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# GULF TIMES

Published in QATAR since 1978

TUESDAY Vol. XXXV No. 13087  
July 30, 2024  
Muharram 24, 1446 AH  
www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

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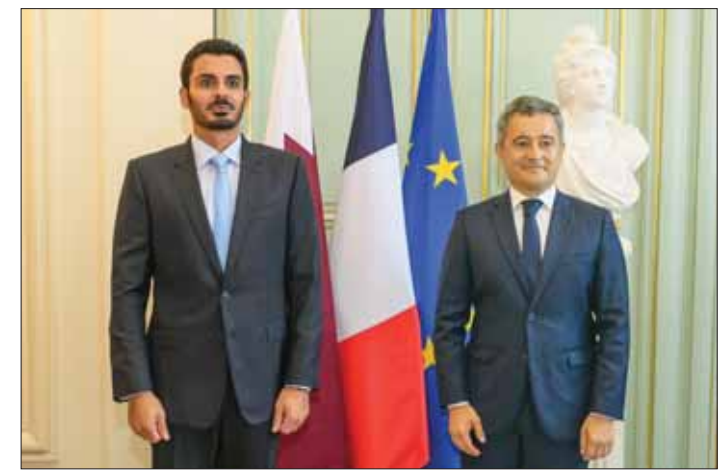
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## Minister visits seat of Qatari security force



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani visited yesterday the seat of the Qatari security force participating in securing the 33rd Summer Olympic Games (Paris 2024). During the visit, His Excellency met with a number of officials and security leaders participating in securing the Paris Olympics, and was briefed on the efforts of the force in securing the Olympics, and the progress of work in the main operations centre for Olympic Games security. (QNA) Page 2

## Interior minister meets French counterpart



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met yesterday with Minister of the Interior and Overseas Territories of the French Republic Gerald Darmanin. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation relations between the two friendly countries in security fields and ways to cement and develop them. The two sides also discussed Qatar's participation in supporting and securing the 33rd Summer Olympic Games /Paris 2024/. (QNA) Page 2

### Old taxis not allowed to cross Abu Samra

Taxis older than five years and buses older than 10, are not permitted to cross Abu Samra border checkpoint, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced yesterday on X. This is in accordance with the regulatory directives concerning the transport of goods by trucks and the transport of passengers by buses and taxis via land routes.

### Two children killed in UK knife attack

Two children were stabbed to death at a Taylor Swift-themed event in northwest England, and a 17-year-old male suspect was arrested, police said yesterday. Nine other children were wounded, six of them critically, and two adults, who were injured while trying to protect the children, were in a critical condition. Merseyside Police said the attack was not believed to be terrorism-related. Page 9

### Maduro 're-elected'

Venezuela's electoral council, loyal to the regime, yesterday officially proclaimed President Nicolas Maduro the winner of elections whose results are rejected by the opposition and questioned internationally. Page 5

### Don't bomb Beirut: US

The United States is leading a diplomatic dash to deter Israel from striking Lebanon's capital Beirut or major civil infrastructure in response to a deadly rocket attack on the Golan Heights. Washington is racing to avert a full-blown war between Israel and the Iranian-backed Lebanese movement Hezbollah. The focus of the high-speed diplomacy has been to constrain Israel's response by urging it against targeting densely populated Beirut, the southern suburbs of the city that form Hezbollah's heartland, or key infrastructure like airports and bridges.

### Lebanon on alert

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday vowed a "severe" response to a deadly strike that killed youths in the annexed Golan Heights, as diplomats raced to contain escalation between Israel and Hezbollah. Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib said a flurry of diplomatic activity has sought to contain the anticipated Israeli response.

## MoEHE launches 'Talib' chatbot to support students

QNA  
Doha

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) inaugurated yesterday, the smart assistant tool 'Talib', the advanced chatbot that provides immediate support and quick intelligent responses to all queries from students, parents, and the entire public in both Arabic and English languages.



HE Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi

Following the inauguration of the tool, HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi, affirmed that the digital transformation process in education is rapidly evolving at multiple levels, prompting Qatar to proactively keep up with these evolutions, in pursuit of meeting the current requirements, thus achieving maximum benefits from these groundbreaking innovations.

He added that the innovations will largely have a salient role in envisioning the future and broadening new horizons of the constant advancement, as MoEHE

embarks on achieving these advancements within its strategies of Qatar National Vision 2030. Addressing the inauguration ceremony, he noted the rapid steps in leveraging the cutting-edge technologies in education through utilising AI technologies, in support of the educational process, since AI offers massive potentials to streamline the procedures for all those working in education, as well as students and the public, something that helps take a combination of additional steps when setting and crafting advancement plans at all levels. To Page 2

## Paris Olympics: Qatar beat Sweden in beach volleyball



Qatar's Cherif Younousse (left) and Ahmed Tijan celebrate after defeating Sweden's David Ahman and Jonatan Hellvig in the beach volleyball preliminary phase match at the Paris Olympics at Eiffel Tower Stadium yesterday. The Qatari pair, who won bronze at the Tokyo Games three years ago, are top of Group A with two wins out of two matches. Sport Page 1

## Netanyahu 'stalling' Gaza truce deal

AFP  
Doha

Palestinian resistance movement Hamas yesterday again accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of delaying a Gaza ceasefire and hostage exchange deal. It said he had set new conditions that mark a "retreat" from an earlier draft.

The statement came after Egyptian, Qatari and US mediators met with Israeli negotiators in Rome on Sunday as international pressure for a ceasefire grows after more than nine months of war. US President Joe Biden outlined in late May what he called an Israeli initiative for a truce and hostage release deal, and this has become the basis for subsequent talks. A source said Israel had "moved

the goalposts" with three new requests. Yesterday Netanyahu's office said "Hamas leadership is preventing an agreement" and denied Israel had made changes to the draft outline. The source said Israel had requested its forces remain in the Philadelphi corridor, a 14-km stretch along the Gaza-Egypt border, and that it controls the return of displaced Gaza civilians to the north of the Palestinian territory.

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## Interior minister holds talks with French counterpart



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## Interior minister visits seat of Qatari security force at Paris Olympics



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani visited the seat of the Qatari security force participating in securing the 33rd Summer Olympic Games (Paris 2024). During the visit, HE the minister met with a number of officials and security leaders participating in securing the Paris Olympics, and was briefed on the efforts of the force, and the progress of work in the main operations centre for Olympic Games security. (QNA)

## Amir issues decisions appointing new ambassadors

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani issued yesterday four Amiri decisions appointing new ambassadors extraordinary and plenipotentiary. Amiri Decision No 56 of 2024 appoints Mohamed Hamad Saad al-Fuhaid al-Hajri as ambassador to Azerbaijan. Amiri Decision No 57 of 2024 appoints Abdullah Ibrahim Abdulrahman Sultan al-Hamar as ambassador to Germany. Amiri Decision No 58 of 2024 appoints Yousef bin Sultan Yousef Sultan Laram as ambassador to Cyprus. Amiri Decision No 59 of 2024 appoints Saad Abdullah Saad al-Mahmoud al-Sharif as ambassador to Iran. The decisions are effective starting from its date of issue and are to be published in the official gazette. (QNA)

## Amir congratulates Venezuelan president on his re-election

In a post on his official X account, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani congratulated Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on his reelection for a third presidential term, wishing him success and a continuous path of development and for the friendly people of Venezuela further progress, peace and prosperity, while expressing his aspirations for joint work to enhance bilateral relations in all fields.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on his reelection for a new presidential term, wishing him success and bilateral relations further development and prosperity. 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 also sent similar cables of congratulations to President Maduro. (QNA)

# Chinese PLA anniversary marked in Doha

By Ayman Adly  
Staff Reporter

The Chinese embassy in Doha yesterday marked the 97th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Liberation Army in an event attended by several officials, diplomats, heads of other diplomatic missions to Qatar, and a number of Qatari officials.

The event was hosted by the Chinese ambassador Cao Xiaolin and defence attaché Senior Colonel Yang Yongzhi. Among the chief guests from the Qatari Ministry of Defence were General Khalifa Bu Jalouf, Amiri Air Force's Human Resources and Education Commander Brigadier General Khalifa Ahmed al-Ammari, Airlift Group Commander Lt Col Hamad Shaheen al-Madeed, Director of Defence and Security Agreements and Conventions Directorate, and Lt Col Abdulrahman al-Dosary, from the International Affairs Directorate.

The ceremony featured a short

documentary on the development and various achievements of the Chinese Liberation Army and its successes in various local, regional and global missions in co-operation with friendly nations and world organisations.

Senior Colonel Yongzhi delivered a speech highlighting the peaceful missions of the Chinese Army and its role in the world humanitarian and rescue efforts among others. He also stressed the strong and friendly Qatar-China relations over the past years on all levels and in the defence and security fields in particular.

He said: "This year marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Qatar strategic partnership. In the past 10 years, President Xi Jinping and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani have met five times, and agreed to deepen the China-Qatar strategic partnership. Under the strategic guidance of the two heads of state, China-Qatar relations have shown a comprehensive and rapid development



Chinese defence attaché Senior Colonel Yang Yongzhi addressing the gathering.

momentum. China has been Qatar's largest trading partner and export destination for four consecutive years."

He stressed that "the military relations between China and Qatar have also continued to develop in a healthy and stable manner and

achieved positive results. At the end of 2023, the 44th People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy escort fleet visited Doha, and Lieutenant General Jing Jianfeng, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission, visited Qatar.



Chinese ambassador Cao Xiaolin and defence attaché Senior Colonel Yang Yongzhi are joined by other dignitaries in cutting a ceremonial cake on the occasion. PICTURES: Thajudheen

In the beginning of 2024, a PLA Navy delegation visited Doha. In May this year, HE Dr Khalid bin Mohamed al-Attiyah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs, visited China, and the PLA National Defence University delega-

tion visited Qatar. In addition, the co-operation between China and Qatar in military training and defence industry is also expanding and deepening. We believe that the prospects for China-Qatar military co-operation are promising in the future."

## MoEHE launches 'Talib' chatbot to support students

From Page 1

HE al-Nuaimi highlighted that designating the smart assistant tool as 'Talib' came to ensure that students are the lynchpin of education, who account for the largest segment in education, pointing out that such a tool is one of the steadfast steps being pursued by MoEHE in leveraging AI in its entire systems and services.

Speaking to the journalists, HE Dr al-Nuaimi asserted that MoEHE strives to keep abreast of all AI technological advancements as part of its strategic plan for digital transformation, like other state ministries and bodies, highlighting that it employs more than one programme and project, chiefly the accomplishment of the smart assistant tool to assist students, parents and the entire public, and provide them with the required answers to their queries promptly. Should the answer not be available, the inquiry will be directed to the relevant department within the ministry. MoEHE is pleased to listen to the public's feedback on this important service, which saves time and effort and allows for constant and optimized communication.

He revealed that MoEHE is due to organise the Gulf Cybersecurity



Forum 2024, in October, alongside a variety of activities relevant to this topic, pointing out that the upcoming academic year 2024-2025 will see expansion in schools by inaugurating several professional schools. For her part, Director of the Information Systems Department at MoEHE Dr Mona Salem al-Fadhli, affirmed that the department is committed to moving forward in keeping up with cutting-edge technologies and reinventing its tools within its digital systems, pointing out that the digital transformation strategy's items comprise leveraging AI technologies, business intelligence and virtual reality technologies in a way that achieves the goals of this strategy, while aligning at the

same time with Qatar's Digital Transformation Strategy 2030. Dr al-Fadhli asserted that MoEHE has achieved many gains through upgrading an integrated system of digital services and applying them through using cutting-edge software technologies to be specifically customized for activating AI and future technologies. She highlighted that the inauguration of AI-powered Talib on MoEHE website ushers in a new era of optimal goal by accomplishing AI-powered systems and services, in pursuit of keeping up with technological advancements, pointing out that the IT department is currently mulling numerous solutions in AI field, which are expected to debut in the near future.

## Qatar participates in session of Arab committee for human rights

QNA  
Cairo

Qatar is participating in the 54th ordinary session of the Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights that commenced at the General Secretariat of the Arab League in Cairo yesterday and will run for three days.

The state was represented by a delegation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by ambassador Dr Turki bin Abdulla al-Mahmoud. In his speech at the meeting, Dr al-Mahmoud highlighted the importance of the session's agenda, especially regarding the unprecedented Israeli violations against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, praising the efforts of the General Secretariat of the Arab League and the Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights for organising this important meeting.

He reaffirmed Qatar's condemnation of the Israeli violations and racist practices in the occupied Arab territories, particularly attacks against civilians, stressing



the need to adhere to international humanitarian law and protect civilians from the serious violations to which they are continuously subjected in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The session will address the Israeli occupation forces' severe assaults in the occupied Palestinian territories, amidst the ongoing onslaught on the Gaza Strip, and Israel, the occupying power, holding back the bodies of martyrs. It will also follow up on the outcomes of the recent Arab Summit in Manama concerning the guarantee of the right to health and the right to education during armed conflicts.

