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SPORT | Page 1

### Qatar held to draw as 10-man North Korea stage comeback



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## 20 civilians die as Israel strikes Gaza safe zone

### ● Massacre toll reaches 41,020

AFP  
Al-Mawasi, Gaza

Israel struck a declared safe zone in Gaza yesterday, in a strike the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas-run territory's health ministry said killed at least 20 people.

The strike hit Al-Mawasi in the southern Gaza Strip, which Israel had designated as a "humanitarian zone" early in the war, and prompted condemnations from the region and beyond.

Samar al-Shair, one of tens of thousands of displaced Palestinians who have sought refuge in the coastal area, said the attack came "as we were sleeping in our tents", setting makeshift shelters ablaze.

As Egyptian, Qatari and US mediation efforts again appear to stall, Israel's Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said a truce and hostage release deal was a "strategic opportunity" that would give his country a "chance to change the security situation on all fronts".

The Gaza health ministry said 20 bodies had been brought to hospitals since the early morning strike, but more victims were

### Qatar condemns Mawasi massacre

Qatar condemned in the strongest terms the brutal massacre committed by the Israeli occupation in Mawasi Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip, which led to the deaths of dozens of Palestinians. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed, in a statement yesterday, that the continuation of the occupation's heinous crimes against defenceless civilians, its blatant defiance of international laws and norms, and its seeking of military escalation instead of a political path are an inevitable result of the silence of the international community and the absence of accountability and punishment.

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likely still buried in the sand.

The territory's civil defence agency earlier gave a death toll of 40 people.

"There are entire families who disappeared under the sand," an official said.

Israel's offensive in Gaza has

killed at least 41,020 people, according to the territory's health ministry. The United Nations says most of the dead are women and children.

UN envoy Tor Wennesland condemned the strike, saying international humanitarian law "must be upheld at all times", while stressing "civilians must never be used as human shields".

Turkiye said the strike added to Israel's "list of war crimes", while Egypt denounced "the continuation of Israeli massacres" and Saudi Arabia decried "a new attack in a repeated series of violations by the Israeli war machine".

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy condemned "the shocking deaths", which he said showed "how desperately needed" a Gaza ceasefire was.

The war has drawn in other Iran-aligned armed groups across the region, with Israeli forces trading regular fire with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

On Tuesday the military as well as a source close to Hezbollah said an Israeli strike on eastern Lebanon, far from the border, killed a commander from the Iran-backed group.

### Sheikha Moza meets Yemeni PM



Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the Chairperson of the Education Above All (EAA) Foundation and UN Sustainable Development Goals Advocate, met yesterday with Prime Minister of the sisterly Republic of Yemen Dr Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak. The efforts made by Silatech to economically empower youth in Yemen were discussed, along with means to protect education during wars and conflicts. (QNA)

### 'Killing of US-Turkish activist unprovoked and unjustified'

### ● Blinken demands fundamental changes to Israeli army's conduct in West Bank

Reuters  
London

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday demanded an overhaul of Israeli military conduct in the occupied West Bank as he decried the fatal shooting of an American protester against settlement expansion, which Israel said was accidental.

Aysenur Ezgi Eygi, 26, who is also a Turkish national, was shot dead last Friday at a protest march in Beita, a village near Nablus where Palestinians have been repeatedly attacked by far-right Jewish settlers.

Israel's military said that its initial inquiry found it was highly likely its troops had fired the shot that killed her but that her death was unintentional, and it voiced deep regret.

In his strongest comments to date criticising the security forces of Washington's closest Middle East ally, Blinken described Eygi's killing as "unprovoked and unjustified". He said Washington would insist to the Israeli government that it makes changes to how its forces operate in the West Bank.

"No one should be shot and killed for attending a protest. No one should have to put their life at risk just for freely expressing their



Aysenur Ezgi Eygi

views," he told reporters in London.

"In our judgment, Israeli security forces need to make some fundamental changes in the way that they operate in the West Bank, including changes to their rules of engagement.

"Now we have the second American citizen killed at the hands of Israeli security forces. It's not acceptable," he said.

"We are deeply offended by the suggestion that her killing by a trained sniper was in any way unintentional," Eygi's family said in a statement.

Since the 1967 Middle East war, Israel has occupied the West Bank of the Jordan River, an area Palestinians want as the core of a future independent state.

Israel has built a thickening array of settlements there that most countries deem illegal.

### World Cup 2022 TV series begins sales

Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC) together with FIFA announced that their new 8-part TV series *WE WERE THERE*, which goes beyond the headlines and explores the remarkable human stories from the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, has now commenced worldwide sales. As well as telling the story of the tournament, each episode is a mini documentary with a multi-layered narrative which establishes the backstory of the lead characters and discovers their unique journey to Qatar, witnessing key matches through their eyes, and revealing how being at the FIFA World Cup changed their lives.

### E3 sanctions Iran over missiles to Russia

Western powers yesterday announced fresh sanctions on Iran for supplying Russia with short-range missiles for imminent use against Ukraine, calling it a dangerous escalation of the conflict that threatened European security. Britain, France and Germany, the so-called E3 powers, said they would cut aviation agreements with Iran and sanction its national carrier Iran Air. On a visit to London, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Russian military personnel have trained in Iran using the Fath-360 missile.

## Gord develops hybrid cooling system



The prototype of Synergia 7n1.

By Joseph Varghese  
Staff Reporter

The Gulf Organisation for Research and Development (Gord) has developed a new hybrid, ultra-efficient cooling system, Synergia 7n1, which is approved by the UK Patent Office, and registered with the International Patent Organisation.

"A unique feature of our hybrid cooling system is its ability to cool outdoor spaces with up to 50% energy efficiency compared to conventional systems in the market, thus presenting a potential business opportunity to take it into commercialisation," Dr Yousef Alhorr, founding chairman of Gord told *Gulf Times* in an exclusive interview. **To Page 4**

## S'hail 2024 begins at Katara



The 8th edition of Katara International Hunting and Falcons Exhibition (S'hail 2024), was inaugurated yesterday (Tuesday) at Katara - Cultural Village by general manager and organising committee chairman Prof Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti. The event which runs until Saturday (September 14) from 10am to 10pm, enjoys a wide participation from local, regional, and international companies, with some of them making their debut. **PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam. Page 12**

## Qatar-Armenia labour deal

Qatar and Armenia have signed an agreement to enhance co-operation in the labour sector and regulate the recruitment of skilled Armenian workers. HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri and Armenian Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Narek Mkrtychyan signed the agreement in Yerevan. The agreement aims to attract skilled and qualified Armenian workers, enhance the productivity of the private sector, and improve the work environment. The agreement is signed as part of Qatar's international co-operation strategy to improve labour recruitment, streamline procedures, protect employer and worker rights. Meanwhile, Qatar participated in the inaugural edition of the



Yerevan Dialogue International Conference in the Armenian capital. The event was attended by officials, experts, and scientists worldwide. HE Dr al-Marri represented Qatar. The two-day conference will focus on climate change, information technology, and the health sector, with the goal of creating suggestions and ideas to address crucial issues in the global economy. **(QNA)**

## Call to put an end to tragic humanitarian conditions in times of war and crisis



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met yesterday with the visiting President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Kate Forbes. The meeting dealt with the humanitarian conditions in a number of countries, especially in the Gaza Strip, the occupied Palestinian territories and Sudan.

The two sides agreed on the need for concerted efforts by the international community and humanitarian organisations to put an end to the tragic humanitarian conditions and violations to which civilians and humanitarian workers are exposed in war and conflict zones. During the meeting, HE AlKhater expressed Qatar's appreciation to the IFRC

and Red Crescent Societies for its efforts in responding to relief and humanitarian needs in times of war and crisis. For her part, Forbes thanked Qatar for its role in providing humanitarian aid and relief to those affected by conflict and natural disaster areas. The meeting was attended by Secretary-General of the Qatar Red Crescent Faisal Mohammed al-Emadi. **(QNA)**

## PM congratulates new French premier

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Michel Barnier on his appointment as Prime Minister of France. **(QNA)**

## Mawasi Khan Yunis massacre condemned

Qatar condemned in the strongest terms the brutal massacre committed by the Israeli occupation in Mawasi Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed, in a statement yesterday, that the continuation of the occupation's heinous crimes against defenceless civilians, its blatant defiance of international laws and norms, and its seeking of military escalation instead of a political path are an inevitable result of the silence of the international community and the absence of accountability and punishment. In this regard, the ministry stressed the need for regional and international efforts to work together more than ever to end the aggression on the Gaza Strip immediately, provide protection to the brotherly Palestinian people, and confront attempts to forcibly displace them. The ministry reiterated Qatar's firm position on the justice of the Palestinian cause and the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people. **(QNA)**

## Qatar reaffirms support for Sudan's stability, unity

**QNA**  
Geneva

Qatar has reaffirmed its steadfast position in supporting the unity and stability of Sudan, the integrity of its territories, and its rejection of any form of interference in Sudan's internal affairs.

Qatar also reiterated its commitment to promoting and protecting the human rights of the Sudanese people and ensuring their security and right to a dignified life.

This came in an address delivered by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Delegation of Qatar in Geneva Jawhara bint Abdulaziz al-Suwaidi at the 57th session of the Human Rights Council.

Al-Suwaidi expressed Qatar's deep concern over the continued deterioration of human rights in Sudan and the worsening suffering of the Sudanese people due to the ongoing war.

She condemned the severe crimes and violations that have

been inflicted upon them, calling for an end to these acts and for the perpetrators to be held accountable. She stressed that the most urgent priority for the Sudanese people is the immediate cessation of hostilities and the unhindered provision of humanitarian aid to those affected.

She emphasised the importance of resuming negotiations between the warring parties and engaging in serious dialogue to prevent further risks, paving the way for a comprehensive dialogue that leads to lasting peace, preserves Sudan's unity, and fulfils the aspirations of its people for security, stability, and development.

Al-Suwaidi reaffirmed Qatar's solidarity with the Sudanese people during this difficult time. She also reiterated Qatar's commitment to continue providing all forms of support and humanitarian aid to alleviate the crisis.

Furthermore, she called on the international community to intensify its efforts and respond by offering more assistance to meet the growing needs of the Sudanese people.

## AlKhater meets Somali, Liberian ministers



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met yesterday with the visiting Somali State Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation Ali Mohamed Omar. The meeting dealt with discussing bilateral relations and means to support development projects in Somalia.

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met yesterday with Liberian Foreign Minister Sara Beysolow Nyanti on the sidelines of the 5th Observance of the International Day to Protect Education from Attack (IDPEA), marked by the Education Above All Foundation. Besides bilateral relations and ways to boost them, they discussed the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian territories and several topics of common interest. **(QNA)**



## Credentials of Chile, Estonia ambassadors received



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi received yesterday copies of the credentials of ambassador of Chile (non-resident) Patricio Diaz Bruton, and ambassador of Estonia (non-resident) Maria Belovas. HE al-Khulaifi wished the ambassadors success in their duties, assuring them of providing all support to advance relations between Qatar and their respective countries to closer co-operation in various fields. **(QNA)**





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## Focus on children's rights in digital space as National Human Rights Forum opens

The third edition of the National Human Rights Forum kicked off yesterday, organised by the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) in partnership with the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Social Development and Family, and the National Cyber Security Agency.

This year, the forum is held under the theme of protecting children's rights in a safe digital environment, with a focus on the challenges and prospects for empowerment and protection. The forum is held in collaboration with the UN Children's Fund (Unicef) and the office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The event saw the participation of over 600 officials, experts, specialists, and students from universities and schools.

The opening session was attended by HE the Chairperson of the NHRC Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah and Chairperson of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, HE the Minister of Transport Jassim bin Saif al-Sulaiti, HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah, HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi, HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad, HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti, and other officials from various state institutions.

The two-day forum aims to create a platform for national dialogue among ministries, public institutions, civil society, parents, and children on the latest developments and challenges related to children's rights in the digital environment. It seeks to provide insights into enhancing legislation, public policies, administrative measures, procedures, and practices related to the prevention, empowerment, and protection of children in the digital space based on a human rights approach. It also seeks to



examine best practices within the country and internationally, promoting measures related to protecting children's rights in the digital space. Additionally, the forum aims to empower children with their right to a safe digital environment while considering Islamic values and national identity, alongside raising awareness of the importance of providing children access to the digital world while protecting them from potential risks.

In a related development, the Ministry of Labour, represented by the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, participated in the forum.

Sheikha Najwa bint Abdulrahman al-Thani, who is the Assistant Undersecretary for Expatriate Workers Affairs at the Ministry of Labour and Secretary of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, attended the forum's opening session.

Fatima Rajab al-Ismael, who is a member of the Secretariat of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, presented a paper on measures to prevent the exploitation of child labour on the Internet, noting that increased reliance on technology and the expansion of the digital space have necessitated a re-evaluation of the challenges children face and the importance of protecting them from exploitation and misuse. She highlighted that the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking in Qatar places children's rights at the forefront, especially given the new threats posed by modern technologies. She emphasised ongoing efforts

to develop policies, enhance legislation, and intensify national, regional, and international efforts to protect children's rights and ensure a safe digital environment for them. She added that there was no child labour in Qatar due to the strict laws the state has enacted to protect children's rights and shield them from exploitation, especially under the labour law, which prohibits child labour and imposes penalties of imprisonment and fines on violators.

In the opening session of the forum, HE the Chairperson of the NHRC Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah, who is also the Chairperson of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions said that she was pleased that the third edition of the National Human Rights Forum this year is dedicated to discussing the protection of children's rights in the digital environment, highlighting that the topic is one of the most pressing emerging human rights concerns globally.

HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad emphasised during the forum's opening session that children are at a crossroads, requiring wise guidance to either harness technological advancement for the benefit of humanity and the progress of societies, or to be drawn into the dangerous complexities of technology, which threaten our ethics and disrupt the balance and developmental approach of our societies. (QNA)

## Interior ministry attends forum for human rights

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) participated in the 3rd National Forum for Human Rights, organised by the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) under the theme "Protecting Children's Rights in a Secure Digital Environment: Challenges and Perspectives for Empowerment and Protection," along with the participation of several relevant bodies.

During the Forum's opening, Director of the Economic and Cyber Crimes Combating Department Brig. Ali Hassan al-Kubaisi - who represented the MoI at the Forum - highlighted the MoI's role in combating electronic crime at all levels. He stressed that there is a development in electronic crime globally as a result of rapid technological development, indicating that combating electronic crimes, including those directed at children, is one of the key priorities of the MoI.

He pointed out that Qatar took



the initiative to host the Interpol database to protect children from exploitation and as the first Arab country in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region in this regard, as this database has achieved various success in arresting criminals who exploit children worldwide.

On the other hand, Cyber-crime Combating Officer Captain Fahad Omair al-Shahrani, presented a working paper

during the session on national strategies and measures regarding the protection of children's rights in the digital space, in which he reviewed the vital role played by the Economic and Cyber Crimes Combating Department through developing and implementing policies and programmes aimed at combatting cybercrimes against children and protecting them from potential risks. (QNA)

## Caribou Coffee opens at UDSST

Caribou Coffee has opened a new location at the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST), a statement said.

"We are so excited to be part of the UDSST community, and proud to serve students, teachers and employees of this beautiful campus," said Wael Omar, director of operations for Al Mana Food and Beverage division.

"We serve a diverse selection of blends and single-origin coffees, like Caribou Blend, Day-break Morning Blend, and Caribou Mahogany, as well as a wide range of espresso beverages, including lattes, cappuccinos, macchia in addition to indulging range of sandwiches and cakes," he explained.

The outlet is located in the middle of the campus, with proximity to classrooms, libraries, student centres and management offices, and will be open from 7am to 6pm.

Caribou Coffee currently operates 15 branches throughout



Doha with 24 hour outlets at Suhaim bin Hamad Street and Al Jazeera Petrol Station, Salwa Road, the statement added.

## Hyatt Plaza's Super Sale a big success

The Super Sale Campaign at Hyatt Plaza, from September 3 to 7, has been a tremendous success, drawing enthusiastic shoppers from across the region with its exceptional discounts and enticing promotions, a statement said yesterday.

The Super Sale featured substantial discounts on a wide range of products, including fashion, toys, jewellery, furniture, cosmetics, electronics, home decor, and more.

Shoppers also enjoyed exclusive offers such as buy-one-get-one-free deals, flat sales, special promotions, and unique discounts.

Mohammed al-Hawamdeh, head of marketing at Hyatt Plaza, said: "We extend our deepest appreciation to all the tenants and visitors who wholeheartedly embraced our 5-day Super Sale Campaign.



Their unwavering support and enthusiasm have been instrumental in our success. We eagerly anticipate welcoming our visitors to experience a plethora of fun family activities this season."

Hyatt Plaza continues to

redefine the shopping experience by offering an exceptional blend of popular retail brands, remarkable customer service, and captivating events and campaigns that keep shoppers coming back for more, the statement added.

## Embassy appeals to Indian travellers to abide by Qatar's rules on medicines



Indian ambassador Vipul addressing the awareness seminar yesterday.

By Shafeeq Atingal  
Staff Reporter

The Embassy of India reminded community members yesterday, to strictly adhere to the procedures and restrictions while carrying medicines to Qatar.

Addressing an awareness seminar, organised in association with the Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF), ambassador Vipul noted there is an upward trend of cases where travellers from Indian airports are seized in Qatar with prohibited drugs.

"The expatriate community, social activists and the media should be cautious and interfere," he said while drawing attention towards the grim scenario and explaining that several Indian citizens are languishing in Qatar jails after they were caught with prohibited drugs.

"A lack of awareness about the prohibited drugs and restrictions in place result in the detention of some. The anti-drug law is strong and strictly enforced in Qatar and the convicted don't

go unpunished," he pointed out. ICBF president Shanavas Bava stressed the need to launch active campaigns to make community members aware of the rules and regulations. He explained the legal and financial assistance provided to the jailed Indian citizens by the embassy and affiliated bodies.

First Secretary Eish Singhal urged the travellers to be cautious while carrying the items of others. "In some cases, those sentenced claimed they had been handed over a packet by agents while travelling to Qatar and the packet was found to contain prohibited or restricted items when they landed," he said.

Qatar's Ministry of Interior (MoI) has repeatedly said departing or arriving travellers are not allowed to carry drugs containing narcotics or psychotropic substances except in accordance with the controls and conditions issued by the authorities concerned.

These should be carried with a medical report with a validity not exceeding six months.

The report should contain personal details of the patient, medical diagnosis, treatment plan and

duration along with medical prescriptions and the scientific name of the medicine.

Also, travellers need to ensure that their baggage does not contain narcotic substances or medicinal drugs with dangerous psychotropic substances.

MoI has also urged travellers not to carry the belongings of others while travelling to Qatar without checking their contents to avoid legal accountability.

"The carrier bears full criminal responsibility if these materials are prohibited in the country. Avoid bringing any suspicious substances or drugs. Because some narcotic substances and medicines may be allowed in the home country but banned in Qatar. Consult the government health institutions to get medicines. Stay away from suspicious places and bad friends," MoI has warned.

Anyone caught for the consumption of narcotic substances can get a fine of not more than QR10,000 and not less than QR5,000.

Imprisonment for a period of not exceeding three years and not less than six months and a fine of not exceeding QR20,000 and not less than QR10,000 will be given in case of drug abuse.

This applies to whoever imports, possesses, acquires, purchases, receives, transports, produces, extracts, separates or manufactures narcotic substances. This is also for those who cultivate or possess or purchase plants listed in Schedule 4 with the intention of illicit consumption or personal use.

Travellers can check the list of prohibited drugs at the website of the Ministry of Public Health. Incidents about drug abuse or trafficking could be informed and help could be sought at 2347000 and drug@moi.gov.qa

# GCC ministers stress on protecting environment

**Q**atar chaired in Doha yesterday the 26th Meeting of GCC Ministers of Environment Affairs.

The ministers welcomed Saudi Arabia's scheduled hosting of the 16th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), to be held on December 2-13, and congratulated the UAE on its successful hosting of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 28) and achieving its desired goals.

During his opening remarks, HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, chair of the meeting, stressed that the changes witnessed by the world today, with their environmental and climate impacts, have become an ongoing threat that requires, more than ever, intensified efforts and continuous co-ordination by the GCC council to ensure sustainable development for current and future generations.

Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi praised the efforts of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and the leaders of the GCC countries, noting that the GCC countries are working to enhance environmental policies, rely on renewable energy, and reduce carbon emissions to achieve a balance between development and environmental protection.



Bahrain's Oil and Environment Minister Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak bin Dainah stressed the role played by the Gulf Ministerial Council in addressing common issues in all positions, whether regional or international, noting that all countries in the region and the world are suffering today from the challenges of climate change.

Saudi Arabia's Deputy Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture, Mansour bin Hilal al-Mushaiti highlighted the contribution of the Ministerial Council, through this committee, in advancing the joint environmental work process towards achieving the goals of sustainable development in the region, including approving the strategic plan of the Committee of Ministers Responsible for the Environment, and adopting the environmental directions of the GCC countries.

Chairman of the Oman's Environment

Authority, Dr Abdullah bin Ali al-Amri, reviewed his country's efforts in protecting wildlife and endangered animals.

Acting director-general of Kuwait's Public Environment Authority Samira Mohamad al-Kandari attributed the stability and distinguished growth witnessed by the GCC countries to the wise directives of their leaders and their continuous emphasis on the necessity of protecting the environment, preserving its natural resources, and sustainable development through planning and implementation that takes into account the environmental dimension in all development projects.

The meeting concluded with the approval of the recommendations and results of the work of the technical committees and joint working groups in the fields of environment, biodiversity and international co-operation, in addition to joint activities and events. - QNA

## Al-Kuwari meets Yemen premier

HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari met Yemen Prime Minister Dr Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak, who is currently visiting the country. The meeting discussed aspects of co-operation between the two countries and ways of enhancing and developing them, in addition to various topics of common interest.



## Al-Kuwari meets Bloomberg Media chief



HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari met with Bloomberg Media chief executive Karen Saltser at the headquarters of the Ministry of Finance. They discussed areas of joint co-operation, reviewed relations between the parties concerned, and other important economic and investment developments.

## Qatar, Palestine ministers meet



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met Palestine Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Varsen Aghabekian Shaheen yesterday on the sidelines of the 162nd session of the Arab League Council at the level of Foreign Ministers. - QNA

## Qatar joins public security forum in China

Qatar participated in the Global Public Security Co-operation Forum in China from September 8-10. HE the Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Security Affairs Sheikh Nayef bin Faleh bin Saud al-Thani led the delegation participating in the forum. On this occasion, HE Sheikh Nayef discussed with representative of the vice-governor of Shaanxi province and director of the province's Public Security Administration Office, Lai Bing, co-operation, relations in security fields, and ways to develop them. - QNA



## Ministry issues recall orders for BMW, Mazda models

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Alfordan Automobiles, has announced the recall of BMW iX xDrive 40, iX M60, 735i Saloon, and 520i Sedan, 2022-2024 models, as faulty installation of a capacitor may possibly cause reduction in the steering assistance when parking, leading to the display of a steering fault message.

The MoCI, in co-operation with National Car Company, also announced the recall of Mazda CX-60, 2023 model, as a possible defect in the automatic transmission control unit (clutch), leads to a decrease in engine speed during deceleration, and an error in the Engine Control Unit causes the fuel tank temperature to rise and fuel to evaporate, thereby stopping the engine at low speeds.

The MoCI urged all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, which processes complaints, inquires and suggestions through the following channels: Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, social media channels @mociqatar, and mobile application MOCIQatar available on iPhone and Android devices.

## Gord develops hybrid cooling system



Dr Yousef Alhorr.

From Page 1

"We hope that after final testing, we can produce commercial prototypes of this cooling system," he said.

He explained that Synergia 7n1 has already received two awards: one from the Association of Energy Engineers in the US for the best energy innovation in the world, and the other an award for Best Patent in Energy Efficiency from the League of Arab States.

"The system can seamlessly combine seven cooling solutions into one portable unit and hence named 7n1," Dr Alhorr said. "We have managed

to manufacture the prototype in Qatar, which is now attracting a new business opportunity for the local industry."

"As cooling now accounts for 70% of energy consumption in buildings, it is very important to tackle this challenge, and this is what we have managed to do with Synergia," he added. "Moreover, Synergia will support new jobs creation in this very important domain."

The founding chairman of Gord said a new line of air conditioners can be launched with the Synergia 7n1 technology.

"We are eagerly anticipating the impact this innovation

will have as fresh air handling units have a promising potential," he said. "These units can be used to cool entertainment venues, souks, parks, and workplaces, among other locations."

"They can also be used to cool specialised facilities such as hospitals and surgery rooms, where the circulated air is not allowed, and you need 100% fresh air," Dr Alhorr said. "So, when the air conditioning systems deal with 100% fresh air, there is a big challenge in terms of the energy use."

"The differences between our system and the conventional systems are primarily in two key areas," he said. "Alongside using the compressor for cooling, our system uses dehumidification and indirect evaporative cooling as two pre-treatment stages for processing air."

As for the operation of the new system, Dr Alhorr said that desiccant dehumidification is used to reduce the humidity of the air and goes to another pre-treatment stage where it is cooled down again by using the evaporative cooling.

"By having these two pre-treatment stages, we reduce 50% of the energy used for the remaining cooling. Instead of cooling from 48° Celsius outside to 18C inside, the compressors are pre-conditioned to stage 1, with temperature reduced from 48C to 33C," he said. "Then, in stage 2, the compressors cool from 33C to 18C. Fifty per cent of the load is taken by the two pre-treatment stages, where we don't use compressors."

"It's only one pump and a few fans, making the energy consumption very minimal compared to the energy consumption of the compressors," Dr Alhorr added.

"In the US, Europe, and the Far East, there are various ongoing projects focused on exploring and developing hybrid cooling systems," he stated. "We have managed to do it on a large scale with capacities of up to 100 tonnes, which represents a substantial scale of operation."



## QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (USD)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/C/OFS/6543/24 Provision of Underwater Inspection and Geophysical Survey on Call Off Basis	12/09/2024 to 19/09/2024	0	2,430,000	14/10/2024

### Scope of Work:

The objective of this tender is to establish long term Contract(s) on call off basis for (i) Inshore pipeline & submarine cable survey, (ii) Offshore pipeline and submarine cable surveys, (iii) Offshore jacket structure surveys (iv) Air and saturation diving activities (v) Minor rectification works and (vi) Marine surveys and ROV services for drilling and environmental support. The duration of the awarded Contract (s) shall be five (05) years tentatively from 18 Jul 2025 with a sole option for Company to extend it further for up to two (02) years.

**Bid Validity:** Bid should be valid for 180 calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

### Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:

ITT document for this tender will be available in QatarEnergy LNG website under Suppliers tab >Current Open Tenders. The bids shall be submitted through the QatarEnergy LNG online platform (SMART by GEP).

