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GULF TIMES



FRIDAY Vol. XXXV No. 13083

July 26, 2024
Muharram 20, 1446 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

Published in QATAR since 1978



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Qatar, Jordan call for end to Israeli offensive, permanent Gaza truce

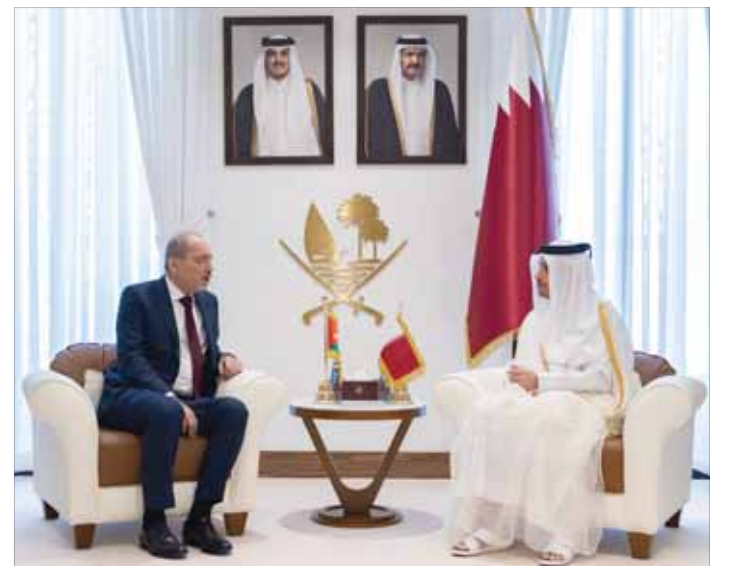
QNA Doha

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Dr Ayman al-Safadi, who is visiting the country.

During the meeting, they discussed the co-operation relations between the two countries and ways

to support and develop them. They also discussed the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories and the developments of the joint mediation efforts to end the war. They emphasised the necessity of reaching an immediate and permanent ceasefire in the Strip and formulating an effective international stance to stop the illegal Israeli measures in the occupied West Bank, including East

Jerusalem, which undermine the two-state solution and the chances of achieving just and comprehensive peace.



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani holding talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan Dr Ayman al-Safadi in Doha yesterday.

The meeting also discussed the co-operation between the two

countries in addressing the humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip, ways to bring aid through the Jordanian route, and efforts to reduce regional escalation. **To Page 2**

Qatari aid for Gaza arrives in Jordan

A new shipment of Qatari aid, including 55 tonnes of tents and health supplies, provided by the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), arrived in Jordan by land, in preparation for its entry into the Gaza Strip in co-operation with the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organisation. The shipment was received by HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AIKhatat.

Spectacular Paris Olympics opening ceremony today



Paris was yesterday counting down the hours to the most ambitious Olympics opening ceremony in history on the river Seine. The show today evening will see up to 7,500 competitors sail down a 6-km stretch of the Seine on 85 boats, accompanied by a performance blending French culture and Olympic values that organisers promise will be spectacular. The Paris ceremony will take place in front of 300,000 spectators and an audience of VIPs and celebrities from around the world. **Page 8, Sport Page 1**

Trump leads Harris 48%-46%: NYT poll

Republican Donald Trump leads Democratic US Vice-President Kamala Harris by 48% to 46% in a New York Times/Siena College poll of registered voters conducted July 22 to 24 and published yesterday.

Sheikh Joaan meets Qatar athletes at Olympic Village



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, visited the Qatari delegation at the Olympic Village yesterday, where he met with Team Qatar athletes and urged them to give their best at the Paris 2024 Olympics.

HE Sheikh Joaan also toured the Qatari delegation's building, reviewing the workflow and procedures undertaken by the Qatari administrative delegation. He praised their ongoing efforts to facilitate the participation of

Team Qatar during the Olympic Games.

Accompanying HE Sheikh Joaan during the visit were Dr Thani al-Kuwari, Second Vice-President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, and Secretary-General Jassim bin Rashid al-Buenain.

HE Sheikh Joaan was received by Mohamed al-Misned, Team Qatar Chef de Mission, Meshal al-Nasr, President of the Qatar Shooting and Archery Association, Ali Ghanim al-Kuwari, President of the Qatar Volleyball Association and members of Team Qatar.

Biden in talks with Netanyahu presses for Gaza ceasefire

Reuters Washington/Cairo

US President Joe Biden pressed for a ceasefire to the 9-month-old war in Gaza in talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday.

White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said gaps remain between Israel and the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas for a ceasefire but "we are closer now than we've been before."

"Both sides have to make compromises," Kirby said.

State Department spokesperson Matt Miller said: "I think the message from the American side in that meeting will be that we need to get this deal over the line."

"We've got a lot to talk about," Biden said when he welcomed Netanyahu to the Oval Office.

"I want to thank you for 50 years of public service and 50 years of support for the state of Israel," Netanyahu told Biden.

Biden and Netanyahu later were due to meet together with the families of American hostages held by Hamas.

Today, Netanyahu travels to Florida to meet former president



The injured arrive at the Nasser hospital following the Israeli attacks on Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces advanced deeper into some towns on the eastern side of Khan Younis in southern Gaza yesterday and tanks advanced in central Rafah, with airstrikes and shelling killing 30 Palestinians over the past day, health officials said.

Fighting in recent days has centred around the eastern towns of Bani Suaila, Al-Zanna, and Al-Karara, where the army said on Wednesday it had found the bodies of five Israelis who were killed on Oct. 7 and held in Gaza since.

Gaza's health ministry said Israeli military strikes on areas in eastern Khan Younis had killed 14 people, taking the death toll across Gaza over the past 24 hours to 30 people with 146 injured.

Several were wounded in the eastern towns during Israeli tank and aerial shelling, while an airstrike east of Khan Younis killed four people, Palestinian health officials said.

Israeli bombardment intensified in several areas in Rafah, near the border with Egypt, as tanks operated north, west and in the town centre.

QFFD provides \$25mn to support UNRWA

QNA Doha

Qatar, through the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), is contributing \$25mn to UNRWA to support Palestinian Refugees and the agency's human development and humanitarian activities in the region.

Following the signing between the two parties, Acting Director-General of QFFD Sultan bin Ahmed al-Aseeri said that, "in addition to its vital role in providing basic services to Palestine refugees in its

fields of operation, including education, healthcare, and social protection, UNRWA today has a critical role to deliver aid to the people in Gaza who are facing a horrific war. This contribution reaffirms Qatar's strong support for the Palestinian cause and for addressing the humanitarian situation facing Palestinian Refugees".

Similarly, UNRWA Director of External Relations and Communications, Tamara Alrifai said that "Qatar has long been a steadfast supporter of Palestinian Refugees and an advocate and supporter of UNRWA's work across the region. **To Page 2**

DQ's 'Stopover programme' grows rapidly

By Pratap John Business Editor

Discover Qatar's 'Stopover programme' continued to grow exponentially in 2023/24, with DQ's ambitious aim to double stopover passengers achieving growth of over 150% and room nights almost three-times higher than the previous year.

"This impressive growth has, in part, been enabled by the addition of the beach-inclusive stopover package, premium hotels with beach access, launched within the last six months to complement the existing stopover offerings," Qatar Airways Group said in its latest annual report.



Discover Qatar is Qatar Airways Group's destination management subsidiary.

In its annual report, Qatar Airways Group said that the 2023/24 fiscal year marked a "momentous" stride for Discover Qatar (DQ) in its first 'business-as-usual' year since 2019.

"Over the past 12 months, DQ has delivered significant growth across core product streams, as well as operating a plethora of logistical arrangements and exceptional tourist experiences to international visitors through its global network

of partners, tour operators and travel agents," it said.

In line with the group's commitment to innovation and performance, the 2023/24 financial year saw the continuation of the success and growth of DQ's Transit Tours with the 'City Tour' remaining the top seller, Qatar Airways said in its 'annual report'.

Working in close collaboration with Group partner Qatar Duty Free (QDF), Transit Tours for Hamad International Airport travellers in February included a shuttle bus and tickets to visit the Qatar ExxonMobil Open 2024 and Qatar Total Energies Open 2024 tournaments, showcasing DQ's ability to quickly introduce new product experiences into its product portfolio. **To Page 2**

Shipment of Gaza aid from Qatar reaches Jordan



A new shipment of aid from Qatar, including 55 tonnes of tents and health supplies, provided by the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), arrived in Jordan by land, in preparation for its entry into the Gaza Strip in co-operation with the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organisation.

The shipment was received by HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater. She oversaw the unloading of the shipment at the warehouses of the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organisation.

The arrival of the shipment was witnessed by the Official Spokesman and Director of Operations and Consular Affairs at the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Sufyan Qudah, Qatar's ambassador to Jordan Sheikh Saud bin Nasser al-Thani, and Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organisation Secretary-General Dr Hussein al-Shabli. - QNA

OFFICIAL

Amir condolences with Kuwait ruler

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has sent a cable of condolences to the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah on the death of Sheikh Jaber Duaij al-Ibrahim al-Sabah.

His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani have also sent cables of condolences to the Amir of Kuwait. - QNA

DQ's 'Stopover programme' grows rapidly

From Page 1

As a result, transit tour passengers have significantly increased from 13,000 to 64,000 over the last 12 months - a rise of almost 400%.

DQ has also provided support for a number of exceptional events hosted in Qatar "over the last 12 months".

For the 2023 AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023, DQ provided logistic services to more than 6,000 football fans throughout the tournament.

With Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2023, DQ provided a range of services, including exclusive ticket and hotel packages to over 2,000 visitors.

This success promises to replicate itself for next year, with DQ once again being the first provider in the world to offer exclusive access to tickets to its B2B partners, with forward sales for the 2024 event already approaching 50% of those delivered in 2023.

DQ also facilitated and organised the World Scholar's Cup - Global Round, which took place in Doha, handling and accommodating 1,500 international students from over 50 countries.