The 54th ordinary session of

the Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights will also discuss the topic of artificial intelligence (AI) and human rights, particularly the matter of AI ethics and ways to address the challenges posed by this technology to the optimal enjoyment of human rights. Furthermore, the 2025 Arab Human Rights Day logo will be approved and observed annually on March 16.

The Permanent Arab Committee for Human Rights will submit its recommendations to the next regular session (162) of the Arab League Council at the ministerial level for consideration and adoption in September.

# HIA clocks 25.9mn passengers in H1, rises 25% on first half of 2023

Hamad International Airport welcomed 25.9mn passengers in the first half of 2024, a 25% increase compared to the first half of 2023. Additionally, HIA's aircraft movement has grown by 19% in the first half of 2024 (to 138,471 aircraft movements), total number of bags handled by 19% (20.92mn) and cargo operations by 12% (1.24mn tonnes of cargo), in comparison to the first half of 2023, Hamad International Airport said in a release yesterday.

This includes a 22.1% increase in point-to-point passengers compared to the same period last year. Point-to-point refers to the passengers flying directly into and out of Doha, reflecting significant growth in the number of airline partners operating from the airport, and the flourishing tourism sector in Qatar.



Hamad International Airport expanded its network this year by welcoming new airline partners, including Japan Airlines, Garuda Indonesia, China Southern Airlines, and Akasa Air.

This is in addition to Iberia, Xiamen Airlines and Vistara joining the airport's network late last year. This expansion underscores the airport's commitment to enhancing connectivity and providing

more travel options for passengers and has significantly boosted tourism, fostered trade relationships and fortified business ties between Qatar and the global community.

Hamad International Airport experienced a notable 12% growth in cargo operations, in terms of cargo tonnage, compared to the same period last year. The demand from and to the Middle East experienced a remarkable 45.3% growth, driven by the recovery of airline operations between GCC countries, particularly the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain.

Traffic to and from Europe grew by 32.8%, supported by the launch of new destinations and increased capacity to existing destinations from Qatar Airways as well as the commencement of services by Spain's Iberia in late 2023. The

Asian-Pacific region had a considerable growth of 20.9% as well, bolstered by the addition of four new airlines from the region – including Chinese carrier Xiamen Airlines – which began operations in late 2023. Qatar Airways further expanded its capacity in key Asian markets such as in Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam – while also introducing new routes to Cambodia, Central Asia, and other Asian cities.

London emerged as the top destination, with Qatar Airways serving both London Heathrow Airport and London Gatwick Airport. Other popular destinations included Bangkok, Dubai, Jeddah and Colombo. Hamad International Airport projects a further increase in passenger traffic in the second half (H2) of 2024.



Having reached the 50mn passenger per year mark earlier this year, HIA forecasts it will surpass this milestone by the year end, underscoring Qatar's airport's robust position as a leading global aviation hub.



## Qatar Charity launches health and educational projects in Somalia

Qatar Charity (QC) has implemented a series of pioneering educational and health projects in Galmudug State of Somalia. Many high-level government officials and social figures attended the inauguration ceremony.

Galmudug State's Education Minister Mohamed Hashi Dhore, praised the modern schools project implemented by QC in the region, emphasising its importance in building a new generation of scholars and leaders.

The project included the construction of three new fully equipped schools. Galmudug State's Minister of Health Abdullahi Jama lauded the pivotal role played by QC in improving the health situation in



Somalia by building and equipping numerous health centres. Director of QC's office in Somalia, Abdel Fattah Adam Moal-

lem, pointed out that each school accommodates about 192 students and has all facilities and green spaces, a statement added.

## 11 graduates conferred Podcast Diploma at Al Jazeera Institute

Al Jazeera Media Institute celebrated the graduation of a new group of trainees in the second edition of Podcast Diploma, where eleven participants successfully passed the intensive training programme.

The ceremony was attended by Al Jazeera Media Institute staff and family members of trainees who came to celebrate their success in the 18-day diploma.

During the ceremony, Hamad al-Houl al-Marri, Director of Planning and Projects Department at Al Jazeera Institute, praised the trainees' efforts, expressing his pride in the level of creativity they have shown throughout the training period and the output of the diploma, wishing them success and excellence in their upcoming projects.

In alumni speech, Ali al-Kuwari said: "Today, we feel happy and proud of what we have achieved in this training programme, and we are proud to be part of this distinguished



diploma in which we acquired skills and expertise necessary to produce professional podcast content.

The programme included many specialised training materials, such as script preparation, recording and audio editing techniques in addition to marketing and distribution strategies for podcasts. For sure, these skills will give us more opportunities to achieve our goals in this beautiful world.

A selected group of trainers

led the training for this diploma, namely trainer Ibrahim Arab, journalist Aseel Abdel Hamid, producer Yusra al-Askhri, journalist Mohamed Armash, photographer Fahd al-Kaabi, engineer Hamdi Aoun and expert Mahmoud al-Najjar.

This training programme comes within the framework of Al Jazeera Media Institute's commitment to enhance media skills and upgrading creativity and communication levels in the digital media sector.

## New Karwa kiosk offers multiple services



Karwa Academy director Faisal al-Nuaimi

By Shafeeq Alingal  
Staff Reporter



The new Karwa kiosk at Doha Festival City. PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

Mowasalat (Karwa) has opened its new permanent kiosk at Doha Festival City, offering a seamless experience of multiple services. The second such kiosk by Karwa provides guidance for Karwa Public Transport, Karwa Taxi, Doha Limousine, and Karwa Academy services.

On the sidelines of the opening on Thursday, Karwa Academy director Faisal al-Nuaimi told *Gulf Times* that the new kiosk reflects Karwa's commitment to reaching out to the public while providing

hassle-free services.

"This is part of Karwa's endeavours and strategic approach to connect with the public directly and engage with them more effectively. We are trying to increase the accessibility to Karwa services. People can come and get to know about our services directly instead of checking our website and going to our institutions," al-Nuaimi said.

At the kiosk, the services of Karwa's public transportation and taxi services can be booked where-

as the learners can book their slots to join the Karwa Academy for training. "They need no more to go to our academy or offices to avail or query about our services," al-Nuaimi said.

In 2023, Karwa launched its first kiosk at Villaggio Mall. Al-Nuaimi explained that the new kiosk is based on the good response the company is receiving from its first kiosk. Al-Nuaimi said two more kiosks will soon open at LuLu Hypermarket D Ring Road Branch and City Center Doha.

## QRDI Council launches Mumaken programme for RDI enabling tools

The Qatar Research, Development and Innovation (QRDI) Council has launched the Mumaken Programme, a comprehensive training initiative designed for RDI policymakers and individuals within RDI-supporting entities.

The programme aims to equip participants with essential knowledge, key RDI enabling tools, and practical skills to support the design of national and institutional RDI-related policies, strategies and blueprints.

Nejoud al-Jehami, senior director, Policy Planning and Evaluation, QRDI Council, commented: "We have designed Mumaken programme to address key areas for cultivating Qatar's RDI ecosystem via three distinct tracks, aligning with the objectives of the Qatar National Vision 2030 and Qatar's third National Development Strategy."

She added: "By partnering with various local and international experts and offering a blend of lectures, interactive workshops, case studies, and group discussions, we ensure participants gain the necessary skills to support building a well-regulated, well-governed and well-orchestrated innovation ecosystem across Qatar and represent our country as a global hub for innovation and talent."

The Mumaken programme offers three specialised tracks namely: Track (A) is intellectual property and Technology Transfer. This



The programme aims to support the design of national and institutional RDI-related policies.

track provides participants with a thorough understanding of intellectual property (IP) management and the mechanisms of technology transfer.

Track (B) – Science and Technology regulations – familiarises participants with the regulatory landscape affecting science and technology initiatives.

Track (C) is Tools and methods for RDI policy design and evaluation which equips participants with the tools and methodologies required for effective RDI policy design and evaluation.

In partnership with the Malaysian Industry-Government for Higher Technology (MIGHT), the QRDI Council concluded its first training sessions under Track (C) last month. Held from June 5 to

June 13, the training focused on strategic foresight with a hands-on approach to utilising various tools and methods such as Horizon Scanning, Wind Tunnelling, and Scenario Analysis.

This training session marked a significant milestone in the Mumaken Programme. Participants in the seven-day training included representatives from government ministries, higher education institutions, and QRDI Council.

QRDI Council collaborates with various international partners to deliver highly impactful sessions across all three tracks of the Mumaken Programme. These efforts are in line with the QRDI 2030 Strategy and are aimed at facilitating the implementation of the Third National Development Strategy.



# Arado holds forum on digital transformation in Istanbul

**QNA**  
Istanbul

The activities of the “Digital Transformation and its Role in Improving Institutional Performance and Serving Citizens” forum, which is held by the Arab Administrative Development Organisation (Arado), affiliated with the Arab League, kicked off yesterday in the Turkish city of Istanbul over three days.

In his speech at the opening of the forum, Arado Director-General Nasser al-Hattlan al-Qahtani said the forum aims to shed light on the importance of digital transformation and its impact on institutional performance and citizen service, in addition to reviewing global trends and recent developments in this field and identifying the most important challenges of



digital transformation and ways to overcome them.

Al-Hattlan added that the fo-

rum also aims to identify the tools and technologies used in the digital transformation proc-



ess, in addition to discussing how to improve the performance of institutions through information and communications technology and highlighting the importance of digitisation and digital innovations that contribute to improving the citizen's experience in interacting with government services and institutions.

In a statement, Arado said that the forum addresses several topics in this regard, including global trends and recent developments in the field of digital transformation, reviewing the most important challenges facing the digital transformation process and ways to overcome them, in addition to



the tools and technologies used in the digital transformation process, and ways to improve the per-

formance of institutions through information and communications technology.

# Displaced Gazans struggle with disease, lack of shelter

**Reuters**  
Cairo/Deir al-Balah

Thousands of Palestinians fled a community in the central Gaza Strip yesterday in the face of new Israeli evacuation orders, worsening the humanitarian plight in an area already inundated with displaced people fleeing an assault in the south.

Israeli forces, which have now captured nearly the entire Gaza Strip in nearly 10 months of war, have spent the last several weeks launching major operations in areas where they had previously claimed to have uprooted Hamas fighters.

Hundreds of thousands of people have converged on Deir Al-Balah, a small city in the centre of the enclave that is the only major area yet to be stormed, many



A Palestinian girl with a skin disease looks on as she receives treatment at Nasser hospital, amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

forced there by fighting in the ruins of Khan Younis further south since last week.

In its latest assault, Israel ordered residents on Sunday to flee Al-Bureij, just northeast of Deir.

“What is left? Deir? Deir is full of people. Everyone is in Deir. All of Gaza. Where should people go?” Aya Mansour told Reuters in Deir after fleeing from Bureij.

The Israeli military said fighter jets hit 35 targets across the Gaza Strip over the past day as troops battled fighters in Khan Younis and Rafah, close to the border with Egypt. The armed wings of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said fierce gun battles have been ongoing in those two areas as well as in the suburb of Tel Al-Hawa in Gaza City further north.

Palestinian medical officials said at least eight Palestinians were killed in an Israeli air strike earlier in Khan Younis.

On Sunday, the military issued new evacuation orders to some districts in Bureij, forcing thousands to leave before the army blew up several houses. Some families used donkey carts and rickshaws to carry whatever belongings remained. Many walked for several km on foot to reach Deir or Al-Zawayda town to the west.

Philippe Lazzarini, head of UN-RWA, the United Nations relief agency for Palestinians, said only 14% of the Gaza Strip had not been placed under evacuation orders by the Israeli military. People have been forced to evacuate repeatedly, often with only a few hours notice.

Aid worker Tamer al-Burai in Deir said water in Deir was becoming more difficult to get as more and more displaced people arrived, both from Khan Younis to the south and Bureij to the north.

# Iran's new president warns Israel against attacking Lebanon

**AFP**  
Tehran

Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian yesterday warned Israel against attacking Lebanon as tensions soar over a deadly rocket strike in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights blamed on Hezbollah.

“The Zionist regime (Israel) will make a great mistake with heavy consequences if it attacks Lebanon,” Pezeshkian said during a call with French President Emmanuel Macron, according to the Iranian president's website.

Pezeshkian assumed official responsibilities on Sunday after official endorsement from Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and is to be sworn in to parliament today.

Israel vowed to hit back after the strike on a football field in Majdal Shams, a Druze Arab town in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, killed 12 youths on Saturday.

Israel accused Lebanon's Hezbollah movement of being responsible for the strike, which the group denies.