**Note:** Effective from 1st July 2023, bids received from Local Companies (established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal by Bid Closing Date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned/notified) will not be accepted. Local Company that has been established for less than 2 years and insurance companies are exempted from this requirement. For further details please visit ICV Digital Portal:- <https://icv.qa/en-US/>



## Dolphin Energy Limited

### Invitation to Tender

Tender Number	Description	Tender Bond	Deadline for Submission, 12 Noon (Qatar Time) on
RFP-QC-OPU-1777	Call off Services for Emergency Pipeline Repair System Onshore Ras Laffan	QAR 40,000	8 <sup>th</sup> October 2024
RFP-QC-OPU-1806	Long Term Service Agreement (LTSA) for NDT Services	QAR 150,000	8 <sup>th</sup> October 2024

Dolphin Energy Limited (Qatar) is inviting companies to participate in the above Tenders.

Only companies registered in the State of Qatar with proven experience, the required facilities and technical knowledge as well as a demonstrated track record in the supply of the services required should apply.

**How to Tender**  
Expression of Interest (EOI) Form can be downloaded from the company's website [www.dolphinenergy.com/procurement](http://www.dolphinenergy.com/procurement)  
Interested companies must complete the EOI Form and submit it to the company's email address within two (2) working days from the publication date of this advertisement.  
Following receipt of the completed EOI Form, interested companies will receive a Request for Proposal (RFP) through Dolphin Energy's SAP Ariba to tender.

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## Finnish ambassador visits Qmic



The Qatar Mobility Innovations Centre (Qmic) of Qatar University hosted Finnish ambassador Pekka Voutilainen, for discussing areas of possible collaboration. Ambassador Voutilainen engaged with Qmic's leadership to gain insights into the centre's innovative projects in mobility solutions, smart technologies, and innovative initiatives, a statement said. The discussions focused on potential areas for collaboration, particularly in advancing smart mobility and enhancing transportation infrastructure. The envoy also introduced some of the most significant technological developments within the Finnish technology sector, and presented some ideas regarding possible partnerships with stakeholders in the Qatari market. Ambassador Voutilainen stated: "This visit reflects the commitment of both countries to foster collaboration in innovation and technology. I am impressed by Qmic's initiatives and believe there are significant opportunities for partnership that can benefit both nations." Dr Mohammed Abdulaziz al-Sada, Qmic's executive director, said: "We are excited about the possibility of working together with Finnish counterparts to leverage technology and contribute to Qatar's vision for a smart and sustainable future, as well as boosting collaboration with Qmic and Qatar University, the main national educational institute in Qatar."

## Alchemist Doha officially launches in Qatar

**Alchemist Doha, a partnership between Alchemist Accelerator and QRDI, seeks to create thriving environment for tech-savvy entrepreneurs in emerging markets**

Alchemist Doha (AD) held its inaugural launch event yesterday, bringing together a diverse group of entrepreneurs, investors, and community members dedicated to fostering innovation in Qatar and emerging markets.

Alchemist Doha is the product of a dynamic partnership between Alchemist Accelerator and the Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation Council (QRDI).

It seeks to create a thriving environment for tech-savvy entrepreneurs in emerging markets, including Qatar, eager to take their businesses to new heights.

AD's mission is to identify, support and invest in promising founders with "exceptional products and proven market traction" who wish to live in Doha to harness local opportunities and have a stable supportive homebase for their ventures.

The launch event featured a series of discussions and presentations by prominent figures from the startup and innovation community.

Omar al-Ansari, secretary-general, QRDI Council, and Ravi Belani, CEO, Alchemist Accelerator, kicked off the event by discussing the untapped potential of startups and founders in emerging markets.

This was followed by an introduction to the Alchemist Doha team who talked about prior experiences that shaped their outlook and personal missions. Additionally, the event spotlighted two Alchemist's alumni who shared their experiences and highlighted the



Omar al-Ansari, secretary-general, QRDI Council, and Ravi Belani, CEO, Alchemist Accelerator, kicked off the event by discussing the untapped potential of startups and founders in emerging markets.

value that the Alchemist's network and programmes have provided on their journey.

The event offered attendees a firsthand look at the benefits of joining Alchemist Doha and how it can open doors for emerging entrepreneurs.

"By combining our resources and expertise, we aim to create a thriving RDI ecosystem in Doha that will drive a strong culture of innovation and product development, and enable global expansion. Together, we are committed to supporting the most promising founders from Qatar and emerging markets in achieving their full potential," said al-Ansari.

"We are delighted to collaborate with QRDI to launch Alchemist Doha. This partnership reflects our shared vision of nurturing and empowering tech entrepreneurs

in emerging markets, and we look forward to the impact this will have on the region and the world," said Belani.

Startups joining Alchemist Doha would receive an equity investment of up to \$1mn, access to the flagship Alchemist Accelerator programme and the Alchemist global network, dedicated support services to integrate within Qatar's market and innovation ecosystem, as well as incubation and soft landing services provided through AD's network of local partners.

As Alchemist Doha continues its journey, it is planning more initiatives aimed at fostering innovation and strengthening connections among entrepreneurs and investors. The team is excited about the future and remains committed to supporting and empowering the startup community.

## GU-Q's new literary series 'Qalam' begins

Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) has launched 'Qalam: Great Writers in Conversation with Kamila Shamsie', a series that will bring some of the world's most acclaimed writers to engage with the community.

Led by award-winning novelist, and GU-Q's inaugural Writer-in-Residence Kamila Shamsie, the series offers a unique exploration of how storytelling can bridge cultures and ideas.

The inaugural event, open to the public, will be held on GU-Q's campus on September 15 from 5.30pm to 7pm. It will feature a conversation with Abdulrazak Gurnah, winner of the 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Gurnah's powerful works, including *Paradise and Afterlives*, explore themes of colonialism, migration, and identity—subjects that resonate deeply in the modern world.

Shamsie, whose own novels, such as *Home Fire* and *Burnt Shadows*, examine the intersections of history, politics, and personal experience, will join Gurnah in discussing these important topics.

"Qalam will allow audiences to hear from writers who look unapologetically at the complexities of the world and the human heart, bypassing easy answers in favour



The series offers a unique exploration of how storytelling can bridge cultures and ideas.

of deep exploration," said Shamsie.

She went on to share her enthusiasm for her role at GU-Q and the upcoming programme of events: "I'm particularly excited by the opportunity to bring some of the world's greatest writers to audiences in Doha — we often talk of literature as 'universal' but conversations and interpretations are always shaped by context, and I'm sure it will be a delight to both the writers and their audiences to encounter each other in Qatar where so many different histories intersect."

Following this inaugural event, Qalam will continue on October 23, with Hisham Matar, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Return*.

In November 2024, Ahdaf Soueif, the acclaimed Egyptian novelist of *The Map of Love* and founder of the Palestine Festival of Literature will also take part in the series.

In addition to public talks, Qalam offers students the chance to participate in intimate fireside chats, book clubs, and other activities designed to foster deeper engagement with these distinguished authors.

A special initiative driven by Dean Safwan Masri as part of GU-Q's 20th anniversary celebrations, Qalam reflects the university's commitment to fostering dialogue and bringing diverse voices together — challenging, inspiring, and transforming how we understand the world and each other.

## iSpace opens 3rd Apple reseller store in Qatar



iSpace's third store in Qatar opens at City Center Doha.

iSpace, an Apple authorised reseller, celebrated the grand opening of its third store in Qatar, located on the first floor of City Center Doha.

Designed with its signature blend of technology and aesthetic, the 116sqm store features sleek grey and white tones, creating a space that embodies the elegance and innovation of the Apple brand, a statement said.

"We are thrilled to expand our presence with the opening of iSpace at City Center Doha," said Bader al-Darwish, chairman and managing director of Darwish Holding.

"The mall's prime location in the West Bay, combined with its diverse retail mix, offers the ideal environment for delivering the complete Apple experience."

The new store will showcase the latest Apple products — including the iPhone 15 series, MacBook Air with M3, the redesigned iPad Air, the iPad Pro with M4, and the Apple Watch models.

"iSpace customers are eagerly awaiting to explore the newest innovations that will be launched later this month following the recent Apple event," it was explained.

iSpace offers a wide range of



The new store features sleek grey and white tones, creating a space that embodies the elegance and innovation of the Apple brand.

accessories from leading brands such as Bang & Olufsen, Beats by Apple, Belkin, Bose, Devialet, Promate, Sennheiser and Sony. Complementing these offerings is a suite of exceptional value-added services:

- Trade-in programme: Exclusive value on old devices. Buy-back guarantee: Guaranteed buyback of every Apple product purchased at a minimum of 40%. Installment plans: 0% fee on 12-month instalment plans with selected banks. Ex-

tended warranty: Complimentary 4-year warranty on iPhone, Mac, iPad, and Apple Watch. Pay later: "Buy Now - Pay Later" service with no interest or hidden costs.

During the first three months following the opening, iSpace customers can earn double Avios on every purchase of Apple products. This offer is valid at all three iSpace locations: Lagoon Mall, Al Maha Center on Salwa Road, and City Center Doha, as well as online at iSpace.qa

## FREE VEHICLE RECALL

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- There may be a defect in the automatic transmission control unit (clutch), which leads to a decrease in engine speed during deceleration
- Error in the Engine Control Unit" causes the fuel tank temperature to rise and fuel to evaporate which may cause the engine to stop at low speeds



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Contact the dealer for the free required repair



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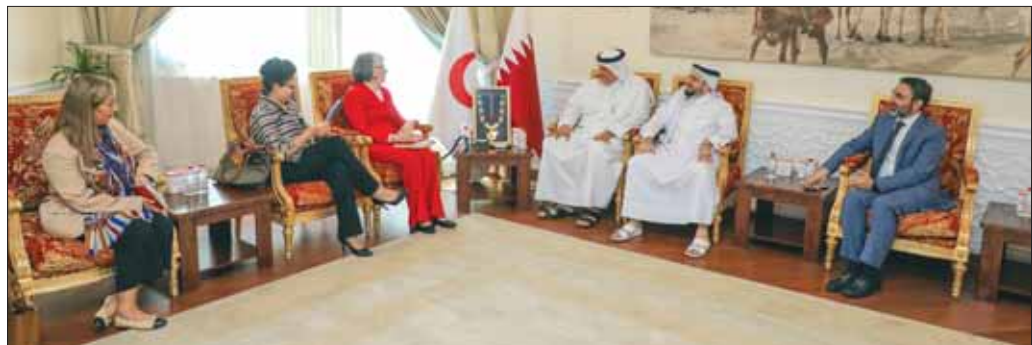
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IFRC president Kate Forbes and QRCS officials with the participants of a workshop.

## IFRC president takes part in Qatar meetings



IFRC president Kate Forbes meeting with QRCS president Yousef bin Ali al-Khater.

Kate Forbes, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has made a two-day visit to Qatar to take part in several meetings and activities, in co-operation with Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS).

At the headquarters of QRCS, she held a meeting with president Yousef bin Ali al-Khater, secretary-general Faisal Mohamed al-Emadi, and international relations head Dr Alham Ismail al-Sukhni. The meeting was attended by Liana Ghukasyan, special adviser to IFRC president, and Yara Yassine, head of Strategic Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation at IFRC - Mena.

Al-Emadi took Forbes and the accompanying delegation on a tour of Al-Hemaihah Workers' Health Centre, operated by QRCS in the New Industrial Area under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Health. She praised the quality medical services provided for up to 2,000 patients per day.

The tour was attended by QRCS' Medical Affairs Division executive director Abdullah Sultan al-Qatan, chief medical

officer Dr Hassan Ali Qassim, Emergency Medical Services acting director Ahmed Saoud Jassim, and the centre director Dr Murhaf al-Akshar.

The delegation visited QRCS' Disaster Information Management Center (DIMC), with Dr Mohamed Salah Ibrahim, director of Relief and International Programmes Division.

They watched a detailed presentation on the activities and resources of DIMC, the intervention process during local and international emergencies, and the outcomes of the field training Disaster Management Camp.

In collaboration with the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, Forbes delivered a public lecture entitled Protection of Children in Disaster, Emergency, and Crisis Situations. It was attended by al-Emadi, Dr Ibrahim, ICRC's Qatar Mission head Basma Tabaja, ambassadors, QRCS members, Doha Institute academics and students.

With the participation of Forbes, al-Emadi inaugurated on Monday a two-day workshop on Advancing Crisis Response in Health Through

QRCS and ICRC Partnership. The ceremony was attended by Willem de Jonge, deputy head of ICRC Regional Delegation in GCC, Tabaja, Dr Ibrahim, and Jassim.

Al-Emadi and Forbes took part in a five-day Training of Trainers workshop on Focused MHPSS Activities for Groups, co-organised by QRCS and IFRC. Forbes visited QRCS' section at KidZania Doha, together with al-Emadi and Hussein Aman al-Ali, director of Volunteering and Local Development Division.

In celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions 1949, an arts exhibition titled Dialogues on Humanity was inaugurated yesterday by Forbes, al-Emadi, and Tabaja, in the presence of Sheikh Hanouf Abdulrahman al-Thani, director of International Organisations Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and many ambassadors and representatives of local/international government organisations and NGOs.

Running until September 29, the 40-photograph exhibition is co-organised by the Embassy of Switzerland in Qatar, QRCS, ICRC and the Lausanne-based Photo Elysee.

## Qatar chairs GCC traffic directors general panel meeting



Qatar chaired the 43rd virtual meeting of the committee of traffic directors general in the GCC states. Director-General of Traffic Maj. Gen. Abdulaziz bin Jassim al-Thani represented Qatar at the meeting, which discussed a number of items on the agenda regarding enhancing GCC co-operation in the traffic sector. (QNA)

## HEC Paris in Qatar, Apex Health sign MoU



Members of HEC Paris in Qatar and Apex Health at the MoU signing event.

