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WEDNESDAY Vol. XXXV No. 13081
July 24, 2024
Muharram 18, 1446 AH
www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

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Amir participates in 142nd IOC session

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, who is a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), participated yesterday in the 142nd IOC Session under the chairmanship of President of the IOC Dr Thomas Bach and in the presence of members of the Olympic Executive Office, members of the IOC, and heads of international federations and national Olympic committees at the Palais des Congres in Paris, France. President of the Qatar Olympic Committee HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani also participated in the meeting, which discussed the topics on its agenda and took appropriate decisions regarding them. The attendees also discussed a number of regional and international sports issues related to the development and organisation of Olympic events. (QNA)



Qatar Airways orders 20 more Boeing 777X jets

By Pratap John
Business Editor

Qatar Airways has ordered 20 more Boeing 777-9 planes, expanding its order book for the US manufacturer's 777X family of jets to 94. The national airline's significant order of Boeing 777X aircraft, which is considered the world's largest and most fuel-efficient twin-engine jet, was announced on the second day of the Farnborough International Airshow.

The announcement also includes a commitment for 40 additional GE9X engines and spare engines, as well as a long-term services agreement.

According to Boeing, Qatar Airways helped launch the 777X programme and now has an order for 60 777-9 passenger airplanes.

Qatar Airways is also the inaugural launch customer for the 777-8 Freighter and has 34 of the next generation cargo jet on order.

On the first day of Farnborough Airshow 2024, Qatar Airways showcased Qsuite Next Gen, the latest version of the 'World's Best Business Class', which will be featured on the 20 additional or-



Qatar Airways has ordered 20 more Boeing 777-9 planes, expanding its order book for the US manufacturer's 777X family of jets to 94.

der of the Boeing 777-9 aircraft, amongst other aircraft.

The highly-anticipated Qsuite Next Gen includes updated features such as movable monitors with Bluetooth connectivity, companion suits with window views, larger lie-flat and double beds, lockable drawers, touch-screen passenger control unit and more.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer Badr Mohamed al-Meer said: "Qatar Airways is proud to announce an expansion to the existing Boeing 777X aircraft order with an additional 20, totalling 94 Boeing 777X aircraft. "We, as the 'World's Best Airline', are an industry leader and operate one of the youngest fleets, offering unparalleled innovation and quality. Keeping an eye on the future, we continue to ensure that all Qatar Airways passengers are only met with the best products and services available in the industry."

Boeing Commercial Airplanes President and CEO Stephanie Pope said: "Qatar Airways is a leader in our industry, and we are honoured the airline added 20 more 777-9 jets to its large Boeing order book. We appreciate their confidence that Boeing's market-leading widebody family will provide outstanding fuel efficiency and a superior passenger experience for its global operations."

GE Aerospace President and CEO, Commercial Engines and Services, Russell Stokes said: "We are pleased to extend our partnership with Qatar Airways to support the airline's commitment to an excellent customer experience and best-in-class efficiency. To Page 5

Khan Younis residents flee as Israeli tanks advance

Reuters
Cairo/Gaza

Palestinian residents of eastern neighbourhoods of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip fled their homes yesterday as Israeli tanks advanced deep into the area after Israel ordered the population to evacuate.

The tanks pushed into the Khan Younis town of Bani Suhaila and several districts nearby were bombed for a second day, forcing tens of thousands of civilians to seek refuge elsewhere.

Gaza health officials said Israeli military strikes since Monday killed at least 80 Palestinians in the Khan Younis area - adding to a death toll of more than 39,000 in nearly 10 months of warfare, according to Gaza authorities' figures.

Many of the newly displaced families said they had to spend the night in the streets as they searched in vain for a space as western Khan Younis and central Gaza areas were overcrowded.

UN officials described scenes of despair as Israeli airstrikes hit the area.

"The situation is impossible," the UN's Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA said on X.

"People are exhausted from the continuous displacement and unliveable conditions & they are trapped in increasingly small &



Women injured during Israeli bombardment arrive at the emergency ward of Al-Nassr hospital in Khan Younis, on the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

overcrowded areas," it said.

Residents in Khan Younis said tanks remained stationed deep inside Bani Suhaila, east of downtown Khan Younis. Soldiers were seen searching inside the town's main cemetery, while others commandeered roofs of high-rise buildings, firing their guns toward the western areas from time to time, residents said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is in Washington this week, told families of hostages held in Gaza that a deal that would secure their release could be near.

Months of efforts mediated by Egypt and Qatar to reach a ceasefire gained momentum in recent weeks under a proposal outlined by Biden in May. Page 6

Baladna profits increase 137% in H1 of 2024

The net profits of Baladna QPSC rose 137% in the first half of 2024, reaching QR100.420mn, compared to QR42.297mn, in the same period in 2023. According to the company's data published on Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) website yesterday, there was a surge in earnings, per share to QRO.053 for June 30, 2024, compared to earnings, per share of QRO.022 for the same period in the preceding year.

Business Page 8

QDB to host third Arab SME Summit

Qatar Development Bank signed yesterday a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in the latest bid to promote and support SMEs in Qatar and the Arab region. In line with the agreement, QDB will host the third Arab SME Summit within the framework of the 10th edition of Rowad Qatar Entrepreneurship Conference 2024 which will be held from Nov 17-Nov 19 at the DECC under the theme "Navigating Digital Horizons." Business Page 7

July 21 hottest day ever recorded

July 21 was the hottest day ever registered globally, according to preliminary data published yesterday by the EU's climate monitor. The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said the global average surface air temperature of 17.09C (62.7F) on Sunday was the warmest in their record books, which go back to 1940. "The Earth has just experienced its warmest day," the monitor said in a statement. Page 11

Ethiopian landslides toll jumps to 229

The death toll from two landslides in southern Ethiopia has jumped to 229 and could rise further as the search for survivors and casualties continued into a second day, a government official said yesterday. Following heavy rain a landslide buried people in Gofa zone in Southern Ethiopia regional state on Sunday night, then a second one engulfed others who had gathered to help on Monday morning. An official said children and police officers were among the dead. Page 6

Over 110 farms take part as dates festival begins

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

The 9th Local Dates Festival started at Souq Waqif yesterday with the participation of more than 110 local farms featuring several local varieties.

Organised by Souq Waqif Management in co-operation with the Agricultural Affairs Department of the Ministry of Municipality, the exhibition also showcases date products such as syrup, cakes, juices and ice cream. Also, the ministry has set up counters to display date farming techniques.

Souq Waqif director Mohamed Abdullah al-Salem said that the exhibition marks an increase in the number of participating farms and customers year after year while becoming an ideal venue for marketing local dates. He noted that the response from the farmers and the customers is positive.

Ahmed Salem al-Yafei, head of the Ag-



gricultural Extension and Services Department at the Ministry of Municipality, said the growing number of participating farms and visitors bear witness to the good response evoked by the annual exhibition. Al-Yafei said a special exhibition of figs and almonds will be held at the exhibition on Thursday. To Page 12

Harris leads Trump 44% to 42% in US presidential race

Vice-President Kamala Harris opened up a marginal two-percentage-point lead over Republican Donald Trump after President Joe Biden ended his re-election campaign and passed the torch to her, a Reuters/Ipsos poll found.

The poll, conducted on Monday and Tuesday, followed both the Republican National Convention where Trump on Thursday formally accepted his party's nomination and the Biden announcement on Sunday he was leaving the race and endorsing Harris.

Harris, whose campaign says she has secured the Democratic nomination, led Trump 44% to 42% in the national poll, a difference within the 3-percentage-point margin of error.

Harris and Trump were tied at 44% in a

July 15-16 poll, and Trump led by one percentage point in a July 1-2 poll, both within the same margin of error.

While nationwide surveys give important signals of American support for political candidates, just a handful of competitive states typically tilt the balance in the US Electoral College, which ultimately decides who wins a presidential election.

The most recent poll results underscored the rationale for Biden dropping out of the race and for Harris replacing him on the ticket.

Some 56% of registered voters agreed with a statement that Harris, 59, was "mentally sharp and able to deal with challenges," compared to 49% who said the same of Trump, 78. Page 7



Harris delivers remarks during a campaign event in West Allis, Wisconsin, US yesterday.

Deputy PM meets Korea's naval operations chief



HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiyah met with the visiting Korean Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Yang Young-mo, and his accompanying delegation. The meeting discussed topics of common concern besides co-operation between the two sides and ways to enhance and develop them. The meeting was attended by the Commander of the Amiri Naval Forces Staff Maj Gen (Navy) Abdullah bin Hassan al-Sulaiti and a number of senior officials and officers from both sides. (QNA)

Amir congratulates Egyptian president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on his country's National Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of congratulations to Prime Minister Dr Mostafa Kamal Madbouly. (QNA)

Transport minister meets UK transport secretary



HE the Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti met yesterday in London with UK Secretary of State for Transport Louise Haigh, on the sidelines of his participation in the Farnborough International Airshow (FIA). During the meeting, the two sides discussed aspects of bilateral co-operation in transportation, transportation services and civil aviation, and ways to enhance them. The meeting was attended by In Charge of Managing Qatar Civil Aviation Authority Mohamed Faleh al-Hajri, and Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Badr Mohamed al-Meer. (QNA)

Justice ministry holds training courses for legal professionals in government sector



The Ministry of Justice (MoJ)'s Center for Legal and Judicial Studies (CLJS) is organising two training courses targeted at a number of legal professionals from various government ministries and entities, from July 21 to July 25.

In a statement, the ministry said the courses will revolve around the protection of human rights in Qatar and the legal regulation of sports in Qatar's sports law.

The courses will equip participants with the fundamental legal skills and knowledge of the subject matter of the courses.

The course on the protection of human rights in Qatar will cover human rights concepts, sources, classifications, and the local, regional, and international legislative mechanisms for human rights protection, as well as developing an understanding of the role of institutions in protecting and enhancing human rights in Qatar, and Qatari laws' compatibility with international conventions on human rights.

The course syllabus is based on five main pillars: the Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar (2004), Law No. (11) of 2004 Issuing the Penal Code and its amendments, Law No. (23) of 2004 on the promulgation of the Criminal

Procedure Code and its amendments, Law No. (14) of 2004 on the promulgation of Labour Law and its amendments, along with international agreements on human rights, in addition to the state and human rights entities' practices and procedures to address human rights violations, as well as judicial applications in Qatar and cases related to human rights before the UN and the European Court of Human Rights.

As for the course on the legal regulation of sports in Qatar's sports law, it will include topics such as the legal regulations governing sports clubs and associations in the country, the process of organising sporting events, international standards and the Qatari sports law, in addition to the work of the Qatar Olympic Committee and the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy.

Director of CLJS Dr Saleh Ali al-Fadala underscored the importance of these specialised training courses in enhancing the legal skills and knowledge of legal professionals, specialists, and researchers, thereby benefiting the government ministries and institutions in which they work, for whose needs these courses were tailored. Al-Fadala added that they underscore Qatar's

efforts to protect and uphold human rights and the Rule of Law, as well as developing national legislation supporting human rights. He added that such training highlights Qatar's leading position in sports, raises public awareness of the importance of legally regulating sporting activities, promoting the economic and developmental benefits of investing in sporting activities, and finding the best solutions to ensure the growth and development of these activities in line with Qatar National Vision 2030, as well as presenting the latest developments and best practices of relevance to the legal regulation of sporting activities locally, regionally, and internationally.

The Director of CLJS indicated that MoJ is committed to meeting the country's training needs under the Third National Development Strategy and in keeping with the human development pillar of the Qatar National Vision 2030, thus, offering quality programmes and courses that include practical training, to prepare qualified national professionals in various legal and related fields, and enhancing the technical expertise of legal professionals from across government entities. (QNA)

Mauritanian president receives credentials of Qatar's envoy

Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Sheik al-Ghazouani has received in Nouakchott the credentials of Shaheen bin Ali al-Kaabi as Qatar's ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Mauritania. The ambassador conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the president, and wishes of good health and happiness to him, and for the government and people of Mauritania continued progress and prosperity. For his part, the Mauritanian president entrusted the ambassador to convey his greetings to the Amir, wishing His Highness good health and happiness, and Qatar continued progress and development. (QNA)



Chief of Staff meets British minister and UK chief of defence staff

HE the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Lieutenant General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad al-Nabit met with British Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry Maria Eagle, on the sidelines of his visit to the Farnborough International Airshow. During the meeting, the two sides discussed topics of mutual interest and reviewed bilateral military relations, as well as ways to enhance and develop them. Several senior officers of the Qatar Armed Forces attended the meeting. (QNA)



HE the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Lieutenant General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad al-Nabit met with the UK Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, during his visit to London. The meeting discussed a number of topics of common concern. They also discussed military co-operation between the two sides and ways to enhance and develop them. The meeting was attended by a number of Qatari Armed Forces senior officers. (QNA)

AlKhatier meets Ukraine envoy, Afghan health minister



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatier met yesterday with Ukrainian ambassador to Qatar Andrii Kuzmenko. The meeting discussed bilateral relations, in addition to the latest developments regarding Qatar's continuous mediation to reunite children and families separated by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. (QNA)



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatier met yesterday with the visiting Acting Minister of Public Health in the Afghan caretaker government Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and ways for enhancing and developing them, especially in the health, humanitarian and development fields. (QNA)

Al-Khulaifi meets Swiss official



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met yesterday with the visiting President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Swiss Parliament Laurent Wehrli. The meeting discussed co-operation between the two countries and ways to support and strengthen them. They also discussed the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, the developments in Afghanistan, and the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, in addition to a number of topics of common concern. Wehrli thanked Qatar for its continued efforts to achieve peace and stability in the region. (QNA)



Envoy underscores strong Qatar-Egypt ties

Egyptian embassy marks National Day

By Ayman Adly
Doha

The relationship between Qatar and Egypt is experiencing a quantum leap in all sectors, as the two countries are keen on further promoting these relations for broader horizons to meet the high expectations of the two brotherly peoples, stressed the Egyptian ambassador in Doha Amr El-Sherbini.