Pezeshkian, in his phone call with Macron, accused Israel of violating “all the international frameworks and laws” in its “crimes” against Palestinians.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani on Sunday warned Israel that any new military “adventures” in Lebanon could lead to “unforeseen consequences” and “the broadening of the scope of instability, insecurity, and war in the region”.

## 36 Uganda opposition party members charged with 'terrorism': lawyer

Ugandan authorities have charged 36 members of an opposition party with “terrorism” after they were deported from neighbouring Kenya, one of their lawyers said yesterday, denouncing a “witch hunt”, AFP reported from Kampala. The members of the Forum for Democratic Change party (FDC) were arrested in Kenya and charged with what lawyer Erias Lukwago called an “absurd abuse” of a legal procedure by the Ugandan authorities. “This is an absurd abuse of a judicial process to witch-hunt and torment opposition supporters,” the lawyer said, claiming that the FDC members had travelled to Kisumu, Kenya, to attend a training seminar. The Ugandan police announced their arrests in a press release, saying, without giving further details, that they were “engaged in covert activities suspected to be subversive, drawing the attention of Kenyan security forces”. According to the police, the opposition members were handed over to the Ugandan authorities on July 24.

## Royal Jordanian, Lufthansa, Air France suspend flights to Beirut

Jordan's flag carrier Royal Jordanian has suspended flights to Beirut yesterday and today, Jordanian Television reported, citing a statement from the airline yesterday. Reuters reported. The airline said it was continuing to evaluate flights scheduled for today. The move came as tensions escalated between Israel and the armed political group Hezbollah after a strike in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights killed 12 children and teenagers. The Jordanian foreign ministry called on its citizens to avoid travelling to Lebanon in a statement later. The statement also urged Jordanian citizens in Lebanon to exercise the utmost caution and stay away from areas of tension. Air France and the German airline group Lufthansa also said

yesterday they were suspending flights to Beirut after Israel threatened reprisals for a deadly rocket strike launched from Lebanon, AFP reported from Beirut. Lufthansa services would be halted up to and including August 5 due to “current developments in the Middle East”, a group spokesman said. Air France and its low-cost subsidiary Transavia France meanwhile said that flights between French airports and Beirut would be suspended yesterday and today because of the “security situation” in Lebanon. Israel has said it would retaliate after rocket fire launched from neighbouring Lebanon killed 12 young people in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights on Saturday.

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**POLICY**  
**South Africa's ANC expels former president Zuma**

Former South African president Jacob Zuma has been expelled from the African National Congress (ANC) after backing a rival party in May's parliamentary election, the ANC said yesterday, Reuters reported from Johannesburg. Zuma was suspended from his long-time party in January after announcing he would support the new uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in the general election. He later became the leader and face of MK. MK did better than expected in the poll and won about 15% of the vote, a major factor in the ANC's loss of its majority for the first time since the apartheid era.

**CRIME**  
**Teacher shot and killed at SA school**

A South African teacher was killed in front of her primary school students near the coastal city of Durban, in the latest incident to shock the crime-ridden nation, local authorities said yesterday, AFP reported from Johannesburg. The 46-year-old was called out of her classroom by two gunmen and shot dead on the spot as she stepped out, according to the provincial government. The education department in Durban's KwaZulu-Natal province said it was “deeply distressed to confirm that a female educator was tragically shot and killed”. It called for a speedy probe “to ensure justice is served”.

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# Biden calls for US Supreme Court overhaul

AFP/Reuters  
Washington

US President Joe Biden has unveiled plans to reform the conservative-dominated Supreme Court, in a bold but long shot bid to make a mark with his last six months in power.

In proposals backed by Vice-President Kamala Harris, the presumptive Democratic election nominee, Biden called for 18-year term limits for the top court's justices and an enforceable ethics code.

The 81-year-old also wants a constitutional amendment to reverse the court's recent ruling backing Republican nominee and former president Donald Trump's claims of presidential immunity.

Biden told reporters that the Supreme Court "needs reform" as he left the White House to head for Austin, Texas where he will give a speech on his plans.

The president's move comes after a series of shock Supreme Court decisions – such as the 2022 repeal of the nationwide

right to abortion – and following a host of scandals involving the top court's lifetime-appointed justices.

The plans have almost no hope of getting through a deeply divided US Congress but could motivate Democratic voters in the November 2024 election, from which Biden dropped out just over a week ago.

He separately said in an opinion piece in the *Washington Post* that his proposals would reflect that "no one is above the law".

"What is happening now is not normal, and it undermines the public's confidence in the court's decisions, including those impacting personal freedoms," Biden said in the piece.

He had confirmed that he would seek the reforms during an Oval Office address last week outlining his priorities for his remaining months in the White House.

Harris said in a separate statement that both she and Biden were "calling on Congress" to pass the reforms.

"These popular reforms will help to restore confidence in the Court, strengthen

our democracy, and ensure no one is above the law," she said.

Republicans, who control the House of Representatives, declared Biden's Supreme Court plans "dead on arrival".

House Speaker Mike Johnson said the proposal would "tilt the balance of power and erode not only the rule of law, but the American people's faith in our system of justice".

Legal expert Steven Schwinn warned that Biden had a "close to zero" chance of getting the plan through.

However, Biden was probably trying to "raise public consciousness" and "introduce the Supreme Court as an election issue", Schwinn, a law professor at the University of Illinois Chicago, told AFP.

The Supreme Court, with a 6-3 conservative majority, plays an outsize role in determining the lives of ordinary Americans from everything from reproductive health to the environment.

Trump appointed three justices during his 2017-2021 presidency and Democrats have warned that with a second term he

would be able to name even more.

Biden, who earlier in his presidency convened a commission to study Supreme Court changes, has appointed one of the nine justices, Ketanji Brown Jackson.

Biden had previously resisted calls to overhaul the court but has changed his mind after it dealt several blows to his policies in recent years.

The court stunned the world when it overturned the 1973 *Roe v Wade* ruling that had underpinned the federal right to abortion.

At least 20 states have now brought in full or partial abortion bans.

The court in recent years has expanded gun rights and rejected race-conscious collegiate admissions, as well as blocking Biden's agenda on immigration, student loans, coronavirus (Covid-19) vaccine mandates and climate change.

It has rolled back the power of federal agencies, blocked Biden's signature student debt forgiveness plan, and partially ruled earlier this month in favour of Trump's immunity claims.

Trump is now using that ruling to challenge his recent criminal conviction in a hush money case and a series of other prosecutions.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has been rocked by ethics scandals involving arch-conservative justices.

Justice Clarence Thomas recently admitted that two luxury vacations he took in 2019 were paid for by a billionaire Republican political donor.

Thomas, the longest-service justice on the court, has also ignored calls to recuse himself from cases related to the 2020 election, after his wife took part in the campaign to keep Trump in power despite his electoral loss.

And Justice Samuel Alito has rejected calls to recuse himself from some Trump-related cases after flags linked to the former president's false election fraud claims were discovered to have been flown outside his home and vacation property.

Unlike other members of the federal judiciary, Supreme Court justices have no binding ethics code.

## Protests erupt in Venezuela following election

AFP  
Caracas

Protests erupted in Venezuela's capital yesterday as the regime deflected charges that it had rigged an election win for President Nicolas Maduro that the opposition has disputed and many in the international community have questioned.

Hundreds of people poured onto the streets of Caracas chanting: "Freedom, freedom!" and "This government is going to fall!"

Several were seen ripping Maduro campaign posters from street posts and burning them.

Maduro, 61, attended a meeting yesterday where the National Electoral Council (CNE) certified his re-election to a third six-year term from 2025-2031.

At the event, he dismissed international criticism and doubts about the result, claiming that Venezuela was the target of an attempted "coup d'etat" of a "fascist and counter-revolutionary" nature.

Attorney-General Tarek William Saab linked opposition leader Maria Corina Machado to an

alleged hacking "attack" to "adulterate" the results.

The elections were held on Sunday amid widespread fears of fraud and a campaign tainted by accusations of political intimidation.

Pollsters had predicted a resounding victory for the opposition despite institutions loyal to the regime barring the popular Machado from participating.

In the early hours of yesterday, the CNE said Maduro had won 51.2% of votes cast compared to 44.2% for Machado's proxy, Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia.

The opposition cried foul, saying it had taken at least two-thirds of the vote.

"Depressed. Disappointed. Humiliated," Giovanni Inglese, a 65-year-old man who guards cars for a living, told AFP Monday of his state of mind. He was convinced the outcome had been "manipulated," he added.

The result sparked concern over irregularities from the United Nations, United States, European Union and several countries in Latin America, although many of Venezuela's allies congratulated Maduro.

Opposition leader Machado said that the

election was "another fraud".

Despite the official result, she said: "Venezuela has a new president-elect and it is Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia."

Nine Latin American countries called in a joint statement yesterday for a "complete review of the results with the presence of independent electoral observers".

The US-based Carter Centre, one of a few organisations allowed to bring observers into Venezuela, urged the CNE to immediately publish detailed polling station-level results.

Brazil and Colombia also urged a review of the numbers while Chile's president said the outcome was "hard to believe".

Peru recalled its ambassador and Panama said it was suspending relations with Caracas.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed "serious concerns" while European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged "transparency".

Maduro received congratulations from allies China, Russia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Honduras and Bolivia, and Mexico said it would recognise the result.

## Harris campaign raises \$200mn in one week

Reuters  
Washington

Kamala Harris's election campaign said yesterday that it has raised \$200mn and signed up 170,000 new volunteers in the week since she became the Democratic Party's presidential candidate, as Republicans continued to hammer Harris over her work as vice-president.

President Joe Biden ended his re-election bid on July 21 and endorsed Harris for the November 5 vote against Republican former president Donald Trump.

"In the week since we got started, @KamalaHarris has raised \$200 million dollars. 66% of that is from new donors. We've signed up 170,000 new volunteers," Harris' deputy campaign manager, Rob Flaaherty, posted on X.

Polls over the past week, including one by Reuters/Ipsos, show Harris and Trump essentially tied, setting the stage for a close-fought campaign over the 100 days left until the election.

Trump's campaign said in early July that it raised \$331mn in the second quarter, topping the \$264mn that Biden's campaign and its Democratic allies raised in the same period.

Trump's campaign had \$284.9mn in cash on hand at the end of June while the Democratic campaign had \$240mn in cash on hand at the time.

Harris has secured support from a majority of delegates to the Democratic National Convention, likely ensuring she will become the party's nominee for president next month.

"So our vice-president is the presumptive nominee. We will have the official vote on August 1," Democratic National Committee chair Jaime Harrison told MSNBC yesterday.

Biden withdrew from the race amid questions about his age and health following a faltering debate performance against Trump in late June.

Biden pledged to remain in office as president until his term ends on January 20, 2025.

Harris's takeover has reenergised a campaign that had faltered badly amid Democrats' doubts about Biden's chances of defeating Trump or his ability to continue to govern had he won.

Polls showed that Trump had built a lead over Biden, including in battleground states, after Biden's disastrous debate performance, but Harris's entry to the race has changed the dynamic.

A *New York Times*/Siena College national poll published on Thursday found Harris has narrowed what had been a sizeable Trump lead while Trump had a two percentage point lead over her in a *Wall Street Journal* poll published on Friday.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll published on July 23 showed a two point lead for Harris.

## Park Fire grows to California's sixth largest

Reuters  
Los Angeles

Thousands of firefighters battling a massive northern California wildfire were working in milder temperatures and higher humidity yesterday, but the blaze that has destroyed more than 100 structures since it began five days ago continues to grow.

The Park Fire, which officials said was started by a man who pushed a flaming car into a gully, grew slightly overnight to 368,000 acres (148,924 hectares).

The sixth largest wildfire in state history is rolling through a remote area some 180 miles (290km) northeast of San Francisco, according to Cal Fire.

Crews were "still in for quite a firefight today, just because (of) the sheer magnitude and the sheer size of the fire", said Dan Collins, a Cal Fire captain, noting that temperatures were to be in the high 80s Fahrenheit with 25% humidity during the day.

Some 4,800 firefighters were building and strengthening control lines yesterday morning, hoping to increase the 12% they had contained.

The more favourable weather conditions compared to those they faced over the past several days were helping, Collins added.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said in a statement that the accused arson suspect,

Ronnie Dean Stout II, was jailed without bond on a Butte County judge's warrant after he was identified as the person seen pushing a flaming car into a gully on Wednesday afternoon.

The fire rapidly grew, doubling in size from Friday to Sunday and destroying at least 114 structures in four counties.

The fire has also caused officials to issue evacuation warnings and orders to several communities, including Paradise, the town that was devastated by the 2018 Camp Fire, the deadliest in the state's history.

Cal Fire also reported yesterday that 33% of the SQF Lightning Complex was contained.

