showed fierce winds blowing merchandise from store shelves in Santa Ana town, where the typhoon made landfall.

As of 8am yesterday, typhoon Yinxing's centre was estimated to be northwest of Laoag city and moving out across the South China Sea, according to the state weather agency.

Rapsing, the Cagayan disaster chief, said power lines were being restored as the province shifted into clean-up mode, with police, firemen and rescuers using excavators and other equipment to clear major roads.

Yinxing is the third storm in less than a month to threaten the Philippines after severe tropical storm Trami and super typhoon Kongrey together left 158 people dead, the national disaster agency said, with most of that tally attributed to Trami.

Seoul-US alliance will strike back 'if N Korea attempts nuke attack'

South Korea President Yoon Suk-yeol said the country was prepared in its alliance with the US to strike back if North Korea attempted a nuclear attack against it, Newsweek reported yesterday.

Yoon also said South Korea could rely on US nuclear weapons to defend the country and did not need its own, according to the US magazine.

"I believe that it would be irrational for them to decide to wage a nuclear attack against the Republic of Korea and should they do so the nuclear-based ROK-US alliance will immediately strike North Korea with the US nuclear weapon," Newsweek cited Yoon as saying.

North Korea flexed its military muscle with the test of a huge new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile dubbed Hwasong-19 on October 31, amid accusations from Washington and Seoul that it has deployed troops to aid Russia in Ukraine.



Bangladesh Nationalist Party leaders and supporters march to protest and protect the voting rights of the people, in Dhaka yesterday.

Hasina allies plotting return, warns BNP

AFP
Dhaka

Allies of ousted Bangladeshi premier Sheikh Hasina were working to undermine the interim government that replaced her regime, two of her leading opponents warned yesterday at a huge rally in the capital Dhaka.

Hasina, 77, fled by helicopter to neighbouring India in August as a student-led uprising saw protesters flood streets of the capital Dhaka, bringing a dramatic end to her iron-fisted tenure.

Since then a caretaker government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus has taken charge, tasked with implementing far-reaching democratic reforms and staging fresh elections.

Hundreds of thousands of people attended yesterday's demonstration, one of the biggest since Hasina's

toppling, which was organised by her long-time opponents of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). "We have gathered here to protect the voting rights of the people and to prevent the re-emergence of fascists," Tarique Rahman, the BNP's exiled vice-chairman, told attendees via a videolink from his home in London.

"We must be cautious. Though the autocrats are gone, ill forces are still active. We cannot afford for the interim government to fail."

The BNP was subjected to repeated crackdowns under Hasina's government, which rights groups say was behind the extrajudicial killing of hundreds of political opponents and the unlawful abduction and disappearance of hundreds more.

"Sheikh Hasina has fled, but the conspiracy continues," BNP general secretary Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told the rally.

SE Asia prepares for factories fleeing Trump tariffs on China

Reuters
Bangkok

Companies have been moving factories from China to southeast Asia, anticipating Donald Trump would slap high tariffs on Beijing if he regained the White House, a move set to accelerate with his election win, industrial park developers in the region say.

Trump, who won a resounding victory on Tuesday, has threatened 60% tariffs on goods coming into the US from China, much higher than the levies of 7.5-25% he imposed in his first term, a major

risk for the world's second-largest economy.

Southeast Asia - with auto and electronics factories from Thailand to Vietnam and Malaysia - will likely benefit at China's expense, said two executives, two business groups, a lawyer and an analyst in the region.

Developers of industrial parks are adding Chinese speakers and preparing land tracts for factories, a sign of how Trump, who takes office in January, could reshuffle global supply chains.

As Trump geared up his campaign to retake the presidency earlier this year, calls from Chinese customers flooded WHA Group,

one of Thailand's largest industrial estate developers, said CEO Jareeporn Jarukornsakul.

"There was (already) a relocation to southeast Asia, but this round is going to be more intense," she said, referring to Trump's 2017-2021 first term.

WHA is expanding its sales force and adding Chinese speakers to teams overseeing maintenance and administration of industrial parks spanning more than 30,000 acres in Thailand and Vietnam, Jareeporn said.

Of the 90 factories that have opened this year in industrial parks run across Southeast Asia by Thailand's Amata Corporation, some

two-thirds have been companies relocating facilities from China, said Vikrom Kromadit, the developer's founder and chairman.

Trump will be a "big punch" to China, potentially doubling the number of firms looking to move from there into Amata's 150 square km of industrial estates in four Southeast Asian countries, Vikrom said.

Construction begins this month on an Amata industrial park in Laos, where China has built a high-speed rail line connecting Kunming in southwestern China to the Laotian capital Vientiane, he said.

Thailand, a regional automobile manufacturing hub, has drawn

over \$1.4bn in investment from Chinese automakers into its fast-expanding electric vehicle industry.

"We want a lot of investment from China so we can sell to America," said Thai Commerce Minister Pichai Nariphaphan.

"I believe this will happen," Nariphaphan told reporters. "The Americans love us, the Chinese love us - we don't have to choose sides."

Malaysia, hoping to draw over \$100bn in new investments to its semiconductor sector, could benefit from a realignment of supply chains, said leaders of two business groups.

"This shift could provide Malaysia with new opportunities to capture a larger share of exports to the US and other key markets," said Soh Thian Lai, president of the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers.

But risks persist, particularly with some indications that Trump may consider tariffs on imports from countries across the region, said Leif Schneider, head of international law firm Luther in Vietnam.

Vietnam, a major exporter to the US with \$90bn bilateral trade surplus between January and September, is bracing for volatility under Trump.