HEC Paris in Qatar and Apex Health have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance healthcare leadership, promoting wellness and advancing healthcare standards in Qatar, a statement said.

The MoU emphasises the exchange of knowledge and expertise, particularly leadership programmes at enhancing talent development across Qatar and the region. This partnership marks a significant step towards raising healthcare standards, leveraging innovative solutions and integrat-

ing world-class educational resources.

The signing ceremony took place at Apex Health's state-of-the-art View Hospital, officiated by Joseph Hazel, CEO of Apex Health, and Dr Pablo Martin de Holan, dean of HEC Paris in Qatar.

Dr de Holan said: "By leveraging HEC Paris's expertise in executive education and Apex Health's innovation in healthcare, we are not just improving healthcare standards - we are shaping the future leaders who will drive Qatar's healthcare sector to new heights."

Hazel, said: "At Apex Health we

recognise the vital role that education plays in empowering executives, supporting outstanding talents and shaping the future of Qatar. This promising co-operation between the two parties will push education opportunities to new levels. The value of this partnership will come to life by providing HEC Paris' executives with an enriching educational experience, utilising our physician's international expertise to give back to the community, and facilitating the valuable exchange of scientific information to expand the scope of research outputs," Hazel added.

## Thai embassy showcases 'vibrant culture' in Doha

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

The Thailand embassy in Qatar brought three of Thailand's most iconic traditions to life at a Doha event, offering attendees an opportunity to engage with the country's vibrant culture.

The "Experience the Thai-ness Trio: Thai Food, Thai Massage, and Muay Thai," provided a unique journey into the heart of Thailand's cultural heritage.

Speaking at the event, Thai ambassador Sira Swangsilpa said the occasion "exemplifies the deep wisdom, creativity, and traditions of Thailand, cultivated over generations and recognised globally for their unique contributions to health and well-being."

"The Thai-ness Trio represents more than just our cultural heritage - it embodies the spirit of Thailand. The first 'T' is Thai food, rich in herbs and spices, promotes nourishment and balance. The second 'T' is Thai massage, long known for its therapeutic qualities, offers much-needed relief from the stresses of modern life."

The envoy underlined that Unesco recognised "Traditional Thai Massage" as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2019, adding it to their prestigious list.

According to Swangsilpa, the third "T" is Thai boxing or Muay Thai, a discipline demanding both physical and mental fortitude. He pointed out that all the live demonstrations at the event was led by local experts - skilled Thai chefs, boxing coaches, and masseuses - who bring the authentic spirit of Thailand to Doha.

"This event is not only a showcase of our culture but also a platform for fostering deeper mutual understanding and strengthening people-to-people connections as well as enhancing social interactions between Thailand and Qatar," he said.



Sira Swangsilpa and Abdullah al-Dosari with Muay Thai coaches and trainers. PICTURE: Joey Aguilar



Ambassador Sira Swangsilpa takes part in the live Muay Thai demo. (Supplied picture)

'Experience the Thai-ness Trio' was attended by Qatar Sports for All Federation CEO Abdullah al-Dosari as a honorary guest, along with spouses of heads of foreign missions in the country, among other guests.

The event kicked off with a spotlight on Muay Thai, Thailand's time-honoured martial art. Deeply entwined with the nation's heritage, Muay Thai is renowned worldwide as the "Art of Eight Limbs". Attendees also experienced authentic Thai massage - an ancient art that aims to unlock blocked energy, restore balance, and revitalise the entire being - as expert therapists showcase the graceful movements and precise application of techniques.

The event's final segment focused on exploring the Thai cuisine, displaying what was described as a harmonious blend of flavours inspired by Thailand's bountiful agriculture and rich cultural heritage.

Part of the programme is a live cooking demo of Phad Thai, a national treasure renowned for its perfect balance of sweet, sour and salty notes.

The embassy said the Destination Thailand Visa is available for those seeking to immerse themselves in Thai culture. This five-year visa grants 180-day stays per entry, ideal for digital nomads, freelancers, and anyone interested in Muay Thai, Thai cooking, or other cultural experiences.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

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Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR  
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS  
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

## Qatar Charity signs MoU to aid Sri Lanka farmers

Qatar Charity (QC), through its office in Colombo, Sri Lanka, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Agriculture and Plantation Industries to assist small-scale farmers in enhancing agricultural practices and increasing their incomes.

QC also distributed 2,500 food packages, in co-ordination with the National Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organisations in Sri Lanka, to families impacted by natural disasters across various regions of the country. This comes as part of QC's efforts to enhance food security and to ease the financial pressures on vulnerable families in Sri Lanka.

The agreement was signed by Mahmood Abu Khalifa, director of QC's Office in Sri Lanka, and Janaka Dharmakeerthi, secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Plantation Industries. The agreement includes funding for a project to distribute fertilisers to



approximately 3,500 farmers across several provinces. At the food package distribution, Sanjeewa Wimalagunaratna, director general of the National Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organisations, noted that each package is designed to meet the needs of beneficiary families for an entire month. He also expressed his appreciation to QC for its impactful contribution to addressing humanitarian and developmental needs across various sectors, benefiting all sections of Sri Lankan society.

Janaka Kumara, secretary of the Colombo District, praised QC for its timely intervention in aiding families displaced by natural disasters. The beneficiaries

expressed their gratitude for the food aid provided by QC amid their struggles with poverty and displacement.

Sudarshana Fonseka said: "I felt immense joy upon receiving the large and diverse food package. It will help us prepare nutritious meals for our children and ease the burden of our difficult living conditions."





Palestinian medics administer polio vaccines to children at the Al-Daraj neighbourhood clinic in Gaza City, yesterday, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas movement.

## WHO: Polio vaccine push moves to northern Gaza amid disruptions

AFP  
Geneva

The third phase of a giant polio vaccination drive targeting children in Gaza began yesterday in a particularly war-ravaged zone, but the WHO said a support convoy had to abort its mission.

After the first confirmed polio case in 25 years, a massive vaccination effort began last week targeting over 640,000 children under 10, aided by localised “humanitarian pauses” in fighting.

After covering central and southern Gaza, the campaign moved into its final phase in the north from yesterday until tomorrow, said World Health Organisation spokesman Tarik Jasarevic.

Maher Shamiya, the deputy health minister in the Gaza Strip, said that 230 teams were working to provide the vaccines and that there had already been “significant turnout of families eager to vaccinate their children”.

“I came to protect my children from polio,” said Samah Yahya, a 38-year-old mother of two from Gaza City.

“I heard that the vaccine is safe, and thank God, the children received it.” Disease has spread with Gaza lying in ruins and the majority of its 2.4mn residents forced to flee their homes due to Israel’s military assault – often taking refuge in cramped and unsanitary conditions.

A fresh campaign to provide a needed second dose is due to begin in about four weeks in Gaza, besieged for over 11 months.



A Palestinian medic unpacks polio vaccines during an inoculation drive at the Al-Daraj neighbourhood clinic in Gaza City, yesterday.

Ahead of the roll-out of the third phase, “vaccines, cold chain equipment and finger markers were delivered to north Gaza yesterday,” Jasarevic said.

However, “a WHO mission carrying fuel for hospitals and vehicles for the polio campaign as well as campaign monitoring experts was impeded”, he said.

It had taken three hours for that mission to get a green light from the Israelis to move, “followed by five hours at the holding point, after which the mission had to be aborted”, he explained.

WHO also voiced concern that some areas in the north facing Israeli evacuation orders are part of the areas where humanitarian pauses had been agreed to allow the vaccination to go ahead.

“We appeal to all parties to continue ensuring these humanitarian pause zones are respected during the campaign,” Jasarevic said.

He said a separate WHO mission to reach Gaza’s largest hospital, Al-Shifa, in the north was also “impeded” on Monday.

That marked the fourth time in as many days that WHO was unable to reach the hospital.

“We call for safe and sustained access to the north and for a functional de-confliction system, which still remains a challenge 11 months into the war,” Jasarevic said.

He said the number of denied requests for access to the north had “doubled in August compared to previous months”.

UN spokesman Jens Laerke told reporters that out of 208 UN attempts to access northern Gaza in August, only 74 successfully made their scheduled aid deliveries.

“Forty-four were impeded, which means they were blocked or delayed on the ground, resulting in some of them being aborted”, while 72 were “flatly denied”, he said, adding that the remainder were withdrawn by the UN due to logistical, operational or security reasons.

Hamas’ October first week storming of Israel sparked the war in Gaza.

## Israel strike on Lebanon kills Hezbollah commander

AFP  
Beirut

An Israeli strike yesterday on eastern Lebanon killed a Hezbollah commander, a source close to the group and the Israeli military said, with the movement saying it launched rockets in retaliation.

Hezbollah has traded near-daily fire with Israeli forces in support of ally Hamas since the Palestinian group’s October first week storming of Israel triggered war in the Gaza Strip, with repeated escalations during more than 11 months of the cross-border violence.

A source close to Hezbollah told AFP that Mohammad

Qassem al-Shaer, “a field commander” in the group’s elite Radwan Force, “was targeted in an Israeli strike on a motorcycle in the Bekaa” Valley in Lebanon’s east, far from the Israeli border.

Hezbollah earlier announced Shaer had been killed by Israeli fire, but did not refer to him as a commander.

Elsewhere, Lebanon’s health ministry said an “Israeli enemy” strike on a building in the southern city of Nabatiyeh wounded 12 people, most of them lightly, revising an earlier toll.

Hezbollah later said it launched “dozens of Katyusha rockets” at two north Israeli military positions “in response to the enemy attacks... particularly the assassination the enemy carried

out in the Bekaa” Valley and the “targeting of a building”, referring to the Nabatiyeh strike.

The Israeli military said about 45 “projectiles were identified crossing from Lebanon”, with some intercepted and no immediate reports of casualties, adding that the air force later struck “Hezbollah launchers” in south Lebanon.

The cross-border violence since early October has killed some 615 people in Lebanon, mostly fighters but also including 138 civilians, according to an AFP tally.

On the Israeli side, including in the annexed Golan Heights, authorities have announced the deaths of at least 24 soldiers and 26 civilians.

## Oil tanker ablaze off Yemen threatens environmental disaster

AFP  
Dubai

An abandoned tanker carrying more than one million barrels of crude oil could contaminate vast areas of the Red Sea in a severe, long-term environmental disaster if it breaks up or explodes, experts warn.

The Greek-flagged Sounion, struck on August 21 by Yemen’s Houthi rebels, was still on fire as recently as Saturday, maritime monitors said.

Threatening an oil spill four times the size of the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster off Alaska, a leak or on-board blast could cause almost irreparable damage, said Julien Jreissati, Middle East and North Africa programme director at Greenpeace.

“Once released, an oil spill of this magnitude could be nearly impossible to contain, spreading contamination across vast areas of seawater and coastlines,” Jreissati told AFP.

“The long-term impacts on marine biodiversity could be devastating, with oil residues potentially persisting in the environment for years or even decades.”

The Houthis have been firing drones and missiles at ships in the vital commercial route since November, saying they are targeting vessels linked to Israel, the US and Britain in a show of solidarity with Palestinians over the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

The Sounion, carrying 150,000 tonnes of crude oil, lost engine power and caught fire after the initial strike, forcing the evacu-

ation of its 25 crew members by a French frigate serving with the European Union’s Aspides force, which is patrolling the area.

The Houthis then returned and detonated charges on the ship’s deck, setting off new fires. It is anchored west of the rebel-held port city of Hodeidah, midway between Yemen and Eritrea.

An attempt by private companies to tow away the burning ship was abandoned because it was “not safe” to proceed, Aspides, which was guarding the tug boats involved, said last week.

“Given that the vessel is a large, heavily laden oil tanker, now immobilised and on fire, the situation is extremely hazardous and unpredictable,” Jreissati said.

“The potential for a major environmental disaster is significant as the vessel could break apart or explode at any time.”

The 10-month Houthi campaign against shipping has killed at least four sailors and sunk two ships, including the Rubymar, which went down in March carrying thousands of tonnes of fertiliser.

The Sounion, however, poses the gravest danger yet.

“This situation is an environmental catastrophe slowly unfolding in front of our eyes,” said Wim Zwijnenburg of Dutch peace-building group PAX.

The Joint Maritime Information Center, run by an international naval coalition, on Saturday said daily surveillance flights had reported “several” fires on deck but no visible cargo oil slick.

A salvage and firefighting operation was expected to start this week.

“Minor oil slicks were detected in some satellite images, likely linked with burned oil after the explosions or from the engine,” added Zwijnenburg.

But “there has been no indication of a crude oil spill from the cargo that the ship is carrying”.

The Sounion recalls the danger posed by the FSO Safer super-tanker, a 48-year-old ship with a corroding hull that lay abandoned for years off Yemen’s Red Sea coast.

The ship had gone unserviced due to Yemen’s war between the Houthis and a coalition, which started in March 2015 and has caused a major humanitarian crisis in the impoverished country.

In August 2023, the United Nations successfully completed the transfer of its cargo of more than a million barrels of oil in a costly operation that took years to organise.

Noam Raydan, an expert tracking maritime attacks for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy think tank, said the Sounion operation carried heavy risks.

“Conducting salvage operations during the Houthis’ months-long attack campaign in the Red Sea has been challenging, and the Sounion incident will be no different,” Raydan said.

“Finding suitable tugboats that are located near the region and willing to operate in such a risky environment can be difficult,” the expert added.