That fire has raged for the past two weeks some 350 miles (563km) to the south of the Park Fire.

Part of that complex, dubbed the Borel Fire, swept through Havilah, torching much of that historic gold mining town on Friday.

The Park and Borel fires were just two of the 102 large active fires burning nationwide.

A total of 25 had forced evacuations as of morning yesterday, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

A cold front in the Pacific Northwest, where many of the fires burn, was forecast to bring rain and thunderstorms to the region.

However, the system will carry strong wind gusts of up to 50mph (80kph) that could hamper firefighting efforts, the centre said in a statement.



A firefighter monitors flames as the Park Fire burns near Paynes Creek, California. - Reuters

## Latino voters' concerns dull Democrats' edge against Trump

By Moises Avila  
AFP

A naturalised US citizen, Nicaraguan-born Linda Fornos believes uncontrolled immigration is harming her family's ability to care for itself, and says she will be casting her ballot for Donald Trump in November – having voted Democrat in 2020.

Latino voters represent the fastest-growing racial and ethnic group of eligible US voters, and one that traditionally has favoured the Democratic ticket in presidential elections.

However, polls show an increasing number of Latinos like Fornos switching allegiance – a trend that poses an enormous challenge for Vice-President Kamala Harris in the 100 days she has left to counter the lure of Trump and his hardline border policies.

Fornos, who has lived in the US for 16 years, addressed the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee in mid-July, making the case that the "Biden economy" had made life nearly impossible for her and her family.

"One of my sons works three jobs, and the other holds down two. That makes six jobs for three people just to survive in Biden's economy," she said. "Our open borders are making this problem worse."

She added: "It's upsetting to see million of

dollars being spent to help immigrants who came here illegally while hard-working families who did it the right way are left struggling"

Nearly 64mn people of Hispanic descent live in the United States, roughly 20% of the population, according to 2022 figures.

Thirty-six million of them are eligible to vote, according to the Pew Research Centre.

And of the estimated 16.5mn who voted in 2020, 59% supported the Democratic candidate, Joe Biden.

However, if some Democrats expected Trump's campaign vow of mass deportations of undocumented immigrants – or his denunciations of those migrants as rapists and criminals – to offend Latino voters, people like Fornos support him.

"The fact is that illegal immigration hurts legal immigrants the most," she said.

Democrats have seen their dominance among Latino voters steadily ebb, from a three-to-one edge in the 1970s to roughly two-to-one today, said Benjamin Marquez, a University of Wisconsin political scientist.

The Republican strategy now, he said, is not to win the Latino vote outright but to "shave off enough Latino votes" to prevail.

Jorge Martinez, a strategist with the conservative America First Policy Institute, says he expects the Republicans to do that – easily.

He predicted that Trump and running mate J

D Vance will win "the vast majority of the Hispanic vote".

Martinez told AFP that the policies of the first Trump administration brought prosperity and security to Latino voters.

Vanessa Faura, a naturalised Peruvian who also addressed the Republican convention, said Biden's policies had done the opposite.

In today's economy, she said, Latinos merely "survive", sometimes feeling no better off than in the countries they left.

The economy has proved a confounding issue for Democrats.

They regularly point out that the country is flourishing by many metrics.

However, even as the Biden administration has helped slow the soaring inflation of the Covid-19 days, prices are not returning to their pre-pandemic levels, leaving people feeling poorer.

Meanwhile, many Latinos, who are often Catholic, also feel better aligned with Republican cultural values.

And the children and grandchildren of Latino immigrants tend to enjoy better lives, getting better education and jobs than their forefathers, said Marquez.

So "with each successive generation, you see more sympathy toward the Republicans", and forgetfulness about "how your grandfather got here".

## World's forests failed to curb 2023 climate emissions, study finds

By Jake Spring  
Reuters

Forests and other land ecosystems failed to curb climate change in 2023 as intense drought in the Amazon rainforest and record wildfires in Canada hampered their natural ability to absorb carbon dioxide (CO2), according to a study presented yesterday.

That means a record amount of CO2 entered Earth's atmosphere last year, further feeding global warming.

Plant life helps to slow climate change by taking in huge amounts of CO2, the main greenhouse gas driving global warming.

Forests and other land ecosystems on average absorb nearly a third of annual emissions from fossil fuels, industry and other human causes.

However, in 2023, that carbon sink collapsed, according to study co-author Philippe Ciais of the Laboratory for Climate and Environmental Sciences (LSCE), a French research organisation.

"The sink is a pump, and we are pumping less carbon from the atmosphere into the land," he said in an interview. "Suddenly the pump is choking, and it's pumping less."

As a result, the growth rate of CO2 in the atmosphere jumped 86% in 2023 compared to 2022, the researchers said.

Scientists at Tsinghua University in

China, the University of Exeter in England and LSCE led the research into what caused the shift.

Their study was presented at the International Carbon Dioxide Conference in Manaus, Brazil.

A major driver was record high temperatures globally that dried out vegetation in the Amazon and other rainforests, preventing them from taking up more carbon while also fuelling record fires in Canada, the study found.

"Imagine your plants at home: If you don't water them, they're not very productive, they don't grow, they don't take up carbon," said Stephen Sitch, a study co-author and carbon expert at the University of Exeter.

"Put that on a big scale like the Amazon forest," Sitch told Reuters on the sidelines of the conference.

The study is still in the process of peer review with an academic journal, but three scientists who were not involved in the research told Reuters that its conclusions were sound.

They said that dips in land carbon sinks tend to happen in years affected by the El Nino climate phenomenon, like 2023.

However, the record high temperatures being driven by climate change made last year's dip particularly extreme.

Also, the consequences of the dip are more severe than in the past because humans are now causing the emission of more carbon dioxide than ever before.

The scientists cautioned that Earth's carbon sink varies widely year to year, and a single year alone will not spell doom.

However, it would be alarming if what was observed in 2023 becomes a trend, they added.

"This is a warning," said Richard Birdsey of Woodwell Climate Research Centre in the US, who was not involved in the study. "There's a good chance that years like 2023 are going to be more common."

The less carbon the land ecosystems absorb, the less fossil fuels the world can burn before humankind blows past global climate targets, said Anthony Walker, an ecosystem modeller at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in the United States who was not involved in the study.

QATAR

**ZULAL WELLNESS RESORT BY CHIVA-SOM PLANTS 200 NEW SEEDLINGS TO RE-ESTABLISH SHORELINE STABILIZATION AND SUPPORT BIODIVERSITY SURROUNDING THE PROPERTY**

To celebrate The International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem the team at Zual Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som planted more than 200 new mangrove seedlings.

The International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem is a UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) holiday celebrated every year on 26 July since 2016. Now in the eighth year, the day aims to raise awareness of the importance of mangrove ecosystems and to promote solutions for their sustainable management, conservation and use. Mangroves play a crucial role in stabilizing coastlines, supporting diverse wildlife, and serving as carbon sinks that mitigate climate change effects.

General Manager Holger Glaser said: "At Zual Wellness Resort, we are committed to environmental sustainability and the preservation of our natural resources. By planting 200 new mangrove seedlings, we endeavour to restore and expand the nature in Al Ruwais and in surrounding areas. We will continue to contribute and give back to the community in whatever part we can do. Especially in preserving and maintaining the valuable nature in a more sustainable way by fostering an eco-friendly mindset among our employees and guests."

In line with the UN's sustainable development goals, Sustainability is at the heart and soul of Zual Wellness Resort where the Qatari mangroves are honoured at the resort's dedicated mangrove education centre which teaches guests about the biological value of the mangrove ecosystem. Guests are invited to plant their own mangrove tree and learn about the importance of conservation. This activity is designed to deepen the knowledge of all guests, particularly to educate children on the importance on sustainability.

As a Chiva-Som property, Zual Wellness Resort believes that personal wellbeing goes hand-in-hand with



the health of the environment. Zual Wellness Resort is committed to sustainability and minimising environmental impact by lowering energy use, maximising sustainable resources, and recycling.

Mangroves play a vital role in protecting the coastal ecosystems they inhabit. They serve as a physical barrier to erosion and flooding; filter water, thereby improving its quality; and provide shelter to a diverse array of marine life. In the past half century, however, they have diminished rapidly worldwide due to coastal development and altered land use.

For further information, please visit website <https://www.zual.com/sustainability> or follow @zualwellnessresort on Facebook or Instagram. To send enquiries, please contact Zual team at [reservations@zual.com](mailto:reservations@zual.com).



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# Healthy Aging: An Art of Joyful Living

As we honor the wisdom and experience that come with age, it's essential to focus on accepting healthy aging. With advancements in healthcare and a better understanding of wellness, aging no longer needs to be associated with deterioration. Instead, it can be a period of vibrant health, activity, and fulfillment. Here, we explore practical steps and lifestyle choices that contribute to a healthier, more rewarding aging process.



**Dr. Noushad Ck**  
Global CEO  
Micro Health Laboratories &  
MicroCheck Home Healthcare Services

**Adopt a Balanced Diet:** A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats provides essential nutrients that support overall health. Incorporate foods high in antioxidants, such as berries, nuts, and leafy greens, to combat oxidative stress and inflammation. Staying hydrated and moderating intake of processed foods, sugars, and saturated fats can also help prevent chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.

**Commit to Regular Physical Exercise:** Engaging in activities like walking, swimming, or strength training can significantly improve cardiovascular health, maintain muscle mass, and enhance flexibility. Exercise also boosts mental health by releasing endorphins, "the feel-good" hormones which reduce stress and promote a positive outlook on life. Aim for regular exercise, combining aerobic activities with muscle-strengthening exercises each week.

**Stay Mentally Active:** Engaging in mentally stimulating activities like reading, puzzles, learning new skills, or even social interactions can keep the brain sharp. Consider joining clubs, attending workshops, or participating in community activities that challenge the mind and foster social connections. Lifelong learning and social engagement are key to maintaining cognitive vitality.

**Foster Social Connections:** Strong social ties have been linked to longer, healthier lives. Cultivating relationships with family, friends, and community members provides emotional support, reduces feelings of loneliness, and enhances quality of life. Participate in group activities, volunteer, or simply make time for regular social interactions. Building and maintaining a robust social network is essential for emotional well-being and resilience.

**Adopt a Positive Mindset:** Cultivating gratitude, practicing mindfulness, and setting realistic goals can enhance emotional health and foster a sense of purpose. Surround yourself with positivity, whether through uplifting books, inspirational people, or engaging in activities that bring joy. A hopeful and optimistic outlook can boost resilience and improve overall quality of life.

**Ensure Adequate Rest and Sleep:** Quality sleep is crucial for physical and mental health. Establish a regular sleep routine, create a restful environment, and avoid stimulants like caffeine and electronics before bedtime. Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep per night to support bodily functions, improve mood, and enhance cognitive performance. Good sleep hygiene is a fundamental component of healthy aging.

**Manage Stress Effectively:** Chronic stress can take a toll on health. Practice stress management techniques or engage in hobbies that relax and rejuvenate. Maintaining a balanced lifestyle, seeking professional help when needed, and prioritizing self-care can reduce stress levels and improve overall well-being.

**Focus on Preventive Healthcare:** Regular check-ups and screenings are essential for early detection and management of health conditions. Stay up-to-date with vaccinations, and follow medical advice for managing chronic conditions. Preventive care, including routine blood pressure checks, cholesterol tests, and cancer screenings, can catch potential issues before they become serious. Work closely with healthcare providers to create a personalized plan that addresses specific health needs.

**Conclusion:** Aging is a natural and beautiful part of life that can be adopted with vitality and grace. By prioritizing physical activity, nutrition, mental engagement, social connections, preventive healthcare, a positive mindset, quality rest, and stress management, we can pave the way for a healthier and more fulfilling journey through our later years. Let's celebrate the aging process and take proactive steps to ensure that our golden years are vibrant, active, and enriched with joy and purpose.

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## OFFICIAL

**China's Xi and Italy's Meloni discuss conflicts**

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni discussed the war in Ukraine and the crisis in the Middle East at a meeting in Beijing yesterday, Meloni's office said. Meloni, whose country currently holds the rotating G7 presidency, stressed the importance of China as a partner in dealing with growing global insecurity during their talks. The two leaders addressed the "priority issues on the international agenda from the war in Ukraine to the risks of a further escalation of the situation in the Middle East. They also discussed the growing tensions in the Indo-Pacific," the Italian leader's office said in a statement.

## TRIAL

**Hong Kong pro-democracy activist convicted**

A Hong Kong court yesterday convicted pro-democracy activist Owen Chow and his solicitor Phyllis Woo of getting a complaint form meant for the ombudsman out of prison without authorisation last year. Chow, 27, and assistant solicitor Phyllis Woo, 30, were charged with "carrying an unauthorised article out of prison". Both earlier pleaded not guilty to the charge and decided that they would not testify or summon any witnesses. Chow is one of 14 convicted of conspiracy to commit subversion in a landmark national security case in May which drew international criticism. He faces up to life imprisonment.