CORPORATE

Indian court orders liquidation of Jet Airways

India's top court has ordered the liquidation of bankrupt airline Jet Airways, ending a five-year-long legal process that began when the full-service carrier collapsed in 2019 with \$1.2bn in debt. Once the country's second-largest airline, Jet Airways stopped operating five years ago after it ran out of cash and its planes were grounded, with lenders forcing it into bankruptcy proceedings the same year. A national company law tribunal last year allowed ownership of the airline to be transferred to a consortium of buyers that included UAE-based businessman Murari Lal Jalan as part of the bankruptcy resolution process.

CORPORATE

Reliance pushes again for satellite spectrum auction

Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance yesterday again asked the telecom regulator to check the feasibility of an auction for satellite spectrum allocation, weeks after it clarified that it will allot spectrum administratively. Ravi Gandhi, a top policy executive with Reliance, said a move to allot satellite spectrum on a first-come first-serve basis is "flawed" and "discriminatory". His comments came at a discussion on the topic attended by representatives from billionaire Elon Musk's Starlink and telecom firm Bharti Airtel. India's move to allocate the spectrum administratively is seen as a win for Musk's Starlink, which has expressed interest in launching in India.

LAW AND ORDER

Two militants killed in Kashmir gunfight

Soldiers in Kashmir killed two militants during a firefight, police said yesterday, hours after gunmen in a separate incident shot dead two village defence guards. The gun battle started on Thursday night in Sopore, in Kashmir's north, when soldiers and police were searching for militants. "Two terrorists have been neutralised in Sopore encounter," police said in a statement yesterday after the night-long counterinsurgency operation. Hours before the clash, gunmen shot dead two guards in the remote southern Kishtwar after they were likely abducted. The village defence guards are a force tasked with fighting off militant attacks.

POLITICS

Irish prime minister calls general election for Nov 29

Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris yesterday announced the formal start of the country's general election campaign, hoping to retain his coalition's lead in polls and to capitalise on a slide in support for the opposition Sinn Fein. The prime minister had until March to go to the polls, but has been paving the way for an earlier election since a 10.5bn-euro giveaway budget that began hitting voters' wallets this month. The premier confirmed this week that voting day would be November 29. "The time is now right to ask the Irish people to give a new mandate," Harris said.

Zomato, Swiggy breached antitrust laws, says India

Reuters
New Delhi

An investigation by India's antitrust body found food delivery giants Zomato and SoftBank-backed Swiggy breached competition laws, with their business practices favouring select restaurants listed on their platforms, documents show.

Zomato entered into "exclusivity contracts" with partners in return for lower commissions, while Swiggy guaranteed business growth to certain players if they listed exclusively on its platform, according to non-public documents prepared by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

Exclusivity arrangements between Swiggy, Zomato and their respective restaurant partners "prevent the market from becoming more competitive," the CCI's investigation arm noted in its findings.

The antitrust investigation against Swiggy and its top rival Zomato began in 2022 after a complaint by National Restaurant Association of India about the impact on food outlets of alleged anti-competitive practices of the platforms.

The CCI documents are not public, in line with its confidentiality rules, and were shared with Swiggy, Zomato and the complainant restaurant group in March 2024. Their findings have not been previously reported. Zomato declined to comment, while Swiggy and the CCI did not respond to queries.

Shares in Zomato fell 3% after the Reuters report, from being flat in earlier trade. The CCI case is mentioned as one of the "internal risks" in Swiggy's IPO prospectus, which

says "any breach of the provisions of Competition Act, may attract substantial monetary penalties."

The CCI report noted that Swiggy told investigators the "Swiggy Exclusive" programme was phased out in 2023, but the company "is planning to launch similar programme (Swiggy Grow) in non-metropolitan cities."

Food delivery giants Swiggy and Zomato have in recent years reshaped how Indians order food, as hundreds of thousands of outlets listed on their apps just when smartphone use, and online ordering, both grew rapidly.

Swiggy, which yesterday is closing bids for its \$1.4bn IPO - India's second biggest this year, and Zomato both in recent years also pushed restaurants to maintain a parity on prices, directly reducing competition in the market by preventing restaurants offering lower prices on other online platforms, the CCI documents stated.

Zomato was found to have imposed pricing and discount restrictions on restaurant partners, and in some cases included a "penal provision" if the outlet failed to comply.

Some of Swiggy's partner restaurants were "threatened that their rankings will be pushed down, if they do not maintain price parity," the CCI's investigation arm noted.

The next, and final phase, of the CCI case is a decision by the CCI leadership which is still reviewing the investigation findings to decide on any penalty or order changes to Swiggy's and Zomato's business practices.

That decision could take several weeks, and the companies still have the option of contesting the investigation findings with the CCI.



Members of the legislative assembly (MLAs) from the Bharatiya Janata Party are taken out of the house by marshals amid a protest against the resolution to restore special status for Jammu and Kashmir during an assembly session in Srinagar yesterday.

Modi rejects calls to restore Kashmir's partial autonomy

Reuters
New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi strongly backed his government's contentious 2019 decision to revoke the partial autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, days after the territory's newly elected lawmakers sought its restoration.

"Only the constitution of Babasaheb Ambedkar will operate in Kashmir... No power in the world can restore Article 370 (partial autonomy) in Kashmir," Modi said, referring to one of the founding fathers of the Indian constitution.

Modi was speaking at a state election rally

in the western state of Maharashtra, where Ambedkar was from.

"Only the constitution of Babasaheb Ambedkar will operate in Kashmir... No power in the world can restore Article 370 (partial autonomy) in Kashmir"

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government revoked partial autonomy in 2019 and split the state into the two federally administered territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh - a move that was opposed by many political groups in the region.