Qatar welcomes signing of Beijing Declaration by Palestinian factions

Qatar has welcomed the signing of the Beijing Declaration by the Palestinian factions to end division, achieve reconciliation and enhance national unity, expressing its hope that the declaration would be implemented in a way that would contribute to unifying the national ranks to confront the war on the Gaza Strip and the Israeli violations in all of Palestine's occupied territories.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said in a statement yesterday that signing the declaration is an important step towards unity and consolidating the national project to establish an independent Palestinian State on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem (Al-Quds) as its capital.

The ministry also affirmed Qatar's support for all steps aimed at overcoming differences and ending division, as well as its aspiration for the sustainability of unity and partnership among the Palestinians, expressing Qatar's appreciation for China's role in sponsoring the talks that culminated in the signing of the declaration. - QNA

Qatar, Jordan call for end to Israeli offensive, permanent Gaza truce

From Page 1

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and al-Safadi emphasised Qatar's and Jordan's support for Lebanon's security and stability, stressing the need to adhere to Resolution 1701.

HE Sheikh Mohamed voiced Qatar's appreciation for the role of Jordan in bringing humanitarian aid into Gaza through the Jordanian route.

Al-Safadi reiterated his country's support for the efforts made by Qatar, Egypt, and the US to reach a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

He also thanked Qatar for the care it gives to Jordanians who work and reside in the country.

QFFD provides \$25mn to support UNRWA

From Page 1

"The agency is grateful to the government and people of Qatar for their solidarity and generosity, especially as the situation in Gaza reaches unprecedented levels of suffering."

Alrifai pointed out that the "UNRWA is the backbone of the humanitarian response in Gaza and remains one of the sources of normality for Palestine refugees in the region, through critical services such as healthcare and education".

The UNRWA's significant financial challenges threaten its ability to maintain its essential services for Palestine refugees.

The agency has called on donors and partners to renew their support for Palestine refugees at large, and particularly for the people of Gaza, who depend on the UNRWA for their survival needs.

In 2023, Qatar contributed \$18mn to the Programme Budget of the UNRWA in support of Palestine refugees.

General Secretariat of Shura Council earns ISO certificate in Comprehensive Quality Management

The General Secretariat of the Shura Council has obtained the ISO global certificate for the comprehensive quality management system (ISO 9001:2015), in the scope of planning and quality after a comprehensive and intensive assessment of the quality standards implemented in its operations.

In a statement, the General Secretariat of the Council indicated that obtaining the certificate from the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) reflects its efforts to apply the best performance standards, and to continuously improve and develop administrative work methods in the Shura Council.

The General Secretariat noted that the ISO certificate will be a key factor in implementing the best administrative standards in the Council, enhancing operational efficiency, and continuously developing and improving performance, which supports and strengthens the Council's work in exercising its legislative and oversight powers to the fullest extent. - QNA

AlKhater meets Jordanian charity official



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater held a meeting with the chairman of the board of trustees of the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation, Prince Rashid bin al-Hassan.

During the meeting, they discussed co-operation, relations between the two countries and means to support and develop them, in addition to the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories.

The meeting was attended by Qatar's ambassador to Jordan Sheikh Saud bin Nasser al-Thani. - QNA

Graduates of military colleges' foundation course honoured

The Armed Forces' education authority has celebrated the graduation of the joint foundation course for officers graduating from military colleges no. (2), in the presence of HE the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad al-Nabit.

The 20-week course, in both Arabic and English, aimed to qualify the student officers to work as infantry faction leaders or their equivalent in armed forces units.

The English version of the course also aimed to increase the knowledge of the student officers with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) procedures, standards and doctrine.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, HE Lieutenant-General al-Nabit honoured the first members of the session in the presence of senior officer commanders in the armed forces. - QNA



Ministry conducts workshop for security services group workers

The Ministry of Labour (MoL), in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), has conducted a workshop for employees and workers of the Security Services Group (SSG) to raise awareness about heat stress risks and ways to preserve mental health.

The workshop featured presentations to raise workers' awareness on ways to prevent the risks of heat stress and maintain occupational and mental health and safety in workplaces and residential areas.

Representatives of the ministry's Occupational Safety and Health Department and the MoPH addressed workers' enquiries during the presentations. - QNA

France, Qatar officials hold Olympic security talks



As part of the participation of Qatar's security forces in securing the Paris 2024 Olympics, a delegation headed by Brigadier-General Nawaf Majid al-Ali, Commander of the Qatari security forces, met on Wednesday with Lieutenant-General Xavier Duspet, Commander of the Gendarmerie in the Ile-de-France region and discussed joint plans to ensure the effectiveness of the partnership.

Difi outlines preparations for International Year of Family Conference



The event focused on the contribution of family-oriented policies in the promotion and protection of human rights.

As part of the preparations for the 30th Anniversary of The International Year of The Family global conference, Qatar Foundation's Doha International Family Institute (Difi) collaborated with the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations Office in Geneva to lead a side event at the 56th session of the Human Rights Council.

The event, which focused on the contribution of family-oriented policies in the promotion and protection of human rights, explored how the policies can address the impacts of megatrends - trends that have an effect on a global scale, such as technological change, urbanisation, migration, demographic

change, and climate change - on the functioning and well-being of the family.

Jawhara bint Abdulaziz al-Suwaidi, deputy permanent representative of Qatar in Geneva, stressed the role of the family in protecting its members and ensuring their human rights, noting Qatar's investment in building strong and cohesive families.

Nada al-Nashif, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, said: "Families should be protected and assisted to provide an environment conducive to the growth and well-being of their members, given their role in promoting development, cohe-

sion, and social integration."

Difi executive director Dr Sharifa al-Enadi highlighted the role that the institute plays in developing and implementing family policies in Qatar and the Arab region, and discussed the preparations for the upcoming 30th Anniversary of The International Year of The Family.

"This global conference, which is taking place in Qatar in October 2024, will provide an interactive platform for leaders, policymakers, academics, experts, youths, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and relevant stakeholders to participate and discuss the impact of megatrends on families and their accompanying challenges," she said.



Qatar chairs GCC Parliamentary Co-ordination Committee meeting

The Parliamentary Co-ordination Committee and Foreign Relations of the Legislative Councils of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Countries held its 18th meeting virtually yesterday under Qatar's chairmanship. During the meeting, which was headed by Shura Council member Nasser bin Mohamed al-Nuaimi, the committee followed up on the progress made in what the committee had previously agreed upon regarding strengthening co-operation with the parliaments of Latin American and Caribbean countries, strengthening Gulf-European parliamentary relations, and the mechanism for holding co-ordination meetings in international parliamentary forums, and increasing the momentum of Gulf parliamentary meetings at all levels. - QNA

Minister of State at MoFA meets Thailand's deputy foreign minister



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi held a meeting with Thailand's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Russ Jalichandra yesterday. During the meeting in Doha, they discussed co-operation, relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them. They also discussed the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, in addition to a number of topics of common interest. Jalichandra voiced his country's gratitude to Qatar's role in mediating the release of the Thai hostages in Gaza. - QNA

MoEHE holds interviews for scholarship students

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), in collaboration with the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau, and the Ministry of Labour, has begun interviews for scholarship students for university studies for the academic year 2024-2025, with all participating authorities from public and private sectors.

Running until mid-August, the interviews primarily aim to introduce scholarship students to employers, ensuring that the scholarship process is linked to market's needs.

Acting director of the MoEHE's Scholarships Department Noura Mohamed al-Ansari said that the ministry has expanded its efforts this year to guide and advise scholarship students and created committees within the scholarship administration to assist students who might need clarification about selecting the appropriate institution for their preferences.

Human resources specialist at the Ministry of Finance, Nouf al-Suwaidi, commended the initiative to interview scholarship students, in collaboration with all state authorities.

She said that scholarship students at the Ministry of Finance have the priority in field training, affirming that MoEHE is committed to effectively engaging with scholarship students and helping them achieve their academic and career ambitions.

The director of the Cybersecurity Policy Strategies Department at the National Cybersecurity Agency (NCSA), Abdulrahman Mohamed al-Shafi, said that the NCSA co-operated with the MoEHE to help the students get familiarised with the NCSA's job vacancies. - QNA

S Africa appoints the first woman chief justice

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has named Mandisa Maya as the first female chief justice, effective on September 1, following consultations with the Judicial Service Commission. This is a significant milestone for the country, the presidency said in a statement.

Maya, the current deputy chief justice, will replace Raymond Zondo, whose term ends on August 31. Maya had missed out on the top job in 2022, when the Judicial Service Commission recommended her for the role, but Ramaphosa chose Zondo, 64, instead.

Currently Zondo's deputy, the married mother-of-three, is one of four women among the top court's 10 permanent judges. Boasting one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, South Africa enjoys a high female participation in public life. More than 40% of lawmakers, including the National Assembly speaker and her deputy, are women. - Reuters/AFP

UN: Boat with 45 refugees capsizes off Yemen's coast

A boat with at least 45 refugees has capsized off the coast of Yemen's Taiz on Wednesday night, and there are only four survivors, the UN refugee agency in Yemen said. The boat capsized because of strong winds and overloading, the agency added.

It said it was working with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to assist the survivors and provide protection. No further details were provided about the rest of the refugees. In June, at least 49 migrants died and 140 went missing after their vessel, which departed from Somalia carrying 260 migrants, capsized off the Yemeni coast. - Reuters

Morocco heatwave kills at least 21 people in 24 hours

AFP Rabat

A heatwave in Morocco has killed at least 21 people in a 24-hour period in the central city of Beni Mellal, the health ministry announced yesterday.

The meteorology department said rising temperatures affected much of the country from Monday to Wednesday, reaching 48° Celsius (118° Fahrenheit) in some areas.

In Beni Mellal, "the majority of deaths involved people suffering from chronic illnesses and the elderly, with high temperatures contributing to the deterioration of their health conditions", the regional health directorate said in a statement.

The ministry was not able to immediately say if this was the highest recorded death toll from a heatwave in the country.

Beni Mellal, more than 200km (150 miles) southeast of Casablanca, was still experiencing temperatures of 43C yesterday.