## DISASTER

**Hundreds living in floodwater in Vietnam**

Hundreds of people are living submerged in floodwater in the suburbs of Hanoi, a week after torrential rains in northern Vietnam caused rivers to overflow their banks. Residents of Ben Voi village - around 40km from central Hanoi - are travelling through the streets by boat and sleeping in homes partially inundated by muddy water. "I cannot go anywhere, and neighbours are finding it difficult to come to my shop to buy things," Tran Thi Ly, who runs a convenience store from the ground floor of her home, said. Since early July, flooding and landslides have killed at least 18 people in the country's northern mountainous areas.

## COMMENT

**'Everything in progress' at new capital: Widodo**

Indonesia President Joko Widodo yesterday said "everything was still in progress" during a visit to the country's planned new capital, the flagship of his two terms in office but plagued by delays. The capital is due to move from traffic-clogged and sinking Jakarta to the planned city of Nusantara in East Kalimantan province, but the project is months - even years - behind schedule. Widodo was expected to attend a flag ceremony in Nusantara on August 17 to mark Indonesia's Independence Day and has invited VIPs including ambassadors and key investors to the event. But the overall project is way behind schedule.

# Lanka president fails to get backing of largest party for re-election

Reuters  
Colombo

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe yesterday failed to secure the backing of the biggest political party in parliament for his re-election bid, posing a major challenge to his prospects in the September 21 vote.

Nearly 17mn of Sri Lanka's 22mn population are eligible to cast ballots in the vote that is crucial to determine the future of reforms in the nation weathering its worst financial crisis in decades.

Of the various candidates, Wickremesinghe is seen as the most market- and reform-friendly option. He took over the top job in July 2022 as the economy crumbled under a severe financial crisis triggered by a record shortfall of foreign exchange reserves.

But with just one seat in parliament, he needs the support of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), which holds a parliamentary majority and counts former president Mahinda Rajapaksa and his brother as key members, to be a stronger contender.

Although the SLPP decision is a blow to Wickremesinghe, it does not take him out of the race entirely, as he is contesting as an independent candidate and a breakaway faction of the SLPP and other opposition parties could end up supporting him.

"The politburo decided by a significant majority that Sri Lanka

Podujana Peramuna will present a candidate under the SLPP party symbol," SLPP general secretary Salaga Kariyawasam told reporters after the party's politburo meeting.

The SLPP candidate would be announced in the next few days, Kariyawasam added.

There was no immediate comment from Wickremesinghe or his office in response to the SLPP decision.

A source in Wickremesinghe's United National Party said the outcome was expected.

"We are still expecting a group of SLPP members to support President Wickremesinghe as well as parliamentarians from minority parties," said the source with direct knowledge of the matter. "This allows us to build a broader coalition across different parties and ethnic lines."

Wickremesinghe's predecessor, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, was the first sitting president to be ousted from power after thousands of disgruntled protesters occupied his office and official residence forcing him to flee the country and later resign.

Over the past two years Wickremesinghe has overseen a fragile economic recovery securing a \$2.9bn International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout programme that helped stem a fall in the rupee, tame runaway inflation and rebuild dollar reserves.

Wickremesinghe also set the groundwork for Sri Lanka to start debt restructuring talks with its official creditors and bondholders.



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (centre) poses for photos with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong (second right), Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar (left), Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa (second left) and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (right) at the prime minister's office after the four ministers participated in their Quad meeting in Tokyo yesterday.

# Quad foreign ministers decry dangerous S China Sea actions

Reuters  
Tokyo

Foreign ministers from Australia, India, Japan and the US yesterday said they were seriously concerned about intimidating and dangerous manoeuvres in the South China Sea and pledged to bolster maritime security in the region.

The joint statement came after talks between the so-called 'Quad' countries in Tokyo, attended by Australia's Penny Wong, India's Subrahmanya Jaishankar, Japan's Yoko Kamikawa and Antony Blinken from the US.

In security talks between the US and Japan on Sunday, the two allies labelled China the "greatest strategic challenge" facing the region.

"We are seriously concerned about the situation in the East and South China Seas and reiterate our strong opposition to any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion," the ministers said in the statement, which did not directly mention China.

They also expressed serious concern about

the militarisation of disputed features and coercive and intimidating manoeuvres in the South China Sea, including dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels.

Asked about the statement at a regular news briefing yesterday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said the Quad was "artificially creating tension, inciting confrontation and containing the development of other countries".

Chinese vessels have repeatedly clashed with Philippine ships seeking to resupply its troops on the disputed Second Thomas Shoal in recent months, although the two countries in July reached a provisional agreement that aims to ease tensions.

The Quad group said they were working on a series of initiatives to maintain "the free and open maritime order" including helping partners improve domain awareness via satellite data, training and capacity building. They also announced a plan to set up a new maritime legal dialogue.

"We are charting a course for a more secure and open Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean region

by bolstering maritime security," Blinken said in remarks to reporters after the meeting.

"In practical terms what does this mean? It means strengthening the capacity of partners across the region to know what's happening in their own waters," he added.

He said the US would continue to work with its partners to ensure freedom of navigation and the unimpeded flow of lawful maritime commerce.

The US announced plans on Sunday for a major revamp of its military command in Japan. It was among several measures announced by the allies to address what they said was an "evolving security environment", noting various threats from China including its muscular maritime activities.

"Uncertainty surrounding the international order as well as the international situation has been increasing with Russia continuing its aggression in Ukraine, attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force in the East China Sea and South China Sea, and the launch of ballistic missiles by North Korea," Japan's Kamikawa said after the talks.

**N Korean leader's daughter is 'likely successor'**

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is grooming his teenage daughter as his successor to lead the nuclear-armed state, according to South Korean MPs briefed by Seoul's spy agency. The daughter, Kim Ju-ae, has been seen with her father at a variety of events, fuelling speculation that Kim Jong-un has chosen her as heir apparent to lead a fourth generation of hereditary rule by his family. MP Lee Seong-kweun said the National Intelligence Service has judged that she has been chosen as heir. "Pyongyang is teaching Kim Ju-ae to be heir apparent, indicating she's the most likely successor," Lee told reporters. The NIS also told parliamentarians that Kim Jong-un is now "heavily overweight" at "around 140kg", putting him at "high risk of heart-related illness". Kim, who is widely known to be a cigarette smoker, was said to have shown symptoms of high blood pressure and diabetes in his early 30s, Lee said, quoting the NIS.

**Kim Jong-un inspects flood damage**

North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un looks out from a car as he inspects the area for flood damage after record-breaking heavy rains in the city of Sinuiju, North Pyongan province.

# Philippine oil spill threatens livelihoods

Reuters  
Tanza, Philippines

An oil spill from a marine tanker that capsized off the coast of Manila Bay in the Philippines has reached the shores of a nearby fishing village, threatening the health and livelihood of fishermen, as efforts began to mop up the fuel.

MT Terra Nova was carrying 1.5mn litres of industrial fuel when it sank in rough seas off the coast of Limay in the province of Bataan, west of the Philippine capital, on Thursday. One member of the 17-strong crew was killed.

Fishermen in the town of Tanza in Cavite province, south of Manila, were distraught after the oil slick landed on the town's shores and they reported smelling a foul odour.

"This oil spill will have a big effect on us fishermen because we rely on the sea and it has been affected by the oil," said 48-year-old Renan Honsana.

"We would need to sell our catches very cheap because people would not buy it. Where can we get our livelihood except to this sea," Honsana added.

The Philippine coastguard said it has sealed the leak from the capsized tanker and would start siphoning the oil out to prevent more fuel from leaking out. It surveyed the waters of Limay, Bulacan and Cavite by air and observed "minimal oil sheen".

Officials were investigating whether the sinking was related to Typhoon Gaemi, which intensified monsoon rains in the Philippines, triggering floods and landslides that killed at least 36 people.

# Bangladesh protests resume after ultimatum ignored

AFP  
Dhaka

Bangladeshi students held scattered street protests yesterday after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government ignored an ultimatum to release their leaders and apologise for those killed in deadly unrest.

Student rallies against civil service job quotas this month sparked days of violence that killed at least 205 people including several police officers, according to an AFP count of police and hospital data.

The clashes were some of the worst of Hasina's 15-year ten-

ure but her government has since largely restored order by deploying troops, imposing a curfew and shutting down the internet nationwide.

At least half a dozen leaders of Students Against Discrimination, the group that organised the initial protests, are among thousands since taken into police custody.

"The government is continuing to show complete and utter insensitivity to our movement," Abdul Kader, one of the group's co-ordinators, said in a statement.

"We are requesting all citizens of Bangladesh to show solidarity with our demands and join in our movement."

Several protests were staged in the capital Dhaka and elsewhere in Bangladesh yesterday, but they were only a fraction of the size of those seen earlier in the month.

Police charged with batons to break up one protest on Dhaka's outskirts, arresting at least 20 people, newspaper Prothom Alo reported.

Security forces were deployed widely elsewhere in the teeming megacity of 20mn to deter other demonstrations.

Students Against Discrimination leaders had vowed to end a week-long moratorium on new demonstrations if police failed to

release their leaders by Sunday evening. The group's demands also include a public apology from Hasina for the violence, the dismissal of several of her ministers, and the reopening of schools and universities around the country that were shuttered at the height of the unrest.

At least 9,000 people have been arrested nationwide since the unrest began, according to Prothom Alo.

Troops are still patrolling urban areas and a nationwide curfew remains in force but it has been progressively eased since the start of last week.

Bangladesh's mobile internet

network was restored on Sunday, 11 days after a nationwide blackout imposed at the height of the unrest, in another sign of the government's confidence that it was in control of the situation.

"The situation is turning back to normalcy thanks to the timely and appropriate measures taken by the government and the people," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Hasina's government also declared a day of national mourning today for those who were killed during the unrest.

Protests began this month over the reintroduction of a quota scheme reserving more than half

of all government jobs for certain groups.

With around 18mn young Bangladeshis out of work, according to government figures, the move deeply upset graduates facing an acute jobs crisis.

Critics say the quota is used to stack public jobs with loyalists to the ruling Awami League.

The Supreme Court cut the number of reserved jobs last week but fell short of protesters' demands to scrap the quotas entirely.

Hasina, 76, has ruled Bangladesh since 2009 and won her fourth consecutive election in January after a vote without genuine opposition.



**CRIME**  
**Ex-BBC host charged over indecent images of children**

Former BBC news anchor Huw Edwards, one of the most recognisable faces on UK television, has been charged with three counts of making indecent images of children, police said yesterday. Edwards, who resigned from the BBC in April on "medical advice", six months after he was initially arrested, was charged on June 26 and has been bailed to appear at London's Westminster Magistrates' Court on Wednesday, police added. The offences, which are alleged to have taken place between December 2020 and April 2022, relate to images shared on a WhatsApp chat, police said in a statement.

**HEALTHCARE**  
**UK junior doctors reach pay deal with government**

A trade union representing junior doctors in England has reached an improved deal with the British government for a 22.3% average pay rise over two years, a source familiar with the matter said, paving the way for an end to months of disruptive strikes. The breakthrough follows a series of strikes by junior doctors since early 2023 over demands for better pay, including the longest walkout in the 75-year history of the state-funded National Health Service in January. The issue has exemplified Britain's labour unrest over the last two years as high inflation and a cost-of-living crisis spurred demands for better pay across a wide range of sectors.

**WARNING**  
**'Disruption likely' when EU's new travel checks for Brits start**

Britain is insufficiently prepared for the European Union's new post-Brexit border security checks for UK nationals entering the bloc and disruption is likely when they are introduced in late autumn, the government warned. Britain voted to leave the EU in 2016. The EU's European Entry/Exit System will remove the requirement to manually stamp passports at the EU's external border and instead create digital records that link a travel document to a person's identity using biometrics. It will require non-EU citizens arriving in a Schengen area destination (most EU countries) to register their fingerprints, provide a facial scan and answer questions about their stay.

**LAW AND ORDER**  
**Eight climate activists arrested at UK airport**

Police said they arrested eight climate protesters at London's Gatwick Airport yesterday after they tried to block departure gates in the latest disruption at European airports. "Eight people have been arrested on suspicion of interfering with public infrastructure", said a police statement, adding that "heightened police presence should be expected". Gatwick, Britain's second-busiest airport, was operating normally according to an airport spokesman. Just Stop Oil said seven protesters were involved in the disruption, with a video on the group's social media showing activists sitting on the floor blocking an entrance to the departure gates.

# Ola Electric to raise \$734mn in India's biggest IPO this year

Reuters  
Mumbai

Indian e-scooter maker Ola Electric yesterday said it aimed to raise \$734mn in the country's biggest IPO this year, a deal set to lure major foreign investors and highlight growing confidence in India's financial markets.