On the occasion of the 72nd anniversary of July 23, 1952 revolution of Egypt (National Day), the Egyptian embassy in Doha organised a celebration to mark the event on Tuesday evening.

The celebration was hosted by the Egyptian ambassador in Doha Amr El-Sherbini with chief guests that included HE Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, Minister of Environment and Climate Change; HE Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs; HE Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad, Minister of Social Development and Family; ambassador Ibrahim bin Yousif Fakhroo, director of the Department of Protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and other senior Qatari officials, alongside a considerable number of dignitaries, heads of diplomatic missions, envoys and some members of the Egyptian community in Doha.

The ambassador expressed his happiness that this event is be-



ing marked in brotherly Qatar as the two countries enjoy historical bonds of brotherly and deeply-rooted relations as well as joint co-operation to enhance Arab solidarity.

He pointed out that the exchange of visits by the top leaderships of both countries have further enhanced bilateral relations. This is in addition to the various exchange of visits by senior officials from both coun-

tries to Doha and Cairo.

He noted that the trade exchange volume between the two countries in 2023 increased by 51% compared to the previous year, with strong indicators for more increases this year. Besides, Qatar is among the top investors in Egypt in various key economic sectors. He also said that there is a considerably excellent cultural co-operation between Qatar and Egypt.

AlKhatер meets Palestinian ministers



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatер met yesterday with the visiting Palestinian Minister of Planning and International Co-operation Dr Wael Zaqout, and Minister of State for Palestinian Relief Affairs Dr Basil Nasser.

Discussions during the meeting dealt with the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, Israeli violations in the West Bank, and the Israeli occupation

authorities' freezing of Palestinian Authority funds. HE AlKhatер renewed Qatar's condemnation of the genocide in the Gaza Strip and the Israeli violations of all international laws and conventions in the West Bank, occupied Jerusalem and all Palestinian territories, including the intensification of the policy of displacement, settlement and economic restrictions, and reiterated Qatar's supportive position of the Palestinian brothers in all the occupied Palestinian territories. (QNA)

Qatar Charity's efforts in Bosnia hailed

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid al-Khatер recently visited the Qatar Charity (QC) office in Bosnia and Herzegovina with Qatar's ambassador Meshal bin Ali al-Attiyah along with their accompanying delegation.

The visit, according to an official statement from QC, underscores the humanitarian and developmental co-operation between Qatar and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It emphasises Qatar's commitment to enhancing international partnerships in education, social development and supporting initiatives that promote cultural exchange between nations.

The purpose of this visit was to familiarise themselves with the projects and activities implemented by the QC in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Qatari delegation was received by Hassan al-Nuaimi, general supervisor of the office and Mohamed Oushan, the office director. A presentation was given highlighting the history of QC in Bosnia and Herzegovina, its projects and the sectors it supports.

Honouring students
HE the minister honoured the resident students at the Doha Al Khair residence for female students under QC on the graduation of the fifth batch for the



academic year 2023-2024. This project is a significant initiative providing a supportive environment for female students to complete their studies.

HE the minister praised the pioneering project for female students in Bosnia and Herzegovina and QC's efforts across various fields.

Pioneering project
QC established the university residence for female students in 2019 in the heart of Sarajevo, near four universities offering various scientific dis-

ciplines. The location was carefully chosen to provide a safe and comfortable environment for academic pursuits, benefiting students from low-income rural backgrounds aspiring for higher education and better futures. Additionally, QC implements diverse projects across humanitarian and developmental sectors while enhancing healthcare and educational services and contributing to improving the quality of life for local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Al Jasra Salon holds lecture on leadership in govt sector

Al Jasra Cultural Salon organised a lecture titled "Leadership in the Government Sector", presented by Mubarak al-Khayareen, who praised the club's role in the cultural movement in the country.

Al-Khayareen presented the importance of the theme, which faces great challenges characterised by the absence of responsibility and lack of stimulating second-line industry capable of directing businesses and individuals according to the planned goals. This is in addition to not choosing leadership cadres from the government sector when forming or working on a specific project, and choosing the majority from the energy sector or the financial sector due to the low level of confidence in the government sector's leadership outputs.

The leadership programmes that the government sector aspires to do in the current period indicate the existence of gaps, with great need of support and stimulation and the presence of a leadership climate in this sector. But through the Qatar Leadership Center, which was established in 2010, trans-



From left: Khaled Ahmed al-Obaidan and Mubarak al-Khayareen.

formation, administrative planning, and leadership began in the public sector. Since that period, the public sector has witnessed transformations, but most of them are procedural transformations, not leadership ones. The lecturer called for improving leadership reputation and striving to get rid of leadership stagnation in the government sector.

At the end of the meeting Khaled Ahmed al-Obaidan, Acting Chairman of the Board of Directors, honoured the lecturer and presented him with the club's shield and a certificate of thanks and appreciation.

Qatar attends preparatory meeting for Int'l Conference on Sustainable Development



Qatar has participated in the preparatory conference for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Sustainable Development, which is being held in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. Qatar's delegation to the conference was headed by Qatar's ambassador and its Permanent Representative to the African Union Saad bin Mubarak al-Nuaimi. The conference discussed progress made and gaps in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and identified actions needed to accelerate the achievement of the sustainable development goals. (QNA)

Children engage in diverse activities at Katara camp

Katara Summer Camp continues to attract visitors on its third day, including children in different activities within the camp's diverse programmes. The camp offers educational, recreational and cultural activities to develop children's skills and enhance their intellectual, creative and social abilities. The Cultural Village Foundation - the Katara aims for children to take advantage of the summer holidays, since it helps in bettering their self-discipline and individual responsibility, and gives them an opportunity to expand their circle of friends. Katara Summer Camp programmes are held in partnership with the Qatar Red Crescent Society by training participants in first aid, in addition with Al Jazeera Media Institute where its trainer Iman al-Obaidi presented a workshop on self-confidence. These activities helped participants learn life skills in an entertaining and interactive way. This helped in developing their social abilities as well as increasing their knowledge and understanding of key topics. They additionally took part in an air rifle shooting event, competitions and cultural games. Today's programme will include a trip to Al Shaqab to learn about horses and their important role in Qatar's society. (QNA)



WCM-Q hosts fully immersive simulation educator course

Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q) recently held the third iteration of its unique faculty development course, offering clinicians and educators a valuable opportunity to master the effective use of simulation-based education.

Titled "Simulation Educator Course: Designing and Debriefing Effective Simulations", the two-day immersive workshop aimed to equip participants with the skills needed to describe the theoretical foundations of healthcare simulation, design effective simulation scenarios, and apply formal and informal debriefing techniques that engage learners, promote reflection, and mitigate frustration. The course emphasised a



Participants at the workshop.

three-step approach: pre-brief, simulation, and debrief, ensuring

psychological safety throughout the process so learners could

identify and address gaps in their knowledge and practice. Interac-

tive debriefing and peer feedback sessions enabled participants to reflect, analyse, and understand the risks and benefits of observed behaviours.

The workshop was aimed at physicians, nurses, pharmacists, allied health professionals, healthcare simulation professionals, and educators.

Course speakers included Dr Stella Major, an associate professor of family medicine in clinical medicine and director of the Clinical Skills and Simulation Lab (CSSL) at WCM-Q; Dr Michelle Brown, an associate professor in the Department of Health Services Administration at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and founding pro-

gramme director of the health-care simulation master's degree; Rudy Bahri, the manager of CSSL at WCM-Q; and Arlene Masaba, a lecturer in the Nursing and Midwifery Department, College of Health Sciences, University of Doha for Science and Technology.

Dr Major said: "Simulation-based learning is a crucial educational methodology in health education. It equips healthcare educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver effective simulations. This workshop offers clinicians and educators a truly unique and immersive learning experience, enabling them to immediately apply these techniques in their practice."

Sidra Medicine performs complex nasal surgery successfully

A six-year-old boy, born with a rare condition called a nasal meningoencephalocele, underwent a minimally-invasive procedure at Sidra Medicine recently. This was the first time such a procedure was performed on a child in Qatar, where the anterior base of the skull was repaired entirely endoscopically via the nose. The child was seen at the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) clinic at Sidra Medicine with a blockage in his nose. After an in-office endoscopy and imaging, the diagnosis showed a tumour had created an unusual route from

the sterile area inside his skull to the outside, putting him at risk of serious infections and leakage of cerebrospinal fluid. Since the mass of the tumour was blocking his nose, it was making it hard for him to breathe. With the diagnosis, and being expatriates in Qatar, the boy's parents went on a journey determined to find the best possible care and treatment for their son. Following several consultations at Sidra Medicine, they were reassured of the hospital's expertise in minimally-invasive endoscopic surgery and its reputation for treating complex paediatric conditions.

Recognising the complexity of the boy's condition, an expert team was assembled, led by Dr Taseer Feroze Din, an attending paediatric ENT physician at Sidra Medicine. The ENT team at Sidra Medicine led by Dr Din and Dr Mohamed Mahdi, ENT hospitalist, meticulously planned and executed the operative procedure. The minimally-invasive approach involved navigating specialised endoscopic instruments through the nostrils to access the meningoencephalocele. This was the first time such a procedure was performed on a child in Qatar.

After the young patient's successful endoscopic and minimally-invasive surgery, the ENT team developed a holistic recovery plan to help him heal and regain full function. They closely monitored his progress, addressing any discomfort or potential complications. "Everything went very smoothly, and he was discharged a day earlier than planned. It was a real pleasure seeing a young boy initially understandably nervous, to one who was liberated from worry after the surgery and a comfortable post-operative course - this is why we do what we do," added Dr Din.



Dr Mohamed Mahdi (left) and Dr Taseer Feroze Din.

QF alumna advocates art therapy to overcome mental health barriers

An alumna of Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar), Sara Powell, has a passion for arts and therapeutic practices and credits her foundation course at the Qatar Foundation partner university for her love of art in all its forms.

After combining her two passions to take a master's degree in art psychotherapy, Powell realised she wanted to continue helping people, especially when she witnessing the students partake in play therapy and observed an increase in concentration and expression.

"Sometimes young children cannot process things happening in the world and need to learn how to express themselves safely," she said. "It can also help their caregivers understand their needs better."

Following completion of her Master's, the idea for ATIC was born. A community-driven centre, ATIC aims to familiarise, promote, and provide art psychotherapy services through art and other expressive therapies like play, music and movement.

With her first clinic established in Singapore in 2010, opening a second



Sara Powell

clinic in Dubai was a natural progression for Powell when she moved back to the region in 2014, as was reaching out to VCUarts Qatar.

"Art therapy is becoming more known around the region - and Qatar is at the forefront of recognising the importance of it," she says. "Working with VCUarts Qatar and Qatar Foundation through multidisciplinary teams is allowing me to focus on expanding our reach and making more holistic services readily available."

"There needs to be more opportunities for neurodivergent people, including

those with autism, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, those suffering with anxiety and mood disorders - as well as trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, eating disorders such as bulimia, binge-eating and anorexia - to communicate their thoughts and feelings in their own creative way."

Powell says that during sessions at ATIC, there are always a variety of art materials readily available, but it is not about the materials or aesthetic; clients don't need to know anything about art or art making to engage in art therapy - it's about the process, the relationship.

"It is about what it means to them, and what it symbolises for them," she said. "Their mode of expression is often telling of their specific challenges - for example, those with anorexia tend to gravitate towards controlled media, while those who suffer from bulimia use paint."

While Powell says ATIC works a lot with children, they also deal with a wide variety of clientele, from children, adolescents, adults, individuals, couples and groups to government agencies, hospitals, schools and corporations.

PHCC's EDP Index recognised as leading practice by HSO

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC)'s Emergency and Disaster Preparedness (EDP) Index has been recognised as a leading practice by the Health Standards Organisation (HSO) for the first time.

HSO, a globally respected entity headquartered in Canada, collaborates with leading experts and individuals with experiences to develop standards, assessment programmes, and quality improvement solutions.

This recognition underscores PHCC's EDP Index in Qatar as a critical and replicable tool for primary care organisations worldwide, enhancing their readiness for emergencies and disasters.

The EDP Index supports the sustainability and resilience objective, strengthening PHCC's disaster resilience to ensure sustained operations during a crisis and serving as a force multiplier for the Ministry of Public Health during public health emergencies.

Through its meticulous application, PHCC has significantly enhanced its understanding of preparedness and achieved notable improvements, moving closer to its target readiness score.

The EDP Index is a comprehensive organisational assessment tool involving 585

criteria derived from internationally recognised emergency preparedness regulations and best practices, including those from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Health and Human Services, World Health Organisation, Accreditation Canada International, The Joint Commission, National Fire Protection, and the International Organisation for Standardisation.