Temperatures are expected to drop in the coming days, the meteorology department said. In the tourism hotspot of Marrakesh, they are expected to drop by 10° on Sunday.

Morocco has suffered a sixth consecutive year of drought, and record heat this past winter with January the hottest since 1940, according to the meteorology department which had recorded temperatures approaching 37C in some places.

The rising temperatures and prolonged drought, which have lowered reservoir levels, are a threat to the vital farm sector.

Water evaporation reached 1.5mm cu m (53mm cubic feet) per day, Water Minister Nizar Baraka said at the end of June.

The High Commission for Planning said in May that the "labour market continues to

suffer from the effects of the drought" and reported that the unemployment rate had increased to 13.7% in the first quarter, up from 12.9% in the same period of last year.

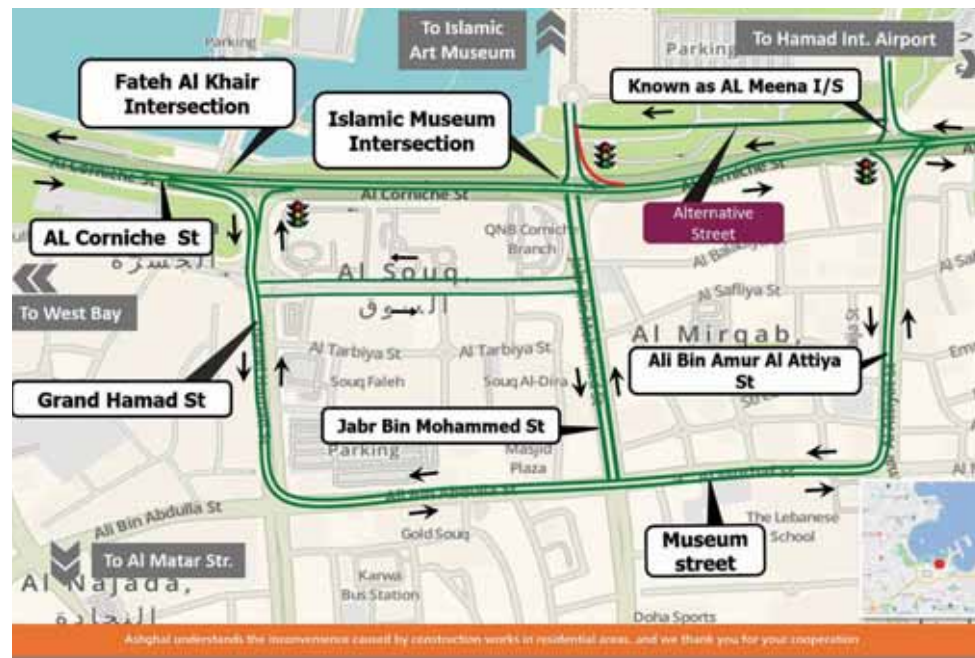
Around 159,000 jobs in the agricultural sector disappeared, the figures showed.

Morocco's record temperature - 50C - was set in August last year in the coastal resort city of Agadir.

Globally, Monday was the hottest day recorded since measurements began in 1940, the European Union's Copernicus Earth observation programme said.

It has previously predicted that daily records would be broken this summer in the northern hemisphere and that the planet would endure a particularly long period of intense heat due to climate change.

Scientists have linked climate change to more prolonged, stronger and more frequent extreme weather, including heatwaves.



1-week closure at Islamic Museum Intersection

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced a temporary closure of the free right turn on Islamic Museum Intersection on Corniche Street for drivers coming from the junction known as Al Meena Intersection for one week from July 27. The closure that will be implemented in co-ordination with the General Directorate of Traffic has been announced to enable maintenance works. Motorists can use the alternative street as shown on the map to reach their destinations. Ashghal will install road signs advising motorists of the temporary closure and has requested all to follow and abide by the speed limit to ensure safety.

Final statement of Somali Diaspora Conference calls for strengthening Qatar-Somalia relationship

The final statement of the Somali Diaspora Conference hosted by Doha, on harnessing the capabilities of Somalis in diaspora for the prosperity and revival of Somalia, called for reinforcing bilateral relationship between Qatar and Somalia, to serve interests of the two countries and the region.

Issued at the conclusion of the conference that was attended by officials, academics, politicians, and Somali entrepreneurs, the statement emphasised the importance of cultural and commercial innovation among Somali in diaspora, along with their role in upgrading development and commercial institutions in Somalia.

It highlighted the progress that the Somali government has achieved across multiple sectors and its role in defending Somali sovereignty and national unity, lauding the role played by expatriates in implementing

development programmes in Somalia, and the imperative of strengthening their capabilities and expanding the scope of their co-operation.

Additionally, the statement called for optimising the level of government services offered to the Somali diaspora.

The participants underscored the importance of investment and its role in advancing Somalia and boosting its economy, in addition to utilising their expertise in developing Somalia in all fields, calling for synergistic efforts to encourage expatriates to engage in investment activities in Somalia and advance the country's economy, such as enhancing incentives and providing necessary guarantees for Somalia's reconstruction.

The three-day conference touched on the latest development in the situation in Somalia and discussed issues of education,

entrepreneurship, culture, identity, youth empowerment, encourage investment in Somalia, in addition to other topics.

The sessions highlighted the aspirations of Somali people to achieve development, prosperity and progress, and avenues for beefing up productive capabilities and opening new markets with the aim of achieving sustainable development in the entire fields.

Held for the first time in an Arab country, the conference discussed wide-ranging challenges facing Somalia, foremost of which are environmental challenges, poverty, unemployment, et al, and suggested appropriate solutions to be further studied and applied, to move forward towards achieving sustainable economic development desired by Somalia.

The participants said they are grateful to Qatar for hosting the conference. - QNA

4 Burkina journalists have 'disappeared' in a month: watchdog

AFP Abidjan

Four journalists critical of Burkina Faso's ruling junta have disappeared in the space of a month, media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said yesterday, placing partial blame on the military authorities.

Since coming to power in a coup d'etat in September 2022, Burkina Faso's military leaders have cracked down on press freedom and political dissent in the West African country.

RSF said the missing journalists "were seen as critical voices by the authorities", which "ultimately led to their abductions".

"Since 19 June, two journalists and two columnists have disappeared, at least three of them abducted by armed individuals," RSF said. "The kidnapers of at least two of these journalists claimed to be members of the National Intelligence Agency (ANR)."

"It is now clear that the government bears a degree of responsibility for their disappearances - particularly for the deafening silence around the kidnappings, and for showing public hostility towards journalists."

The list of missing journalists includes Kalifara Sere, a commentator for television station BF1, who has not been heard of since June 19 after being questioned by the Supreme Council for Communication (CSC).

Sere had "never minced his words" about Burkina Faso's military rulers, RSF said, and was taken in for questioning after accusing the government of having "fabricated information that is false".

Adama Bayala, a journalist who also worked for BF1, went missing on June 28 while on his way to meet a friend in the capital Ouagadougou.

RSF called Bayala "one of the few voices

that openly criticises the current government".

Atiana Serge Oulon, editor of the investigative magazine *L'Evenement*, was abducted from his home on June 24.

So was Omega Media's editor-in-chief Alain Traore, better known as "Alain Alain", who was seized on July 13 by "two armed men wearing balaclavas and muffers, accompanied by at least three other people".

Oulon had conducted an investigation into suspected embezzlement by a high-ranking officer, while Traore had written a satirical column "criticising the shortcomings of those in power", RSF said.



Dr Sohaira Siddiqui

GU-Q faculty member makes Islamic research more accessible

The Al-Mujadilah Centre and Mosque for Women opened its doors in January this year with an ambitious vision: to be a brave and dynamic place for Muslim women to learn, connect, and engage in public debate.

Now, six months later, thanks to the leadership of executive director Dr Sohaira Siddiqui, the centre is already achieving its goals.

Founded by Her Highness Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, the centre aims to strengthen Islamic identity among Muslim women of all ages and backgrounds and to enrich contemporary Islamic discourse.

Integral to executing the project is Dr Siddiqui, an associate professor of Islamic Studies and Theology at Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q).

The centre honours the rich history of Muslim women as leaders and thinkers, focusing on research projects in Islamic texts, law, and ethics; Muslim women's lives; and Muslim women's health and well-being.

"When I was first approached about Al-Mujadilah, I saw it as an exceptional opportunity to create a unique space for learning and discussion," says Dr Siddiqui.

The role allowed her to bridge her academic life and her deep understanding of the profound gap that remains in the study of Muslim women's lives, past and present.

Dr Siddiqui's work at Al-Mujadilah is deeply connected to her academic pursuits.

Dr Siddiqui has published several books on the history of Islamic law.

Her forthcoming book, *Contesting Colonial Power: Refashioning Islamic Law in British India*, explores how British colonial rule could not wholly erase Islamic law.

Starting from 1757, the book traces how Islamic law adapted and persisted within the common-law framework when the British East India Company attempted to replace Mughal authority and reshape the legal system to suit their administrative needs.

At Al-Mujadilah, Dr Siddiqui's extensive research experience shapes the centre's initiatives.

The centre's research and programming theme for the coming year, "Muslim Women in Public Life: Possibilities and Challenges", explores how Muslim women have engaged in and contributed to society and public life from the inception of Islam to the present day.

The centre will explore the various dimensions of women's public involvement - as scholars, economic actors, patrons, or political agents - and how this has been shaped by cultural, religious, and political factors in diverse historical and contemporary contexts.



Oil spill threatens Manila after tanker capsizes

Reuters
Manila

A marine tanker carrying industrial fuel sank in rough seas off the Philippines yesterday, causing the death of a crew member and an oil spill that could spread to wa-

ters off the capital Manila, officials said.

Sixteen of the 17 crew members of MT Terra Nova have been rescued, Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista said, after the ship capsized off the coastal town of Limay in Bataan province.

The coastguard said they found the body of a previously missing

crew member in the sea off Limay town in Bataan province, less than three hours drive from the capital Manila, yesterday afternoon.

"There is already oil spill. Right now, we cannot dispatch our resources because of strong winds and high waves," Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista told a situation briefing.