Adding to the problems, naval forces “will need to remain near the tanker to prevent the Houthis from interrupting the (salvage) process”, Raydan said.

## Jordanians vote in election overshadowed by Gaza conflict

AFP  
Amman

Jordanians voted yesterday in a parliamentary election overshadowed by the Gaza war and concerns over a slump in tourism, a sector vital to the kingdom’s economy.

It is the first vote since a 2022 reform increased the number of seats in the house, reserving more for women and lowering the minimum age for candidates.

Despite these efforts to modernise the legislature, voters and candidates said the war in the Gaza Strip dominated the election.

After voting, Prime Minister Bisher Khasawneh said he hoped the turnout would not be affected by “this brutal Israeli aggression”.

“We hope that the vote will be high and befitting of this national occasion,” he said.

Independent Election Commission chairman Musa Maaytah later told a news conference he expected turnout “to be around the average of the previous elections in 2020 and 2016” when it was “around 30 per-

cent”. Polls closed at 7:00pm (1600 GMT), with the electoral authority announcing a turnout of about 32%.

Chief European parliament observer Zeljana Zovko had earlier told reporters voting was “going smoothly”.

Analysts had predicted a high abstention rate, with Islamist candidates struggling to harness public anger over the devastating war in Gaza sparked by Hamas’s unprecedented October first week storming of Israel.

Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994, becoming only the second Arab state to do so after Egypt.

But around half its population is of Palestinian origin, and protests calling for the treaty’s cancellation have been frequent since the war erupted.

Tensions escalated further two days before polling day when a Jordanian gunman killed three Israeli guards at Jordan’s border crossing with the occupied West Bank – the first such attack since the 1990s.

Voters meanwhile fear the ongoing war will continue to strain the economy until Israel and Palestinian Hamas group reach a ceasefire.

## Dam overflow sparks new crisis in insurgency-hit Nigerian city

AFP  
Maiduguri

Flood water from an overflowing dam has destroyed tens of houses in Maiduguri, the capital city of Borno state in northeast Nigeria, with emergency officials fearing the situation could get worse.

Several aerial videos and photos shared by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) with AFP showed rows of houses submerged in murky water.

An epicentre of more than a decade-long insurgency, Maiduguri serves as the hub for the responses to the humanitarian crisis in the northeast region.

The UN refugee agency in Nigeria (UNHCR) said on its X account that it is the city’s worst flooding in 30 years.

“It is an unprecedented incident,” NEMA spokesman Ezekiel Manzo said yesterday.

“Some of the central parts of the city that have not witnessed flood in so many years are witnessing it today.” The flood also sacked the city’s post office and main zoo, with authorities



The flooded yard of Sanda Kyarimi Park Zoo is pictured in Maiduguri, northern Borno state, Nigeria, yesterday.

warning that “deadly animals had been washed away into our communities (sic)”. Manzo said forecasts did not prepare the emergency workers for the extent of the flooding, while also blaming the impact of climate change for the “disaster”.

He told AFP that there were deaths as a result of the incident but declined to give a specific number as rescue workers continue rescue operations in the affected areas.

With flooding still “high in many parts of the city”, authorities have opened three “temporary shelters” for the victims.

“Homes are submerged, schools shut down & business-

es crippled as people evacuate with their belongings,” UNCHR Nigeria said.

Floods have killed at least 201 people and displaced around 225,000 more in parts of the country but mainly in the northern region as of September 3.

Most of the deaths were in the country’s northern region. The NEMA spokesman said at the end of last month that the central and southern parts of Nigeria may be hit harder as rain intensifies.

At least 115,000 hectares (285,000 acres) of farmland have also been affected, NEMA figures showed.

### HEALTH

## DR Congo gets 50,000 mpox vaccine delivery from US

Democratic Republic of Congo received yesterday 50,000 more vaccine doses from the United States to fight the country’s mpox epidemic, adding to some 200,000 donated by the European Union, AFP reported from Kinshasa. The DR Congo is at the epicentre of the latest outbreak and has recorded more than 21,500 cases and over 700 deaths, according to the public health institute in charge of managing the epidemic in the country. “The donation of 50,000 vaccines against mpox coming from the US arrived today in the DR Congo,” US ambassador to DRC Lucy Tamlyn said on X yesterday.

### TRAGEDY

## Senegal migrant shipwreck death toll climbs to at least 26

Senegal’s navy said yesterday that at least 26 people died after a migrant boat sank off the coast two days earlier, in the latest migration-linked tragedy to occur off West Africa. AFP reported from Dakar. In a post on X, the navy said it had recovered “17 lifeless bodies” yesterday, bringing the toll to 26 after nine were initially announced dead following the shipwreck.



## TRIAL

**Thai ex-cop denies changing evidence in hit-and-run case**

A former senior Thai police officer denied charges of evidence-tampering yesterday in a deadly hit-and-run crash involving an heir to the Red Bull fortune more than a decade ago. It is the first time anyone has appeared in court on charges linked to the 2012 crash, in which Vorayuth "Boss" Yoovidhya was accused of ploughing his Ferrari into a policeman's motorbike, killing the officer on the spot. Former national police chief General Somyot Poompanmoung, along with a former deputy attorney general and six others, denied charges of malfeasance and cover-up in a hearing in Bangkok.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

**Chinese ships enter Sea of Japan ahead of military drills**

Five Chinese naval ships entered the Sea of Japan heading in the direction of Russia over the weekend, Tokyo said after Beijing announced joint military drills with Moscow. The Japanese defence ministry "confirmed that these vessels sailed north-eastwards through the Tsushima Strait towards the Sea of Japan from Saturday to Sunday." Japan's Self-Defence Forces "conducted vigilance monitoring and intelligence gathering" with a vessel and patrol plane, the ministry said. It did not say where the Chinese ships were heading but local media reports suggested that they were on their way to the drills with Russia announced by Beijing on Monday.

## ACCIDENT

**Taiwan fighter jet crashes at sea on training mission**

A Taiwan air force Mirage fighter jet crashed off the island's northwest coast yesterday night and search efforts were ongoing for the pilot, who successfully ejected, the defence ministry and official Central News Agency said. The defence ministry said the French-built Mirage was conducting nighttime exercises when it suffered a suspected loss of power and the pilot then bailed out. The Central News Agency said the aircraft had crashed into the sea off Hsinchu on Taiwan's coast. Taiwan's air force has suffered a series of crashes in recent years, including in 2022 when it grounded its Mirage fleet after one crashed into the sea off the east coast.

## STRATEGY

**Peaches from Fukushima region sold at Harrods**

Peaches from Fukushima can now be bought at London's luxury department store Harrods in a Japanese push to ease fears about produce grown in the region hit by nuclear disaster. A box of three large, juicy white peaches costs £80 (\$100) - the first time the fruit is available at a shop in Europe, after sales at temporary events. Before the 2011 atomic meltdown, Fukushima prided itself as a "fruit kingdom", famous in Japan for its delicious offerings, including peaches, grapes, pears and cherries. But after an earthquake-triggered tsunami unleashed the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl, consumers feared eating them could harm their health and sales plunged.

# 60 nations endorse 'blueprint' for AI use in military; China opts out

Reuters  
Seoul

About 60 countries including the US endorsed a "blueprint for action" to govern responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the military yesterday, but China was among those which did not support the legally non-binding document.

The Responsible AI in the Military Domain (REAM) summit in Seoul, the second of its kind, follows one held in The Hague last year.

At that time, around 60 nations including China endorsed a modest "call to action" without legal commitment.

Government representatives yesterday said this year's "blueprint" was more action-oriented, in keeping with advanced discussions and developments in the military such as AI-enabled drones being rolled out by Ukraine, which also endorsed the document.

"We are making further concrete steps," Netherlands Defence Minister Ruben Brekelmans said. "Last year ... was more about creating shared understanding, now we are getting more towards action."

This includes laying out what kind of risk assessments should be made, important conditions such as human control, and how confidence-building measures can be taken in order to manage risks, he said.

Among the details added in the document was the need to prevent AI from being used to prolifer-

ate weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by actors including terrorist groups, and the importance of maintaining human control and involvement in nuclear weapons employment.

There are many other initiatives on the issue, such as the US government's declaration on responsible use of AI in the military launched last year.

The Seoul summit - co-hosted by the Netherlands, Singapore, Kenya and the UK - aims to ensure multi-stakeholder discussions are not dominated by a single nation or entity. However, China was among roughly 30 nations that sent a government representative to the summit but did not back the document, illustrating stark differences of views among the stakeholders.

"We also need to be realistic that we will never have the whole world on board," Defence Minister Brekelmans said.

"How do we deal with the fact that not everyone is complying? ... That is a complicated dilemma that we should also put on the table," he added. The venue and timing for the next summit is still being discussed, officials said.

At the UN General Assembly in October, South Korean officials said they plan to raise discussions about AI in the military domain based on the 'blueprint'.

Giacomo Persi Paoli, head of Programme Security and Technology at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), said countries should engage with others in between summits to mitigate any risks.



A man wades through flood waters outside his house in Thai Nguyen province yesterday, in the aftermath of Typhoon Yagi hitting northern Vietnam.

# Vietnam evacuates 59,000 as toll from typhoon floods climbs to 82

AFP  
Hanoi

Tens of thousands of people were forced to flee their homes yesterday as massive floods inundated northern Vietnam in the wake of Typhoon Yagi, and the death toll climbed to 82.

Yagi struck Saturday bringing winds in excess of 149kms per hour and a deluge of rain that has caused flooding not seen in decades, according to locals. More than 59,000 people have been forced to evacuate their homes in Yen Bai province, local authorities said yesterday, after the floodwaters engulfed almost 18,000 homes.

Floodwaters in Hanoi have reached levels not seen since 2008, state media reported, citing a senior local official, and forecasters have

warned more is expected in the city's historic centre.

Phan Thi Tuyet, 50, who lives close to the swollen and fast-moving Red River which runs through the capital, said she had never experienced such high water.

"I have lost everything, all gone," she said, clutching her two dogs as she was evacuated by boat, along with other residents whose homes were flooded. "I had to come to higher ground to save our lives. We could not bring any of the furniture with us. Everything is under water now."

Typhoons in the region are forming closer to the coast, intensifying more rapidly, and staying over land longer due to climate change, according to a study published in July.

Yagi downed bridges, tore roofs off buildings, damaged factories and triggered widespread flooding and landslides, leaving 64 peo-

ple still missing. Hanoi authorities said more than 25,000 trees in the city had been uprooted in the storm. Huge trunks blocked key roads in the city centre, creating large traffic jams.

The north of the country - densely populated and a major manufacturing hub for global tech firms including Samsung - was badly hit, with floodwaters in the city of Yen Bai at record levels, meteorologists said.

Authorities have issued flood and landslide warnings for 401 communes across 18 northern provinces. One-storey homes in parts of Thai Nguyen and Yen Bai cities were almost completely submerged in the early hours yesterday, with residents waiting on the roofs for help.

Rescuers were trying to reach residential areas to retrieve old people and children. On social media, relatives of those stuck in floodwater posted desperate pleas for help and supplies in the early hours of the morning.

**North Korea leader vows to exponentially boost nuclear arsenal**

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said the country is now implementing a nuclear force construction policy to increase the number of nuclear weapons "exponentially", state media KCNA reported yesterday. In a speech on North Korea's founding anniversary on Monday, Kim said the country must more thoroughly prepare its "nuclear capability and its readiness to use it properly at any given time in ensuring the security rights of the state", said KCNA. A strong military presence is needed to face "the various threats posed by the US and its followers", he added. Kim also said North Korea is facing a "grave threat" from what it sees as a US-led nuclear-based military bloc in the region. South Korea's deputy defence minister for policy, Cho Chang-rae, and his US and Japanese counterparts yesterday condemned Pyongyang's recent diversification of nuclear delivery systems, tests and launches of multiple ballistic missiles.



Australian opposition leader Peter Dutton addresses protesters at a national farmers rally in Canberra, Australia, yesterday.

# Australian farmers protest animal, environment policies

Reuters  
Canberra

Hundreds of farmers from across Australia held a protest yesterday against government farming policies they said were influenced by environmental and animal welfare activists and which were harming their livelihoods.

Australia is one of the world's biggest agricultural exporters and farmers nationwide are increasingly angry with the centre-left Labor government that has sought to ban exports of live sheep, restrict water use and accelerate construction of renewable power and transmission in rural areas. "We deserve to be respected," National Farmers' Federation (NFF) president David Jochinke told a crowd on the lawn in front of Australia's federal parliament in Canberra.

"There are alternative voices that are united against us. We don't think they are the ones that should be setting the policy," he said.

"We feel like we are getting stifled." The government did not send a representative to the rally. Agriculture Minister Julie Collins told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) the government was committed to listening and had helped farmers by expanding overseas market access and investing in biosecurity.

The NFF said more than 2,000 people attended what was its first nationwide rally of farmers in the capital since the 1980s.

The protest is part of a wave of unrest in Europe and elsewhere aimed at governments imposing environmental regulation that farmers say burdens them with red tape and higher costs, as well as limiting their ability to farm.

# Australia plans social media minimum age limit

Reuters  
Sydney

Australia plans to set a minimum age limit for children to use social media citing concerns about mental and physical health, sparking a backlash from digital rights advocates who warn the measure could drive dangerous online activity underground.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his centre-left government would run an age verification trial before introducing age minimum laws for social media this year.

Albanese didn't specify an age but said it would likely be between 14 and 16.

"I want to see kids off their devices and onto the footy fields and the swimming pools and the tennis courts," Albanese told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"We want them to have real experiences with real people because we know that social media is causing social harm," he added.