Jammu and Kashmir held its first local election in a decade in September and October and

the newly-elected lawmakers passed a resolution this week seeking the restoration.

Jammu and Kashmir's ruling National Conference party had promised in its election manifesto that it would restore the partial autonomy, although the power to do so lies with Modi's federal government.

Jammu and Kashmir's new lawmakers can legislate on local issues like other Indian states, except matters regarding public order and policing. They will also need the approval of the federally-appointed administrator on all policy decisions that have financial implications. Under the system of partial autonomy, Kashmir had its own constitution and the freedom to make laws on all issues except foreign affairs, defence and communications.

'Anti-govt' samosa theft prompts police probe

Missing samosas sparked a police probe in India with five officers facing disciplinary action for allegedly eating a plate of the savoury treats intended for a senior politician, media reports said yesterday. Samosas - pockets of meat or vegetable filling cooked inside a blanket of deep-fried pastry - are a mainstay of Indian snack cuisine. They are also a staple of government receptions, including one staged last month by police in Himachal Pradesh for an official visit by the state's Chief Minister, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu. A special helping of samosas specially intended for Sukhu's relish instead allegedly found their way into the mouths of five police officers. The resulting high-level enquiry culminated in a report by the state's Crime Investigation Department that dubbed the affair an "anti-government act". "The report added all personnel involved acted according to their own agenda, raising concerns about intentional misconduct," the *Economic Times* reported.

Reception for military veterans



Britain's Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and Defence Secretary John Healey with Chelsea Pensioner David Hards during a reception for military veterans and their families in Downing Street, London.

Naga separatists threaten to resume violence

Reuters
Guwahati, India

An armed separatist group in a remote northeast Indian state yesterday threatened to "resume violent armed resistance" after nearly three decades of ceasefire, accusing New Delhi of failing to honour promises in earlier agreements.

The Naga insurgency, India's oldest, is aimed at creating a separate homeland of Nagalim that unites parts of India's mountainous northeast with areas of neighbouring Myanmar for ethnic Naga people.

About 20,000 people have died in the conflict since it began in 1947.

A ceasefire between the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), a lead-

ing separatist group, and Indian security forces has held since it was enforced in 1997 and the group signed an agreement with New Delhi in 2015 towards striking a resolution on their demands.

But talks have stagnated since and in a statement yesterday, the group's chief Thuingaleng Muivah accused India of "betrayal of the letter and spirit" of the 2015 agreement.

India's interior ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Muivah's remarks.

In a statement, Muivah urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi's federal government to "respect and honour" the 2015 agreement, which he said "officially recognised and acknowledged" the right to a sovereign flag and constitution for the separatists.

William reflects on 'brutal' year as Kate returns to public life

AFP
London

Catherine, Princess of Wales, takes a significant step in her recovery from cancer this weekend, as she attends formal events alongside her father-in-law King Charles III to remember Britain's war dead.

Her attendance at the events in London are the first time that Catherine, who is widely known as Kate, will be at a major royal occasion since ending chemotherapy.

Buckingham Palace's announcement came as her husband Prince William described the past year in

which both Kate and his father battled cancer as "brutal" and probably the "hardest" of his life.

Charles, 75, will lead the royal family at two of the most important events in the royal calendar - today evening's Festival of Remembrance commemorative concert and tomorrow's ceremony at the Cenotaph war memorial.

Senior royals traditionally attend the solemn wreath-laying at the monument near parliament alongside political leaders, current and former members of the armed forces, including war veterans.

But the presence of Charles's wife Queen Camilla, 77, has not yet been confirmed after she withdrew

from engagements earlier this week due to a chest infection.

Her attendance would be subject to medical advice nearer the time, the palace said.

William, 42, yesterday revealed how he had coped since both illnesses were announced.

"Honestly, it's been dreadful. It's probably been the hardest year in my life," he told reporters at the end of a four-day visit to South Africa for his Earthshot prize initiative.

"So, trying to get through everything else and keep everything on track has been really difficult"

The palace in February announced that Charles had been diagnosed with an undisclosed

cancer and would withdraw from public life to undergo treatment.

The following month Kate, also 42, revealed that she too had been diagnosed with cancer and was undergoing chemotherapy.

Both have since made limited returns to public duties, although head of state Charles, who recently toured Australia and Samoa, is still undergoing treatment.

Catherine said in September that she had completed her chemotherapy and was looking forward to undertaking more engagements "when I can".

"I'm so proud of my wife, I'm proud of my father, for handling the things that they have done," Wil-

liam added. "But from a personal family point of view, it's been, yeah, it's been brutal," he said.

This year's awards ceremony for William's Earthshot prize was held in Cape Town on Wednesday.

The initiative honours projects seeking novel solutions to the challenges facing the world's nature and climate.

William is also committed to a five-year programme, Homewards, launched by his philanthropic foundation to tackle homelessness in the UK.

When told he appeared relaxed, William said he "couldn't be less relaxed this year".

"It's more a case of just crack on

and you've got to keep going," he said.

"I enjoy my work and I enjoy pacing myself, and keeping sure that I have got time for my family too," he added.

He and Kate have three children together: Prince George, 11, Princess Charlotte, nine, and six-year-old Prince Louis.

In addition to health problems, the royal family has this year faced continuing tensions surrounding William's estranged brother Harry.

Harry's ties with his family have been increasingly fraught since he and wife Meghan quit royal life and moved to California in 2020.

CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

Production Editor

Amjad Khan

P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
editor@gulf-times.com
44350478 (News),
44466404 (Sport),
44466636 (Home delivery)
44350474
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How Asia's markets could benefit from a Trump White House

Asia and even China are shaping up as surprisingly resilient investment markets as Donald Trump returns to the White House, with fund managers optimistic the region can withstand tariffs better than Europe.