HSO's recognition of the EDP Index as a leading practice highlights its effectiveness and potential for global application.

This multifaceted approach not only enhances organisational readiness but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement and resilience. By identifying gaps and implementing targeted strategies, primary care organisations can achieve higher levels of preparedness, ensuring better outcomes for their communities during emergencies.

HSO's recognition underscores PHCC's commitment to advancing the quality of the healthcare sector within Qatar. By leveraging the EDP Index as a Leading Practice, PHCC is enhancing its preparedness and response capabilities and setting a benchmark for innovation and excellence in healthcare.

Ehsan, International Volunteering Platform sign MoU

The Center for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly (Ehsan), one of the centres affiliated with the Ministry of Social Development and Family's Qatar Social Work Foundation, and the International Volunteering Platform (Bevol) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to achieve shared objectives devoted to serving the elderly in the community.

The MoU would chart a framework for Bevol to generate an appropriate technological environment, in pursuit of offering qualitative services, such as a special volunteering platform that connects the elderly with volunteering opportunities that best suit their skills and interests in capitalising on their expertise through utilising motivational means to create the platform and provide connection mechanisms between the elderly and stakeholders via a cutting-edge technological system.

This pioneering service in Qatar sets a precedent in the region for implementing this kind of technological services for the elderly.

In addition, the MoU primarily aims to



forge a productive co-operation between the two parties in multiple fields that include joint co-ordination on promotion aimed at serving the two sides, spreading the culture of volunteering and co-operation in crafting and executing the empowerment programmes for the elderly.

It also intends to link the volunteering field with the elderly segment, advance the volunteering field, empower the elderly, embark on training and building

the capacities of youth, in addition to organising professional conferences and events within the two parties' field of operation.

Acting director, communications and media bureau at Ehsan Centre, Wissam Mohamed al-Wissam, said the centre believes in the importance of collaboration with bodies that share visions and objectives, underlining that Bevol platform is a perfect partner in the endeavour toward offering best services for the elderly and enhancing their role in the society to achieve social welfare for them.

Bevol platform regional director, Mohamed Khalifa al-Kubaisi, said he is confident the partnership would assist the elderly to contribute to serving the society through imparting their expertise to youth via state-of-the-art technological tools. He pointed out that such a professional platform would highlight the superb and advanced role of Qatar in serving the elderly in the region, with a massive opportunity available to expand this innovative experience in the world. (QNA)

Lexus, Toyota, BMW, Jeep models recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Al Abdulghani Motors has announced the recall of Lexus LX, RX, IS, UX, NX350, and LS, and Toyota Crown, 2023 model, due to a possible defect in the front and rear-view camera, which may result in the image not being displayed.

MoCI, in co-operation with Al Fardan Automobiles, announced the recall of BMW i7 xDrive 60 Saloon M Sports, and i7 M70 xDrive Saloon, 2023 model, as rubbing against surface of high-voltage cable is detected, which causes a drive system warning message display on instrument cluster.

MoCI, in co-operation with United Cars Almana, announced the recall of Jeep Wrangler, 2024 model, over a possible defect of the absence of the owner's manual in Arabic, which may lead to incorrect use of the vehicle. MoCI urged all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, which processes complaints, inquires and suggestions through the following channels: Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, X (formerly Twitter) - @MOCIQATAR, Instagram - MOCIQATAR. The MoCI mobile application, MOCI QATAR, is available on iPhone and Android devices.



A PHCC health centre.

CONDOLENCES

The Vicars, Managing Committee and Members of **Malankara Orthodox Church, Doha** Deeply mourn the sad demise of



Mrs. Shine Thomas (33)

Koickal Shinto Villa, Manthanam, PO Kunnathanam
Who entered into eternal rest on 22.07.2024

We express our heartfelt condolences to her
Husband: **Mr. Shinto Varghese**
Sons: **Aaron, Adon & all family members**

Funeral Services will be held on Thursday 25th July 2024 at
St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Manthanam, Kerala.

May Almighty God rest her soul in eternal peace, and give grace and fortitude to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss.

WAREHOUSE FOR RENT

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

 **6672 2989**



A celebration of Qatari culture and creativity

By **Joey Aguilar**
Staff Reporter

The inaugural SkillFest is transforming Msheireb Downtown Doha into a hub of artistic expression, showcasing the rich heritage of Qatar alongside cutting-edge contemporary art.

The festival, running until August 15, offers residents and visitors a unique and engaging experience. It features a diverse range of activities, catering to all ages and interests.

Interactive workshops designed to inspire and engage participants in various artistic and cultural crafts take centre stage. Renowned Qatari and regional artists and artisans share their expertise through masterclasses, while engaging workshops for children foster the next generation of creative talent.

It is learnt that this event underlines Msheireb Properties' commitment to promoting Qatari culture



and showcasing the remarkable talent within the community. The festival also serves as a platform for local artisans to connect with the public, share their passions, and inspire others.

Msheireb Galleria provides a selection of curated offerings at various zones throughout the summer, including Food, Play,

Treasure Hunts, and Splash zones.

The SkillFest Market, bustling with activity from 11am to 3pm and between 4pm and 10pm, features more than 20 local vendors who showcase and sell their unique hand-crafted products. Visitors can also immerse themselves in a photography exhibition, featuring stunning wildlife photographs by renowned

Qatari photographer Azzam al-Mannai.

Msheireb Galleria, a central hub of the festival, takes visitors to 'a world of excitement' at its Arcade Zone, where they can explore a giant immersive maze and enjoy a mix of retro and modern games.

SkillFest extends beyond Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD), with events taking place at Place Vendome, Mall of Qatar, and West Walk. This nationwide initiative, supported by Visit Qatar, aims to celebrate local and sustainable arts and crafts inspired by Qatar's marine environment.

Festival-goers also have the chance to examine more than 100 works by 74 designers, design studios, and collections at the "Arab Design Now" exhibition - on view until August 5 at M7. This captivating display underlines the diversity and talent within the Arab design world, spanning from architectural installations to textiles, furniture, and graphic design.

Qatar Airways orders 20 more Boeing 777X jets

From Page 1

The GE9X is the world's most powerful and most fuel-efficient turbofan and we look forward to continuing to support the growth of the Qatar Airways family with this technology."

Qatar Airways continues to lead the industry with one of the youngest fleets and this latest addition to the Boeing 777X order ensures future passengers a seamless journey on our ever-growing network of over 170 destinations worldwide.

"Based on the popular Boeing 777 family and with advanced technologies from the 787 Dreamliner, the 777X programme is designed to set new standards of efficiency, environmental performance and passenger experience.

"The 777-9 is the largest in the family and will help operators open new growth opportunities with capacity for 426 passengers in a typical two-class configuration and a range of 7,295 nautical miles (13,510km)," Boeing said.

Earlier this month, Boeing began certification flight testing for the 777-9, which will offer a new level of passenger comfort with a spacious cabin, better humidity, a quiet environment and increased natural light.

In addition to the 777X family, Qatar Airways has 12 787 Dreamliner and 25 737 MAX aircraft on order, Boeing said yesterday.

Boeing's 2024 Commercial Market Outlook forecasts that twin-aisle jets such as its 777X and 787 Dreamliner will make up 44% of the region's fleet across Middle Eastern operators over the next 20 years.

Team Qatar partakes in World Schools Debating Championship

QNA
Belgrade

Team Qatar is partaking in the English-language World Schools Debating Championship (WSDC 2024 Serbia) taking place from July 16-26 in the Czech Republic and Serbia, with large international participation.

WSDC 2024 Serbia is set to be held in two stages, the first is pre-championship friendly training rounds held in the Czech Republic to gain participants with international experience and familiarise them with the event.

The second stage will be held in Belgrade, Serbia, where young leaders from all over the world will meet at the WSDC 2024 Serbia to address the most prominent issues and offer compelling solutions.

Team Qatar consists of young nationals who have represented Qatar in previous international events. The team is divided into two, the main one includes Amira Ishaq, Mira Khaled, Maryam Kafoud, Fatima al-Muhammadi, and Al-Anoud al-Kaabi. The trainee team are Abdullah al-Muhammadi and Mohamed



Khaled who won the best speaker award in a local championship recently held in Doha.

The national team qualified for the knockout rounds after winning six rounds out of eight. It underwent a training programme for nearly a year and participated in all local championships as well as a number of international championships held remotely.

Team Qatar members highlighted the importance of participating in the WSDC 2024 Serbia and affirmed their readiness for the championship after achieving positive results in previous confrontations with the strongest teams.

They also expressed their joy at being selected to be part of Team Qatar and representing their country on this global stage.

They added that participating in such events helps gain many life experiences such as enhancing social relationships and learning about different cultures around the world.

They expressed their gratitude to the QatarDebate Center for selecting them as well as training and equipping them with the necessary tools and skills which has been proven to be impactful with the constant success achieved.

QatarDebate Center is participating in the exhibition accompanying the WSDC 2024 Serbia by introducing Qatar's culture and the centre's programmes. It will display national attire as well as hand souvenirs and gifts to its visitors.

Qatar hosted the 22nd WSDC in 2010, making it the first Arab country to host the event.

Liquidation Announcement "2"

Based on the Partner's Resolution
Dated 05 May 2024

To Liquidate
**NEWPARK MIDDLE EAST TRADING,
SERVICES AND MAINTENANCE L.L.C.**
(Voluntary Liquidation)

Liquidator / Naresh Dasari

Announce the commencement of liquidation of

**NEWPARK MIDDLE EAST TRADING,
SERVICES AND MAINTENANCE L.L.C.**
Commercial Registration No. 136783

Any party who has any claims from this Company should send a registered letter including all supporting documents to P.O. Box 30653, Doha - Qatar, within 45 days from the date of this publication.

Email: naresh@aksoa.qa,
M: +974 6603 9427 / T: +974 4417 2674

QTERMINALS

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Replacement of Existing 8 Fenders and Design, Supply & Installation of New Fenders for Jetty

Tender Reference Number	HPP1-SC001215
Bid Closing Date & Time	14-Aug-2024
Tender Document Fee	QAR 2,000
Last Date of Purchasing the Tender	31-Jul-2024
Tender Bond	5% of total bid value

QTerminals hereby announces the above tender with the following terms and conditions:

- The offer should be accompanied by a Tender Bond issued by one of the Banks operating in Qatar for the amount shown in the above table and valid for 120 days from the bid closing date. The offer which is not accompanied by the Tender Bond will not be considered.
- The deadline for submitting offers will be **11:00 am** on the date shown above. Any offer received thereafter will not be considered and will be rejected.
- The tender documents will only be released upon payment of the tender document fee.
- The interested suppliers must also register their company via the QTerminals website under the Procurement section <https://qterminals.com/procurement>.
- Supplier must have valid company documents such as Commercial Registration, Establishment Card, Tax Card, Trade License and Classification Certificate and/or business activity from the regulatory authority.

Tender Document Fee Payment:

The Tender Document Fee of QAR 2,000 non-refundable should be deposited to QTerminals bank account as specified below. Please send a copy of the deposit receipt to:

suppliersupport@qterminals.com

Beneficiary Name	QTERMINALS WLL
Bank Name	Qatar National Bank (QNB)
IBAN	QA75QNBAA00000000013192809052
BIC / SWIFT Code	QNBAAQQA

Clarifications:

For any clarifications / queries please contact at:
suppliersupport@qterminals.com or +974-40445369

QTERMINALS

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Marine Hull and Machinery Insurance

Tender Reference Number	HPP1-SC001230
Bid Closing Date & Time	11-Aug-2024
Tender Document Fee	QAR 5,000
Last Date of Purchasing the Tender	30-Jul-2024
Tender Bond	5% of total bid value

QTerminals hereby announces the above tender with the following terms and conditions:

- The offer should be accompanied by a Tender Bond issued by one of the Banks operating in Qatar for the amount shown in the above table and valid for 120 days from the bid closing date. The offer which is not accompanied by the Tender Bond will not be considered.
- The deadline for submitting offers will be **11:00 am** on the date shown above. Any offer received thereafter will not be considered and will be rejected.
- The tender documents will only be released upon payment of the tender document fee.
- The interested suppliers must also register their company via the QTerminals website under the Procurement section <https://qterminals.com/procurement>.
- Supplier must have the relevant Business Activity in their Commercial Registration (CR).

Must have below Criteria for Collection of Tender Documents and Bidding

Companies should have:

- A-rated insurance companies with experience in managing the Hull & Machinery Insurance cover.
- The company should have strong reinsurance partnership with multiple international partners.
- Companies should have minimum of 5 major clients in Qatar/ International for whom you are providing Hull & Machinery Insurance cover.

Tender Document Fee Payment:

The Tender Document Fee of QAR 5,000 non-refundable should be deposited to QTerminals bank account as specified below. Please send a copy of the deposit receipt to:

suppliersupport@qterminals.com

Beneficiary Name	QTERMINALS WLL
Bank Name	Qatar National Bank (QNB)
IBAN	QA75QNBAA00000000013192809052
BIC / SWIFT Code	QNBAAQQA

Clarifications:

For any clarifications / queries please contact at:
suppliersupport@qterminals.com or +974-40445369



WHO 'extremely worried' at prospect of polio, other outbreaks in Gaza

AFP
Geneva

A top WHO official said yesterday he was "extremely worried" over possible outbreaks in war-torn Gaza after poliovirus was detected in the sewage, warning that communicable diseases could cause more deaths than injuries.