The ship was carrying 1,494 metric tonnes of industrial fuel, Bautista said.

Philippine coast guard spokesperson Armando Balilo told a separate briefing a 97-metre coast guard vessel had been deployed to combat the oil spill. Smaller vessels were waiting for the weather to clear before setting sail.

An aerial survey by the coast guard showed an oil slick spreading roughly two nautical miles and being driven by strong waves.

"We are racing against time. We will do our best to contain the fuel," Balilo said.

He added the waters where the ship sank is close to Manila and there is "big danger" the spill

could reach the capital.

"That's part of the contingencies that we are preparing for," Balilo said.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr had ordered the environment ministry to assess the damage and the ministry said its chief was on her way to Limay town.

Myanmar junta, rebels claim control of military regional headquarters

AFP
Yangon

Myanmar's junta and an ethnic minority armed group claimed yesterday they were in control of a town and regional military command in northern Shan state following days of clashes.

Fighting has rocked the town of Lashio, home to the military's northeastern command, since July 3 when an alliance of ethnic armed groups renewed an offensive against junta troops.

Local media run by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) reported the group "fully captured the headquarters of the Northeast Military command in Lashio" yesterday morning and also captured Lashio town, home to around 150,000 people.

MNDAA spokesman Li Jiawen said the group's fighters had captured Lashio, without giving further details.

But junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun told reporters the claim was "not true". "The insurgents infiltrated the outskirts of Lashio so (the security forces) have been following and clearing them," he said, without giving details.

The northeastern command is located in the north of Lashio.

A video uploaded to social media with a caption saying it was shot in Lashio yesterday morning showed deserted streets with no soldiers in sight.

AFP reporters geolocated the

video to a site in the town around 2kms from the command.

Northern Shan state has been rocked by fighting since late last month when an alliance of ethnic armed groups renewed an offensive against the military along the highway to China's Yunnan province.

The clashes have shredded a Beijing-brokered truce that in January halted a campaign by the alliance of the Arakan Army (AA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the MNDAA.

The military has carried out several air strikes around the town during the fighting, according to residents.

Dozens of civilians have been killed or wounded in the recent fighting, according to the junta and local rescue groups.

Neither the junta nor the ethnic alliance have released figures on their own casualties.

Indonesia's foreign minister yesterday slammed the junta's unwillingness to engage with a regional peace plan to resolve the conflict, speaking after meeting her Singaporean counterpart on the sidelines of an Association of Southeast Asian Nations foreign ministers meeting in Laos.

Both Singapore and Indonesia have been critical of the junta's power grab, which has divided the 10-member Asean bloc.

Myanmar's borderlands are home to myriad ethnic armed groups who have battled the military since independence from Britain in 1948 for autonomy and control of lucrative resources.



Waves crash on the coast of Sansha town as Typhoon Gaemi approaches, in Ningde, Fujian province, China, yesterday.

Typhoon hits Chinese seaboard, widespread flooding feared

Reuters
Beijing/Taipei

Typhoon Gaemi roared into southeastern China yesterday after churning across the Taiwan Strait, prompting warnings of swelling rivers, flash floods and waterlogging in cities and provinces that were hit by extreme rains just several weeks ago.

Gaemi, the third and most powerful typhoon to hit China's eastern seaboard this year, made landfall in Fujian province at 7.50pm (1150GMT) after whipping Taiwan with gusts of up to 227kph, some of the strongest winds recorded in the Western Pacific Ocean.

Ahead of its arrival, 240,800 people in Fujian were evacuated.

Despite slightly weakening since its landfall

in Fujian's Putian, a city of over 3mn, Gaemi and its giant cloud-bands are forecast to unleash intense rainfall in at least 10 Chinese provinces in the coming days.

The arrival of Gaemi has drawn comparisons with Typhoon Doksuri last year, which triggered historic flooding as far north as Beijing and caused nationwide losses of nearly \$30bn.

Authorities said water levels in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River as well as the vast freshwater lakes of Poyang and Dongting in central China could rise, returning to dangerous levels seen in early July after intense summer rains.

Due to its high vapour content, Beijing cautioned that Gaemi could spawn strong rainfall in the Chinese capital, about 2,000km north of Putian, even as the storm weakens into a tropical depression.

Gaemi's rains could cause flash floods and waterlogging particularly in parts of northern China where the soil remains saturated after being lashed by a passing system of storms earlier this week, authorities warned.

In Taiwan, Gaemi killed three people, triggered flooding and sank a freighter after the strongest typhoon to hit the island in eight years made landfall on Wednesday night.

The storm cut power to around half a million households, though most are now back online, utility Taipower said.

Apart from the three fatalities, 380 were injured by the typhoon in Taiwan, the government said.

Taiwan's fire department said a Tanzania-flagged freighter with nine Myanmar nationals on board had sunk off the coast of the southern port city of Kaohsiung.

Indonesia launches 'Golden Visa' scheme

Indonesia yesterday launched a long-term visa scheme intended to attract foreign investors, President Joko Widodo said, with amounts of up to \$10mn giving them a 10-year visa and access to Southeast Asia's largest economy. The five-year "Golden Visa" requires individual investors to set up a company worth \$2.5mn, while a 10-year visa requires a \$5mn investment. Individuals not looking to set up a company must place \$350,000 and \$700,000 to gain a five-year and 10-year permit respectively, and the money can be used to buy Indonesian government bonds, public company stocks, or place deposits. Corporate investors are required to invest \$25mn to get five-year visas for directors and commissioners. They need to invest \$50mn to gain a 10-year visa. If the investment is made in the new \$32bn capital city currently being built in the jungles of Borneo island, \$5mn will gain investors a 5-year visa and \$10mn a 10-year visa.

Rescued



An Asian golden cat, which was found injured in a trap, recuperates in an enclosure at the Indonesian Nature Conservation Agency (BKSDA) in Banda Aceh.

Alarm as bird flu cases surge in Asia-Pacific

Reuters
Beijing

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation yesterday called for an urgent and unified response to combat an "alarming" rise in avian influenza cases in humans and animals across the Asia-Pacific.

The H5N1 virus has spread more widely than ever before, reaching as far as South America and Antarctica and infecting new wild and domestic animals, it said in a statement. "Since late 2023, we have observed a rise in human cases and the virus spreading to new animal species," said Kachen Wongsathapornchai, regional manager of the FAO's Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases.

"The emergence of novel A/H5N1 strains, which are more eas-

ily transmissible, increases the pandemic threat. Immediate, co-ordinated preventive measures are essential."

The UN agency counted 13 new human infections reported in Cambodia since late 2023, with additional cases in China and Vietnam. Indonesia and the Philippines are facing heightened security due to its diverse ecological landscape and limited biosecurity measures, while India, Nepal and Bangladesh are also battling outbreaks, it said. It urged member nations to work together to implement comprehensive surveillance systems, including full genome sequencing, to track the virus's spread and evolution. It also called on governments, international organisations and the private sector to share information transparently, and stressed the need for the poultry industry to strengthen biosafety measures.

Suit claiming Bayer weedkiller causes cancer dismissed

Reuters
Canberra

An Australian judge yesterday dismissed a class action lawsuit claiming Bayer's Roundup weedkiller can cause a type of blood cancer, a ruling the company said it would seek to leverage in similar cases being fought in the US.

More than 1,000 people had joined the lawsuit, claiming Roundup's active ingredient, glyphosate, caused their non-Hodgkins lymphoma (NHL).

Justice Michael Lee of Australia's Federal Court said in his ruling

he had reviewed three types of scientific studies - epidemiological, animal studies and mechanistic evidence - that looked at the links between glyphosate and lymphoma and was not satisfied there was sufficient evidence that the chemical caused the cancer in humans.

"It is not proven in this proceeding on a balance of probabilities... that throughout the relevant period use of, and or exposure to Roundup products increased an individual's risk of developing NHL," Lee said.

The claimants' law firm, Maurice Blackburn, said it was reviewing the ruling before deciding whether to appeal.

The lead claimant, 41-year-old Kelvin McNickle, said he used Roundup to spray weeds for over two decades on his family's property and while working for a vegetation management company. He developed non-Hodgkins lymphoma aged 35.

Bayer, a German chemicals and pharmaceuticals company, has long maintained that Roundup and glyphosate are safe. It has been battling lawsuits over Roundup in the US since it bought the product's owner Monsanto in 2018. It still faces more than 50,000 outstanding Roundup claims there.

It has prevailed in 14 of the last 20 US trials but racked up a

string of losses in late 2023 and early 2024, with more than \$4bn in damages awarded. Some of the amounts awarded have since been reduced but the string of wins for plaintiffs shattered investor and company hopes that the worst of the Roundup litigation was over.

Unlike the US, class actions in Australia are not decided by a jury. Bayer spokesman Philipp Blank said that while said the Australian and US judicial systems were very different, "we will of course try to leverage the conclusion of the very science-based approach from the Australian legal system in the litigation in the US".

The class action brought by

Maurice Blackburn against Bayer subsidiaries is one of around 40 similar cases that have been filed outside the US, most of them in Canada.

Some farmers in Australia had worried that if the court had ruled glyphosate could cause lymphoma, it could lead to stricter regulation and restrict its use.

The National Farmers' Federation said in a statement that the country's farmers had put their faith in the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicine Authority to ensure the safety of products they use and that yesterday's ruling had reinforced that the regulator was doing its job.

"This is a win for Australian farmers," said Warren Inwood, a Bayer executive in Australia.

Roundup has been in use around the world since the 1970s.

The product has been under scrutiny since the World Health Organisation's cancer research agency concluded in 2015 that glyphosate was probably carcinogenic to humans, though without concluding whether it posed a risk in real-world use.

Bayer has replaced glyphosate with new active ingredients in its products for household use in the US to reduce the risk of litigation as most claims have come from home users.