Investors say Asia's exporters and supply chains have been able to better weather trade tensions, that China is ready to bolster its domestic demand and that India's rapid growth is attractive. Equity desks in the region's financial centres reported little panic as voters ushered Trump back into office on a platform of tax cuts and protectionism — a contrast to sharp declines in European auto and renewable stocks.

"We saw gradual buying continue to pick up," said Shinji Ogawa, co-head of Japan cash equities sales at JP Morgan in Tokyo of trade on Thursday, with investors choosing industrials and financials.

"There are a few narratives that don't necessarily allow the 'Trump trade' to dictate everything," he said, pointing out rate rises on the horizon in Japan and a policy meeting in China this week expected to approve measures to boost the economy.

To be sure, the investment playbook derived from Trump's first term has been to buy US stocks and their performance has drawn money out of Hong Kong and in to the S&P 500, dealers said. But those with global mandates or wishing to diversify are sticking with the Asia bets they have, following a bit of a drawdown — mostly out of India — through October.

Asia's exporters and supply chains more resilient to trade tensions

"With this environment where cost of dollar capital is unlikely to fall that much...then you're likely to see a lot more preference for growth," said Ken Peng, head of Asia investment strategy at Citi Wealth in Hong Kong.

"So India is going to continue to do that." A bounce in Japanese automaker stocks and a surge in banks and shares of heavy machinery firms, sensitive to capital expenditure, showed buyers' focus there. In Vietnam, shares in industrial park owner Becamex leapt in anticipation of firms expanding manufacturing while developer Kinh Bac City, which has a golf and hotel project with Trump's private conglomerate, hit its upward trading limit.

In Trump's first term, China bore the brunt of his aggressive trade policy, and growth and the yuan took a hit. This time around, investors think they know a little more about what to expect from Trump and say China is better prepared.

"China is now better prepared for any curbs, whether technologically, militarily, or financially," said Charles Wang, chairman of Shenzhen Dragon Pacific Capital Management Co.

"We have a better understanding of Trump...and Trump may also be more cautious in his game with China to avoid lose-lose scenarios." Wang sold shares in Chinese auto parts exporters, expecting a hit from tariffs, but was sticking with investments in China's property sector, figuring it would receive help from the government regardless of Trump.

Other investors noted how China had lowered its share of exports by value headed directly to the US from above 20% in the early 2000s to 15% last year. They also expect the government would respond to trade tensions by backing local spending.

"Higher tariffs would only strengthen China's dependency on domestic demand, which would translate into more supportive policies," said Dong Baozhen, chairman of Beijing-based asset manager Lingtong Shengtai.

China no longer publishes timely equity flow data, but Morgan Stanley said foreign-domiciled long-only funds bought \$11.1bn in Chinese shares through October, mostly early in the month.

There is also possible upside for Asia in Trump's platform. BNP Paribas head of multi-asset investments for China Wei Li said Trump's domestic tax cuts could benefit Chinese companies by lifting demand.

Others said his isolationist foreign policy could leave room for China to improve relations with Europe, or even with the US if Trump's deal-making instincts are engaged. — Reuters

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China can beat back deflation

By Michael Spence
Milan

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, China has been experiencing something unfamiliar: deflationary conditions. At this stage in China's economic development, potential GDP growth is probably in the 5-6% range. But, relative to productive capacity, aggregate demand is far too low to realise this potential.

It is not difficult to identify factors that might have weakened external demand. Developed economies, especially the US, have imposed high tariffs on Chinese goods and introduced export restrictions on certain advanced technologies to China. Meanwhile, broader trade frictions are growing, driven partly by sanctions imposed in response to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The re-election of former President Donald Trump likely portends more trade and other restrictions, and another step toward nationalism, unilateralism, and fragmentation in the global system. This is not necessarily a sea change in US-China relations, though 100% tariffs would be. Reassembling some version of a multilateral order, however, seems considerably less likely in the near term.

That said, China has reached the stage of development where domestic, not external, demand — especially in the non-tradable service sectors — should account for the bulk of aggregate demand. With a GDP of \$13,000 per capita, China has become an upper-middle-income economy approaching high-income status. So, the non-tradable part of its economy should be approaching the size seen in high-income countries: two-thirds of GDP.

This means that even very strong demand for China's exports, or strong tradable demand more broadly, could not offset a large shortfall in non-tradable demand. The barriers to Chinese growth primarily reflect weak aggregate domestic demand, largely owing to a shortfall in household consumption.

Relatively high unemployment, combined with uncertainty about the economy's prospects, has encouraged Chinese households — already big savers by global standards — to double down on precautionary saving. More importantly, the declining value of real estate, which accounts for an estimated 70% of Chinese household wealth, has significant negative effects on consumption. As the US learned after the subprime mortgage crisis of 2007-10, repairing balance-sheet damage in the household sector is no easy feat, let alone one that can be achieved quickly.

Subdued real-estate activity has also affected local-government



finances, which have long depended heavily on land sales and real-estate revenues. Rising fiscal distress among local governments compounds deflationary pressures.

A second reason for China's domestic-demand shortfall is low investment in the private corporate sector. Weak domestic demand for final goods and services is one underlying factor; declining confidence, rooted in a lack of clarity about the relationship between the private sector and the large state-owned corporate sector, is another. Inward foreign direct investment has also declined, owing to trade and investment restrictions and geopolitical tensions, though the impact on China's economy is less significant.