The law would put Australia among the first countries in the world to impose an age restriction on social media.

Previous attempts, including by the European Union, have failed

following complaints about reducing the online rights of minors.

Meta, owner of Facebook and Instagram, which has a self-imposed minimum age of 13, said it wanted to empower young people to benefit from its platforms and equip parents with the tools to support them "instead of just cutting off access".

YouTube owner Alphabet did not respond to a request for comment and TikTok were not immediately available for comment.

Australia has one of the world's most online populations with four-fifths of its 26mn people on social media, according to tech industry figures. Three quarters

of Australians aged 12 to 17 had used YouTube or Instagram, a 2023 University of Sydney study found.

Albanese announced the age restriction plan against the backdrop of a parliamentary inquiry into social media's effects on society, which has heard sometimes emotional testimony of poor mental health impacts on teenagers.

But the inquiry has also heard concerns about whether a lower age limit could be enforced and, if it is, whether it would inadvertently harm younger people by encouraging them to hide their online activity.

"This knee-jerk move ... threat-

ens to create serious harm by excluding young people from meaningful, healthy participation in the digital world, potentially driving them to lower quality online spaces," said Daniel Angus, director of the Queensland University of Technology Digital Media Research Centre.

Australia's own internet regulator, the eSafety Commissioner, warned in a June submission to the inquiry that "restriction-based approaches may limit young people's access to critical support" and push them to "less regulated non-mainstream services".

The commissioner said in a statement yesterday it would

"continue working with stakeholders across government and the community to further refine Australia's approach to online harms" which can "threaten safety across a range of platforms at any age, both before and after the mid-teen years".

DIGI, an industry body representing social media platforms, said the government should listen to "expert voices such as the eSafety Commissioner ... mental health experts, as well as marginalised groups who have expressed concerns about bans so that we're not unintentionally pushing our kids into unsafe, less visible parts of the Internet".



COMMENT

**India not closed to business from China: Jaishankar**

India is not "closed to business from China", but the issue is in which sectors the country does business with Beijing and on what terms, Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said in Berlin. Ties between the two countries have been strained since clashes between their troops on their largely undemarcated Himalayan frontier left 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead in 2020. India subsequently tightened its scrutiny of investments from Chinese companies and halted major projects. The latest annual economic survey suggests that to boost its global exports, India can either integrate into China's supply chain or promote foreign direct investment from China.

DECISION

**Internet suspended in parts of Manipur as violence erupts**

Internet and mobile data services were suspended for five days and an indefinite curfew imposed in some parts of India's northeastern state of Manipur yesterday after student protests over continuing ethnic strife turned violent. After a brief lull, fighting broke out between the majority Meitei and minority Kuki communities on September 1 and some attacks involved the use of drones to drop explosive devices, killing civilians. Police say they suspect that the drones were used by Kuki militants, a claim denied by Kuki groups. Hundreds of Meitei students took to the streets on Monday to protest against the drone attacks.

ANGER

**Striking Indian doctors defy court over rape protests**

Indian doctors in Kolkata yesterday said they were defying a Supreme Court order to end a month-long strike sparked by the rape and murder of a colleague, with thousands marching in solidarity with them. The discovery of the 31-year-old doctor's bloodied body at a state-run hospital in Kolkata on August 9 has stoked nationwide anger at the chronic issue of violence against women. The murder has triggered protests across India - and repeated strikes by medics - demanding safer conditions for women. On Monday, the Supreme Court in New Delhi gave a Tuesday evening deadline for medics to resume work.

LAW AND ORDER

**Thousands of UK prisoners freed to ease jail overcrowding**

Thousands of prisoners in British jails were released early yesterday, as part of government moves to ease overcrowding. Recent figures showed that the prison population in England and Wales was at its highest-ever level. But with concern about released prisoners reoffending, the government insisted no violent offenders would be eligible for early release. Business Minister Jonathan Reynolds said it was "a difficult decision" to release the 1,700 prisoners. Downing Street has said the policy was required to avoid "unchecked criminality", where recently convicted criminals have been spared jail sentences because there were no places available.

# Modi had an advantage in 'controlled' polls: Rahul

Reuters  
New Delhi

India's opposition leader Rahul Gandhi yesterday said he did not view this year's two-month general elections as a free exercise, but rather as one structured to deliver an advantage to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, without citing evidence.

But Modi suffered a rare setback instead, as the opposition made a strong showing, costing his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) its outright majority and forcing it to turn to coalition partners for the first time in a decade to retain power.

"They (BJP) had a huge financial advantage and they had locked our bank accounts," Gandhi said at an event at Georgetown University in Washington.

"The election commission was doing what they wanted. The entire campaign was structured so that Modi could do his thing across the country," he added.

"I don't view it as a free election. I view it as a controlled election."

Gandhi said, "I don't believe that in a fair election, the BJP would come anywhere near 240 seats. I would be surprised."

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 240 seats on its own, or 32 short of half the 543 members in parliament's lower house, but formed the government, as his 15-party National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won 293 seats.

The opposition INDIA alliance led by Gandhi's centrist Congress party won 230 seats. Congress on its own won 99.

The election commission did not respond to the comments.

In response, Agricultural Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said Gandhi was trying to besmirch the image of the nation, an activity he sought to portray as treasonous.

"Due to being defeated consecutively for the third time, anti-BJP ... anti-Modi sentiments have taken root in his mind," Chouhan told reporters.

"He is constantly trying to malign the image of the country, which is equivalent to treason."

In the weeks before the vote, Gandhi's Congress party received income tax notices, seeking payments of about Rs35bn (\$417mn), which it described at the time as politically motivated.

It was eventually given time to resolve the payments until after the vote.

The accusation that voting was not entirely free is not new, with Congress and some allies in the opposition alliance having aired accusations of voting machines having been tampered with in prior elections since Modi won power in 2014.

In public denials, the election commission has said its systems are secure and cannot be interfered with. India's Supreme Court has also rejected petitions seeking a return to the old system of balloting.



Workers of a Samsung facility drink tea as they gather to take part in a strike to demand higher wages at its Sriperumbudur plant near the city of Chennai, India, yesterday.

# Samsung production at key India plant hit due to strike

Reuters  
Sriperumbudur, India

Samsung Electronics' production at a key plant in southern India was disrupted for a second day by hundreds of employees striking for higher wages yesterday, as top executives sought to resolve a rare episode of labour unrest.

South Korea-based Samsung, India's biggest consumer electronics company, counts the country as a key growth market, competing with the likes of LG Electronics to make everything from televisions and refrigerators to smartphones.

The strike-hit plant in Sriperumbudur, the smaller of Samsung's two Indian factories, employs around 1,800 people and makes electronic

products rather than smartphones. But it still contributes 20% to 30% of Samsung's annual \$12bn revenue in India, said two sources with direct knowledge of the matter, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Posters saying "Indefinite Strike" went up outside the factory near the city of Chennai, where hundreds of workers in company uniforms set up tents to shade themselves from the heat. Union leader E Muthukumar said "the strike will continue for a third day" today.

About half of the factory's daily production was affected when many workers stayed away on Monday, and the protesters continue to press their demands for higher wages, better hours and most importantly want Samsung to recognise the formation of a union backed by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions group.

Shares in Samsung closed 1.9% lower in

Seoul, versus the benchmark KOSPI's 0.5% fall.

Samsung's Southwest Asia CEO, JB Park, and other senior executives are visiting the factory to find a resolution, people with direct knowledge of the situation said. Park oversees the India market for Samsung from Gurugram, near New Delhi.

Samsung did not respond to a request for comment. Muthukumar said no settlement had been reached during the discussions yesterday with Samsung management.

Tamil Nadu labour secretary Veera Raghava Rao said that negotiations between workers and management are ongoing, but there is no indication yet when the matter will be resolved.

A spokesperson for Samsung India said on Monday that it actively engaged with workers "to address any grievances they may have and comply with all laws and regulations".

**Jailed Kashmir leader gets bail to campaign in polls**

A jailed member of parliament from Kashmir was granted interim bail yesterday to allow him to campaign for local elections in the region, his lawyer said.

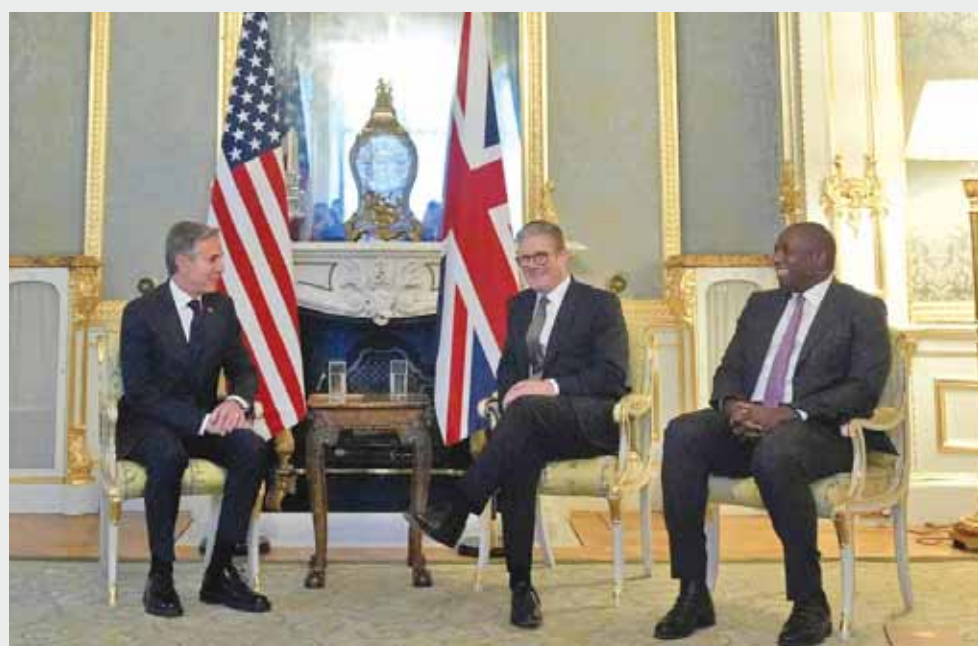
Kashmir is gearing up for the first local assembly elections in a decade, with voting in the three-phased poll beginning on September 18.

Sheikh Abdul "Engineer" Rashid, 57, who was arrested on terrorism funding accusations, was elected as a national lawmaker in June but has been held in a high-security prison in Delhi.

"The court has granted Engineer Rashid interim bail so that he can campaign for his party in the assembly election," his lawyer Ubaid Shams said.

The region has been without an elected government since 2019, when its partial autonomy was cancelled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government and it was brought under New Delhi's direct rule.

**Starmer, Lammy, Blinken discuss Ukraine**



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (left) meets with Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer (centre) and Britain's Foreign Secretary David Lammy during a bilateral meeting at Lancaster House in central London yesterday, during his one-day visit to Britain. Blinken met with Starmer and Lammy to talk about about ways to rally further behind Ukraine, which is waging an offensive into Russian territory as Moscow trudges further on the ground inside Ukraine's east.

# Starmer wins vote on 'unpopular' benefit cut

AFP  
London

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer yesterday survived an early test of his fledgling premiership when lawmakers backed his controversial plan to end fuel benefits for millions of pensioners.

The proposed cuts have sparked anger among some MPs within the ruling Labour party and set up the first flashpoint with its union backers since Starmer took office in July. The furore highlights the challenge facing Britain's centre-left leader as he tries to fix an economy he says was broken by the previous Conservative government while also keeping supporters onside.

Labour announced in July that it would means test the winter fuel allowance, meaning 10mn

pensioners will no longer receive help with their energy bills during the colder months. Starmer admits the move is "unpopular" but insists "tough choices" are necessary to help close a £22bn (\$29bn) "black hole" in the public finances that Labour claims they inherited from the Tories. The former lawyer is spending much of his first months in power blaming the Conservatives for a dire economic inheritance, but Tory MPs accuse him of laying the groundwork for possible future tax rises.

Starmer has asked Britons to "accept short-term pain for long-term good" but is already coming under pressure to offer the country a less gloomy outlook.

Last month he warned that the government's Budget in late October - Labour's first official spending plan since it was last in power 14 years ago - would be "painful".

# Princess of Wales praised for cancer video

AFP  
London

A slick video by Catherine, Princess of Wales announcing that her chemotherapy has finished marks a dramatic shift in communications for the British royal family, media and commentators said yesterday.

Kate, as she is widely known, posted the three-minute footage on social media yesterday, some six months after she dramatically revealed in another video that she was being treated for the condition.

But the intimate portrait of the

42-year-old princess, her husband Prince William and their young children was notable for its departure from the stiff formality of traditional royal public relations.

"It's groundbreaking, an absolute first, a tectonic shift in how the royal family controls its image," said PR consultant Mark Borkowski.

"Kate's journey is profound and deeply personal, but they've learned that emotion can be controlled - and weaponised - in small, potent doses.

"By doing this through a polished film, they maintain dignity and control while still appearing relatable."

The Times likened the video, shot by filmmaker Will Warr in the Norfolk countryside of eastern England where the family has a home, to a Hollywood trailer for the Instagram generation.

The daily assessed it was "the most intimate portrayal of royal family since (Queen Elizabeth II) invited a fly-on-the-wall documentary crew into her home in 1969".

"In 40 years of covering the royal family I have never seen anything like Catherine's video. It's a first for the royals," veteran photographer Arthur Edwards wrote in The Sun tabloid.

Newspapers sought to decode

the meaning behind the soft-focus scenes of the young family seeking solace in nature and enjoying each other's company.