A stock market boom has already led more than 150 Indian companies to raise nearly \$5bn through public listings in the country between January and July, nearly double the figure for the same period last year, LSEG data shows.

The first IPO by an Indian electric vehicle maker will let investors bet on a clean energy push by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, as well as firms from Tata Motors and TVS Motor to Hyundai Motor.

"Our mission is to really make India a global EV hub," Ola's chairman Bhavish Aggarwal told reporters at a press conference in Mumbai, where he posed for photographs sitting on his e-scooters that start retailing at \$900.

SoftBank-backed Ola Electric has become the biggest player in a country where adoption of clean vehicles is still low, but rising rapidly. It had 46% of the e-scooter market as of June 30 despite slashing sales goals last year.

"Tesla is for the West and Ola for the rest," has become a catchphrase linked to Aggarwal, who is betting big on cleaner vehicles.

Aggarwal had plans to start selling an electric car in 2024, but Reuters reported they have been suspended to let the company focus on e-scooters and EV battery cells. It also plans a foray into electric bikes.

Aggarwal said Ola had a good product line up in place for e-motorbikes.

Ola's aggressive push into e-scooters has already disrupted the market forcing a pivot by incumbents such as TVS, Hero Moto-Corp and Bajaj Auto. Its entry into the motorcycle segment, which makes up two-thirds of total two-wheelers sold in the country, will intensify competition.

A term sheet for the IPO, which will run from August 1 to August 6, puts a value of \$4bn on the company, which sold its first scooter in 2021.

That valuation is about 25% lower than Ola's last funding round in September, led by Singapore's investment firm Temasek which valued the EV maker at \$5.4bn.

The lower figure stems from a correction in the valuation of global tech companies as well as Ola's desire to attract participants to the stock offering, said sources who spoke on condition of anonymity.

## Protest over Delhi student deaths



Demonstrators attend a protest yesterday outside a coaching centre after the death of three students, who according to local media reports died after a basement of the coaching centre got flooded during rains on Saturday, in New Delhi, India.

# Family of Indian man killed in Ukraine war waits for remains

Reuters  
New Delhi

Relatives of an Indian man who died in Russia have said he was killed after being forced to fight in the war against Ukraine, and are petitioning the government to bring his body back to his village in the northern Haryana state.

Several men and their families have contacted India's foreign ministry over the last few months saying they were duped into travelling to Russia with the promise of jobs or education only to be forcibly recruited into its army, officials at the ministry said.

At least four other people have been killed in the violence, they say.

Ravi Moun, 21, travelled to Russia in January after being contacted by an agent who prom-

ised him a job in the transport sector, his relatives said.

Once there, however, he was forced to fight in the war.

Moun's family last spoke to him on March 12 and had been trying to contact the government for help in tracking him down ever since, they said.

"If he (Moun) knew he would have to fight, he would not have gone...why would he go where death could be waiting?" said Sonu Mator, his cousin, adding that the family needed the government's help to bring back the body. "We do not have the money to arrange for it ourselves," Mator said.

A letter from the Indian embassy in Moscow last week informed Moun's relatives of his death without elaborating on the circumstances under which he died, according to *The Indian Express* newspaper.

"The Russian side had confirmed the death," wrote Gloria Dung Dung, the second secretary at the embassy, the newspaper reported.

Officials from India's foreign ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

Moun's death comes days after Russia promised New Delhi that Indians duped into joining its army would be discharged.

The Russian embassy in India has also said that Russia is committed to finding the "earliest possible solution".

India has arrested at least four people associated with the racket.

New Delhi has refused to condemn Russia's war with Ukraine and instead called for peace through dialogue and diplomacy.

Sri Lanka and Nepal have also said that some of their citizens have been illegally recruited.

**UK's govt to restart trade talks with India, other partners**

Britain's government yesterday said it was restarting talks aimed at securing free trade agreements with India and countries in the Gulf Co-operation Council. Prime Minister Keir Starmer, whose Labour Party returned to government after 14 years in opposition, has made economic growth the central mission of his government. Trade talks were paused during the election. "Restarting talks is the first step towards agreeing the high-quality trade deals the UK needs to give businesses access to international markets, boost jobs and deliver that growth," the government said. The trade department said the first round of negotiations under the new government were expected to take place in the autumn and would include fresh talks with Israel, South Korea, Switzerland and Türkiye. Britain already has FTAs with those four countries which were rolled over when it left the European Union in 2020, but had previously launched talks aimed at updating the agreements.



Police officers stand guard on Hart Street in Southport, northwest England, yesterday following a knife attack.

## Children among eight stabbed in UK attack

Reuters  
London

A knife attack in northern England yesterday wounded at least eight people, reportedly including children, emergency services said.

Police said armed officers detained a man and seized a knife after being called to a property in Southport, near Liverpool in northwest England.

"There are a number of reported casualties," police said in a statement.

The North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) said it had "treated eight patients with stab injuries who have been taken to Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Aintree University Hospital and Southport and Formby hospital."

Alder Hey Children's Hospital said: "We can confirm that the trust has declared a major incident."

Local business owner Colin

Parry, one of the people who called police, told the domestic Press Association news agency that he believed several "young girls" had been stabbed.

Bare Varathan, who owns a local shop, told PA he saw "seven to 10 kids" who were "injured, bleeding", adding that he saw they had been stabbed.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer called the incident "horrendous and deeply shocking," adding on X, formerly called Twitter, that "my thoughts are with all those affected".

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said she was "deeply concerned" about the "very serious incident" in Southport.

The area where the incident took place is located in a quiet, leafy neighbourhood of residential streets.

Some residents who were allowed to come out from the police cordon sealing it off looked visibly shocked, according to a journalist at the scene.

# New UK govt sets out spending cuts to fix public finances

Reuters  
London

Britain's new Finance Minister, Rachel Reeves, yesterday announced spending cuts worth more than £13.5bn (\$17.3bn) over the next two years to help plug what she said was a £22bn overspend caused by the last government.

Reeves said she would present a full budget on October 30, the first by the newly-elected Labour government, and said it would in-

clude further "difficult decisions" including on tax.

The new government has also accepted independent recommendations on increasing pay for state workers such as teachers and healthcare staff at a cost of £9bn.

In a statement seen by critics as an attempt to pave the way for future tax rises, Reeves accused the former Conservative government of covering up the true state of government spending and said she needed to make difficult decisions to prevent the budget deficit ballooning by 25% this year.

"This level of overspend is not sustainable. Left unchecked, it is a risk to economic stability," Reeves told parliament. "It therefore falls to us to take the difficult decisions now to make further in year savings."

She set out cuts to a range of projects to build roads and restore railways and said the government would review a scheme to rebuild hospitals. She also said she would stop higher-income pensioners from receiving an annual payment for heating costs.

Elected to run the world's sixth-

largest economy in a landslide victory on July 4, Labour has spent much of its first three weeks in power telling voters that things are worse than expected in almost every area of public policy.

Reeves commissioned the review of the public finances upon taking office.

"They gave false hope to Britain when people were already being hurt by their cost of living crisis. The inheritance from the previous government is unforgivable," she said.

"They promised solutions that

they knew could never be paid for: roads that would never be built, public transport that would never arrive, hospitals that would never treat a single patient."

The Conservatives dismissed her accusations as a pretext for Labour to raise taxes.

"Today's exercise is not economic, it's political. She wants to blame the last Conservative government for tax rises and project cancellations she has been planning all along," said Jeremy Hunt, who was finance minister in the Conservative government.

Some economists have also expressed scepticism, saying Labour could have foreseen most big pressures on spending before taking office.

Reeves stressed that she intends to stick to her party's election campaign commitments not to raise the rates of income tax, value-added tax and other main taxes.

Any other tax changes would come in October's formal budget statement, which Reeves said would contain a new set of non-negotiable fiscal rules.



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**GULF TIMES**

## Solidarity based on shared condition of biomass

In a recent commentary, philosopher Michael Marder looks beyond the immediate horror of what is taking place in Gaza to consider the ontological implications of what we see in the long-distance drone shots of the ruins. Allow me to quote him at length: "... Gaza is rapidly transformed into a dump, where high-rise buildings and human bodies, ecosystems...and orchards are mutilated beyond recognition and reduced to organic-inorganic rubble. A solidarity with dumped lives, places, and worlds requires something other than compassion. So what could that be?"

Marder's answer is to propose "another kind of solidarity based on the shared condition of biomass." To say, "I am biomass" is to "identify with a vanishing life", to see Gaza as "a condensed and particularly blunt version of a planetary tendency".

The rendering of all life into mere biomass - chaotic heaps of organic and inorganic matter - can be found everywhere, but it has been "accelerated in Gaza at the cutting edge of the most recent technologies of devastation. Rather than compassion, then, what is required is the solidarity of the dumped, who dare assert, 'We are biomass'".

This notion of biomass echoes an insight from philosopher Levi Bryant: "In an age where we are faced with the looming threat of monumental climate change, it is irresponsible to draw our distinctions in such a way as to exclude nonhuman actors."

### The idea of total recycling is the ultimate capitalist dream

And yet, in today's capitalist societies, efforts to mobilise a large majority of people in the name of our shared ecological condition consistently fail. We all know that we are part of nature and fully dependent on it for our survival, yet this recognition does not translate into action. The problem is that our choices and outlook are influenced by many other forces, such as biased media reporting, economic pressures on workers, material limitations, and so forth.

In her 2010 book, *Vibrant Matter*, philosopher Jane Bennett has us picture a polluted trash site, where not only humans but also rotting trash, worms, insects, abandoned machines, chemical poisons, and so on each play some active role. This scene of biomass exists on the same spectrum as the situation in Gaza, though the latter is an extreme case. Around the world, there are numerous large physical spaces, especially outside the developed West, where "digital waste" is dumped, and thousands work separating glass, metals, plastic, mobile phones, and other man-made materials from the chaotic heaps. One such slum, Agbogbloshie, near the centre of Accra (the capital of Ghana), is known as "Sodom and Gomorrah".

Life in these environments is a horror show, and the communities that live in them are strictly hierarchically organised, with children forced to do the most dangerous work, under extremely hazardous conditions. Yet because this exploitation of biomass appears ecologically attractive (under the banner of "recycling"), it responds perfectly to the demands of modern technology: "In the technological age," writes philosopher Mark Wrathall, "what matters to us most is getting the 'greatest possible use' out of everything."

After all, the whole point of using resources sparingly, of recycling, and so forth is to maximise the use of everything. The ultimate products of capitalism are piles of trash - useless computers, cars, TVs, VCRs, and the hundreds of planes that have found a final "resting place" in the Mojave Desert.

The idea of total recycling (in which every remainder is used again) is the ultimate capitalist dream, even - or especially - when it is presented as a means of retaining Earth's natural balance. It is yet another testament to capitalism's capacity to appropriate ideologies that seem to oppose it.

However, what makes the exploitation of biomass different from the capitalist logic is that it accepts a chaotic wasteland as our basic predicament. Though this condition can be partly exploited, it can never be abolished. As Marder puts it, biomass is our new home; we are biomass. It is a fantasy to think that such environments can be left behind and replaced by life in some idyllic "natural", ecologically sustainable environment. That easy way out has been irretrievably lost to us. We should accept our only home and work within its confines, perhaps discovering a new harmony beneath what appears to be a chaotic heap.

This will require us to be open to the objective beauty of different levels of reality (humans, animals, ruins, decaying buildings), and to reject a hierarchic ordering of aesthetic experiences. Are we ready to do this? If not, we are truly lost. - Project Syndicate

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International Day of Friendship

## One day, Microsoft AI assistants will revolutionise the office

By Matt Day  
Bloomberg

Microsoft Corp is betting that artificially intelligent assistants will transform workplaces around the world, generating new excitement and revenue for a very old product: the Office productivity software used by hundreds of millions of workers.

Few doubt the promise of the technology. The lineup of AI assistants, which Microsoft calls Copilots, can automate manual tasks and generate or summarise text and images.

But this is no plug-and-play offering, according to customers and people who advise them. First, companies have to figure out what data to feed into a Copilot so it can perform effectively without creating a new target for hackers or revealing information employees aren't supposed to see. That takes time and money.

Early adopters say that while Copilots excel at distilling information, they fall short in other respects. The assistants struggle to understand the context of some requests and handle commands involving multiple apps. As a result, widespread adoption is expected to take a while. Jefferies analysts predicted in June that Microsoft won't see a financial windfall until the first half of 2025.

"It is a success in terms of being the most visible business productivity enhancement based on artificial intelligence (AI) that exists today," said Adam Preset, a Gartner Inc vice-president and analyst, who says he's talked with more than 1,000 clients about deploying Microsoft Copilots. "But in terms of its impact on work by the average digital worker, the jury is still out."