In the past, public investment has been a major engine of Chinese aggregate demand. During China's three decades of very rapid growth, gross capital formation — much of it government-directed — amounted to upwards of 40% of GDP. But fiscally strained local governments have less room to pursue the kinds of massive investments seen in the past, and a recovery in investment would have only a limited impact on future growth. Overinvesting solely to fill a gap in aggregate demand is unwise, as Chinese policymakers well know.

Today's deflationary conditions might be unfamiliar to China, but they are not entirely surprising. The transition from an export- and investment-led growth model to one based on domestic consumption and innovation amounts to a fundamental structural transformation. It would be more shocking if all components of this shift were

perfectly synchronised.

In any case, the policy response is already underway. For starters, the government is pursuing a set of measures aimed at stabilising the real-estate sector without fuelling a new bubble. For example, China will nearly double credit lines for unfinished housing projects, in order to enable their completion and protect households that have pre-purchased apartments from losing their entire investment. Since excess capacity cannot be reversed, the best option is to write it off quickly.

At the same time, the Chinese government has been working to clarify the roles of the private and state-owned sectors. Over time, this should restore confidence and stimulate private-sector investment (provided the messaging remains consistent). Recent efforts to encourage the public and private sectors to adopt a more entrepreneurial mindset will also help to invigorate parts of the economy and bureaucracy that are being held back by a fear of making mistakes.

A comprehensive assessment of China's economic prospects should not focus solely on its weaknesses. The economy has many important strengths, not least abundant scientific, technological, and entrepreneurial talent. This has already contributed to China's progress — and, in some cases, leadership — in a number of advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, electric vehicles, batteries, solar energy, and some areas of biomedical and life sciences. It will bring even greater benefits once the current

imbalances are addressed.

China has another important advantage. Many developing economies fail to realise their growth potential, because government policies do not support — and, in some cases, actively resist — structural change. China does not have that problem. Its government recognises the importance of technology-driven structural transformation, and devises policies (and directs investment) accordingly.

In this sense, it can be considered good news that the growth headwinds China is facing today are not primarily the result of a more hostile external environment (though this does not help). Rather, they stem largely from internal imbalances and policy-induced uncertainty — problems the Chinese government has the skill and capacity to address. For example, fiscal stimulus focused on supporting consumption can help to smooth out the rebalancing process and prevent a self-reinforcing downward spiral.

The challenges China faces are daunting, but not insurmountable. With a clear and well-targeted policy approach, growth momentum can be restored within 2-3 years. — Project Syndicate

●Michael Spence, a Nobel laureate in economics, is Emeritus Professor of Economics and a former dean of the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University and a co-author (with Mohamed A. El-Erian, Gordon Brown, and Reid Liden) of *Permacrisis: A Plan to Fix a Fractured World* (Simon & Schuster, 2023).

Japan needs tighter monetary policy

By Koichi Hamada
Tokyo

Last month, returning to Japan for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic, I was struck by how significantly prices had increased. In February 2020, a simple lunch in downtown Tokyo cost about JP¥1,000, then the equivalent of about \$10; today, it costs more like JP¥2,000. To some extent, this mirrors the experience in the US, where, even as inflation moderates, prices remain well above their pre-pandemic levels. The difference is that Japan has also experienced a sharp currency depreciation, which benefits foreign visitors: that JP¥2,000 bill translated to just \$13.

My visit coincided with the election of a new prime minister, Shigeru Ishiba, who had just eked out a victory in a tight race within his Liberal Democratic Party. But I have some reservations about whether Ishiba will pursue the economic policies Japan needs.

In a private conversation with Ishiba in the early 2000s, while I was head of the Economic and Social Research Institute at the Cabinet Office, I noted that the Bank of Japan (BoJ)'s excessively austere monetary policy was hurting Japanese industry. Ishiba — then a member of the lower house of the Japanese Diet (parliament) — responded that, since monetary policy is technical and complex, the government would continue following the opinions and advice of BoJ experts.

This deference has merit. The BoJ, as well as the Ministry of Finance and other organs, benefits from a solid pool of talent, as well as deep knowledge of how and why past policies — monetary, fiscal, and otherwise — have or have not worked. Their advice should therefore be heeded — to a point. The problem is that government technocrats tend to favour familiar policy approaches, even when they are not actually what the economy needs.

Japanese monetary policy after 1990 reflects precisely this bias. Japan's post-World War II economic boom had been fuelled partly by an undervalued yen. But, in 1985, Japan — along with the rest of the G5 — signed onto the Plaza



Shigeru Ishiba, the new prime minister of Japan.

Accord, an agreement to devalue the surging US dollar relative to the yen, the French franc, pound sterling, and the Deutsche Mark. With that, Japan's economic miracle came to a rapid end.

Yet for the next three decades, successive BoJ governors remained committed to maintaining a stronger yen, with all its deflationary implications. One of them, Masaru Hayami, once commented to me (before becoming BoJ governor) that, as a central banker, the undervalued post-war yen had made him "miserable." In other words, politicians' commitment to listening to the experts at the BoJ, with their distinct central-bank bias, contributed directly to Japan's post-1990 "lost decades" of deflation and stagnant growth.

This changed when prime minister Abe Shinze came to power in 2012. Thanks to a sound understanding of economics, Abe knew better than to follow central bankers blindly. At the same time, he recognised the importance of putting the right person at the top of the BoJ. So, he selected Haruhiko Kuroda, who committed to pursuing the monetary expansion that Japan badly needed.

A country's monetary policy does not directly dictate its exchange rate. What matters

is the money supply relative to that of other countries. In 2012, Japan was living in a world of low interest rates. So, to prevent excessive yen appreciation — which would stifle Japanese industry — the BoJ had to keep its own interest rates low, even negative. Through unprecedented monetary easing, starting in 2013, Kuroda managed to ensure that the production costs of traded goods remained just low enough to keep Japanese exports competitive, giving the economy a significant boost.