United Nations agencies said last week that the Global Polio Laboratory Network found vaccine-derived type-2 poliovirus in six environmental samples collected from the sewage in the Gaza Strip on June 23. Ayadil Saparbekov, the World Health Organisation's head of health emergencies in the occupied Palestinian territories, stressed that "we have not yet collected human samples" so it remains unclear if anyone has actually been infected with the virus.

But he acknowledged to reporters in Geneva via video-link from Jerusalem, "I am very much worried".

A type of vaccine against polio - a crippling and potentially fatal viral disease that mainly affects children under the age of five - contains small amounts of weakened but live polio which can occasionally cause outbreaks. Oral polio



Palestinians ride a donkey-drawn cart past a pool of sewage water on a street in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

vaccine (OPV) replicates in the gut and can be passed to others through faecal-contaminated water - meaning it won't hurt the child who has been vaccinated, but could infect their neighbours in places where hygiene and immunisation levels are low.

While epidemiological studies and risk assessments are continuing, Saparbekov said he was deeply concerned at the prospect of any diseases spreading in Gaza, which is facing a towering humanitarian crisis after more than nine months of war following Hamas's dead-

ly October first week storming of Israel.

"I'm extremely worried about outbreaks happening in Gaza," he said, pointing to the confirmation late last year that hepatitis A was spreading, "and now we may have polio".

"With the crippled health system, lack of water and sanitation, as well as lack of access of the population to health services... this is going to be a very bad situation," he warned.

"We may have more people dying of different communicable diseases than from the injury-related diseases."

UN chief welcomes China-brokered accord seeking Palestinian unity

Agencies
UN

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed yesterday an accord brokered by China seeking reconciliation between Hamas and other Palestinian factions to form a national unity government in Gaza.

"I think all steps towards unity are to be welcomed and encouraged," his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, adding that Guterres "very much welcomes the signing of the Beijing Declaration by the Palestinian factions." Earlier yesterday, Hamas announced it had signed the agreement in Beijing with other Palestinian organisations - including Fatah - to work together for "national unity," AFP reported.

Fatah continues to dominate the Palestinian Authority, which has limited administrative control over urban areas of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Israel swiftly slammed the Beijing-brokered deal, with Foreign Minister Israel Katz insisting that "Hamas rule will be crushed" and accusing Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, a leader of Fatah, of embracing the group whose October first week storming of Israel last year triggered the war in Gaza. The text of the deal outlines plans for "a temporary national unity government by agreement of the Palestinian factions" which would "exercise its authority and powers over all Palestinian territories"

- the Gaza Strip as well the West Bank, including Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the factions had agreed to set up an "interim national reconciliation government" to govern post-war Gaza. Speaking at the UN, spokesperson Dujarric said unity amongst the Palestinian factions was crucial.

"Palestinian unity... is crucial for peace and security and for advancing the aspirations of the Palestinian people for self-determination and for fully independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian state," he said.

Analysts said the agreement would prove hard to implement, with complications including the divisions between Palestinian factions and Western opposition to Hamas having any role in governance. No timetable was declared for implementation, Reuters reported. The Beijing Declaration was signed at the closing ceremony of a reconciliation dialogue among 14 Palestinian factions held in China's capital from July 21-23, according to the readout. The meeting marked the latest attempt to heal the Palestinian national schism that has defied all attempts at mediation since 2007, when the Hamas group seized the Gaza Strip from Fatah. The meeting was held amid attempts by mediators to reach a ceasefire deal after nine months of war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. One of the sticking points is the "day-after" plan - how the Hamas-run enclave will be governed once the war, which began in the first week of October last year, ends.

DIALOGUE

US invites Sudan warring sides to ceasefire talks

The United States announced yesterday that it had invited Sudan's warring sides to hold ceasefire talks next month.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington had invited Sudan's regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces to start US-mediated negotiations beginning on August 14 in Switzerland, AFP reported from Washington. "The United States remains committed to working with partners to end this devastating war," Blinken said in a statement. The talks will include the African Union, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Nations as observers, the statement said. For more than a year, war has raged in the northeast African country between the regular military under army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the RSF led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo. The war has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and uprooted more than 10mn people inside the country, while 2mn more have fled across borders, according to the United Nations. "The talks in Switzerland aim to reach a nationwide cessation of violence, enabling humanitarian access to all those in need, and develop a robust monitoring mechanism to ensure implementation of any agreement," Blinken said.

West Bank village lives in fear of settler raids

AFP
Susya, Palestinian Territories

The stress shows on the face of Samiha Ismail who since October first week last year has been stuck in her home in an occupied West Bank village that lives in constant fear of attack by Israeli settlers.

The day after the Hamas raid into southern Israel, settlers entered Susya, a hilltop village in the south of the West Bank, vowing retribution and "humiliation", the 53-year-old Palestinian recalled.

More than nine months on, Ismail is among 450 inhabitants who spend most of the day indoors. Even their sheep are not allowed out of their sheds.

"Every time we take them to pasture, the settlers chase us," the panicked Ismail said.

Instead, the sheep of Israeli settlers now dot the nearby hills.

Susya's inhabitants say their livelihood has gone. One international aid group has sent counsellors to help Susya residents with their mental health.

"Before the war, we would have defended our land, but today nobody moves," she said.

The settlers are armed and protected by the army, she added, and her husband and son have been "beaten up" several times.



Palestinian women walk outside a Doctors Without Borders (MSF) charity tent clinic in Susya village, in the south of the occupied West Bank.

Israeli authorities did not respond to AFP's questions about violence in the region.

Since the start of the Gaza war, Israeli settlement of the occupied West Bank - considered illegal under international law - has hit new records.

Excluding annexed east Jerusalem, some 490,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank alongside some 3mn Palestinians.

In June, the Israeli government declared more than 12 square kilometres of the West Bank to be state land, the largest land appropriation since the 1993 Oslo Accords set out the foundations for land use in the territory.

Land that is declared as Israeli state property can be used for more settlements.

In addition, 25 settlement outposts - not even authorised by Israel - have sprung up across

the West Bank since the start of the year, according to Peace Now, a settlement watchdog.

Men in military fatigues have meanwhile raided Susya at night, kicking down doors and looting property including donkeys and mules, locals said.

Some have even entered houses at night to intimidate residents. "Most of us no longer sleep at night," Ismail said.

Mohamed al-Nawajaa, 78, was born before the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians when Israel was created in 1948 - known as the Nakba, or catastrophe, to Palestinians.

"After October first week last year, they took all these hills. We were kicked out in 1948, 1967... and now again in 2024. But this land is ours," the shepherd said, his head wrapped in a traditional keffiyeh scarf.

CONCERN

UN envoy to Yemen says Houthi threat to Red Sea shipping is growing

Recent developments in the Red Sea and surrounding waterways suggest that the threat to international shipping from Yemen's Houthis is growing, UN Special Envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg told the UN Security Council yesterday, Reuters reported. In a briefing on the situation in Yemen, Grundberg warned of a real danger of a devastating regional escalation following new Houthi attacks on commercial shipping and the first Israeli air strikes on Yemen in retaliation for Houthi drone and missile attacks on Israel. "I remain deeply concerned about the continued targeting of international navigation in the Red Sea and its surrounding waterways," Grundberg said.

CAUTION

Warning issued against Nigeria protests

Nigeria's police chief warned against Kenyan-style protests yesterday after frustrated citizens used online platforms to call for demonstrations against poor governance and a cost of living crisis, Reuters reported from Lagos. In what could be President Bola Tinubu's biggest challenge, Nigerians have taken inspiration from young Kenyans - whose protests forced a government U-turn on tax hikes - and are using X and Instagram platforms to call for peaceful protests from August 1. The last big protest in Nigeria was a demonstration against policy brutality in October 2020. It ended in bloodshed, which demonstrators blamed on soldiers and police, who denied using live rounds. Africa's most populous nation is grappling with its worst economic hardships in a generation, marked by soaring prices after Tinubu removed some petrol and electricity subsidies and sharply devalued the naira.

CRIME

Three Mexicans held in SA drugs bust

Three Mexicans were arrested with two South Africans when elite police units raided a multi-million dollar crystal meth lab hidden in a remote farm north of Johannesburg, police said yesterday, AFP reported from Johannesburg. The owner of the farm near Groblersdal, about 200 kilometres from Johannesburg, was among four men arrested on Friday, they said. A third Mexican was picked up on Monday, the spokeswoman for the elite Hawks unit told AFP. "The drugs were obviously intended for local and international sale," Brigadier Thandi Mbambo said, adding that the manufacturing facility was operating "at a large scale".

Ethiopia landslide death toll rises to 229

AFP
Addis Ababa

Using shovels or their bare hands, local residents

yesterday searched desperately for survivors after a landslide in a remote area of southern Ethiopia killed at least 229 people, the deadliest such disaster recorded in the nation.

Crowds gathered at the site of the tragedy in an isolated and mountainous area of South Ethiopia regional state as some people clawed through mounds of red dirt, according to images posted on social media by the local authority. So far, 148 men and 81 women are confirmed to have lost their lives after the disaster struck on Monday in the Kencho-Shacha locality in the Gofa Zone, the local Communications Affairs Department said in a statement. Five people had been pulled alive from the mud and were receiving treatment at medical facilities, the government-owned Ethiopian Broadcasting Corp reported earlier.

It quoted local administrator Dagemawi Ayele as saying that

most of the victims were buried after they went to help local residents hit by a first landslide following heavy rains.

Dagemawi said that among the victims were the locality's administrator as well as teachers, health professionals and agricultural professionals.

Images posted by the Gofa authority showed residents carrying bodies of the dead on makeshift stretchers, some wrapped in plastic sheeting.

"Initially, four households were affected by the landslide, and later households in the area were mobilised to save lives," said Firaol Bekele, early warning director at the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission (EDRMC), told AFP.



This grab made from a handout footage released by the Gofa Zone Government Communication Affairs Department, shows people standing at the bottom of a landslide that occurred in the Geze-Gofa district.

Doha Clinic Hospital welcomes a New Dermatology Consultant Dr. Rania El Saied

Doha Clinic Hospital is excited to announce the addition of Dr. Rania Elsaied, a highly experienced Professor and Consultant of Dermatology & Aesthetics, to its team. With over 20 years of experience in the field, Dr. Rania will be a valuable asset to the Hospital and the Community.

Dr. Mohammad Atwa, the Medical Director of Doha Clinic Hospital said that "the hospital is committed to providing the best possible care to the patients. As the first private clinic in Doha, Doha Clinic Hospital offers on-site coverage for Dermatology services, ensuring that the patients receive timely and high-quality care for each patient."

He added that "these new Aesthetic and cosmetic services are being offered to the community just shows that Doha Clinic Hospital is dedicated to providing exceptional healthcare services on sound and professional scientific background. It also demonstrates the hospital's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and health care options as well as adherence to the best practices in the healthcare industry.

Providing quality healthcare and new services to the nation of Qatar is our priority, using our Mission, Vision, and Values which guide us along the way as this is a testament to our dedication towards affirming that commitment."

"I look forward to providing these new Aesthetic Dermatology procedures at Doha Clinic Hospital and will work hard for your faith and trust in me as I put my professional dedication, quality of work and commitment to these Aesthetic services." - said Dr. Rania Elsaied, Professor and Consultant of Dermatology and Aesthetics.



Dr. Rania will be available for consultations in DCH Outpatient Department six days a week and welcomes new patients on a walk-in or appointment basis.

Her areas of focus are Aesthetic Dermatology providing a wide range of services as in Botox, dermal fillers, PRP, Lasers for different medical and aesthetic indications and many other procedures. However, this goes hand in hand with her main scope of interest which is Medical Dermatology to treat challenging skin diseases like atopic dermatitis, psoriasis, vitiligo, chronic urticaria, alopecias among many other conditions.

It is worth mentioning that Doha Clinic Hospital is one of the subsidiaries of Mohammed bin Hamad Holding Group, established more than 30 years ago as the first integrated private hospital in Qatar.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MADURA GOPAL PATIL GOPAL PATIL

holder of

Indian Passport No. Y2827238
QID No. 29135641316

hereby change my name

from

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to

MADURA SARAF

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

Harris vows compassion over chaos

Reuters
Milwaukee

Vice-President Kamala Harris assailed Donald Trump yesterday at her first campaign rally since replacing President Joe Biden as the Democratic presidential candidate, while a Reuters/Ipsos opinion poll showed her taking a marginal lead over Trump, the Republican nominee.

"In this campaign, I promise you I will proudly put my record against his any day of the week," she told a cheering crowd of several thousands at West Allis Central High School in a Milwaukee suburb in Wisconsin, a crucial battleground state in the November 5 election.

"Do we want to live in a country of freedom, compassion and rule of law, or a country of chaos, fear and hate?" she asked.

Harris swiftly consolidated her party's support after Biden, 81, abandoned his re-election campaign under pressure from members of his party who worried about his ability to beat Trump or to serve for another four-year term.

She wrapped up the nomination on Monday night by winning pledges from a majority of the delegates who at next month's party convention will determine the nominee, the campaign said.

Most Democratic lawmakers have lined up behind her candidacy, including the party's leaders in the Senate and House, Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries, who endorsed Harris yesterday at a joint press conference.