PEOPLE

Tycoon Jimmy Lai to testify in Hong Kong security trial

Hong Kong pro-democracy tycoon Jimmy Lai will take the witness stand for the first time in November in a high-profile national security trial where he is accused of sedition and colluding with foreign forces, a court said yesterday. The charges against Lai – founder of the now-shuttered popular Chinese-language tabloid *Apple Daily* – revolve around the newspaper's publications, which supported the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in 2019 and criticised Beijing's leadership. Besides sedition, the 76-year-old is also accused of two counts of colluding with foreign forces by calling for international sanctions against Chinese and Hong Kong officials.

FINANCE

Bali seeks investors for \$20bn metro project

The government of Indonesia's resort island of Bali is seeking investors for a 325tn rupiah (\$20bn) underground railway network starting September, officials said. The construction of the metro will be in four stages, connecting the capital of Bali, Denpasar, to popular tourist areas such as Seminyak, Canggu, Nusa Dua, Sanur, and Ubud. Ari Askhara, a representative of the Bali government, said. The government expects the railway to connect Denpasar to Canggu and Nusa Dua by 2031. Bali's provincial government has appointed PT Bumi Indah as the main investor, said Ari. The company will seek other investors, Ari added.

TRAGEDY

Flash floods, landslides kill seven in Vietnam

Flash floods and landslides triggered by heavy rain have killed seven people in northern Vietnam and swept away homes, disaster officials said yesterday. Five people died in Son La and two others were killed in Dien Bien following the downpours. Rescue workers are also searching for 10 others reported missing in the mountainous provinces. According to *Tuoi Tre* newspaper, flash floods early yesterday swept away 10 houses and damaged eight homes in Muong Pon commune of Dien Bien province. It has rained heavily in northern Vietnam since Tuesday, and many areas including the outskirts of the capital Hanoi are filled with muddy floodwater.

CONFLICT

N Korea trash balloons disrupt flights in Seoul, cause fire

North Korea has sent about 500 balloons laden with trash into South Korea's air space over the past 24 hours, officials in the South said yesterday, disrupting flights and igniting a fire on the roof of a residential building. The balloons are part of an ongoing propaganda campaign by Pyongyang against North Korean defectors and activists in the South, who regularly send balloons carrying items such as anti-Pyongyang leaflets, medicine, money and USB sticks loaded with K-pop videos and dramas. A suspected balloon suspended take-offs and landings at Seoul's Gimpo Airport on Wednesday evening for two hours, an official at the Korea Airports Corporation said.

Forgot to remove UN logos from vehicles, claims government

Reuters
Dhaka/New Delhi

Bangladesh has said that it forgot to remove UN markings from vehicles during an army-enforced curfew to contain deadly violence that spread across the country last week and killed nearly 150 people.

The United Nations said it has sought a response from authorities in the capital Dhaka after footage filmed by Reuters journalists on Sunday showed what appeared to be an armoured personnel vehicle marked with the letters 'UN'.

The vehicle was carrying gun-bearing soldiers on a street in Dhaka, which last week saw days of deadly clashes as security forces cracked down on student-led protests against reservation quotas in government jobs.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud told reporters that some vehicles had been "rented to the UN peace mission".

"We forgot to remove the logo. Now the logos have been removed," he added.

The United Nations, international rights groups, the US and Britain were among those who criticised the use of force against the protesters and asked Dhaka to uphold the right to peaceful protests.

"We have raised our concern about the situation in Bangladesh with relevant authorities in Dhaka

and New York and also sought clarity regarding reports that some UN-marked vehicles may have been used during recent events," Farhan Haq, a deputy spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, said.

He said countries that contribute troops and police to UN peacekeeping are to use UN insignia and equipment marked with UN insignia only when they are performing mandated tasks as UN peacekeepers.

Bangladesh is the third largest troop and police contributor to the UN peacekeeping mission, after Nepal and Rwanda.

Earlier the UN rights chief called on Bangladesh to urgently disclose the details of last week's crackdown on protests amid accounts of "horrific violence", calling for "an impartial, independent and transparent investigation".

"We understand that many people were subjected to violent attacks by groups reportedly affiliated with the government, and no effort was made to protect them," Volker Turk said in a statement.

Turk's statement lamented reports that some of the more than 1,000 injured in last week's crackdown were denied medical care, while many people remained missing. "At least two journalists were reportedly killed and scores of others injured. Hundreds of people were also reportedly arrested, including opposition figures," the statement said.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina weeps while she visits a metro station in Mirpur vandalised by students during the anti-quota protests.

Bangladesh premier surveys destruction as unrest recedes

AFP
Dhaka

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina swept yesterday as she surveyed the destruction wrought by days of deadly unrest, as student leaders weighed the future of the protests that sparked the disorder.

Last week's violence killed at least 193 people, including several police officers, according to an AFP count of victims reported by police and hospitals, in one of the biggest upheavals of Hasina's 15-year tenure.

The unrest was precipitated by protests against a public jobs quota scheme that critics say gives preference to allies of Hasina's ruling party.

Thousands of troops are still patrolling cities and a nationwide Internet shutdown remains

largely in effect, although clashes have subsided since protest leaders announced a temporary halt to new demonstrations.

Hasina, 76, spent the morning surveying destruction in the capital Dhaka, where the commuter rail network connecting the sprawling megacity of 20mn people was shut down after mob attacks.

"Over 15 years, I've built this country," she told reporters, condemning protesters for damaging city infrastructure. "What didn't I do for the people? "Who has benefitted from what we have done?" she said. "Do I ride on the metro? Does the government only ride? Do our ministers only ride? Or is it in fact the general public that rides?" Pictures released by Hasina's office showed her flanked by an entourage and weeping at the sight of a vandalised metro station in an outlying Dhaka suburb. The station was among several government buildings and doz-

ens of police posts torched or vandalised during the unrest.

With calm returning to cities around Bangladesh, Hasina's government ordered another relaxation to the curfew it imposed at the weekend to allow free movement between 10am and 5pm.

Streets in Dhaka were choked with commuter traffic in the morning, days after ferocious clashes between police and protesters had left them almost deserted.

Banks, government offices and Bangladesh's economically vital garment factories reopened on Wednesday after they were closed last week. Student leaders met yesterday to decide whether to again extend their protest moratorium, which is due to expire today.

Students Against Discrimination, the group responsible for organising this month's rallies, said it expected the government to make some concessions.

Vietnam bids farewell to late party leader

Thousands of mourners, including top Vietnamese officials, schoolchildren and monks, gathered in Hanoi yesterday for the funeral of Communist Party leader Nguyen Phu Trong as two days of national mourning began.

The 80-year-old, who died at a military hospital in the capital Hanoi last week "due to old age and serious illness", was Vietnam's most powerful leader in decades.

Trong, who had led the party since 2011, was the first leader to have held three consecutive mandates after the liberalisation of Vietnam's economy in 1986. He was known for a high-profile anti-corruption drive that swept through the party, police, armed forces and business, which analysts say has been linked to political infighting.

Trong enjoyed remarkable longevity in office, although rights groups say his leadership coincided with increasing authoritarianism. Alongside bouquets of yellow flowers and burning incense, Trong's flag-draped coffin was laid beneath a large portrait of the leader and dozens of his medals at the National Funeral House in central Hanoi.



Vietnamese people queue as they wait outside the national funeral house to pay their respect for the late general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Nguyen Phu Trong during the first day of a two-day-national mourning in Hanoi yesterday.

Italy PM Meloni to visit China tomorrow

Reuters
Beijing

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will visit China for five days from tomorrow, Beijing said yesterday, her first to the country since she took office nearly two years ago.

"At the invitation of Premier Li Qiang of the State Council, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will pay an official visit to China from July 27 to 31," foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said in a statement.

She will meet with President Xi Jinping as well as Premier Li during the trip, Mao told a regular press briefing.

They will "hold talks with her... to exchange views on bilateral relations and issues of common concern", she said.

Beijing would "deepen prac-

tical co-operation and cultural exchange", Mao added, as well as "promote the steady and long-term development of China-Italy and China-Europe relations".

Meloni's administration withdrew from China's vast Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) last year, having been the only G7 nation to sign up.

Before taking office, Meloni said joining the initiative – a central pillar of President Xi's bid to expand China's clout overseas – had been a "mistake".

Italy's non-binding memorandum of understanding with China had contained broad undertakings for co-operation in logistics, infrastructure, financial and environmental sectors.

But details were scarce and the lack of transparency fuelled distrust among Italy's allies.

Relatives of 18 dead in Nepal plane crash demand answers

Reuters
Kathmandu

Relatives of the 18 dead in an airplane crash in Nepal have yet to hear from the government or the airline on the possible cause of the disaster, they said a day after the small jet went down during take-off at the airport in Kathmandu, the capital.

The incident has cast a spotlight on the mountainous, landlocked nation's poor record on air safety, with almost 360 people killed since 2000 in plane and helicopter crashes.

The 50-seater CRJ-200 aircraft

that crashed this week was operated by Saurya Airlines, and was ferrying 15 technicians, two crew and two of a technician's family to the central city of Pokhara, where it was scheduled for regular maintenance.

Only the captain survived after it crashed in a field beside the runway and caught fire.

"Nobody has contacted us," said Krishna Bahadur Magar, a relative of Nava Raj Ale who was a ground handler at Saurya and died in the crash.

"Our relative was a member of the Saurya Airlines family," Magar said. "Why is the airline now behaving as if they don't care about

him?" Magar was among the dozens who crowded into a narrow alley outside the forensic unit of Kathmandu's Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital yesterday, waiting for authorities to release the bodies of the dead.

Some said doctors had told them they would not receive the remains of loved ones before Saturday, while those bodies charred beyond recognition would require DNA tests to be identified, a process that could take two weeks.

The victims' families felt as if Saurya officials were "deliberately hiding" from them, said Jageswar Giri, whose brother-in-law, Ud-dhab Puri, died in the crash.

"We want to know what technical problems the aircraft was facing, why so many people were on it yesterday, and why it was decided that maintenance work would be done in Pokhara instead of Kathmandu where the plane was grounded," he said.

Officials from the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) have said the plane was being sent to Pokhara because its new airport was equipped with aircraft maintenance hangars.

Responding to the families' questions, the regulator said it was the airline's responsibility to coordinate with them.