Since then, however, the global monetary-policy environment has changed dramatically. A post-pandemic surge in inflation spurred major central banks to hike interest-rates aggressively, beginning in 2022. Though interest rates have come down, they remain relatively high: the US Federal Reserve's policy rate, for example, stands at nearly 5%. The interest-rate differential between Japan and its major trading partners spurred Japanese investors to move their savings into foreign currencies, where they received higher interest rates — and caused the yen to depreciate.

Japan's economy undoubtedly suffers when the yen is too strong; that is why I have often advocated for more expansionary monetary policy. But lower is not always better. And today's dollar exchange rate of around ¥152 is simply too low. The undervalued yen is already contributing to labour shortages in certain sectors (such as construction), encouraging excessive tourism, and discouraging Japanese students from studying abroad. Moreover, it raises the risk of a dangerous inflationary surge.

In this context, a dollar exchange rate of around ¥120 would be far preferable. To this end, the BoJ should immediately adopt a conventional short-term interest-rate policy. If this proves to be too restrictive, the BoJ can return to more relaxed policy arrangements. Fortunately, while I do worry that Ishiba might put too much stock in central bankers' opinions, he currently seems inclined toward the tighter monetary-policy approach that Japan needs. — Project Syndicate

●Koichi Hamada, Professor Emeritus at Yale University, was a special adviser to former Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinze.

ACCUSATION

Russia behind exploding parcels, claims Poland

Russian intelligence services were likely behind a series of parcels that exploded in courier depots across Europe, Polish prosecutors said yesterday, pointing the finger at Moscow in a case officials say could have caused an air disaster. Western officials have previously said that Russia has tried to destabilise allies of Ukraine with acts of sabotage. The explosions in courier depots in Britain, Germany and Poland in July had the potential to mark a serious escalation by causing an explosion on an aircraft. Security officials have said that the parcels were part of a plot that ultimately aimed to trigger explosions on cargo flights to the US and Canada.

RESTORATION

Notre-Dame bells ring out for first time since 2019 fire

The bells of Notre-Dame in Paris rang out together yesterday for the first time since a 2019 fire that devastated the historic cathedral. The sound of the eight bells in Notre-Dame's northern belfry came a month before the cathedral is to reopen following five years of painstaking restoration work in the wake of the blaze. "This is a beautiful, important and symbolic step," said Philippe Jost, who runs the public body tasked with restoring the cathedral under challenging circumstances. On the evening of April 19, 2019, Parisians and the world watched in horror as flames ravaged the world heritage landmark and then toppled its spire.

APPROVAL

Czech lower house backs rise in retirement age

The Czech centre-right government won lower house backing yesterday for pension reforms that will gradually raise the retirement age to 67 in the coming decades. Under plans, the retirement age, currently capped at 65 for younger generations, will rise by one month a year, reaching the cap of 67 by 2056 for people born in 1989, the Labour Ministry said. The plan also promotes working after retirement age by cutting social insurance payments paid by working pensioners, and raises pensions for women who had been out of the workforce while raising children. The reforms will now head to the upper house or Senate.

LEGAL

New law lets Swedish police seize luxury items

Sweden imposed a law yesterday allowing police to seize luxury items from people even if they are not suspected of a crime, if they cannot prove they acquired them legally. The measure, which was passed by parliament on October 2, is part of the right-wing government's crackdown on organised criminal gangs. It means police can seize cars, gold watches and designer goods from people suspected of having ties to criminal gangs, where the items are believed to have been bought with money earned from illicit gang activities, even if the person is not formally suspected of a crime.

Germany's Scholz open to talks on early election

AFP
Berlin

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, mired in crisis after his three-party coalition collapsed this week, said yesterday he is open to talks on whether to move forward snap elections.

The embattled chancellor has signalled new polls by March - half a year earlier than scheduled - but all opposition parties have urgently demanded they be held as early as January to restore stability.

Two thirds of German voters agree, a survey showed, demanding a new government quickly at a time Germany faces deep economic woes and geopolitical volatility.

Germany's crisis erupted Wednesday, just as Donald Trump won the White House race with as yet unknown consequences for transatlantic trade and the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Scholz's political rivals have threatened to block his minority government from passing laws unless he immediately asks for a confidence vote that would allow for a speedy election.

But Scholz threw the ball back into their court by demanding they first help him pass key legislation, in a message aimed chiefly at the CDU/CSU conservative opposition.

Speaking in his trademark unruffled voice on the sidelines of an EU summit in Budapest, Scholz urged a "calm debate" first among parliamentary groups on what laws can be passed this year.

This "could help answer the question of when the right time is" for a confidence vote leading to an early election, he said.

He added that "the election date is not a purely political" decision but must also "allow sufficient time for the organisation of a fair and democratic election".

In Berlin, the debate was anything but calm. The popular *Bild* daily called for Scholz to "clear the way" for a new government. "You, Scholz, have tried and failed," *Bild* editor Marion Horn wrote in a blistering commentary. "Let us voters reassign the mandate of power...as quickly as possible." Some 65% of German voters agreed, while just 33% supported Scholz's more relaxed timeline, according to a survey for public broadcaster ARD.

The coalition crisis, centred on discord over economic and fiscal policy, came to a head when Scholz sacked his rebellious finance minister Christian Lindner from the Free Democrats.

It has reduced the government to Scholz's Social Democrats and the Greens.

Despite the domestic turmoil, the government stressed that on the world stage, it's business as usual, including on support for Ukraine in its war against Russia.