An unofficial survey of delegates by the Associated Press showed Harris with more than 2,500 delegates, well over the 1,976 needed for the nomination. Delegates could still change their minds, but



US Vice-President and Democratic Presidential candidate Kamala Harris speaks at West Allis Central High School during her first campaign rally in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, yesterday. (AFP)

no-one else received any votes in the AP survey; 54 delegates said they were undecided. Harris' rise dramatically reshapes an election in which many voters were unhappy with their options.

Saddled with concerns that included his health and persistent high prices crimping Americans' household finances, Biden had been losing ground against Trump in opinion polls, particularly in the competitive states that are likely to decide the election, including Wisconsin and the Sun Belt states of Arizona and Nevada.

The Wisconsin event offered another opportunity for Harris, the first Black woman and Asian American to serve as vice-president, to reset the Democrats'

campaign. Harris has been raking in campaign contributions. Her campaign said on Monday she had raised \$100mn since Sunday, topping the \$95mn that the Biden campaign had in the bank at the end of June.

While a wave of senior Democrats have lined up behind Harris, the racial justice group Black Lives Matter yesterday challenged the party's swift move.

It called for a national virtual snap primary ahead of the August 19-22 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, where the party will formally nominate its candidate.

"We call for the Rules Committee to create a process that allows for public

She's 'easier' to beat, says Trump

Former US president Donald Trump said his presumptive Democratic opponent Kamala Harris would be "easier" to beat in November's election than President Joe Biden.

"She's far more radical than he is... So I think she should be easier than Biden, because he was slightly more mainstream, but not much," Trump said on a call with reporters.

Trump, who is running to return to the White House, pledged yesterday to take part in at least one presidential debate with Democratic presumptive nominee Kamala Harris.

"Oh, yes, absolutely. I want to. I think it's important," he said on a call with reporters, adding that "I would be willing to do more than one debate, actually."

participation in the nomination process, not just a nomination by party delegates," Black Lives Matter said in a statement to Reuters.

Biden said on X that he would deliver a speech tonight from the Oval Office explaining his decision to end his campaign. He was returning to Washington yesterday after spending several days in isolation at home with Covid-19. The president has tested negative and no longer has symptoms, the White House doctor said in a letter yesterday.

Trump and his allies have tried to tether Harris to some of Biden's more unpopular policies, including his administration's handling of the surge of migrants at the southern border with Mexico.

"Kamala Harris' dismal record is one of complete failure and utter incompetence. Her policies are Biden's policies, and vice versa," Trump spokesperson Steven Cheung said.

Wisconsin is among a trio of Rust Belt states, along with Michigan and Pennsylvania, that are critical for Democrats' chances of defeating Trump.

"There are independents and young

people who did not like their choices, and Harris has a chance to win them," said Paul Kendrick, executive director of the Democratic group Rust Belt Rising.

Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley, a Democrat, said Harris could also help bring back crucial Black voters.

"Many of them didn't come along because they were distracted by his (Biden's) age, distracted by his appearance," he said.

Democratic National Committee chair Jaime Harrison, in an interview on NBC's Today programme, said the party had to move quickly to get the ticket on ballots in all 50 states, and that the vice-presidential pick needed to be made by Aug. 7.

"This process is going to be fair, transparent, open but it's going to be fast," Harrison said.

Potential running mates include Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear, US Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper, Arizona Senator Mark Kelly, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro and Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, according to people familiar with internal policy discussions.

Secret Service director resigns over failure to prevent Trump life bid

AFP
Washington

US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle (pictured) resigned yesterday, a day after acknowledging that the agency had failed in its mission to prevent an assassination attempt against Donald Trump.

Cheatle was facing bipartisan calls to step down after a 20-year-old gunman wounded the former Republican president and current White House candidate at a July 13 campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania.

"It is overdue, she should have done this at least a week ago," Mike Johnson, the Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives, told reporters. "I'm happy to see that she has heeded the call of both Republicans and Democrats."

President Joe Biden thanked Cheatle for her nearly three decades in the Secret Service and said she had "selflessly dedicated and risked her life to protect our nation throughout her career."

"We all know what happened that day can never happen again," Biden said in a statement. He said he would appoint a new director soon.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said that Secret Service deputy director Ronald Rowe, a 24-year veteran of



the agency, would serve as acting director until a replacement is named for Cheatle.

Reacting to her resignation, Trump wrote on Truth Social: "The Biden/Harris Administration did not properly protect me, and I was forced to take a bullet for Democracy. It was my great honour to do so!"

Cheatle appeared before a congressional committee on Monday and said the attack on Trump represented "the most significant operational failure of the Secret Service in decades" — a reference to the 1981 shooting of Ronald Reagan.

Both Republicans and Democrats called on Cheatle to resign during the tense House hearing.

She drew the ire of lawmakers from both parties by refusing to provide specific details about the attack, citing the existence of multiple active investigations.

The gunman opened fire on Trump with an AR-style assault rifle just minutes after he began speaking at the campaign event.

Perched on the roof of a nearby building, he was shot dead by a Secret Service sniper less than 30 seconds after firing the first of eight shots.

Cheatle said the Secret Service was alerted "two to five times" ahead of the attack about a "suspicious individual" at the rally, but was unable to locate him before he opened fire.

Investigators have concluded that the gunman, who lived in a town about 50 miles from Butler, acted alone, and have not been able to identify any strong ideological or political leanings.

Two rally attendees were seriously wounded in the attack and a 50-year-old Pennsylvania firefighter was shot dead.

Trump's former physician said over the weekend that the Republican candidate sustained a gunshot wound on his right ear.

"The bullet passed, coming less than a quarter of an inch from entering his head, and struck the top of his right ear," ex-White House physician Ronny Jackson said.

Cheatle served as a Secret Service agent for 27 years before leaving in 2021 to become the head of security for PepsiCo in North America.

She was named to head the agency by Biden in 2022.

Covid-free Biden prepares for speech

US President Joe Biden headed to Washington yesterday, two days after ending his re-election bid and endorsing Vice-President Kamala Harris for the Democratic nomination to take on Republican former president Donald Trump. Biden spent nearly a week recovering from Covid at his home in Wilmington, Delaware, as he weighed his 2024 candidacy, ultimately dropping his campaign and preparing to address the nation about his decision to not seek another term in office. The president wore his trademark aviator glasses and clasped a surgical mask as

he boarded Air Force One to Washington, where he will speak to Americans from the Oval Office tonight. Biden's White House physician said the president had tested negative for Covid and that his symptoms had resolved. "The president continues to perform all of his presidential duties," Dr Kevin O'Connor wrote in a letter yesterday. Biden said his Wednesday remarks, scheduled for 8pm, will address "what lies ahead, and how I will finish the job for the American people." Tomorrow, he will meet with Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu, the White House said.

FREE VEHICLE RECALL

وزارة التجارة والصناعة
Ministry of Commerce and Industry
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Police arrest Russian over Paris Olympics 'destabilisation' plot

French police yesterday arrested a Russian man suspected of plotting acts of "destabilisation" during the Paris Olympics, prosecutors said. The man, born in 1984, was held in custody and placed under judicial investigation on suspicion of "organising events likely to lead to destabilisation during the Olympic Games", a source in the state prosecution service, who asked not to be named, told AFP.

The source said an investigation was opened into "passing intelligence to a foreign power in order to arouse hostilities in France", adding that the crime was punishable by up to 30 years in jail.

Prosecutors said a visit to the man's home "at the request of the interior ministry" had uncovered evidence of the suspected plans. They did not give any details of the alleged plot, except to say that it was not terrorist in nature, and that specialist anti-terrorist prosecutors were not following the case.

Authorities have investigated over a million people, including athletes, coaches, journalists,

volunteers, security guards and even local residents near event locations ahead of the Olympics, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told weekly Paris Match yesterday. Of those, 4,360 were denied access to the Games, with people close to Darmanin telling AFP on Sunday that 880 were barred over suspicions of foreign interference. In recent months, several high-profile stunts have raised suspicion that foreign actors are trying to influence French public opinion or stoke divisions, notably about Russia's invasion of Ukraine or Israel's campaign in Gaza after the October 7 attack by Hamas. They include dummy coffins labelled "French soldiers in Ukraine" left by the Eiffel Tower in June and red hands tagged on Paris's main Holocaust memorial in May. In October, soon after Hamas's attack, stars of David were tagged on buildings in the Paris region, with two Moldovans suspected to be working for the Russian FSB security service later arrested.



Top China, US diplomats to meet at Asean ministers' talks

AFP
Vientiane

Southeast Asian foreign ministers gather in Laos this week for talks on the disputed South China Sea and the conflict in Myanmar, with top diplomats from China and

the US slated to meet on the sidelines.

The three-day meeting of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) starts in the capital Vientiane tomorrow.

Antony Blinken will meet Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on the sidelines of the event at which he will "discuss the importance of

adherence to international law in the South China Sea", according to the US state department.

Beijing claims the waterway – through which trillions of dollars of trade passes annually – almost in its entirety despite an international court ruling that its assertion has no legal basis.

A series of clashes between

Philippine and Chinese vessels at flashpoint reefs in recent months have fuelled fears of a conflict that could drag in the US owing to its mutual defence treaty with Manila.

Asean ministers are expected to issue a joint communique after their meeting tomorrow.

In a draft seen by AFP, some

ministers expressed concerns over "serious incidents" in the waterway "which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions, and may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region".

A Filipino sailor lost a thumb in a June 17 confrontation when Chinese coast guard members wielding knives, sticks and an axe

foiled a Philippine Navy attempt to resupply its troops on a remote outpost.

Beijing and Manila later reached an agreement allowing for the resupply of the troops stationed on a rusty warship deliberately grounded on Second Thomas Shoal in 1999 to assert Manila's claims to the area.

Bangladesh accepts ruling to cut state job quotas after unrest, eases curfew

Reuters
Dhaka

The Bangladesh government yesterday said it would heed a Supreme Court ruling that 93% of state jobs be open to competition, meeting a key demand of students after a week of some of the country's deadliest protests in years.

But students raised fresh demands including the scrapping of a curfew, restoration of Internet services and a reopening of campuses, leaving unclear whether the government's acceptance of the court decision would completely defuse the unrest.

Relative calm prevailed for a second straight day in Dhaka and most major cities although the army chief said security had still not been entirely restored after he surveyed the capital city by helicopter.

The government announced an easing of the curfew imposed to help contain the unrest, lifting it from 10am to 5pm today to allow people to shop for essentials, with offices reopened between 11am and 3pm.

Bangladeshi authorities also shut down mobile Internet and deployed the army after clashes between protesters and security forces spread across the country of 170mn.

At least 150 people have been killed in the violence with more than 1,600 arrested in the two main cities Dhaka and Chittagong.

The protests tailed off after the

Supreme Court ruled on Sunday in favour of an appeal from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government and directed that 93% of jobs should be open to candidates on merit.

"The government has acted in line with the Supreme Court verdict," Law Minister Anisul Huq told reporters, showing the official gazette notification to that effect.

"The quota reform is done, now I hope the students will concentrate on their studies," he added.

Sarjis Alam, a protest co-ordinator, said students wanted their new demands fulfilled within 48 hours, in addition to an apology from Hasina for the deaths of protesters, but did not say what would happen if the deadline wasn't met.

Hasina's government scrapped quotas in 2018 that had reserved 56% of state jobs for various categories of people, including 30% for families of those who fought in the country's 1971 war of independence. But a high court ruling reinstated the quotas last month, triggering the student protests.

Students were furious because quotas left less than half of state jobs open to merit amid an unemployment crisis, particularly in the private sector, making government sector jobs with their regular wage hikes and perks especially prized.

The unrest has posed a new headache for Hasina as her government has sought to fix the struggling economy after securing a \$4.7bn International Monetary Fund bailout last year.

Heavy rains in Manila



A motorcyclist rides through a flooded street in Manila yesterday, amid heavy rains brought about by Typhoon Gaemi.

Man inhaling white powder in video not Marcos: police

AFP
Manila

A video allegedly showing Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos inhaling a white powder has been denounced as "fake" and "malicious", with investigators yesterday presenting close-up images of his ear to prove it was not him.

The clip featuring a dark-haired man was part of a video shown at a rally in Los Angeles that was organised by a political group linked to Marcos's predecessor Rodrigo Duterte.

The rally was livestreamed on the Facebook

page of pro-Duterte broadcaster SMNI in the Philippines early Monday local time, hours before Marcos was due to deliver his annual State of the Nation address to Congress.

"It is obvious from the video that that is not our president. Their video is fake and obviously not real," Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said, after the video went viral on social media.

Teodoro said it was part of a "serious plan to destabilise our government".

The video spread rapidly on Facebook, YouTube and TikTok. One Facebook post was viewed at least 8mn times.

Duterte's former spokesman Harry Roque shared it on his Facebook page with a caption

in Tagalog reading: "You be the judge! It was viewed 17,000 times. Police forensic experts held a news conference yesterday to prove the man in the video was not the president, presenting photos of Marcos and the unidentified man to compare their facial features.

Enlarged images of their faces and right ears were placed side by side to demonstrate that Marcos's ear was larger in proportion to his face and had a different shape to those of the other man, whose ear curled over at the top.

"Be it AI (artificial intelligence) or impostor or whatever it was, as far as the (police) is concerned that is not the president," Interior Secretary Benjamin Abalos said yesterday.