Many saw in it a clear sign that the princess, who will be queen when William succeeds his father King Charles III, was carefully attempting to control the narrative of her illness. "She's the one in the driving seat," said The Times, while Jennie Bond, a former BBC royal correspondent, said she was "putting down her marker" for the future. "This is how she wants to communicate with people," she told Sky News.

"With this she has shown she wants to be straight with people,

she wants to be direct, she wants the message to be quite simple."

The largely positive public response to the video comes after criticism of Kensington Palace, the couple's private office, and its handling of communications about Kate's illness this year. Speculation ran riot, especially online, after Kate - one of the world's most photographed women - was not seen in public for months following abdominal surgery in January.

An attempt to silence the rumours failed in March, when a family portrait, issued by the palace, was found to have been digitally altered, fuelling the chatter.

Kate's announcement that she was being treated for an undisclosed form of cancer followed soon afterwards, prompting widespread public sympathy and support.

Borkowski said the latest video, and Kate's commentary accompanying it, showed the royal family was now "on the front foot".

"They lost control of the cancer narrative by staying silent," he added. "It shows they learnt from earlier mistakes," he added.

Like other senior royals, William and Kate have a strong social media presence, which is seen as essential to maintain the British royal family's relevance and appeal.



**CHAIRMAN**

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

**Deputy Managing Editor**

K T Chacko

- 📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- ✉ editor@gulf-times.com
- ☎ 44350478 (News),
- ☎ 44466404 (Sport),
- ☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)
- ☎ 44350474
- 📘 facebook.com/gulftimes
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## EV transition loses momentum amid lack of affordable models

While automakers and suppliers are betting big on future demand for electric vehicles (EVs), a near-term global slowdown is causing pain in the industry.

Europe is stalling for time in the EV race as the region's automakers struggle with the transition and politicians become wary of fuelling voter frustrations.

Volkswagen and Volvo Car AB last week scaled back grand ambitions to challenge Tesla and new Chinese rivals.

The reasons: There aren't enough affordable models to move past early adopters and the wealthy, while reduced government incentives have further sapped customer interest.

The result: A plunge in sales.

In July, deliveries of battery-powered cars fell more than 10% across the region, mainly due to a 37% plunge in Germany – the region's biggest market.

The strategic shifts risk setting Europe back in the global battle for the future of the auto industry. While the path might be bumpy, there's broad consensus that personal transport needs to shift away from fossil fuels to stem the worst effects of climate change.

The slowdown in EV demand comes as the region's auto market remains nearly a fifth below pre-pandemic levels, sapping profitability for conventional vehicles as well.

Mercedes-Benz Group has also raised concerns over the pace of market developments. After initially pledging to go all-electric by 2030, Mercedes-Benz CEO Ola Kallenius told a shareholder meeting

### In Europe, there aren't enough affordable EV models to move past early adopters and the wealthy

in May that the company will likely offer combustion engine models well into the next decade, noting that the "the transformation might take longer than expected."

European manufacturers have struggled to produce a mass-market EV. High-end models like the €107,000 Porsche Taycan and the €116,000 BMW i7 cater to elite consumers, but inexpensive alternatives remain scarce.

Smelling the opportunity, Chinese automakers are capitalising on Europe's slow transition, putting on sales offensives with competitively priced EVs like the €33,000 BYD Dolphin, compared with a starting price of €37,000 for the VW ID.3.

The greater issue is demand in Europe and the US.

For the first wave of EVs, carmakers were able to rely on tech enthusiasts and government subsidies for company-car purchases to boost volumes.

But for the next phase, they face more cost-conscious drivers, many of whom are sceptical of the technology and balk at buying vehicles that are more expensive than equivalent fuel-burning cars.

On average, all-electric vehicles are 30% and 27% pricier in Europe and the US respectively, according to a Bloomberg report.

The subsidies and tax breaks that helped drive sales are drying up in Europe, and the current incentives in the US are contingent on a local-production threshold, limiting buyers' choices.

Consumers have also been put off by an increase in borrowing costs as central banks have moved to rein in inflation.

Some consumers are still anxious about charging infrastructure and battery range. The rapid evolution of EV batteries can serve as an argument to postpone a purchase until the technology is better.

South Korea's EV sales slipped last year for the first time since 2017 – dipping 0.1% to 157,823 units – according to data from the Korea Automobile Manufacturers Association.

Several carmakers, led by Tesla, have cut prices repeatedly over the past year to win customers. Many have also reduced output and staffing to maintain profits.

The notion that consumers are indifferent to environmental concerns, or that climate action prevents policymakers from addressing other issues, is deeply misguided, according to Agustin Reyna, Director-General of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC). With road transportation accounting for about 15% of greenhouse gas emissions, transitioning to cleaner vehicles is a linchpin in national efforts to meet climate-change mitigation targets.

A slowing uptake of EVs could also compromise global goals for containing the worst effects of global warming.

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## Tracking air quality the right way

By Soumya Swaminathan and Christa Hasenkopf  
Chennai/Munich

Every year, the World Health Organisation summarises global progress on malaria control. It details the number of cases in affected countries, shows year-on-year changes, outlines goals, and assesses the current funding landscape. The UN puts out a similar annual report for HIV/Aids. This regular tracking of serious public-health concerns is essential for addressing them effectively, because it can help channel resources to where they are most needed and identify interventions that are working.

But there is no authoritative, up-to-date global accounting of air pollution, a health risk that takes a larger toll than malaria and HIV/Aids combined. Particulate matter, a form of air pollution often associated with dust and smoke, was the leading contributor to the world's disease burden in 2021, and has been found to cut 1.9 years from average life expectancy. Air pollution was also linked to more than 700,000 deaths in children under five years old in 2021, making it the second-highest risk factor for death in this age group.

The world's main authority on air quality is arguably the WHO, which produces globally influential standards for pollution levels. Its most recent guidelines, published in 2021, aimed to

improve air-quality standards by lowering the recommended level of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) from ten micrograms per cubic meter to five.

The WHO also compiles data on annual particulate matter in cities worldwide through its ambient air quality database, which is primarily sourced from government measurements and updated every two to three years. But in the most recent edition (updated in January 2024), only 0.4% of cities reported data from 2022, and more than half of the data are at least seven years old. Many countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia – which bear a disproportionate share of the health burden from air pollution – are missing measurements, with four of the most polluted countries reporting none at all. This lack of data makes it impossible to gauge global progress or to ensure strategic resource allocation.

Satellite-derived data could fill in the gaps. But while several groups generate and compile such information, there is no definitive database. (Anecdotally, when we asked ten air-quality experts where they go for the most recent data, we received 14 different answers, none of which meet the criteria for an authoritative global source.) Moreover, annual data often have a lag of up to two years, and there is no established mechanism to assess their quality. Contrary to its name, calculating satellite-derived air-quality data requires ground monitoring data, which

can make satellite data less reliable in countries with little monitoring capacity.

Addressing air pollution worldwide requires a clear view of the global picture. Fortunately, building a system that regularly tracks collective progress on reducing particulate matter, with built-in mechanisms to help improve data-gathering efforts in the most polluted places, is technologically, logistically, and politically feasible.

The first goal should be to create an annual, authoritative accounting of PM2.5 pollution in every country. This would require incentivising countries to contribute more recent ground-monitoring data, establishing a process to combine these data with available satellite information to determine their annual pollution levels, and identifying capacity and data gaps and directing resources accordingly.

Global development and philanthropic organisations will have to provide significant financial and human resources to launch such an effort, including support for countries that currently lack the capacity to monitor or measure air quality. It will also require public-health, environmental, and finance leaders to work together, much as they have done to tackle other serious issues such as malaria, HIV/Aids, Covid-19, and tuberculosis.

Several UN agencies, including the WHO, the World Meteorological Organisation, and the UN Environment

Programme, could house or co-ordinate these data-gathering and capacity-building efforts. And institutions such as the World Bank, regional development banks (the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank, among others), bilateral donors, and philanthropies must help finance them.

There is a dire need for international collective action to tackle this challenge, which is local, yet has global consequences. The latest report on reporting and tracking air quality, published by Our Common Air, addresses some of the key concerns in the commission's recommendations. We have successfully confronted global health challenges in recent years and, in doing so, created a playbook that can be applied to others. The question now is whether the international community will use it to tackle the world's single greatest external risk to human health. – Project Syndicate

● Soumya Swaminathan, a former chief scientist of the World Health Organisation, is Co-Chair of Our Common Air and Principal Adviser for the National Tuberculosis Elimination Program at India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Christa Hasenkopf is Director of the Clean Air Program at the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago and a commissioner at Our Common Air.



FILE PHOTO: Schoolgirls walk towards a school as they reopened after remaining closed for nearly 15 days due to a spike in air pollution, on a smoggy morning in New Delhi.

## Nine Pakistan legislators detained by court under new protest law

AFP/Reuters  
Islamabad

Nine legislators from jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party were among more than 30 people re-manded in custody yesterday under a new law restricting protests. It comes after thousands of supporters of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party gathered in the capital Islamabad on Sunday for a rally that was broken up with tear gas.

The party has faced a sweeping crackdown since former cricket star Khan was jailed in August last year on a series of charges that he says are politically motivated and designed to keep him from power.

The MPs appeared at an anti-terrorism court in Islamabad where a judge remanded them in custody for eight days, an AFP journalist witnessed.

They are accused of violating the Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act 2024 - passed just last week - according to a charge sheet seen by AFP in court.

In total 34 people, including the nine MPs, were named on the charge sheet as having been re-manded in custody.

PTI leader and senior lawyer Muhammad Shoaib Shaheen, who appeared in court alongside the MPs, faced a police complaint about an "attack on officials", "armed riots" and "illegal assembly" after Sunday's rally and was also remanded in custody.

"I was picked up from my office around 7:30pm (1430 GMT)," he said at the court. "These small obstacles won't hold us back. We are the soldiers of Imran Khan, and we stand with him."

Several members of the group were rounded up by police as they left the National Assembly building in the capital on Monday night, the PTI's media team said.

Gohar Ali Khan, PTI chairman in Imran Khan's absence, was also taken away by police but later released, he told reporters.

"These are not the offences where you should charge people with terrorism legislation," he told the media.



Gohar Ali Khan and other PTI leaders address the media outside the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Islamabad. - Reuters

PTI lawmakers protested in a session of the National Assembly yesterday, calling for action against what they alleged was the illegal entry of law enforcement personnel into the premises of parliament.

"Plainclothes people entered the parliament and arrested people's representatives - this is an assault on Pakistan's democracy," PTI legislator Ali Muhammad said.

National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq announced that he would investigate the complaints, which, if verified, could result in legal action. He ordered all detained lawmakers to be returned to parliament.

Media footage showed police pushing the lawmakers into vehicles outside parliament, a scene that Omar Ayub Khan, the party's leader of the opposition, called "despicable".

"Yesterday's massive protest has sent shivers down the government's spine," Khan's aide, Zulfikar Bukhari, said in a post on X, calling the detentions illegal.

Thousands of Khan supporters turned out for Sunday's rally, the largest in the capital since February elections when rival parties formed a coalition to keep PTI from power, despite the party winning the most seats.

It was the first demonstration since the government passed the

new law regulating public gatherings, which it said would allow for peaceful assembly subject to reasonable restrictions.

Political, religious and civil rights groups in Pakistan frequently stage sit-ins and protests that can shut down cities for days.

City authorities gave permission for the demonstration to go ahead but it continued beyond the stipulated time and authorities used tear gas to disperse crowds.

Authorities had earlier warned of legal action "for violation of the permission".

Imran Khan rose to power in 2018 with the help of the military, analysts say, but was ousted in 2022 after reportedly falling out with the generals.

A United Nations panel of experts found this month that his detention "had no legal basis and appears to have been intended to disqualify him from running for political office".

Several convictions against him have been overturned by the courts.

Several members of the PTI's social media and press team were rounded up last month and accused of "anti-state propaganda".

PTI leaders, in a press conference in the northwestern city of Peshawar, announced country-wide protests for Friday against the new crackdown.

## EU scores 'big win' in top court against Apple and Google

AFP/Reuters  
Brussels

The EU's top court has delivered two major victories in the bloc's battle to rein in tech giants by ruling against Apple and Google in separate legal sagas with billions of euros at stake.

The decisions give a boost to the bloc's outgoing competition chief, Margrethe Vestager, who had suffered a series of setbacks in EU courts against her decisions.

"Today is a huge win for European citizens and tax justice," she said on X of the Apple ruling, also praising the Google judgment as a big win for digital fairness.

Putting an end to a long-running legal battle, the European Court of Justice ruled that the iPhone maker must pay €13bn (\$14.3bn) in back-taxes to Ireland.

"Ireland granted Apple unlawful aid which Ireland is required to recover," the court said in a statement.

Minutes later, the court upheld a €2.4bn fine against Google, one of a string of high-profile EU competition cases targeting the tech giant.

The court dismissed an appeal by Google against the 2017 fine, slapped on the search engine for abusing its dominant position by favouring its own comparison shopping service.

Both rulings are final and cannot be appealed. Apple said later in the day in a US securities filing that it would take up to a \$10bn earnings hit.

The figure will not make much of a dent in a company that saw global sales of \$383bn and net profit of \$97bn in the year to September 2023.

Vestager warned that the EU would "continue to push" and "go after" abuses of dominance.

"I was ready to face the loss. It was the win that made me cry," an emotional Vestager told reporters in Brussels.

Apple and Google said they were "disappointed" by the decisions.

Ireland, which is home to Apple's EU headquarters and had challenged Brussels' position, said it would "respect" the court's findings.