"The aid to Ukraine, the military support, the financial support, is assured," said government spokeswoman Christiane Hoffmann.

She also brushed off another attack on Scholz - from US tech billionaire and Trump ally Elon Musk, who in a short German-language message on X had labelled him a "Narr", or a fool.

Asked about Musk's comment, Hoffmann took a playful dig at the tycoon, saying that "on X, you have *Narrenfreiheit*", which translates to the freedom to act like a fool.



Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and Greek Foreign Minister George Gerapetritis shake hands at the ministry of foreign affairs in Athens, Greece, yesterday.

Greece, Turkiye agree to keep working on improving ties

AFP
Athens

The foreign ministers of Greece and Turkiye yesterday agreed to continue improving their relations to boost trade and seek common ground on how to resolve their long-standing territorial differences.

"We confirmed our will to maintain the (positive) climate we have managed to build," Greek Foreign Minister George Gerapetritis said.

"I believe that we can resolve our differences with our neighbour Greece with mutual respect and on the basis of international law," added his visiting counterpart Hakan Fidan.

Last December, Greece and Turkiye restarted high-level talks to reduce tensions when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Athens

for the first time in six years. The visit came after a long period of tension marked by disputes over migration, energy exploration in the Aegean and territorial sovereignty.

Erdogan had earlier questioned century-old treaties and even threatened to invade Greek Aegean islands.

The tension prompted Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis in 2021 to announce a military buildup in naval and air force equipment, and sign defensive agreements with France and the US.

But relations improved after Greece sent rescuers and aid to Turkiye after a massive earthquake killed at least 50,000 people in February 2023.

Gerapetritis yesterday said there was "tangible results" in the rapprochement, with progress made on increasing bilateral trade

to \$10bn (9.3bn euros). "What is important is that our contacts have acquired normalcy," he said.

The trade volume was \$8bn last year and could exceed \$6bn this year, Fidan said.

Turkiye's questioning of the status quo in the Aegean, which Greece says is based on 20th century postwar treaties, are a key obstacle in relations.

Turkiye has said that Greece unfairly regards the entire Aegean as a Greek sea, in disregard of its own rights as a coastal state.

Athens says its only dispute with Ankara is over where to delimit the continental shelf - the stretch of seabed close to its shores - and exclusive economic zones.

Gerapetritis said the talks yesterday had touched on how to begin to discuss the seabed and economic zone issues.

Ship with suspected toxic waste allowed to unload in Albania

A ship carrying possibly toxic industrial waste unloaded yesterday at an Albanian port, after being refused entry to Thailand and spending months at sea, authorities said.

The Turkish-flagged Moliva container ship - believed to be carrying around a hundred containers filled with suspicious waste - arrived in the waters near the port of Durres last week.

But it was not initially permitted to dock at the port. It had to wait until yesterday before being allowed to unload.

The authorities took charge of "102 containers unloaded from the ship", the interior ministry said. "The whole operation was carried out according to a strict plan ordered by the prosecutors in Durres."

The containers are being taken to a "secure location, away from populated areas, complying with all rigorous conditions for physical, environmental and sanitary safety", the ministry added.

Spain's grim search for flood victims



Soldiers search wrecked cars damaged by flooding in Massassana, region of Valencia, eastern Spain, yesterday, in the aftermath of deadly floods. The European nation's worst floods in a generation have killed more than 210 people, left dozens missing and submerged entire towns in mud, particularly in the eastern Valencia region.

Pakistan bans entry to parks, zoos as air pollution worsens

Reuters
Lahore

Pakistan's Punjab banned entry to many public spaces yesterday, including parks and zoos, as it sought to protect people from severe air pollution in parts of the eastern province.

The provincial capital Lahore has been engulfed in a thick, smoky haze this week and was consistently rated the world's most polluted city by Swiss group IQAir in its live rankings, prompting the closure of schools and work-from-home mandates.

The Punjab government's order yesterday placed a "complete ban on public entry in all parks...zoos, play grounds, historical places, monuments, museums and joy/play lands" until November 17 in areas including Lahore. The decision follows restrictions imposed

last month on four "hot spots" in Lahore that banned tuk-tuks with polluting two-stroke engines, along with restaurants that operate barbecues without filters.

Seasonal crop burn-off by farmers on the outskirts of Lahore also contributes to toxic air, which the WHO says can cause strokes, heart disease, lung cancer and respiratory diseases.

The concentration of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in Lahore's air was more than 20 times higher than the level deemed acceptable by the World Health Organisation (WHO). In Multan, it was up to 48 times higher yesterday.

Punjab residents have been trapped in thick smog for over a week ever since the air quality index (AQI), which measures a range of pollutants, spiked above 1,000 - well above the level of 300 considered 'dangerous' - according to data from IQAir.

Putin 'ready to Trump talks but Ukraine demands unchanged'

Putin on June 14 set out his terms for an end to the war: Ukraine would have to drop its Nato ambitions and withdraw all of its troops from all of the territory of four regions claimed by Russia

Reuters
Moscow

President Vladimir Putin is ready to discuss Ukraine with Donald Trump but that does not mean he is willing to alter Moscow's demands, the Kremlin said yesterday.

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov made the remarks after being asked at his daily news briefing if Putin's readiness to talk to the Republican president-elect reflected a willingness to change those demands.

"The president has never said that the goals of the special military operation are changing. On the contrary, he has repeatedly said that they remain the same," Peskov said.

"All this concerns the security interests of our country, the security interests of the Russian people living there. Therefore, there was no talk of any changes here."