Chinese lunar probe finds water in Moon samples

A Chinese lunar probe found traces of water in samples of the Moon's soil, scientists have said, as the country pushes its ambitious space programme into high gear. The Chang'e-5 rover completed its mission in 2020, returning to Earth with rock and soil samples from the Moon.

The lunar samples "revealed the presence of trace water", the group of scientists from Chinese universities wrote in the *Nature Astronomy* journal.

A Nasa infrared detector already confirmed in 2020 the existence of water on the Moon, while scientists found traces of water in recent analyses of samples dating from the 1960s and 1970s.

But the Chang'e-5 samples are from a "much higher latitude", providing new clues as to what form water takes on the Moon's surface, the Chinese scientists wrote. The samples suggest that "water molecules can persist in sunlit areas of the Moon in the form of hydrated salts", they said.

Tribes protest against palm oil firms



Hendrikus Frengky Woro (second left), a community leader from South Papua, performs during a protest with others as representatives from communities of the Awyu tribe of South Papua and the Moi tribe of Southwest Papua deliver a petition to protect their forests from palm oil companies at the Supreme Court in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday.

Sri Lanka govt apologises for cremating Muslim Covid victims

AFP
Colombo

Sri Lanka's government yesterday formally apologised to the island's Muslim minority for forcing cremations on Covid victims, disregarding WHO assurances that burials in line with Islamic rites were safe.

The Cabinet issued an "apology regarding the compulsory cremation policy during the Covid-19 pandemic", the government said in a statement.

It said a new law would guarantee the right to burial or cremation to ensure the funeral customs of Muslims or any other community were not violated in future.

Traditionally, Muslims bury their dead facing Makkah.

Sri Lanka's majority Buddhists are typically cremated, as are Hindus.

Muslim representatives in Sri Lanka welcomed the apology, but said their entire community,

accounting for about 10% of the island's 22mn population, was still traumatised.

"We will now sue two academics – Meththika Vithanage and Channa Jayasumana – who were behind the forced cremation policy of the government," Hilmy Ahamed, spokesman for the Muslim Council of Sri Lanka, said. "We will also seek compensation."

Ahamed said a young Muslim couple suffered untold anguish when their 40-day-old infant was cremated by the state against their wishes.

Then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa banned burials despite his administration facing international condemnation at the UN Human Rights Council and other forums for violating Muslim funeral norms.

In a book published earlier this month, he defended his action saying he was only carrying out "expert advice" from Vithanage, a professor of natural resources, not to let Covid victims be interred.

Taiwan's annual war games cut back by incoming typhoon

AFP
Hualien, Taiwan

Taiwan cancelled some drills in its annual war games as Typhoon Gaemi barrelled towards the island yesterday, expected to bring heavy rains and strong winds when it makes landfall.

The Han Kuang exercises, which started Monday, are held every year across Taiwan to train its armed forces as China ramps up military pressure on the democratic island, which Beijing claims as part of its own territory.

But as Gaemi – currently cat-

egorised as a medium-strength typhoon – edged closer to Taiwan yesterday, the island's northeastern regions started seeing heavy rains, with the Central Weather Administration predicting landfall by late today.

Defence ministry spokesman Sun Li Fang told reporters at an airbase in Hualien that the military will make "flexible adjustments based on the weather conditions in our exercise missions".

"At present, the impact of the typhoon is more obvious in the eastern region and we will make some adjustments to some sea and air exercises due to the typhoon situation," he said yesterday.

By nightfall, Gaemi packed sustained wind speeds of 155kms per hour as it headed towards the island's northeastern coast, prompting several cities – including Taipei – to announce a typhoon holiday and cancelling schools for today.

"Today, please stay home," Taipei mayor Chiang Wan-an said on Facebook.

"Typhoon Gaemi, the first to make landfall this year, continues to intensify... please pay attention to your safety."

Authorities said they were planning to evacuate more than 1,400 people from mountainous areas in the northeast, while Taiwanese

airline EVA announced the cancellation of more than 20 departing flights from the international airport.

Taiwan experiences frequent tropical storms from May to November, but experts say climate change has increased the intensity of tropical storms, leading to heavy rains, flash floods and strong gusts.

The war games this year were a departure from previous iterations, discarding exercises that were "more for demonstration purposes" and opting instead to more realistically simulate an attack from China, the defence ministry had said.

The exercises will also work

on decentralising the command structure, while conducting drills around key infrastructure points – like Taiwan's sea ports, major bridges, and airports.

President Lai Ching-te, dressed in military fatigues, observed earlier in the day as soldiers went through a simulated mass casualty rescue exercise at the Hualien air-force base.

"As guardians of democracy, your efforts are vital for national security and demonstrate our commitment to self-defence," he said on social media platform X.

By afternoon, he arrived in New Taipei City at a port to oversee an elaborate simulation of various

emergency situations as part of the annual civilian defence drills – which run concurrently with Han Kuang.

Lai watched a scenario whereby Chinese missiles had hit the port and its surroundings – according to an announcer narrating over loudspeaker – which prompted workers to evacuate civilians.

In Taipei, air raid sirens blared and staff at a train station ushered passengers out, while some people sheltered in a parking lot.

Taipei residents also received an automated text message that said: "(Air Defence Drill) Incoming missile/rocket threat. Seek immediate shelter."

DECISION
BBC to axe 500 more jobs in bid to be 'more agile'

The BBC is to axe 500 jobs over the next 20 months in a bid to save £200m (\$258m) and become a "leaner, more agile organisation," the British public service broadcaster announced yesterday. The redundancies, to be achieved by closing and transferring some roles and creating others in "growth areas", are the latest layoffs as the BBC copes with squeezed funding and inflationary pressures. The broadcaster is also grappling with wider changes in media consumption such as streaming and on-demand services. It will shed the 500 jobs by March 2026, after already reducing its headcount by 10% in the last five years - a reduction of almost 2,000 roles.

WARNING
UK's health service 'facing unprecedented challenge'

The National Health Service in England faces an unprecedented challenge from backlogs, workforce issues and rising demand, a budget watchdog said yesterday in a report outlining the scale of the challenges facing Britain's new government. The Labour government, which took office this month, has said the Britain's state-run health system is "broken", and has ordered an independent investigation into the state of the NHS. "The scale of challenge facing the NHS today and foreseeable in the years ahead is unprecedented," the National Audit Office said in its report.

TRIAL
UK ex-police watchdog boss cleared of 1980s sex offences

The former head of the UK's independent police watchdog was cleared of rape and sexual assault offences dating back decades. Michael Lockwood, 64, stepped down as director general of the Independent Office for Police Conduct regulator in December 2022 when police launched an investigation into him. He initially faced charges of indecent assault and rape involving a girl under 16, alleged to have been committed between 1985 and 1986 in Hull. Following publicity about the claims, a second woman told police he had indecently assaulted her. A jury at London's Old Bailey court found Lockwood not guilty of 17 charges relating to both women.

LAW AND ORDER
Preacher convicted of terrorism offences

British preacher Anjem Choudary has been convicted of terrorism offences after a trial in London, the capital's Metropolitan Police said yesterday. Prosecutors said the 57-year-old Choudary directed Al-Muhajiroun, which was banned as a terrorist organisation more than a decade ago, and encouraged others to support the group. Choudary denied the charges. He was found guilty of directing and being a member of a terrorist organisation, as well as addressing meetings to encourage support for a proscribed organisation after a six-week trial at Woolwich Crown Court.

India's Union Budget: Balances today's needs while establishing priorities of tomorrow



By Adeeb Ahamed
Managing director,
LuLu Financial Holdings

credit access to MSMEs during their stress period and increase the limit in MUDRA (Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency) loans are welcome ones.

I am also happy to see the initiative to bring out a Financial Sector Vision and Strategy Document. This will provide a clear agenda for all stakeholders over the next five years, ensuring that the efforts of the government, regulators, financial institutions, and market participants are aligned towards common goals.

At the same time, there could have been more incentives for the tourism and hospitality industry. Rethinking lending norms and envisioning hospitality development as a vital part of infrastructure development were necessary. With the growing use of AI in other sectors, tourism and hospitality are poised to become a major driver of job creation and the sector needs more support.

There could also have been more in terms of measures to attract NRI investments to the country. Reducing corporate tax for foreign companies to 35% is a welcome development, while the move to abolish the Angel Tax for startups is indeed commendable. However, the NRI community was expecting more policies and reforms to boost NRI investment in India.

Overall, while this budget is a balanced one and will stand the country in good stead over the long run, one could always argue that there are missed opportunities.



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman holds a folder with the Government of India's logo before presenting the Union Budget in the Parliament in New Delhi yesterday.

Modi sets aside billions for jobs, allies in post-election budget

Reuters
New Delhi

India's government assigned billions of dollars for job creation and regions run by key coalition partners in a budget aimed at cementing the coalition and winning back voters after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's election setback.

Tax changes unveiled in the budget included a higher levy on equity investments to allay concerns the market might be overheating and lower taxes for foreign companies to attract more investment.

The \$576bn in total outlays included \$32bn for rural programmes, \$24bn to be spent over five years to create jobs, and more than \$5bn for two states ruled by coalition partners.

"In this budget, we particularly focus on employment, skilling, small businesses, and the middle class," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said yesterday.

The government will also implement reforms across factors of production, including land and labour, she said.

Subsequent budgets would continue to focus

on those areas, Sitharaman said while presenting her seventh annual budget.

Despite the new spending, India cut its fiscal deficit target to 4.9% of gross domestic product in fiscal year ending on March 31, 2025, from 5.1% in February's interim budget, helped by a large surplus of \$25bn from the central bank.

The government also marginally reduced gross market borrowing to Rs14.01tn.

Economist had blamed the distress in rural areas and a weak job market for a poor poll showing that cost Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) its absolute majority. They say land and labour reforms are essential for India to sustain strong economic growth.

Asia's third-largest economy grew 8.2% in the past fiscal year and the government sees growth of 6.5% to 7% this fiscal year, a report showed on Monday.

Sakshi Gupta, principal economist at HDFC Bank, said the budget managed to strike a balance between policies supporting growth and maintaining fiscal discipline.

However, implementing more ambitious reforms, will be "challenging" for the coalition, Gene Fang, associate managing director for sovereign risk at Moody's Ratings, said.

Previous attempts to make it easier for companies to acquire land and lay off staff have repeatedly faced pushback from states concerned about protests such measures might provoke.

Among measures aimed at boosting employment, the budget included incentives for companies to train staff as well as cheaper loans for higher education, Sitharaman said.

India's reported urban unemployment rate is 6.7%, but private agency the Centre For Monitoring Indian Economy pegs it higher, at 8.4%.

The budget also maintains spending on long-term infrastructure projects at Rs11.1tn, with states assigned Rs1.5tn in long-term loans to fund such expenditure. Some will be linked to reform milestones in areas such as land and labour, which Sitharaman said the government intended to push in its third term.

In a concession to the government's allies, Sitharaman said it would hasten loans from multilateral agencies for the eastern state of Bihar and the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

India raised to 20% from 15% its tax rate for equity investments held for less than a year, while the rate for those held longer than 12 months rose to 12.5% from 10%. The taxes will be applicable from today.

UK gov't to stop housing asylum seekers on barge

Britain's new Labour government yesterday announced it will stop housing migrants on a controversial accommodation barge from next year as it tries to clear a backlog of asylum requests. The interior ministry said the government would not renew the lease for the use of the Bibby Stockholm, moored off England's south coast, when it runs out in January. Designed to house up to 500 asylum seekers, the accommodation has come under persistent criticism since the previous Conservative government began moving people there last August. Ex-prime minister Rishi Sunak's administration said doing so would help lower the costs of housing asylum claimants, many of whom stay in hotels. But some residents likened the barge to a prison and one man was found dead in a suspected suicide in December. Last week, between 60 and 100 residents withdrew from meals and organised a protest to urge the government to speed up asylum procedures.

King Charles meets Queensland governor



Britain's King Charles III greets the governor of Queensland, Jeannette Young and her husband Graeme Nimmo, during an audience at the Sandringham Estate in Norfolk, eastern England, yesterday.

BBC apologises over dance show bullying row

AFP
London

The head of the UK's BBC yesterday apologised to celebrity contestants who had negative experiences on its prime-time "Strictly Come Dancing" show, following a string of bullying allegations.

The programme - exported to over 60 other countries through the "Dancing with the Stars" franchise - is the jewel in the crown of BBC light entertainment.

But in recent months it has faced controversy after former contestant and actor Amanda Abbington, said the show's intense training routine left her with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

"I'm very sorry that anyone has had an experience on Strictly that hasn't been wholly positive," BBC director general Tim Davie told reporters, responding to the growing controversy.

"I think that is something we do reflect on, and I'm sorry about that," he said.

"Sherlock" star Abbington's complaint triggered other revelations and allegations against the show's professional dancers, plunging it into turmoil.

The programme, pairing celebrities with professional ballroom dancers, has captivated viewers for over 20 years, regularly drawing over 6.5m viewers.

Couples perform dance routines scored by judges, pressuring the show's pros to quickly train their celebrity partners in little time.

Acknowledging the behind-the-scenes challenges, Davie said "competitiveness, hard work and the will to do well" were part of what made the show successful.

"But there are limits and the line should never be crossed. We will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour of any kind," he added.