Microsoft, which is scheduled to report earnings next week, hasn't disclosed how many customers are paying for Copilot subscriptions but says plenty

are making the leap despite growing pains. Jared Spataro, the corporate vice president who oversees workplace AI tools, says some customers have simply decided, "Hey, we haven't worked it all out yet, but we can see the writing on the wall. We're gonna make an investment in this and figure it out."

In the nearly two years since OpenAI introduced ChatGPT to the world, the technology industry has raced to deploy and refine tools based on the sort of large language models that power the popular chatbot. Microsoft, which has access to OpenAI's technology through its \$13bn investment in the startup, has embarked on a company-wide effort to embed assistants in its products.

The Copilot branding, an effort to suggest that AI is here to help not replace its human masters, emerged at GitHub, Microsoft's coding platform. Over the past couple of years, the GitHub Copilot has begun to automate the most tedious aspects of software development by finishing lines of code with just a few prompts. The AI assistant had 1.8m paying customers at the end of March, and Microsoft is eager to duplicate that success elsewhere.

Last fall, the company widely released the corporate version of its AI assistant - called M365 Copilot - to large customers, then began offering it to small businesses two months later. Paying for the assistant, which is designed to automate aspects of Outlook, Word, PowerPoint and Teams, doubles the cost of a monthly subscription to about \$60 per user for corporations, though those that sign multiyear contracts typically get discounts.

Ernst & Young said in June that it would equip some 100,000 of its workers with Microsoft's software for salespeople, a titanic order that includes Copilot. The professional services and accounting company lost little time deploying the sales technology to tens of thousands

of workers, but says the AI assistant is rolling out at a slower pace.

EY engineers are working to make sure that when an employee asks for the status of a contract, for example, Microsoft's bot knows where to fetch the information. Small groups are also evaluating AI tools built for Outlook email software and the Teams videoconferencing service ahead of a broader deployment within EY and to its own customers.

"A lot of people think AI is just pixie dust they can sprinkle, and it's gonna make their lives easier," said Keith Mescha, an executive director with the EY unit that helps clients use Microsoft products. "There's actual effort and work to make sure they do it right."

Training employees how to use Copilot is key, so Microsoft created a set of how-to guides and offered an early-adopter program. Lumen Technologies Inc, which got access to the software before it was widely available, says it has deployed M365 Copilot to a "couple thousand" employees.

Lumen marketing chief Ryan Asdourian said the assistant saves salespeople more than three hours a week researching prospects, which he estimated would translate into about \$50 million in additional annual revenue if those employees invested the free time back into their jobs.

That's peanuts for a company of Lumen's size, but Asdourian says the anticipated bump in sales is more than enough to justify the extra subscription outlays. "One of the things that we've done really well is we've taught people how to use the product," he said. The results are "significantly better when your employees know how to use it."

Even for trained employees, Copilot has its shortcomings, analysts and early adopters say. Users who assumed they'd be dealing with one assistant capable of jumping across apps found

themselves re-entering the same query into multiple chat windows, an experience that Spataro likened to getting passed around among clueless customer support agents.

In Excel, Microsoft discovered that Copilot couldn't be a spreadsheet wizard if it didn't speak Python, the coding language widely used for data analysis. And though Copilot can generate a functional PowerPoint presentation, it has struggled to take the sort of step-by-step input necessary to create a great one.

Fixes to those issues have rolled out or are coming in future updates, Spataro said.

Meanwhile, companies are slowly learning what information to feed into the software. Give it too little to chew on, and Copilot is essentially a very expensive email drafting tool. Give it too much, and an office worker might call up a colleague's salary or peek at projects unrelated to their job. That quandary - and the cost of painstakingly reworking data storage or software permissions - represents "the biggest impediment" to widespread adoption of the software, according to Gartner's Preset.

When M365 Copilot rolled out last fall, the software by default could reach into any store of data an employee was permitted to access. Microsoft has since given corporate IT departments the capability to whitelist the troves it wants Copilot to tap into and made it harder for workers to go fishing for things like poorly secured passwords. Unlike a new feature in a software update, successfully deploying Copilot tends to require hiring consultants or devoting training resources that could be spent elsewhere.

"Most companies are not ready" to use Copilot without changing how they label and store information, said Matt Radolec, a vice-president with Varonis Systems Inc, which helps companies secure Microsoft Copilot and other cloud-computing products. "It's only as good as what you put into it."

Most industry observers expect Copilot to eventually generate significant recurring revenue for Microsoft. Analysts with UBS Group AG surveyed big corporate technology buyers earlier this year and found they were testing M365 Copilot with about 14% of their employees. It would be a victory for Microsoft if just half of those workers wound up staying on as paying customers, the analysts wrote in a research note in June.

Microsoft's Spataro said the subscription price reflects the value Copilot brings customers and the cost of running the service. Asking the assistant to summarize a trove of financial documents requires much more computing horsepower than making edits to a Word document. "We feel like it's not just an incremental feature enhancement," he said, but "the culmination of a couple of decades of information technology innovations".



Copilot logo is seen in this illustration. (Reuters)

# Flame-free Olympic ring becomes Games symbol



The Olympic cauldron is lit with the Olympic flame as it flies above Paris while attached to a balloon. (Reuters)

AFP  
Paris

The Olympic cauldron tethered to a balloon in an iconic Paris park has become one of the hottest tickets at the 2024 Games with thousands flocking every day to see the seven metre wide ring of environmentally friendly fire.

The cauldron flies into the Parisian sky at sunset each day under a 30-metre balloon in the Jardin des Tuileries park.

The flame made up of clouds of mist lit by LED rays has become a much-talked about symbol of the Games since it was lit by French sporting icons Teddy Riner and Marie-Jose Perec at Friday's opening ceremony.

Visitors now pack the park, with all available 10,000 daily slots to see the flame taken until the Games close on August 11.

Organisers have promised to add more slots. "We're victims of our own success," they said online.

Virginie Decosta took her 11-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son to the gardens at the weekend.

"It's for the kids, so they can join the party too," the 43-year-old told AFP.

Decosta and her husband are planning to see BMX and basketball, but their children will have to stay home.

"They won't have access to the Games," she said, adding that Olympic tickets were "too expensive." "But at their level they under-

stand the importance of what's going on," she said.

Paris's newest tourist attraction is free. Three hundred people are admitted to see the flame every quarter of an hour between 11:00 am and 7pm.

"It's beautiful," exclaimed Murielle Taupin, a retired police officer who was also among the first guests to see the flame.

The 52-year-old said she was somewhat "frustrated" at not being able to watch the opening ceremony up close.

"So I'm taking part in all the free outdoor competitions," said Taupin, who watched road cycling on Saturday and also planned to cheer on triathletes today.

"With the Tuileries setting, it's magnificent," Taupin said.

Referring to what she called an "unbearable" political situation around the world, the spectacle also offered the chance to experience a moment of "sharing and communion?"

"This balloon is about lightness, it's a message to the whole world," Taupin said.

For the first time in the history of the Olympic Games the flame is fuel free.

"A meticulous combination of a cloud of mist and beams of light, the Olympic Flame will flicker with electricity as its sole source of energy," French utility EDF said in a statement.

The ring "incorporates 40 LED spotlights to illuminate the cloud created by 200 high-pressure misting nozzles," the company said, adding that it ensured the

flow of electricity and water 60 meters above the ground.

French designer Mathieu Lehanneur, 49, said he wanted to make the cauldron as accessible, visible and open "as possible."

It is a nod to the hot air balloon invented by the Montgolfier brothers, the 18th century French aviation pioneers.

Wearing a cap emblazoned with the Olympic rings, American Nelly Li said she came "to admire this new invention, which is environmentally friendly and uses clean energy."

Baptiste Ferlin, a 35-year-old teacher, came to the Tuileries gardens to "enjoy the party."

Ferlin said he loved the idea of turning Paris into "an Olympic stadium" and is happily taking advantage of the opportunity to "experience the atmosphere of the Games."

Arriving from the Paris suburbs, he walked along the Seine before coming to see the flame.

"It makes for a wild party!" Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo said she hoped the hugely popular balloon as well as the rings on the Eiffel Tower and the statues of 10 French women that were part of the opening ceremony could find a permanent home in Paris.

"We should explore possibilities for these three symbols," Hidalgo told the France Bleu broadcaster.

"These three artistic, symbolic and magnificent objects deserve our full attention."

Hidalgo acknowledged, however, that any decision to keep them on display was not hers alone "so

## Fencing cuts a dash at the show



An overview shows Ukraine's Olga Kharlan (left) and France's Sara Balzer competing in the women's sabre individual semi-final bout during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Grand Palais. (AFP)

From literary heroes D'Artagnan to Cyrano de Bergerac, French authors have treated readers round the globe to the cut and thrust of swordplay — and centuries later it has lost nothing in its art in a spectacular fencing show at the Paris Games.

The big names got swept up in the phenomenal atmosphere, from US First Lady Jill Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron and Rolling Stones legendary lead singer Mick Jagger, who passed by the day after he turned 81.

Alexandre Dumas — the son of one of Napoleon's generals — gave the world the magic of the French *Musketeers*, but in their Olympic garb the fencers are more reminiscent of another of his creations, the *Man in the Iron Mask*.

Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac was a duellist himself, and he would have found himself at home at the magnificent venue of the Grand Palais.

Original thinking by the fencing competition organisers came up with the brilliant idea of introducing the semi-finalists and finalists from the impressive balcony overlooking the main hall.

Swaggering down the grand staircase stirred the 9,000 spectators up into a right old lather, especially with two French finalists.

As the fencers descended the

music for the Can Can rang out, plus spontaneous renditions of the rousing French national anthem La Marseillaise.

They did not disappoint, playing their role to the full — masked emotions until they whipped off the visor.

Far from wooden actors, some might say they hammed it up in the style of famed horror film actors Boris Karloff and Christopher Lee.

Dumas was never very far away from French epee ace Yannick Borel, having been the fencing expert brought in for the most recent version of *The Three Musketeers* and its sequel *The Three Musketeers: Milady*.

The 35-year-old had a bit of all four theatrical Musketeers — D'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos and Aramis — about his celebrations as he whipped off the mask.

Unfortunately, he lacked the killer touch they possessed and was unable to give the crowd their "coup de grace in the final, going down to a canny Japanese opponent in Koki Kano.

The old adage about history only remembers the winners may ring true — but try telling that to bronze medal winners, Italian sabre specialist Luigi Samele and Egyptian epee artist Mohamed Elsayed.

Samele, the boyfriend of Ukrainian fencing star Olga Kharlan, fell to the ground, and beat his chest as tears welled

in his eyes as the 37-year-old kissed the head of his opponent, Egypt's Ziad Elsisy.

Elsayed may have been frustrating to watch with his constant histrionics, but his running along the piste and jumping off it when he took bronze was worth the price of the spectators tickets.

However, those cameos were nothing compared to the show stealing performance of the gigantic Georgian world number one in men's sabre, Sandro Bazadze, after he lost 15-14 in the round of 16.

"It's shameful, it's a shame!" he yelled at match referee Vanesa Chichon.

She ignored him and disappeared into the distance as he was restrained through still being attached to the wire on the piste.

He remained gesticulating — prodding his chest with his fingers — and pleading vainly with officials to review the decision.

Eventually the pantomime villain took his leave, but he had the last word nevertheless, protesting that he had been a victim of a dreadful miscarriage of sporting justice.

"My career is finished, it is done," he said. "How can I come back when referees are killing me all the time."

A denouement worthy of a Dumas novel.

I cannot promise today that they will stay". Deputy mayor Pierre Rabadan meanwhile said that keep-

ing the Olympic rings in place was "technically difficult". Questioned by AFP, he added that "suitable

spots" would have to be found for the floating hot air balloon and the statues.

## French climber summits Pakistan's K2 in record time

AFP  
Khaplu

French climber Benjamin Vadrines summited Pakistan's K2 in record time on Sunday, his team told AFP, reaching the top of the world's second-highest mountain in just under 11 hours.

The 32-year-old specialist in high-speed ascents — made without the aid of oxygen — left K2 base camp just after midnight on Saturday and reached the summit 10 hours, 59 minutes and 59 seconds later.

The ascent slashes by more than half the previous record for climbing K2 without the aid of bottled oxygen, completed in 23 hours by fellow Frenchman Benoit Chamoux in 1986.

Vadrines attempted the summit in 2022 but was forced to turn back after suffering from hypoxia, a lack of oxygen in the blood caused by thin air at high altitudes.

"I took my revenge on this mountain," Vadrines said in a voice message shared with AFP. "But above all I wanted to reconcile with it by doing things with maturity."

"It was very symbolic for me because I was returning in my footsteps to where I experienced those very unique moments," he said.