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"The president has never said the goals of the special military operation are changing. On the contrary, he has repeatedly said that they remain the same"

Ukraine rejected that, saying it would be tantamount to capitulation, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has put forward a "victory plan" that

includes requests for additional military support from the West.

On the campaign trail, Trump criticised the scale of US military and financial support for Kyiv and said he could end the war within 24 hours, without saying how. Zelensky has congratulated Trump, but said he does not know how the American plans to end the conflict quickly. "If it's just fast, it means losses for Ukraine. I just don't yet understand how this could be in any other way. Maybe we do not know something, do not see," he said on Thursday. Putin on Thursday congratulated Trump on winning the US election, praised him for showing courage when a gun-

man tried to assassinate him in July, and said Moscow was ready for dialogue with Trump. He said comments that Trump had made about trying to end the war were worthy of attention.

Trump told NBC he had not talked to Putin since his election victory but "I think we'll speak".

Asked about a possible phone call between the two men, Peskov said there was nothing concrete on it to report yet, and it would be premature to talk of any improvement in Russia-US ties.

But Putin had made it clear many times he remained open for dialogue, he said. The Kremlin says relations with the US are at an his-

toric low because of Washington's support for Ukraine and its imposition of sanctions against Russia.

Putin last spoke to Biden in February 2022, days before the start of the war, when the American warned him of a swift and severe Western response if he went ahead with an invasion.

The Kremlin last month denied reports that Trump had spoken to Putin since leaving office after US journalist Bob Woodward in his book "War" quoted an unnamed Trump aide as saying that Trump and Putin may have spoken as many as seven times since Trump left the White House in 2021.



Culture minister opens inaugural Doha Photography Festival

HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani opened yesterday the inaugural Doha Photography Festival, as part of the cultural season activities. Organised by the Qatar Photography Centre affiliated to the Ministry of Culture, the event will continue until Nov 13, opposite Darb Al Saai in Umm Salal.

The opening of the festival, was also attended by HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Saeed bin Smaikh al-Marri, HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad, HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi, the Qatar Press Centre chairman Saad bin Mohammed al-Rumaihi, and the Qatar National Archives Secretary-General Dr Ahmed Abdullah al-Buainain.

The festival includes several personal and group exhibitions of old photos and cameras, in addition to a place dedicated to displaying film images, and a



main theatre where lectures and seminars are held by international photographers, in addition to workshops and interactive platforms for the public.

The Ministry of Culture's Assistant Undersecretary for Cultural Affairs, Dr Ghanem bin Mubarak

al-Ali, said in a statement: "The launch of the Doha Photography Festival in its first edition aims to highlight the importance of photography as a means of expression and documentation, in addition to inspiring society through the stories and experiences of photogra-

phers, and organising workshops to enhance and build capabilities in society."

He explained that the ministry seeks, through the Doha Photography Festival, to promote photographic heritage and culture, by displaying old cameras and pho-

tos, and developing the skills of photographers.

The Qatar Photography Centre director, Jassim Ahmed al-Buainain, said: "The festival seeks to provide a platform for displaying works, as it will include more than 30 photography exhibitions,

allowing local photographers to communicate with the public."

A group of international companies, including Canon, Nikon, and Sony, in addition to local and Gulf shops specialising in photography equipment, are participating in the event, he added. (QNA)

Polish Independence Day celebrated in Qatar

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Hundreds of Polish nationals residing in Qatar celebrated their nation's upcoming Independence Day with a vibrant display of athleticism and community spirit at the 7th annual Independence Run, held at the Lusail Multipurpose Arena yesterday. Organised by the Witold Pilecki Polish School and the Polish embassy in Doha, the event saw participants of all ages participate in 400m and 1,000m races, marking a growing tradition of celebrating Polish independence through sport. It served as a prelude to Poland's 106th Independence Day on Nov 11. "Sport is a great way to bond and to celebrate. There are many sports events organised in Poland on this day, even longer distance 'Independence runs', so we, in a way, link it to other events that are held throughout the country. "The more sport you do in a responsible manner the healthier you are and it brings happiness to the community," head of Mission Tomasz Sadzinski told Gulf Times. He said Polish communities worldwide mark the occasion in different ways, ranging from cooking events to reading contests, adding that the

November climate in Qatar made the run particularly suitable. Sadzinski cited the key role of Witold Pilecki Polish School in holding the event, providing a space for community members to gather, practice Polish, undertake Polish-language projects, and build relationships as it operates voluntarily. Edyta Gierycz, leader of the Witold Pilecki Polish School in Qatar, echoed this view, saying: "We've been providing Polish classes in Qatar since 2013, and eight years ago, we started celebrating our national day with this sports event. "Every year, it gets bigger, and we invite the entire Polish community in Doha - all families - to join us. We're all winners because we're running for Poland. "Even though we live outside of our country, we still feel that Polish vibe, and that's very important". Gierycz underlined the event's family-centric nature and its educational value, noting that children learn from parents, not just from school. "They observe their parents, learn how to love our country, how to celebrate National Day, what it means to us," she said, as she thanked Ministry of Sport and Sports For All Federation for their support, enabling the event to be held at the Lusail Multipurpose Arena.



Members of the Polish community in Qatar, especially children, take part in various activities at the Lusail Multipurpose Arena yesterday to mark Poland's 106th Independence Day.



"Sports connects people and create positive vibes, and we show our kids and teach them that you can celebrate and show patriotism in this way," Gierycz added. "Our kids love sports and the celebration meets the expectation

of our community, they like this day...and we prefer to go out of school and to do activities together". She highlighted the importance of maintaining a connection to Polish culture while living abroad.



Tomasz Sadzinski and Edyta Gierycz address the attendees at the celebration. PICTURES: Thajudheen and supplied