UK water firms fail to get basics right: environmental regulator

Reuters
London

Britain's Environment Agency yesterday lambasted the country's water companies for spewing sewage into rivers and seas, saying the majority of them were failing to get the basics right, as it outlined plans for a tougher regulatory approach.

Years of under-investment by privately run, profit-seeking water companies in the UK have coincided with heavier rainfall from cli-

mate change and a growing population to bring the country's water industry close to crisis.

Regulator the Environment Agency said in its annual report yesterday that five out of nine companies were rated as "requiring improvement", and that the pace of progress towards making water cleaner was too slow.

One of those five failing companies was Thames Water, the country's biggest water supplier, which for the last year has dominated headlines for its poor environmental record and a funding crisis that

means it could be nationalised.

The Environment Agency said that in 2023 there were 47 serious pollution incidents, up from 44 the previous year, and that 90% of those incidents were caused by four companies - Thames, Anglian Water, Southern Water and Yorkshire Water.

Water UK, which represents the companies, agreed that improvements were needed, and called on the industry's other regulator, Ofwat, to back the companies' spending plans for the next five years.

"Water companies have proposed investing a record £105bn (\$135.59bn) to secure our water supply in the future and stop sewage entering our rivers and seas. Ofwat needs to approve these plans in full as any less will put critical improvements at risk," a Water UK spokesperson said.

Britain's Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Minister Steve Reed called the findings "shocking".

"For too long, water companies have pumped record levels of sewage into our rivers, lakes and seas. This government will never let this

happen again," he said in a statement.

The new Labour government, elected three weeks ago, has already outlined steps to introduce new fines for water companies, increase monitoring for spills and ensure money is spent on infrastructure upgrades and not executive bonuses.

For its part, the Environment Agency said it would recruit 500 additional staff and quadruple the number of water company inspections by March next year.

Water UK said that since 2011

the Environment Agency had repeatedly tightened targets.

Severn Trent, United Utilities and Wessex Water were all given the top rating for environmental performance by the Environment Agency. It says all companies should be able to achieve that.

Severn Trent said yesterday it was confident it could halve its spill rate by 2030.

But doing so requires investment. Thames Water, Britain's biggest water supplier, is trying to raise new equity before it runs out of cash by next May.



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Sustainability in focus amid investor backlash against ESG

Sustainability has for long been becoming a priority investment domain, increasingly viewed as an opportunity to create value. But the grant narrative around environmental, social and governance (ESG) has certainly changed.

A boom in the use of ESG factors in the financial world has fed scepticism that the approach is nothing more than a marketing gimmick, fuelling a backlash and regulatory crackdown.

ESG is part of the wider strategy known as sustainable investing. Broadly, the goals are to achieve societal impact, align with personal values or manage risks, proponents say.

But US scepticism toward ESG follows years of attacks by Republicans who accuse the strategy of being “woke” and anti-capitalist.

Financial firms have been navigating a fraught path in the US for much of the past two years.

At stake are more than a few letters.

The historic hurricane that battered the Caribbean and then Texas, and recent wildfires in California show the gravity of an overheating planet. And that’s stoking demand for niche but fast-growing corners of ESG investing, including climate-transition funds and debt instruments such as catastrophe bonds, where issuance is at a record high.

A big worry is the possibility of a second Trump administration that would be even more hostile to climate initiatives and environmental regulation than the first

Also, global investment in the energy transition rose 17% last year to a record \$1.8tn and the numbers continue to grow, according to researchers at BloombergNEF.

While some US firms, including Neuberger Berman, are sticking with ESG, others say

the label is diminished. Jefferies Financial Group has replaced ESG in analysts’ job titles with the words “sustainability and transition.”

Wellington Management Co and Lazard Asset Management have cut jobs. Bank of America Corp has reorganised its ESG research team and merged the group’s activities with clean energy.

Another big worry is the possibility of a second Trump administration that would be even more hostile to climate initiatives and environmental regulation than the first.

Also, wind and solar, a big part of the green-energy pitch, has simply been a bad investment lately.

The S&P Global Clean Energy Index has plummeted more than 50% from its peak in early 2021, even as the S&P 500 ascended to record highs. As a result, US funds with ESG goals are falling out of favour. Despite gains in the broader stock market, the sector’s assets have fallen to roughly \$335bn from a peak closer to \$365bn at the end of 2021, according to researchers at Morningstar.

Still, there are those who believe ESG – or whatever it’s ultimately called – will play a key role in investment decisions.

JPMorgan Chase & Co and Citigroup rank among the top global underwriters of green bonds this year, while Bank of America, Neuberger Berman and Wells Fargo & Co sponsored conferences in New York and Chicago as recently as last month that focused on ESG topics. Some detractors think the term ESG has become so broad as to lose much of its meaning. Many point to the prevalence of greenwashing, which is when companies exaggerate the environmental benefits of their actions.

At the same time, ESG risks have become all the more prominent as extreme weather events and worker strikes have hurt automakers, insurers and travel companies.

Just as the world saw record land and sea temperatures in 2023, so some research models have for long suggested up to a quarter of global GDP could be lost if no action is taken to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Sunday, July 21, 2024 was the hottest day ever recorded globally, according to preliminary data from the European Union’s Copernicus Climate Change Service.

Broadly, global sustainable investments are estimated to range between \$35tn and \$40tn.

Amid mounting concern that only a fraction of such assets are bona fide ESG investing, there are calls for tougher regulations to stamp out the false claims by fund managers.



How will a Kamala Harris foreign policy look like?

By Matt Spetalnick and Simon Lewis
Washington

Vice-President Kamala Harris is expected to stick largely to Joe Biden’s foreign policy playbook on key issues such as Ukraine, China and Iran but could strike a tougher tone with Israel over the Gaza war if she replaces the president at the top of the Democratic ticket and wins the US November election.

As the apparent frontrunner for the nomination after Biden dropped out of the race and endorsed her on Sunday, Harris would bring on-the-job experience, personal ties forged with world leaders, and a sense of global affairs gained during a Senate term and as Biden’s second-in-command.

But running against Republican candidate Donald Trump, she would also have a major vulnerability – a troubled situation at the US-Mexico border that has bedeviled Biden and become a top campaign issue. Harris was tasked at the start of his term with addressing the root causes of high irregular migration, and Republicans have sought to make her the face of the problem.

On a range of global priorities, said analysts, a Harris presidency would resemble a second Biden administration.

“She may be a more energetic player but one thing you shouldn’t expect – any immediate big shifts in the substance of Biden’s foreign policy,” said Aaron David Miller, a former Middle East negotiator for Democratic and Republican administrations.

Harris has signalled, for instance, that she would not deviate from Biden’s staunch support for Nato and would continue backing Ukraine in its fight against Russia. That stands in sharp contrast to a pledge by former president Trump to fundamentally alter the US relationship with the alliance and the doubts he has raised about future weapons supplies to Kyiv.

A lawyer by training and a former California attorney general, Harris struggled in the first half of Biden’s term to find her footing, not helped by being saddled early on with a major part of the intractable immigration portfolio amid record crossings at the US-Mexico border.

That followed a failed 2020 presidential campaign that was widely considered lacklustre.

If she becomes the nominee, Democrats will be hoping Harris will be more effective at communicating her foreign policy goals.

In the second half of Biden’s presidency, Harris – the country’s first Black and Asian American vice-president – has elevated her profile on issues ranging from China and Russia to Gaza and become a known quantity to many world leaders.

At this year’s Munich Security Conference she delivered a tough speech slamming Russia for its invasion of Ukraine and pledging an “ironclad” US commitment to Nato’s Article 5 requirement for mutual self-defence.

The Kremlin said yesterday that Harris had made no noteworthy contribution to relations with Moscow except for statements “unfriendly towards our country.” She has accused Russia of waging a “barbaric and inhumane” war in Ukraine.

On China, Harris has long positioned herself within Washington’s bipartisan mainstream on the need for the US to counter China’s influence, especially in Asia. She would likely maintain Biden’s stance of confronting Beijing when necessary while also seeking areas of co-operation, analysts say.

Harris has made several trips aimed at bolstering relations in the economically dynamic region, including one to Jakarta in September to fill in for Biden at a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). During the visit, Harris accused China of trying to coerce smaller neighbours with its territorial claims in the disputed South China Sea.

Biden also dispatched Harris on travels to shore up alliances with Japan and South Korea,



US Vice President Kamala Harris delivers remarks to the women and men’s National Collegiate Athletic Association Champion teams in her first public appearance since President Joe Biden dropped out of the 2024 race, on the South Lawn of the White House, Washington, on Monday. (Reuters)

which have had reason to worry about Trump’s commitment to their security.

“She demonstrated to the region that she was enthusiastic to promote the Biden focus on the Indo-Pacific,” said Murray Hiebert, a senior associate of the Southeast Asia Program at Washington’s Center for Strategic and International Studies.

While she could not match the “diplomatic chops” Biden had developed over decades, “she did fine,” he added.

However, like her boss, Harris has been prone to the occasional verbal gaffe. On a tour of the Demilitarised Zone between South and North Korea in September 2022 to reassert Washington’s support for Seoul, she mistakenly touted a US “alliance with the Republic of North Korea.”

If Harris becomes her party’s standard-bearer and can overcome Trump’s lead in pre-election opinion polls to win the White House, the Israel-Palestinian conflict would rank high on her agenda, especially if the Gaza war is still raging.

Although as vice-president she has mostly echoed Biden in firmly backing Israel’s right to defend itself, she has at times stepped out slightly ahead of the president in criticising Israel’s military approach.

In March, she bluntly stated that Israel was not doing enough to ease a “humanitarian catastrophe” during its ground offensive in the Palestinian enclave. Later, she did not rule out “consequences” for Israel if it launched a full-scale invasion of refugee-packed Rafah in southern Gaza.

Such language has raised the possibility that Harris, as president, might take at least a stronger rhetorical line with Israel than Biden, analysts say.

While her 81-year-old boss has a long history with Israeli leaders and has even called himself a “Zionist,” Harris, 59, lacks his visceral personal connection to the country.

She maintains closer ties to Democratic progressives, some of whom have pressed Biden to attach conditions to US weapons shipments to Israel out of concern for high Palestinian civilian casualties in Gaza.

But analysts do not expect there would be a big shift in US policy toward Israel, Washington’s closest ally in the Middle East.

Halie Soifer, who served as national security adviser to Harris during the then-senator’s first two years in Congress, said Harris’ support of Israel has been just as strong as Biden’s. “There really has been no daylight to be found” between the two, she said.

Harris is expected to have a previously scheduled meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his visit to Washington this week, her first encounter with a foreign leader since Biden ended his re-election bid.

Harris could also be expected to hold firm against Israel’s regional arch-foe, Iran, whose recent nuclear advances have drawn increased US condemnation.

Jonathan Panikoff, formerly the US government’s deputy national intelligence officer for the Middle East, said the growing threat of “weaponisation” of Iran’s nuclear programme could be an early major challenge for a Harris administration, especially if Tehran decides to test the new US leader.

After a series of failed attempts, Biden has shown little interest in returning to negotiations with Tehran over resuming the 2015 international nuclear agreement, which Trump abandoned during his presidency.

Harris would be unlikely to make any major overtures without serious signs that Iran is ready to make concessions.

Even so, Panikoff, now at the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington, said: “There’s every reason to believe the next president will have to deal with Iran. It’s bound to be one of the biggest problems.”

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LOOMING LARGE: This photograph shows a television screen broadcasting French President Emmanuel Macron addressing a live interview as a portrait of Lucie Castets, the 'Nouveau Front Populaire' choice for PM is displayed on a giant screen on French TV channel France 2 in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

Macron won't name new PM until after Olympics

AFP
Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday dismissed a left-wing alliance's push to name a new prime minister after snap elections, saying parties in a fractured parliament must come together to build a broad coalition after the Paris Olympic Games.

"Of course we need to be concentrated on the Games until mid-August," Macron told broadcaster France 2.

"From then...it will be my responsibility to name a prime minister and entrust them with the task of forming a government, with the broadest backing possible," he said.

Macron surprised the nation by dissolving parliament and calling snap elections, with the second round of voting on July 7 producing a lower-house National Assembly with no clear majority.

The left-wing NFP alliance emerged as the largest grouping with 193 seats, against 164 for Macron's centrists and 143 for the far-right National Rally (RN) and its allies.

Judging themselves the winners with the most seats, left-wing parties have butted heads for weeks over a prospective prime minister.

They finally came up with a consensus candidate, little-known economist and senior civil servant Lucie Castets, just

before Macron's prime-time TV appearance yesterday.

Working for the Paris city government, Castets is a total unknown to the wider public.

The 37-year-old told AFP she had accepted the nomination "with great humility but also great conviction", believing herself a "serious and credible candidate" for PM.

Castets added that one of her priorities would be to "repeal the pension reform" that Macron pushed through last year, triggering widespread protests and discontent, as well as a "major tax reform so everyone pays their fair share".

It is Macron himself who must nominate any new prime minister.

When presidents have seen the opposition take control of parliament in the past, they have accepted prime ministers put forward by the new majority.

But any French government needs to be able to survive a confidence vote in the chamber or risk immediate ejection.

That leaves the situation unclear when no single bloc or alliance can marshal control of the chamber.

"The question is what majority can emerge from the Assembly so that a French government can pass reforms, pass a budget and move the country forward?" Macron told France 2.

It was up to parties to "get out of their comfort zones and work out compromises. It's not a dirty

word," he added.