"It was not a passenger flight,"

said CAAN spokesperson Gyanendra Bhul. "Saurya Airlines has officially said all people on board the plane were their staff, so they should co-ordinate with the family members."

The airline did not respond to telephone calls and messages seeking comment.

A government panel set up on Wednesday to investigate the crash will submit a report within 45 days.

Nepal's worst crash in 1992 killed 167. Last January, 72 people died when a Yeti Airlines plane crashed just before landing in Pokhara.

Meanwhile, the pilot and sole survivor of a plane crash was re-

covering in hospital after a miraculous escape, aviation officials said yesterday.

Gyanendra Bhul of the Civil Aviation Authority said the pilot remained in hospital but his condition was improving.

"The pilot survived because on impact he fell into a cargo container where there were no flames," he added.

Bhul said the flight had climbed up to 400 feet from the ground but then suddenly veered to the right before crashing near the runway.

An army statement on Wednesday night said the pilot was rescued bleeding but conscious by soldiers from the wreckage.

**India duty cut halts concessionary silver, platinum imports from UAE**

India's silver and platinum imports from the UAE, previously benefiting from concessionary duties under a trade agreement, have ceased as New Delhi's move to reduce import taxes eliminated the duty arbitrage that bullion dealers were exploiting, trade and government officials said.

The world's second-biggest bullion consumer slashed import duties on gold and silver on Tuesday to 6% from 15%.

After the reduction, there is no incentive to bring silver or platinum into India under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed between India and the UAE, said Prithviraj Kothari, president of the India Bullion and

Jewellers Association (IBJA).

"Now that regular customs duty for silver is lower than the tax under the CEPA, nobody's importing silver anymore." Bullion dealers primarily imported silver from the UAE under the CEPA, as they only needed to pay an 8% import duty compared to the regular 15%.

This helped the UAE corner nearly half of India's silver imports, with its shipments surging to 1,998 metric tonnes in the first five months of 2024 from just 133 tonnes during the same period a year ago.

However, with the regular duty now reduced to 6%, imports via CEPA have become unfeasible, dealers said.

Heavy rains in Mumbai

Students walk on a waterlogged street after heavy rains in Mumbai, India, yesterday.

Britain and India launch technology security initiativeReuters
London

Britain said it had launched a new technology security initiative with India aimed at boosting economic growth, fostering collaboration on telcoms security and unlocking investment in emerging technologies.

The British government said the agreement would see the two countries work more closely together on critical technologies including semiconductors, quantum and AI.

"This will mean real action together on the challenges of the future from AI to critical minerals. Together we can unlock mutual growth, boost innovation,

jobs and investment," British Foreign Secretary David Lammy said in a statement released by his office during a visit to India.

Lammy, who met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and India's Minister for External Affairs S Jaishankar earlier, also agreed to work more closely with India on tackling climate change, including mobilising finance and accelerating a partnership on offshore wind and green hydrogen.

Prime Minister Modi said he welcomed the new technology security initiative adding India was looking forward to settling on a free trade agreement.

The trade deal was aimed at doubling the two countries' trade from its 2022 level of \$50bn by 2030. Johnson famously promised to have a deal done by

Diwali in October of that year.

In talks with his counterpart, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, the two also agreed to boost defence and security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, and discussed global issues including the Russia-Ukraine conflict, according to a statement from the Indian foreign ministry.

Lammy said his trip to India reflects one of the new government's top foreign policy priorities: a reset with Europe, both on climate and with the Global South. Lammy also met with Indian national security advisor Ajit Doval.

The two countries held 13 rounds of negotiations without a breakthrough before talks were suspended while both nations held 2024 general elections.

India's strategic railway bridge closes the gap to KashmirAFP
Reasi

Soaring high across a gorge in the rugged Himalayas, a newly finished bridge will soon help India entrench control of Kashmir and meet a rising strategic threat from China.

The Chenab Rail Bridge, the highest of its kind in the world, has been hailed as a feat of engineering linking the Kashmir valley to the vast Indian plains by train for the first time.

But its completion has sparked concern among some in the territory, home to a permanent garrison of more than 500,000 soldiers.

India's military brass say the strategic benefits of the bridge to New Delhi cannot be understated.

"The train to Kashmir will be pivotal in peace and in wartime," general Deependra Singh Hooda, a retired former chief of India's northern military command, said.

The new bridge "will facilitate the movement of army personnel coming and going in larger numbers than was previously possible," said Noor Ahmad Baba, a politics professor at the Central University of Kashmir.

But, as well as soldiers, the bridge will "facilitate movement" of ordinary people and goods, he said. That has prompted unease among some in Kashmir who believe easier access will bring a surge of outsiders coming to buy land and settle.

Previously tight rules on land ownership were lifted after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government cancelled Kashmir's partial autonomy in 2019.

India Railways calls the \$24mn bridge "arguably the biggest civil engineering challenge faced by any railway project in India in recent history".

It is hoped to boost economic development and trade, cutting the cost of moving goods.

But Hooda, the retired general,



Soaring high across a gorge in the rugged Himalayas, the newly-finished Chenab bridge will help India entrench control of Kashmir and meet a rising strategic threat from China.

said the bridge's most important consequence would be revolutionising logistics in Ladakh, the icy region bordering China.

India and China, the world's two most populous nations, are intense rivals competing for strategic influence across South Asia, and their 3,500km shared frontier has been a perennial source of tension.

Their troops clashed in 2020, killing at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers, and forces from both sides today face off across contested high-altitude borderlands. "Everything from a needle to the biggest military equipment... has to be sent by road and stocked up in Ladakh for six months every year before the roads close for winter," Hooda said.

Now all that can be transported by train, easing what Indian military experts call the "world's biggest military logistics exercise" - supplying Ladakh through snow-bound passes.

The project will buttress several other road tunnel projects under way that will connect Kashmir and Ladakh, not far from India's frontiers with China and Pakistan.

The 1,315-metre-long steel and concrete bridge connects two

mountains with an arch 359 metres above the cool waters of the Chenab River.

Trains are ready to run and only await an expected ribbon cutting from Modi.

The 272km railway begins in the garrison city of Udhampur, headquarters of the army's northern command, and runs through the region's capital Srinagar.

It terminates a kilometre higher in altitude in Baramulla, a gateway trade town near the Line of Control with Pakistan.

When the road is open, it is twice the distance and takes a day of driving.

The railway cost an estimated \$3.9bn and has been an immense undertaking, with construction beginning nearly three decades ago.

While several road and pipeline bridges are higher, Guinness World Records confirmed that Chenab trumps the previous highest railway bridge, the Najiehe bridge in China.

Describing India's new bridge as a "marvel", its deputy chief designer R R Mallick, said the experience of designing and building was a great learning experience for the engineers.

Suspect charged over stabbing of UK soldier

A 24-year-old man appeared in court yesterday charged with attempted murder over the repeated stabbing of a British soldier near an army barracks earlier this week.

Police have yet to indicate a motive in the attack, but they are not thought to be treating it as terror-related.

Suspect Anthony Esan is accused of attacking lieutenant colonel Mark Teeton in Gillingham, in southeast England on Tuesday. Teeton, who is in his 40s, was in hospital and his condition "is currently described as serious but stable", according to police.

Prosecutors told the court that the suspect was seen "running up behind" the army officer before he "pulled the soldier to the ground", stabbed him "repeatedly" and drove away on a moped.

Two knives were dropped at the scene and a further three were found stored on the bike, the prosecutor added.

Rubber Duck Race

Rubber ducks float on a canal in Paddington during the annual Rubber Duck Race in London, Britain, yesterday. The race raises funds for COSMIC charity.

Manchester Airport arrest video sparks protestReuters
London

A video showing a British police officer kick and stamp on a man's head during an arrest at Manchester airport in northern England sparked a protest outside a police station. Police suspended one of the officers involved and referred the actions to an independent police complaints watchdog after the video, filmed by an onlooker, was posted on social media platforms and attracted criticism.

It showed a chaotic scene in an airport car park, in which several officers armed with tasers restrained two suspects. The events preceding this scene were not included in the video. One man was kicked and stamped upon by an officer as he lay face down on the floor. The second man also ap-

peared to be struck in the head by an officer.

A Greater Manchester Police (GMP) statement said the video showed "an event that is truly shocking, and that people are rightly extremely concerned about. The use of such force in an arrest is an unusual occurrence and one that we understand creates alarm." It said police had responded to reports of an assault, and three officers were assaulted during their response. The officers, including one female officer whose nose was broken, required hospital treatment.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he had seen the video and understood the public's concern.

An officer was suspended yesterday, having initially only been removed from operational duties. The Independent Office for Police Conduct confirmed it was investigating the incident.

UK govt launches flagship green energy planAFP
London

Britain's new Labour government launched its flagship green energy infrastructure plan yesterday, announcing a multi-billion-pound partnership with the business arm of the royal family to develop offshore wind farms.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer is establishing a publicly owned body called Great British Energy to spearhead funding in domestic renewable energy projects as the UK weans itself off fossil fuels.

"There is a massive prize within our reach, and make no mistake the

race is on to get there," Starmer said of his pledge to ensure Britain's energy "independence".

His government has allocated £8.3bn (\$10bn) of public money over the next five years as Labour aims to meet Britain's climate change targets.

It also wants to bring down the price of energy by reducing reliance on foreign imports of oil and gas.

GB Energy will also seek to attract private investment, and the government announced a first tie-up with the monarchy's land and property holdings company that aims to leverage private investment of £60bn.

The Crown Estate is an independently run business whose profits go

to the government, which passes on a small portion to the monarchy to support official duties of the royal family.

It is one of Europe's biggest property empires, owning vast swathes of Britain's seabed with a huge commercial potential in developing offshore wind power generation.

The Crown Estate estimates that its GB Energy partnership will lease enough offshore land to produce up to 30 gigawatts of new energy, enough to power almost 20mn homes, by 2030.

The UK currently produces only 14 gigawatts of energy through offshore wind, according to government data.

The government introduced its legislation to establish GB Energy into parliament yesterday.