One of the most bitter legal battles between the European Commission and big tech, the Apple case dates back to 2016 when the EU's executive arm claimed Ireland allowed the iPhone maker to avoid billions of euros in taxes.

By the commission's calculations, Dublin allowed Apple to pay a tax rate of 1% of its European profits in 2003 which then dropped to 0.005% by 2014.

It was one of several investigations over the previous decade into sweetheart tax arrangements between major companies and several EU countries.

However, Apple said yesterday that there was no "special deal".

"We always pay all the taxes we owe wherever we operate," the company said in a statement.

Apple, which said it paid \$577mn in tax, 12.5% of the profit generated in the country, in line with the tax laws in Ireland in the period 2003-2014 covered in the EU investigation, said: "The European Commission is trying to retroactively change the rules and ignore that, as required by international tax law,



Margrethe Vestager at the news conference in Brussels. - Reuters

our income was already subject to taxes in the US."

The ruling is a blow for Apple as the iPhone maker had gained the upper hand in the Ireland case in 2020, when the EU's General Court annulled the order for it to pay the taxes owed.

Following an appeal by Brussels, the legal adviser of the higher European Court of Justice in November recommended scrapping the 2020 decision, saying that it was peppered with legal errors.

The top court, which could have sent the case back to the lower court, decided to rule that Apple should pay the back-taxes.

The conclusion to the case spelled relief for Brussels, which has faced difficulties defending its tax enforcement moves in recent years, with previous cases lost against Amazon and Starbucks.

Vestager admitted she was "positively surprised" by the decision but warned "there is still an occurrence of massive profit shifting into low tax territories".

She will be replaced later this year when the new European Commission takes office, and advised her successor to "make this one of many necessary priorities".

The EU fine against Google was one of several record penalties imposed for violating EU competition rules, totalling around €8bn between 2017 and 2019.

"We are disappointed," Google said. "We made changes back in 2017 to comply with the European Commission's decision."

Google faces yet another test next week when the top EU court will decide on the smallest of those fines, worth around €1.49bn.

Legal headaches for Google are also mounting across the Atlantic.

A trial began on Monday in the United States where the government accuses Google of dominating online advertising and stifling competition.

It comes after a US judge ruled last month that Google maintained a monopoly with its search engine.

Google's so-called ad tech - the system that decides which online adverts people see and how much they cost - is an area of particular concern for regulators worldwide.

Brussels last year accused Google of abusing its dominance of the online ad market and recommended the US company sell part of its ad services to ensure fair competition.

## James Earl Jones dies

American actor James Earl Jones (pictured), an imposing stage and screen presence who overcame a childhood stutter to develop a stentorian voice recognised the world over as intergalactic villain Darth Vader, died on Monday at the age of 93.

Jones, a longtime sufferer of diabetes, died at his home surrounded by family members, his agent, Barry McPherson, said.

No cause of death was provided. Jones had a great physical presence on stage and television, as well as in movies, but he would have been a star even if his face was never seen because his voice had a career of its own.

The resonating bass could instantly command respect - as with the sage father Mufasa in *The Lion King*, and many Shakespeare roles - or instil fear as the rasping Vader in the *Star Wars* films.

Jones laughed when a BBC interviewer asked if he resented being so closely tied to Darth Vader, a role that required only his voice for a few lines while another actor did the on-screen work in costume.

"I love being part of that whole myth, of that whole cult," he said, adding that he was glad to oblige

fans who asked for a command recital of his "I am your father" line to Luke Skywalker, played by Mark Hamill.

"#RIP dad," Hamill wrote on X on Monday with a broken heart emoji above a story about the death of Jones.

Jones said he never made much money off the Darth Vader part - only \$9,000 for the first film - and that he considered it merely a special effects job.

He did not even ask to be in the credits of the first two *Star Wars* movies.

His long list of awards included Tonys for *The Great White Hope* in 1969 and *Fences* in 1987 on Broadway and Emmys in 1991 for *Gabriel's Fire* and *Heat Wave* on television.

He also won a Grammy for best spoken word album, *Great American Documents* in 1977.

Although he never won a competitive Academy award, he was nominated for best actor for the film version of *The Great White Hope* and was given an honorary Oscar in 2011.

He began his movie career playing Lieutenant Luther Zogg in Stanley Kubrick's 1964 classic *Dr.*



Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb.

Later acclaimed movie roles included novelist Terence Mann in 1989's *Field of Dreams* and South African Reverend Stephen Kumalo in 1995's *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

He also starred in *Conan the Barbarian*, *Coming to America*, *The Sandlot*, *Matewan*, *The Hunt for Red October* and *Field of Dreams*, among others.

Jones also was heard in dozens of television commercials and for several years CNN used his authoritative *This is CNN* to introduce its newscasts.

James Earl Jones was born on January 17, 1931, in the tiny community of Arkabutla, Mississippi, to a family with a mixed ethnic background of Irish, African and Cherokee.

## Chile arrests ex-firefighter with 'hero' motive over deadly blaze

Chilean police have arrested a former firefighter for allegedly contributing to a massive blaze that killed 137 people and destroyed thousands of homes in February because he wanted to be a "hero" by helping put it out.

The arrest of Elias Salazar, 39, adds to those of another volunteer firefighter and a forestry official suspected of involvement in the second deadliest inferno recorded in the world this century. Several fires broke out simultaneously on February 2 around the coastal city of Vina del Mar, some 70 miles (110km) northwest of Chile's capital Santiago.

Authorities had said from the start that the fires were likely set intentionally. Salazar was once a volunteer firefighter and until his arrest an employee of the National Service for Disaster Prevention and Response (Senapred).

Valparaiso police official Guillermo Galvez said on Monday that Salazar is accused as a "material author" in the events and for allegedly setting at least one of the fires. About the motivation, Galvez said Salazar "likes to be a hero, participating and helping in emergencies". - AFP

## Brazilian police busts gang that moved three tonnes of illegal Amazon gold

Brazilian police carried out a wide operation against illegal mining in the Amazon on Monday, raiding a criminal organisation that financed the production and sale of 3.1 tonnes of gold whose origin was hidden with fraudulent papers.

Federal police said in a statement that the majority of the arrests and two dozen search and seizure warrants served were in the south of Para state, where illegal gold mining has surged in recent years in the rainforest, much of that on protected Indigenous reservation land.

"We found that at least 3.14 tonnes of illegally extracted gold had been laundered using fraudulent statements of the origin of the ore," the statement said.

Much of the gold was refined in Sao Jose do Rio Preto, a city in the north of Sao Paulo state that has a thriving jewellery industry and where illegal gold is melted down into ingots with legal gold, making it hard to trace the illegal metal.

"We have to establish whether the gold was illegal and came from unauthorised mining," the head of the operation, federal police officer Alexandre Manoel Goncalves, told Reuters.

A federal judge ordered the confiscation and freezing of 2.9bn reais (\$514mn) in cash and assets, including vehicles, motorcycles, jewellery and gold nuggets, the police said.

Four companies were suspended, six mining licences and four gun possession permits were revoked, and four local government officials were ordered removed from office, the police said.

The statement added that Indigenous people were found to be involved in the criminal organisation. - Reuters

## Harris, Trump sharpen attacks ahead of first 2024 debate

Reuters/AFP  
Washington

Republican Donald Trump and Democratic Vice-President Kamala Harris prepared to meet for the first time early today in their only scheduled debate of the US presidential campaign, a key moment in a close-fought contest.

The nationally televised debate beginning at 9pm ET (0100 GMT today) takes place just eight weeks before the November 5 election, and days before early voting will start in some states.

Former president Trump, 78, said he would contrast the left-wing policies Harris proposed in her failed 2020 presidential bid with the more centrist positions she has staked out now.

"You don't know what to expect. She's changed all of her policies over the years," he told NBC News in a phone interview.

Harris, 59, indicated she will draw attention to Trump's habit of lying.

"Donald Trump has a real problem with the truth," she wrote in a social media post yesterday.

Her campaign released an ad featuring former president Barack Obama ridiculing



Trump's false claims about crowd sizes at his events.

Harris will also talk about her plans to lower Americans' daily expenses, campaign advisers said.

The encounter is particularly important for Harris, with opinion polls showing that more than a quarter of likely voters feel they do not yet know enough about her.

The debate offers Harris, a former prosecutor, a chance to make her case against Trump, whose felony convictions, outspo-



ken backing for supporters convicted in the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol and frequent falsehoods offer plenty of fertile ground.

It will be the first time the two candidates have met and follows weeks of personal attacks on Harris by Trump and his allies that have included racist and sexist insults.

Trump's advisers and fellow Republicans have urged him to focus on the high levels of inflation and immigration that have taken place during Democrat Joe Biden's presi-

dency, though both have dropped dramatically this year.

"He's ready to talk about why your life was better when he was in office," Lara Trump, the candidate's daughter-in-law, said on CNN.

Presidential debates do not necessarily change voters' minds, but they can transform the dynamics of a race. Biden's performance against Trump in June was so damaging that it eventually led him to abandon his campaign.

The two candidates are effectively tied in the seven battleground states likely to decide the election, according to polling averages compiled by the *New York Times*.

The 90-minute debate, hosted by ABC News, will take place at the National Constitution Centre in Philadelphia.

As agreed by the campaigns, there will be no live audience and microphones will be muted when it is not a candidate's turn to speak.

"This debate may go down in the history books. Break out the popcorn," said Andrew Koneschusky, a former press secretary for Senate leader Chuck Schumer.

The vice-presidential candidates - Democrat Tim Walz and Republican JD Vance - are to hold a debate on October 1.



Members of the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra held a performance at Sidra Medicine.



## QPO brings music, joy to Sidra Medicine

Sidra Medicine, a Qatar Foundation entity, hosted the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO) for a special performance yesterday.

The event, held at the plaza level of the hospital, brought the transformative power of music to patients, families, and staff.

The QPO, a world-class ensemble, de-

livered a captivating performance, uplifting spirits and bringing a moment of joy.

The musicians' warm interactions fostered a welcoming atmosphere throughout the event.

The orchestra also hosted a special interactive activity for children, introducing them to explore different sounds and learn how the instruments work.

The hands-on experience sparked their imaginations, brought smiles to their faces, and fostered a sense of wonder and discovery.

Jennifer Ahen, director of Marketing and Communications at Sidra Medicine, said: "We were thrilled to welcome the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra to Sidra Medicine."

"Music has a profound ability to connect hearts and create moments of joy," she continued. "The performance and interactive activity nurtured a sense of community within our hospital, reminding us of the importance of holistic care that addresses the emotional and social well-being of our patients and their families."

The event was part of Sidra Medicine's ongoing commitment to providing holistic care that extends beyond medical treatment.

By incorporating art and music into the healing process, Sidra Medicine is aiming to create a positive and supportive environment for everyone, a statement explained.



Katara general manager and organising committee chairman Prof Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti and other dignitaries tour S'hail 2024 yesterday. **PICTURES:**Shaji Kayamkulam<-closing bold italic->



## S'hail 2024 opens

By Ayman Adly  
Staff Reporter

The 8th edition of Katara International Hunting and Falcons Exhibition (S'hail 2024) was inaugurated yesterday at Katara - the Cultural Village by general manager and organising committee chairman Prof Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti.

The event, which runs until Saturday (September 14) from 10am to 10pm, enjoys a wide participation from local, regional, and international companies, with some of them making their debut.

Across various sections, the exhibition displays of the latest hunting weapons, rifles, hunting equipment and gear, sophisticated modern technologies related to hunting and falconry, off-road vehicles, and handcrafted falconry items, besides various artistic works that include painting, sculptures, life size stuffed wild animals, and other antique items.

The opening ceremony saw the participation of a number of diplomats, who toured the various pavilions of the exhibition alongside Prof al-Sulaiti and other dignitaries.

S'hail 2024 features 171 leading companies from 19 countries - Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Lebanon, Pakistan, Germany, the UK, China, Spain, France, the US, Portugal, Belgium, Russia, Australia, South Africa, Lithuania, and Poland.

New participants from China, Poland, and Australia are making their entry into the local market this year through the exhibition.

Daily auctions will highlight Mongolian gyrfalcons and chicks, with the final day dedicated to a broad range of bird auctions.

The event enjoys the support of various ministries, including the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Municipality, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, and Ministry of Communications, with special pavilions offering serv-

ices and facilities for visitors.

The event is also backed by the Social and Sports Activities Support Fund (Daam), the Qatar Insurance Group (official insurance sponsor), and Al-Kass TV (media partner).

Prof Dr al-Sulaiti expressed his delight at the exhibition's opening.

"S'hail has become a premier global gathering for falconers and hunting enthusiasts to share experiences," he said. "The exhibition continues to evolve, presenting new opportunities in the heritage of hunting and falconry while affirming its authenticity and historical significance."

He lauded national companies for their high-quality, innovative products and highlighted the exhibition's role in promoting the hunting culture and values among contemporary generations.

Prof al-Sulaiti also appreciated the support of various ministries and official institutions and thanked the sponsors for their commitment to making this global event a success, showcasing Qatari culture and preserving national identity.

The exhibition also features various competitions, such as the Best Burqaa (hood) contest, judged by public voting and a panel of experts, with results announced on the final day.

Other contests include Best Stand and Best Kiosk, assessing the aesthetics and quality of construction.

The first day of the exhibition enjoyed an influx of visitors, in particular Qatari young men, who see the event as a unique opportunity to grab the latest in the field and meet fellow enthusiasts.

Painters were seen at various zones of the exhibition, creating images while some craftsmen were crafting falconry tools at various pavilions.

The exhibition also offers various veterinary services besides a number of outlets offering traditional supplements and drugs for falcons.