In the mean time, Prime Minister Gabriel Attal and his ministers remain in place in a caretaker capacity.

Left-wing leaders were quick to denounce Macron's position.

The president "wants to impose his republican front on us by force", said Jean-Luc Melenchon, figurehead of the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI) party, referring to a decades-old strategy of France's mainstream parties coming together to box out the far right.

Parties made temporary alliances for the second round to do just that on July 7, stopping the RN from achieving an overall majority.

But Macron has lumped together LFI with the RN as "extreme" in repeated public statements, calling after the elections for a broad governing coalition that would effectively exclude both.

He sees parliament's centre of gravity further to the right and has already struck deals with the diminished conservative Republicans party for key positions in parliament, such as the speaker's chair.

Macron "is attempting a shameful misappropriation" of the election result, said Olivier Faure, head of the Socialist Party.

"When you call elections at the risk of causing chaos, you respect the result. Denial is the worst policy that leads to the worst kind of politics," he said.

Left converges on PM candidate

AFP
Paris

Left-wing French parties said yesterday they had chosen a little-known economist as prospective prime minister, after butting heads for weeks over a name since winning snap elections. The New Popular Front (NFP) pick Lucie Castets is an economist and senior civil servant with a background in "fighting tax evasion and financial crime" as well as campaigning for public services, the alliance said in a statement.

Working for the Paris city government, Castets is a total un-

known to the wider public.

Although the consensus appears to put an end to infighting in the fractious grouping of Socialists, Greens, Communists and hard-left France Unbowed (LFI), hurdles remain before Castets can be installed at the head of a possible new left-wing government.

The NFP has 193 seats in the National Assembly lower house following July 7's second-round poll, against 164 for President Emmanuel Macron's centrists and 143 for the far-right National Rally (RN) and its allies.

But that is still well short of a majority in the 577-seat body, and any government needs to be able

to survive a confidence vote in the chamber or risk immediate ejection.

The 37-year-old Castets told AFP she had accepted the nomination "with great humility but also great conviction", believing herself a "serious and credible candidate" for PM.

Castets added that one of her top priorities would be to "repeal the pension reform" that Macron pushed through last year, triggering widespread protests and discontent, as well as a "major tax reform so everyone pays their fair share".

It is President Macron himself who must nominate any new prime minister.

Russia pledges legal action if EU takes frozen assets profits

Reuters
Moscow

The Kremlin yesterday called a European Union plan to use interest earned on frozen Russian assets to fund military aid to Ukraine "theft" and said it would take legal action against anyone involved in the decision.

The EU's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, on Monday said that the first tranche of €1.4bn in military aid for Ukraine taken from proceeds earned on frozen Russian assets would be made in early August.

"Such thievish actions cannot remain without reciprocity," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "This money is not only essentially stolen, but will also be spent on the purchase of weapons."

"Definitely, we will work out the possible legal prosecution of those people who are involved in decision-making and the implementation of these decisions, because this is a direct violation of international law, it is a violation of property rights."

After President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine in 2022, the United States and its allies prohibited transactions with Russia's central bank and finance ministry, blocking around \$300bn of sovereign Russian assets in the West.

European Union countries are taking the interest earned on those frozen assets — essentially bonds and other types of securities in which the Russian central bank had invested — and putting them into an EU fund which will be used to help Ukraine. It foresees €15-20bn (\$16-\$22bn) in profits by 2027. Putin says the West unleashed what he casts as an economic war against Russia but has touted both the resilience of the Russian economy, which grew 3.6% last year, and the failure of sanctions of stop Russian trade.

The Kremlin has repeatedly said that any seizure of its assets would go against all the principles of free markets which the West proclaims and that it would undermine confidence in the US dollar and euro while deterring global investment and undermining confidence in Western central banks.

The Russian Foreign Ministry yesterday said Moscow would have a tough response to Europe's use of any revenues from Russian assets, the state-run RIA news agency reported.

German parties unite to shield court from any populist threat

Germany's government and largest opposition parties said they have agreed to amend the constitution to protect the structure of the country's highest court and limit the risk of a populist party ever gaining enough power to weaken the body.

Justice Minister Marco Buschmann said yesterday the need for the constitutional amendment became clear after seeing legislation in Hungary and Poland in recent years that targeted the power of the courts.

The proposals, which should pass comfortably since the parties together have over 80% of seats in parliament, enshrine in Germany's Basic Law the size of the 16-judge court, the judges' 12-year term and the mandatory retirement age of 68. They also stipulate that any proposed change to the court would need a two-thirds majority in both chambers of parliament. At present, the structure of the court can be modified by simple majority vote.

"Our rule of law must not be sabotaged from within," said Interior Minister Nancy Faeser in a statement yesterday, commenting on the agreement. "When authoritarians attack democracy, the judiciary is often their first target."

The agreement was struck between Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats, the Greens and the Free Democrats in the ruling coalition, and the opposition conservatives.

Conservative lawmaker Ansgar Heveling said the agreement ensured the court was "equipped for turbulent political times."

Hungary to block EU funds until Ukraine allows Lukoil transit

FM plays down EU decision to shift meeting to Brussels

Reuters
Budapest

Hungary will block European Union refunds for member states that gave munitions to Ukraine until Kyiv allows the transit of oil from Russia's Lukoil through a pipeline over its territory, the Hungarian foreign minister said yesterday. Slovakia and Hungary said earlier this month that they had stopped receiving oil from Lukoil through the Druzhba pipeline after Ukraine imposed a ban last month on the transit of resources from Lukoil.

Also in response to the situation yesterday, Hungary's energy ministry convened a working group concerning the security of supply, which "reviewed the steps taken so far and possible next steps," a statement by the ministry read.

"As long as this issue is not resolved by Ukraine, everyone should forget about the payment of the €6.5bn of the European Peace Facility (EPF) compensation for arms transfers," Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto was quoted as saying by broadcaster ATV.

Ukraine's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Kyiv says it has blocked oil from Lukoil but overall flows have not been reduced through the pipeline, which also serves other suppliers.

The Druzhba, or "friendship", oil pipeline linking Russia to former socialist bloc states in eastern Europe



FIRM: FM Peter Szijarto

has remained functioning through more than two years of war, even as the EU weaned itself off most other sources of Russian energy supplies. Hungary in particular has remained notably dependent on Russian oil and says it cannot supply its refineries without it.

Hungary and Slovakia asked the European Commission on Monday to mediate a consultation procedure with Ukraine. The procedure would allow for the issue to go to court unless the EU executive body acts within three days.

The EPF, created in 2021, operates as a cashback scheme that gives EU members refunds for sending munitions to other countries.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, member states that gave weapons to Ukraine can ask for compensation from this fund. But Hungary has been blocking the disbursement of the next tranche of EPF money for more than a year, citing various issues.

Meanwhile, Hungary's foreign minister voiced indifference yesterday over a decision by the European Union's top diplomat to shift an EU ministers' meeting from Budapest to Brussels in a sign of disapproval over Hungary's initial use of the EU presidency.

"It was all the same to me in the beginning, and it's all the same to me now," Peter Szijarto said in a statement.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell acted after Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban began a self-styled Ukraine peace mission by holding talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump.

Orban, a nationalist who has often been at odds with broader EU policy, embarked on his quest without coordinating it with other EU government leaders or Ukraine just days after Hungary took on the 27-bloc's rotating presidency on July 1.

"We have to send a signal, even if it is a symbolic signal," Borrell told reporters in Brussels on Monday after the last meeting of EU foreign ministers before the summer break.

Borrell said there had been no consensus among EU members over whether to attend the ministerial meeting in the Hungarian capital Budapest, planned for August 28-29 — and a gathering of defence ministers afterwards.

He said he opted to switch both meetings to Brussels given that a majority of countries wanted to send a message to Hungary over Orban's outreach to Russia, which is subject to EU sanctions over its 2-1/2-year-old invasion of Ukraine.

July 21 hottest day ever recorded globally: EU climate monitor

Every month since June 2023 has eclipsed its own temperature record compared to the same month in previous years

July 21 was the hottest day ever registered globally, according to preliminary data published yesterday by the EU's climate monitor. The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said the global average surface air temperature of 17.09 degrees Celsius (62.7 degrees Fahrenheit) on Sunday was the warmest in their record books, which go back to 1940. It comes as heatwaves and wildfires ravage swathes of Europe and the United States.

"The Earth has just experienced its warmest day," the monitor said in a statement.

The new daily high was 0.01 degree Celsius above the previous record



People cool off at a fountain in the Madrid Rio park amid the heatwave. (AFP)

temperature of 17.08 registered on July 6, 2023.

"On July 21st, C3S recorded a new record for the daily global mean temperature," C3S director Carlo

Buontempo said in a statement. "We are now in truly uncharted territory and as the climate keeps warming, we are bound to see new records being broken in future months and

years," he said. Though just a tiny rise above the previous record, what was "truly staggering" was the streak of unprecedented global heat recorded over the past 13 months, Buontempo added.

Every month since June 2023 has eclipsed its own temperature record compared to the same month in previous years.

Copernicus said in this context, and at the peak of the northern hemisphere summer, it was not "completely unexpected" that this new daily high would be breached.

It could be eclipsed by the soaring heat experienced earlier this week, the monitor said, pointing to a streak of record-breaking days that occurred in July and August 2023.

Global temperatures were expected to peak and drop soon though there could be further fluctuations in coming weeks, Copernicus said.

Climate change is causing longer, stronger and more frequent extreme weather events like heatwaves and

floods, and this year has been marked by major disasters across the globe. Deadly heatwaves have already hit North America, Mexico, India and Thailand this year, to name a few, while flooding has devastated parts of East Africa, China and Brazil.

Wildfires are torching a path across southern and eastern Europe and in Canada and the United States as prolonged scorching temperatures in parts of the northern hemisphere make conditions tinder dry.

The burning of fossil fuels is the primary driver of global warming but emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases keep rising, despite international efforts to switch to clean energy and slow rising temperatures.

2023 was the hottest year on record and 2024 could follow in step considering the "sufficiently warm" temperatures experienced to date, Copernicus said.

But it was "too early to predict with confidence" which would be hotter between the years, it added.

Chief of Staff participates in opening of Farnborough International Airshow



HE the Chief of Staff of Qatar Armed Forces Staff Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad bin Aqeel al-Nabit participated in the opening of Farnborough International Airshow, held in the United Kingdom. Farnborough International Airshow includes the latest releases in the aerospace, aviation, and defence industries. During the airshow opening, HE the Chief of Staff was accompanied by a number of Qatar Armed Forces senior officers. (QNA)

'35 Years of Excellence in GIS' award for municipality ministry

The Ministry of Municipality's Center for Geographic Information Systems (CGIS) won a special award during its participation in the Esri User Conference, held in San Diego, California.

CGIS Director engineer Manaf Ahmed al-Sada received the award titled '35 Years of Excellence in GIS in Qatar', in the presence of a delegation from the ministry.

In a statement, the ministry said that this award recognises Qatar's outstanding performance and significant progress in the field of GIS over the past 35 years, which has been administrated by CGIS since 1990.

The statement indicated that CGIS possess various mechanisms and tool for collecting and analysing different data types, and that recently, it has established an integrated system for aerial surveys using unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) or manned aircraft equipped with the latest aerial photography cameras and scanners for land and sea mapping.

It added that Qatar's distinction in the region lies in possessing this advanced system operated by CGIS specialists. These efforts have culminated in the application of a comprehensive GIS nationwide, which gives Qatar a prestigious global position in the field.

This achievement is the fruit of CGIS's exceptional work and the significant support it receives from the Ministry of Municipality, among other relevant authorities.

CGIS specialises in providing core digital geographic databases, updated aerial and satellite imagery, which are made accessible for all government institutions to utilise in building their respective databases according to their areas of specialities. Moreover, it ensures the integration of this updated digital data through the National GISNet, linking over 100 governmental departments.

Furthermore, CGIS has cre-



ated several core databases serving large sectors of governmental and private entities as well as individuals, which prominently includes 'My Address' service, among numerous other applications and software benefiting various sectors within the Ministry of Municipality, and beyond.

Organised by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), a sector leader globally, the Esri User Conference is one of the world's largest forums of its kind, with this year's edition receiving 18,000 representatives from countries, institutions, and companies, along with specialists.

Furthermore, the conference serves as a pivotal platform showcasing significant technological advancements in GIS software, applications, data usage mechanisms, and analysis in fields such as artificial intelligence and remote sensing, alongside satellite imagery. (QNA)

Over 110 farms take part as dates festival begins

From Page 1

The festival is held in the eastern square of Souq Waqif in an air-conditioned tent. To run until August 3, the exhibition is open to the public from 4pm-9pm. On Friday, the festival is held from 4pm-10pm.

The annual festival features all Qatari varieties of dates including Al Khalas, Al Khenazi, Al Shishi, Al Barhi, Al Saqai, Al Razizi, Nabt Saif and Al Lulu.

Last year, the sales witnessed a record 220 tonnes and the authorities expect to exceed this number in this edition due to the high quality of Qatari dates.

In the 9th edition, the organising committee has set conditions for participation. The dates must be good, clean and free of infections, insects, and impurities. A team of specialists from the Agricultural Affairs Department takes samples of the wetlands of the participating farms for examination and analysis in order to ensure that they are free of toxic substances and any remaining traces of pesticides.