The company is the bedrock of Labour's pledge made before its landslide general election victory against the Conservatives on July 4 to make Britain a "clean energy superpower". Labour, in power for the first time since 2010, is committed to meeting the UK's legal obligation of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050. It also wants to decarbonise Britain's electricity grid by 2030, although experts have said the ambitious target will be difficult to meet.

Starmer's government has already ended a ban on new onshore wind farms in England that the Conserva-

tives imposed in 2015. The government is introducing a separate bill to widen the investment powers of the Crown Estate, giving it more scope to borrow for investments including offshore wind projects.

It has also proposed boosting investment in sustainable aviation fuel plants across the country.

Profit from the Crown Estate more than doubled last year to a record £1.1bn, driven by a short-term boost from offshore wind farms, according to annual accounts published on Wednesday. The government says GB Energy will have five key functions, including leading projects and building supply chains. It will not produce its own power.

New technologies it will invest in include carbon capture and storage, hydrogen, wave and tidal energy.

The public financing of the body will be funded through windfall taxes levied on oil and gas companies.

British customers' energy bills have soared since key producer Russia launched a full-scaled invasion of neighbouring Ukraine in February 2022.

Labour maintains the party's net-zero energy plans will save households £300 a year on their bills.

But the Conservatives' energy spokeswoman Claire Coutinho called GB Energy "nothing but a gimmick that will end up costing families, not cutting bills".



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Lame duck Biden could still have an impact

When Joe Biden finally recovers from Covid at his beach house and returns to the Oval Office, likely later this week, he risks being the lamest of lame ducks for his remaining six months in office.

But the 81-year-old, smarting from the humiliation of having to drop his re-election bid, could still influence the success of Vice-President Kamala Harris's campaign and push to resolve key foreign policy issues.

"We're not quite lame duck. It's wounded duck," Peter Loge, director of George Washington University's School of Media and Public Affairs, told AFP.

All US presidents leaving office face a period of limbo between election day in November and inauguration day in January.

For Biden, however, an unusually long period of some 100 days looms when voters, politicians and foreign leaders will all have their eyes on the horizon instead of on him.

Yet Biden's pledge in his stepping-down letter on Sunday to "focus solely on fulfilling my duties as president for the remainder of my term" does not have to be an empty one.

"He's still the president of the United States, he's in charge. He obviously wants to do things that set Vice-President Harris up for success," said Loge.

That puts the onus on Biden to keep pushing the key domestic threads that have run through his presidency, such as lowering inflation, keeping unemployment down and dealing with high pharmaceutical prices.

He can still appoint judges who could then stay in place for decades. This remains a key lever of power in a deeply polarised country

Crucially, Biden can still appoint judges who could then stay in place for decades.

This remains a key lever of power in a deeply polarised country where an increasingly politicised judiciary decides on issues like women's rights.

"He has a real incentive to end strong, so that Harris can look strong until November" as she faces Republican former president Donald Trump, added Loge.

With seemingly intractable wars raging in Gaza and Ukraine, Biden may also turn his focus abroad for his final days in the Oval Office.

"What I would expect is that Biden will concentrate on foreign affairs," David Karol, who teaches government and politics at the University of Maryland, told AFP.

"Presidents have made major moves in foreign policy in the lame duck phase," he said, citing among others George HW Bush's decision to remove US troops from Somalia in the dying days of his one-term presidency.

A major prize would be a ceasefire in Gaza, which Israel has pounded.

Biden risks highlighting his lame-duck status with a planned meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this week – if his recovery from Covid allows it.

The two leaders have had strained relations over Netanyahu's conduct of the war.

But a deal would be "helpful" to Harris's candidacy "because that issue has proven divisive in the Democratic Party," said Karol. "And she's maybe a little less tied to the policy than he is."

On Ukraine, Biden may be keen to secure the multi-billion-dollar aid package for Kyiv's fight against Russia, amid fears that if Republican Donald Trump wins he could abandon it.

The one final power that an outgoing president can wield is potentially the most sweeping, but also the most controversial – the presidential pardon.

Biden's beloved but troubled son Hunter was convicted in June on charges of lying about his drug addiction while buying a handgun, and faces up to 25 years in prison.

Candidate Biden pledged not to pardon 54-year-old Hunter or commute any sentence – but his thinking could change post drop out, and in an election race like no other in modern US history, anything is possible. – AFP

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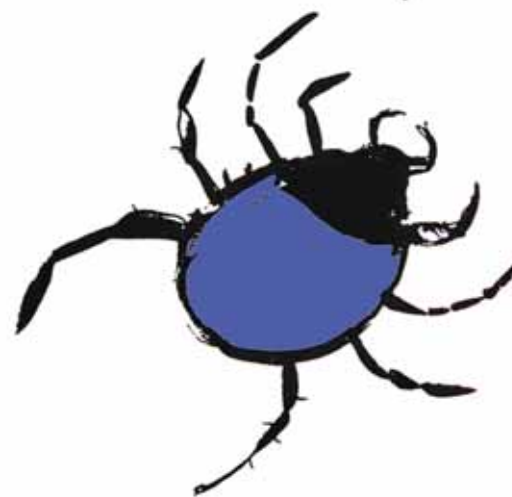
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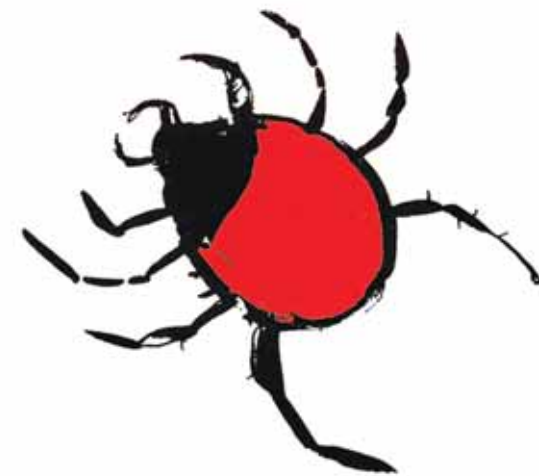
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"Racism in Sports?"



"Yes, unfortunately, a perception of Olympic proportions."



Of a president rejecting the drug of power

It is a sign of strength to admit to limitations, to listen to reason, and to recognise the will of the majority

By **Nina L. Khrushcheva**
New York

“We cling to power as a flea clings to a collar,” Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, my great-grandfather, declared in 1957. To make his point, he asked his audience of shocked Communist Party apparatchiks what the average retirement age was. “Mid-sixties,” someone replied. The 63-year-old Khrushchev joked that he was getting up there and wanted to sip tea peacefully as a pensioner, not to head straight from the Kremlin to the grave. US President Joe Biden apparently got the memo.

To be sure, a US president is not the same as a Soviet dictator (at least for now). Khrushchev was operating within an authoritarian system in which transfers of power typically followed funerals, not elections. In his case, it was a coup that ultimately brought about change: his colleagues ousted him in 1964, partly because they did not want to lose power if he stepped down.

But relinquishing power is difficult when nothing is forcing you to do so. That was true even for Khrushchev, who was so convinced of its importance that he sought to enshrine term limits in the Soviet constitution.

Though he had planned to step aside in 1965, he admitted in retirement that he probably wouldn't have had the courage to follow through, because he had goals – opening up the Soviet Union's borders, easing censorship, ending the Cold War – that no successor was likely to pursue.

Khrushchev's fears were hardly unfounded: these changes ended up taking place only 20 years later, during Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika era. But one must wonder whether Khrushchev – who was 70 when he was ousted, and had already presided over a despotic system for almost a decade – would have had the will, let alone the flexibility, to continue to push through those reforms, even if he had remained in power.

Stepping down did not come easily to Biden, either. He had faced intensifying pressure to suspend his presidential campaign over concerns about his age and mental acuity ever since his faltering performance in a debate with the Republican presidential nominee, Donald Trump, in late June. But, for nearly a month, he resisted.

Some of Biden's arguments for staying in the race had some merit: his governance record from the last three and a half years is impressive, and only he has

defeated Trump in a presidential election. But other arguments – for example, that he stands for American democracy (as if other Democrats don't) – were far flimsier. Perhaps the psychology of power in autocracies and democracies is more similar than we like to admit, with those on top coming to believe that theirs is the best – or even the only – way.

Absolute power corrupts absolutely. That is the kind of power Khrushchev had, and he was corrupted by it. The danger of such corruption is less acute in a democracy, thanks not only to formal constraints on power, such as elections and term limits, but also to the central role of persuasion, co-operation, and consultation with allies and colleagues. But it still takes tremendous force of will to cede power voluntarily.

Given this, Biden should be commended for dropping out of the presidential race and endorsing his vice president, Kamala Harris, as the Democratic Party's nominee. It is a sign of strength to admit to limitations, to listen to reason, and to recognise the will of the majority.

This is something the Kremlin's propagandists – who have been presenting Biden's decision as a sign of weakness, while repeatedly highlighting Republican demands that he also step down

immediately as president – do not understand. Their “fearless leader” Vladimir Putin, who has ruled Russia for a quarter-century now, would never bow to such pressure.

When Putin faced mass protests over his decision to return for a third presidential term in 2012, after serving as prime minister for four years, he faced intense pressure to quit (or so I was told by Kremlin insiders at the time). But Putin was committed to upholding his reputation as a “macho man,” and refused to back down. Since then, he has turned more authoritarian with each passing year.

Putin's stubborn refusal to change course has also been on display in Ukraine. After it became apparent that the full-scale invasion of February 2022 would not yield a quick victory, he doubled down, making nuclear threats and annexing four partially occupied regions of Ukraine (Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia).

The irony is that Putin did not initially plan to stay in power for long. He was supposed simply to consolidate his predecessor Boris Yeltsin's legacy, before moving on to some cushy job as, say, a Gazprom executive. But as Andrei Sakharov – the Soviet nuclear physicist and human-rights activist who received a Nobel Peace Prize in 1975 – supposedly used to say, the kiss of the Kremlin's power is deadly. If it could corrupt Khrushchev, who genuinely believed in the rotation of power, it was virtually guaranteed to infect Putin, a former KGB boss.