"I really enjoyed seeing the same sections again, but with lucidity this time." Standing at 8,611 metres on the Pakistan-



MILESTONE: Vadrines.

three months and one day. Tenjin was killed in an avalanche less than three months later as he guided another climber on Mount Shishapangma in Tibet.

In January 2021, a 10-man team from Nepal became the first to summit K2 in winter as temperatures plunged to minus 65 degrees Celsius. The mountain regularly claims the lives of elite climbers. Rescue prospects seemed remote yesterday for two feted Japanese climbers who fell from K2's western face at the weekend. Kazuya Hirai and Kenro Nakajima had been using the same "alpine style" of climbing as Vadrines, which relies on a minimum of fixed ropes, when they plunged from above 7,000 metres.

A helicopter spotted the motionless pair but was forced to abort a rescue attempt and their sponsor, clothing brand Ishii Sports, said yesterday they were on "steep terrain that is difficult to reach". Rescue attempts are still being discussed and no organisation has yet declared the men dead. Successful evacuations from K2 after mishaps are rare. A successful climb up K2's western face has been achieved only once, in 2007.

Vadrines is considered one of France's pre-eminent climbers and set a speed record climbing Pakistan's Broad Peak in 2022 before descending by paraglider.

He reached the top of the 8,051-metre mountain, not far from K2, in seven hours and 28 minutes.

## 'Moderate' Catalans agree to form govt with Socialists

The leadership of moderate separatist party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) has approved an initial agreement to support Spain's Socialists to form a regional government in the rich northeastern region, state broadcaster TVE said yesterday. The decision is subject to confirmation by militants in an internal party vote, it said. Securing ERC's support is key for the Socialists, who

won the most votes in May's regional election but fell short of a majority. The Socialists, led locally by Salvador Illa, got 42 seats in Catalonia's 135-seat chamber. The party's usual coalition partner, the far-left Sumar alliance, won six, while the ERC had 20. Parties wanting to form a government need 68 seats in a first round of voting in the chamber and a simple majority in the second.



People from the Baloch community take part in a demonstration demanding greater rights in Gwadar of Pakistan's Balochistan province on Sunday. (AFP)

## Death toll in tribal feud rises to 42

At least 42 people have been killed in a land feud between tribes in northwestern Pakistan, officials said yesterday, during days of fighting with machine guns and mortars. The Muslim Madagi and Mali Khel tribes have been fighting since Wednesday, when a gunman opened fire at a council negotiating a decades-long dispute over farmland, local police official Murtaza Hussain said. No-one was wounded in that attack but Hussain said it reignited longstanding religious tensions between the clans, who live side-by-side in the district of Kurram on the border with Afghanistan. "A ceasefire was achieved in Kurram tribal district through government efforts. However, shooting resumed later at night," said a senior official from the provincial interior ministry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who requested anonymity because was not authorised to speak to the media. He said local police had put the death toll at 42 — all men — with 183 wounded, including some women, since Wednesday.

## Soldier killed, injuries in tense Pakistan standoff

Pakistan's army said protesters taking part in a march in the southwestern city of Gwadar attacked security forces deployed to guard them yesterday, killing one soldier and injuring 16 others. A nationalist ethnic Baloch movement has been demonstrating for the last two days in the port city, blocking a highway to press their demands for the release of members of their movement they say were detained by security forces.

The army said protesters assaulted military personnel who had been deployed to guard them, killing a soldier. "The unprovoked assaults by the violent protesters have resulted in injuries to sixteen soldiers, including an officer." The Baloch movement's leader, Bebag Baloch, said the army used force to break up the protest rally and several of the protesters were injured, including women and children. He did not comment on the death and injuries reported by the military.

Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province, where the port city of Gwadar is located, borders Iran and Afghanistan and has long been the scene of a low-level insurgency by separatist groups, who say they have been fighting for a greater share in the region's rich mineral resources.

Provincial Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti told legislatures in a televised speech that the demonstration was a "conspiracy" to block a foreign investors' delegation, which is due to visit the Gwadar next week. He offered the movement talks to ensure peace.

"Our doors are open," Bugti said in the speech. The development of Gwadar's port and many other projects in the region are part of the Chinese \$65bn investment as part of President Xi Jinping's Road and Belt vision.

## QRCS and IFRC hold first Mena workshop for trainers on HSPs

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) have co-organised the first workshop for trainers on Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs).

The five-day event was attended by 20 participants from 10 national societies in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region: The Libyan Red Crescent, the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, the Lebanese Red Cross, Kuwait Red Crescent Society, the Iranian Red Crescent Society, Jordan National Red Crescent Society, Palestine Red Crescent Society, Yemen Red Crescent Society, the QRCS, and the Egyptian Red Crescent.

The facilitators came from the IFRC - Geneva, IFRC - Mena, the Italian Red Cross, and the British Red Cross.

In general, it was a capacity-

building training for the region's national societies in emergency support and response to population displacement caused by conflicts and disasters.

HSPs are one of the top five capacity-building priorities for Mena national societies to better respond to migration/displacement waves, identified by the regional survey conducted in March 2023.

By exchanging theoretical experience and practical scenarios, the participants were introduced to the nature, design, and operation of HSPs, capitalising on the Emergency Additional Capacity Team as a vital component of National Society response to population movements.

Subhi Fahad al-Ejeh, head of Relief and Disaster Management at the QRCS, stressed the importance of courses that address the



Participants of the workshop.

humanitarian aspect of migration, especially amid issues faced by the region, such as natural disasters, armed conflict, and climate change impacts.

"The QRCS closely co-ordinates various training activities closely

with the IFRC to be held in Qatar," the official said. "It is crucial to have a lot of regional resources and expertise in disaster response, which can provide solutions and support in this respect."

Dr Hosam Faysal, regional head

of the IFRC - Mena's Health, Disasters, Climate, and Crises Unit, said: "This workshop represents our commitment as a network to assisting IDPs (internally displaced persons), host communities, and the National Societies

actively meeting their needs."

"This is in conformity with our 2030 Joint Strategy in relation to ensuring that migrants enjoy safety, humane treatment, and dignity, and that no one is left behind," he said.

## Qatar Foundation empowers youth through environmental education

Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Earthna Centre for a Sustainable Future, the national operator for the Eco-Schools programme, is empowering the youth of the country through environmental education.

The legacy of Eco-Schools spans three decades, and since its inception in Qatar in 2018, this international initiative has been dedicated to empowering students to spearhead sustainable change within their communities.

The programme plays a pivotal role in cultivating environmental awareness among Qatari youth, with its most recent milestone being successfully engaging with 20 public schools in Qatar.

"In the academic year 2023-2024, we worked with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and welcomed onboard 20 public schools and trained 67 teachers," said Earthna technical

lead Ruba Hinnawi. "This milestone reflects the ministry's eagerness to integrate education for sustainability in the educational system in Qatar to equip students with environmental knowledge and hands on activities to lead positive climate action for the sustainability of our communities."

According to Hinnawi, the Eco-Schools programme is making a key contribution to the future of environmental sustainability in Qatar.

"Through student-centred events such as the Eco-Schools Congress, a biennial congregation where all registered schools and Green-Flag awarded schools network, Earthna offers the youth a platform to showcase their achievements as stewards of the environment to inspire others to follow suit," she said.

The Eco-Schools Congress of 2023 was marked by a thematic

focus on marine and coastal ecosystems to coincide with the recent Earthna educational publication titled Qatar Unique Marine Ecosystem.

"Every congress we try to offer students an opportunity to leave a legacy, during the congress this year, students designed reusable bags made from leftover fabric to replace plastic bags to protect our environment from plastic pollution and to increase biodiversity in Qatar," Hinnawi said.

In a shift from the traditional education model to a more hands-on learning model, students took on the role of eco-entrepreneurs and created the bags from wasted fabric.

These eco-conscious creations, which are serving as a vehicle for community engagement and environmental advocacy, are now being sold at the QF's Education City Gift Shop branches.

Revenue from sales is donated



Boys who took the role of eco-entrepreneurs and created bags from wasted fabric.

Right: Girls taking part in one of the activities of the Eco-School programme.

to a tree planting activity in the Education City under the QF Park and Plant initiative.



A figure of Killua from the manga and anime series Hunter x Hunter.



Zabuzaba and Haku from Naruto.



## Anime fever takes over Qatar Toy Festival

Festival has drawn more than 50,000 visitors

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

The second edition of Qatar Toy Festival is proving the popularity of Japanese manga and anime in the country, Spacetoon senior marketing executive Abdulhadi Hussrieh has said.

"The Anime Zone is one of the most popular spots at the festival as visitors are drawn to cosplay, collectibles, and other exciting activities," he told *Gulf Times*. "It's a place where they can express their love for anime, meet like-minded individuals, and immerse themselves in the vibrant culture."

Hussrieh noted that cosplay - the practice of dressing up as characters from anime and other media - has become a major attraction at the festival.

"People love to wear the costumes of popular characters (from anime and manga series) like *Naruto*, *Demon Slayer* and *Detective Conan*," he said. "They want to capture these moments and share them on social media platforms like Instagram."

The Spacetoon official added that the impact of anime extends beyond the festival as it plays a key role in enriching Qatar's art scene.

He pointed out that it fosters a thriving manga community, bringing together artists, cosplayers, and enthusiasts who participate in numerous events and gatherings.

Hussrieh said the Anime Zone also serves as a gathering place for seasoned collectors who share their passion and discuss their prized possessions.

The Anime Zone showcases an array of collectibles, in addition to bringing together artists, cosplayers, and enthusiasts.

PICTURES: Shajji Kayamkulam

This widespread appeal makes the Anime Zone a popular destination not only in Qatar but throughout the region.

The festival's dedication to anime is further evidenced by the upcoming Cosplay Open Day tomorrow (July 31), where participants of all ages can showcase their costumes in a catwalk competition.

The event culminates with the awarding of a special prize to the best cosplayer.

The latest edition of the festival has seen significant growth this year, occupying more than 17,000sq m of indoor space at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC).

With 10 themed zones, including three new additions - Anime, Movie Land, and Retail - the festival offers a diverse range of activities and entertainment.

The expanded space also allowed for the participation of more than 50 international brands, including favourites like Barbie and Naruto, alongside newcomers such as Mr Bean and Barney.

Hussrieh said the festival has welcomed more than 50,000 visitors since its launch on July 15.

He expressed optimism that it will continue to attract large crowds in the coming days.

He also underlined the success of the festival's live stage shows, including Mr Bean, which have entertained families and children.

"The parade shows and live performances, like the one by renowned Arab singer Rasha Rizk, have been a major draw," Hussrieh said. "We are expecting even more visitors in the coming days, with the upcoming performance by Qatari singer Dana El-Mer on August 4."



The event began with a panel talk moderated by DesignWanted chief executive Patrick Abbattista.

## Design Doha collaborates with Italian magazine

Design Doha hosted a special event on Saturday (July 27), in partnership with the Italian *DesignWanted* magazine, to mark the conclusion of Arab Design Now and the biennial, inviting the public to take part in the celebrations and explore the exhibition before it closes on August 5.

The event began with a panel talk moderated by Patrick Abbattista, the chief executive of *DesignWanted*, a magazine exploring product trends and innovations, while connecting the design community on a global scale.

*Materials' Legacy: Products, Spaces, and Culture* discussed how materials and culture have been interwoven for centuries, shaping what can be accomplished in both architecture and product design, and how it defines society.

Focusing on materials in the Mena (Middle East and North Africa) region, the discussion delved into their impact on the forms of expression from different points of view.

This session featured insights from Ali Karimi of Civil Architecture, and Turki Gazzaz and Abdulrahman Gazzaz of Brick Lab, a studio for architecture, design and experimental research based in Saudi Arabia.

Following the panel talk, there was a curated tour of Arab Design Now focusing on the materials used in certain objects in the exhibition.

The tour was followed by a networking event at Profiles Cafe.

"By hosting this closing event for Arab Design Now, we wanted to express our appreciation for all the spectacular contributions to this special exhibition and celebrate the talent, creativity, and innovation that brought it to fruition," Design Doha deputy director Fahad al-Obaidly said in a statement. "We'd like to extend our sincerest thanks to *DesignWanted* for their continued support throughout the inaugural Design Doha, and their contribution to hosting what was a very special event - one that has already furthered the conversation around design in the region."

Under the leadership of HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Qatar Museums launched Design Doha, a biennial event celebrating excellence and innovation in design in Qatar and the Mena region, in February this year.

Curated by Rana Beiruti, Arab Design Now is a regional survey of more than 70 Arab designers, exploring contemporary and traditional design methods with a focus on sustainability.

This exhibition, highlighting the design aesthetics of the Levant, the Gulf, and North Africa, is currently on view at M7 in Msheireb, Doha's centre for innovation and design, which hosted the inaugural Design Doha.