“The young will sign papers even better than we, the oldies, do,” Khrushchev once quipped, “and won't forgive us if we don't step aside.” But, as long as Putin remains in control, he will have no need for anyone's forgiveness. So, damn the young. Damn all Russians. Damn education, the economy, cultural and scientific exchanges, and good international relations. Damn Russia's future.

By stepping aside to let a younger candidate take over, Biden has prioritised America's interests over his own desire to lead. The decision reflects a humility that is far more likely to be found among democratic leaders than authoritarians. But as Trump has shown – such as with his efforts to overturn the 2020 election and his vow to be a dictator “on day one” – such humility is never guaranteed. – Project Syndicate

• *Nina L. Khrushcheva, Professor of International Affairs at The New School, is the co-author (with Jeffrey Taylor) of In Putin's Footsteps: Searching for the Soul of an Empire Across Russia's Eleven Time Zones.*



US President Joe Biden arrives at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland on Tuesday. Biden returned to the White House after spending nearly a week at his personal residence recovering from Covid and for the first time since dropping his re-election bid. (AFP)

Katara Hospitality's initiative for retirees sets a benchmark

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter



Katara Hospitality (KH) garnered widespread positive feedback from retired citizens on its new benefits package and sets a potential model for other companies and organisations in the country.

KH's initiative, which provides retirees with a 25% discount on all its properties in Qatar and globally, was designed to recognise their years of service and foster a stronger connection with the community.

According to KH, retirees expressed their appreciation for the recognition shown by the company for their years of service. They are also excited for the opportunities to travel to new destinations and experience the hospitality industry firsthand, both in Qatar and internationally.

"This initiative reflects our commitment to corporate social responsibility and community engagement. By recognising the contributions of our retired citizens, we aim to foster stronger community relations and support their well-being", KH said.

According to KH, the programme's implementation has been smooth, working closely with the General Retirement and Social Insurance Authority. It

tapped local news outlets, government media channels, and its website and social media to ensure effective communication. A dedicated call centre team has been established to handle inquiries and provide support to retirees.

Beyond the discounted rates, KH said it is actively exploring additional benefits and offerings to further enhance the experience for retirees. This includes initiatives designed to encourage them to explore Qatar's diverse tourism offerings, further invigorating domestic tourism and showcasing the country's unique assets to its citizens.

"We believe that by creating exclusive discounts and benefits for retirees, we can not only boost domestic tourism in Qatar but also provide our retirees with the opportunity to discover our unique assets globally," KH said, noting that this initiative is seen as a significant step towards establishing Qatar as a premier destination for both domestic and international travellers.

KH added that the programme sets a high standard for corporate social responsibility and envisions it as a model for other companies and organisations in Qatar to follow.

"We aspire to see other entities and companies within Qatar adopt similar benefits packages to retired citizens," KH said. "The potential benefits are far-reaching, from increased customer loyalty, enhanced community relations and supporting retirees".

KH reiterated its broader vision for the hospitality sector in Qatar and internationally: to enhance the guest experience while contributing to the country's tourism growth.

"As Qatar's flagship hospitality organisation, we are committed to our role in developing the country's tourism sector in line with the Qatar Vision 2030, that leads the country on the path of economic diversification and recognises the hospitality industry as one of the strategic drivers in implementing this vision.

"Some of our key initiatives are developing our assets in Qatar and abroad and enhancing the experience in our hotels. By focusing on these initiatives, we aim to create an exceptional hospitality experience that attracts visitors around the world while also showcasing Qatar's rich culture and heritage," KH said.

MECC holds workshop on national strategy to fight desertification



and long-term policies to achieve these goals.

The workshop showcased several projects and programmes that have significantly contributed to combating desertification and enhancing environmental sustainability in Qatar. These include the inventory and preservation of wild plants, protection of the Ghaf tree, establishment of a field gene bank, rehabilitation of the Qatari desert, rainwater harvesting, an agricultural census, and support for farmers.

Al-Khanji reaffirmed MECC's dedication, in collaboration with its partners, to achieving sustainable development, preserving the environment, and bolstering national and international efforts to combat desertification. These initiatives are aimed at improving the quality of life for both current and future generations.

The workshop brought together officials from the Ministries of Defence, Municipality, and Transport, the Public Works Authority (Ashghal), the Civil Aviation Authority, the National Planning Council, Kahramaa, Qatar Foundation, Qatar Energy, and the ExxonMobil Center.

Discussions centred on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the proposed national strategy and action plan to combat desertification in Qatar. The strategy's key areas and the most significant projects related to combating desertification in the country were also presented. (QNA)

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MECC) organised a workshop to develop a national strategy and action plan to combat desertification in Qatar. The two-day workshop, spearheaded by the Wildlife Development Department, saw active participation from various state institutions.

The workshop aimed to address the national challenges of combating desertification, enhance public awareness, and foster leadership, innovation, and technical co-operation programmes.

Mohamed al-Khanji, Director of the Wildlife Development Department at MECC, emphasised Qatar's steadfast commitment to international environmental agreements, highlighting its efforts to combat desertification and promote environmental sustainability. Qatar has been a signatory to the Convention to Combat De-

sertification since January 1999, demonstrating its commitment to mitigating the effects of drought and desertification in affected countries.

Al-Khanji elaborated that the ministry, in collaboration with relevant authorities, is working on a modern national strategy to combat desertification. This strategy aims to integrate desertification-combating efforts into national sustainable development plans, ensuring alignment with biodiversity strategies and sustainable development goals (SDGs).

He underscored the importance of setting strategies and priorities within sustainable development policies to combat desertification, addressing its underlying causes, and focusing on economic factors contributing to this phenomenon. The state is also committed to creating a conducive environment through robust legislation

Qatari students in summer camp to learn Chinese language skills

Under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), 11 Qatari students participated in the Summer Camp for Language and Culture held in the cities of Beijing and Hangzhou in China as part of the project to expand the teaching of foreign languages to public school students.

The camp, held from July 2 to 27, was intended for 11th-grade students studying Chinese as an elective at HBKU's Language Center. It is the second camp of its kind to feature Qatari students. The camp aimed to introduce students to the Chinese culture, enhance their language skills in a local environment, and prepare them for future jobs. Students had the opportunity to develop their communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills in line with the competencies and values of the general framework of the national curriculum.

The camp also aimed to promote global awareness, understanding, and cultural exchange through students' participation in group lessons. The programme included networking meetings, sporting activities, visits to heritage sites, and participation in various Chinese cultural lectures and experiences.

The summer language and culture camps are part of the "Expansion of Foreign Language Teaching in Government Schools" project launched by the MoEHE.

The project aims to enhance the linguistic skills students acquire while studying foreign languages at school. These camps provide an opportunity to familiarise students with the host country's culture and improve their attributes through various activities and events. (QNA)



Qatari students participate in French language summer camp



The Ministry of Education and Higher Education has sent 19 11th-grade Qatari students studying French as an elective course to the Language and Culture Camp in France for the summer of 2024. The camp was held in Royan at the Karel Language Institute. The four-week camp aimed to enhance students' French language skills, introduce them to the culture and civilisation of France, and involve them in various events to strengthen their personal traits through local traditions and culture. It also aimed to help them develop critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, and communication skills in line with the competencies and values of the general framework of the national curriculum. The camp increased students' awareness of the options available for higher education in France and highlighted future career opportunities for students

fluent in multiple foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue.

The camp's study programme included 15 weekly lessons. Students were divided into two groups to ensure the quality of language instruction and provide intensive support. The programme focused on developing students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Several cultural and social activities, such as local excursions and cultural events, were also organised to enhance the learning experience. These activities helped students immerse themselves in French culture and improve their language skills through direct interaction. The students enjoyed participating in the camp and benefiting from the educational and cultural activities that contributed to developing their language and personal skills. (QNA)

Documentary on Qatari athlete's Olympics journey

Coinciding with the 2024 Paris Olympics, which open today, the sports and entertainment platform TOD has announced a unique Olympic experience through its latest documentary film, *Can We Win Two Golds?* This film celebrates Arab athletes participating in this year's Olympiad. In a press release issued Tuesday, TOD elaborated that the film follows a famous Qatari athlete on his final Olympic journey before retirement, aiming to inspire and encourage all Arab athletes as they prepare for the ongoing Olympic Games. In addition to *Can We Win Two Golds?*, TOD presents a selection of Olympic documentaries, including *Chasing Tokyo*, an 86-minute film about the British sailing team's journey through the uncertain Tokyo Games, and *Target Paris 2024*, a three-part mini-series that follows four archers - Lisa Barbelin and Audrey Adiceom (France),



Kim Woojin (Korea), and Bernardo Oliveira (Brazil) - as they prepare for the Paris Olympics. The TOD platform announced that it would provide subscribers with an exclusive Olympics news channel available around the clock in English. John-Paul McKerlie, Vice-President of Marketing and Sales at TOD, said, "This initiative underscores our commitment to providing a unique sports experience to users across the

Mena region. By celebrating the spirit of the Olympic Games and offering unparalleled entertainment content, TOD continues to connect viewers with the most exciting and inspiring events from around the world." The Summer Olympics Games pack on TOD offers new users access to the games until August 11 and extended access to the entire TOD Entertainment library until December 31.

Al Jazeera Media Institute to launch AI in Newsrooms



Al Jazeera Media Institute is to launch its new programme, *Artificial Intelligence in Newsrooms*,

from August 1. The programme is the first of its kind at the institute, presented by broadcaster Ebtikar (Arabic for innovation), a digital broadcaster who works with artificial intelligence technology. The programme addresses the uses of AI in newsrooms around the world, and addresses the various problems associated with that use. Starting with the technical, skills and material obstacles that prevent the integration of smart tools in media institutions, and going through the challenges related to the public's trust in the content produced by the machine, and ending with fears about the potential impacts of the uses of AI on professional ethics.

Hamad al-Houl al-Marri, Director of the Planning and Projects Department at the Institute, said: "The programme reviews successful experiences around the world in employing smart tools in the various stages of media content production, such as monitoring and follow-up, authenticating news, and combating systematic media misinformation."