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PM participates in Joint Meeting of GCC Foreign Ministers with Benelux countries



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani participated yesterday in the joint meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries with the Benelux countries, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The meeting dealt with bilateral co-operation and the means to enhance it, in addition to several issues of joint interest. (QNA) Page 2

Qatar gets 3.2mn visitors until Aug, 26% more than last year

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Qatar welcomed 3.2mn visitors by August this year, highlighting the nation's rising status as a premier family-friendly destination, Qatar Tourism (QT) chairman HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji said.

In his World Tourism Day 2024 statement, al-Kharji, also chair of the Board of Directors of Visit Qatar, noted that this remarkable growth aligns with Qatar's vision to position itself as one of the fastest-growing tourism destinations in the region, aiming to attract 6mn annual visitors by 2030.

QT's latest figure marks a 26% increase compared to the same period last year. Such achievement, he said, also demonstrates QT's aim to further increase the sector's contribution to the GDP from 7% to 12%.

Al-Kharji said this development forms part of the nation's broader economic diversification efforts as outlined in the recently unveiled Third National Development Strategy for 2024-2030.

"As we commemorate World Tourism Day 2024 under the



Saad bin Ali al-Kharji

theme 'Tourism and Peace,' we recognise that tourism is more than just a means of exploration; it is a powerful catalyst for transformation," he said.

Al-Kharji credited the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani for the country's progress and stressed that the tourism sector is central to Qatar's economic development strategy.

He said tourism's role extends beyond economic benefits, noting that it fosters cultural exchange and understanding - crucial for bridging divides and nurturing

a sense of pride within the local community.

The strategic focus on enhancing Qatar's reputation as a leading family tourism destination is complemented by efforts to leverage the country's rich cultural heritage and develop innovative attractions, al-Kharji added.

"We have been strategically planning and establishing a governance framework while attracting distinguished tourism professionals to shape the next stages of our journey. In doing so, we have established Visit Qatar as the main arm responsible for marketing and promoting Qatar Tourism.

"We remain committed to achieving our objectives through integrity, effective teamwork, and continuous innovation. Our success is rooted in our dedication to service excellence, transparency, and collaborative efforts," he said.

Al-Kharji underlined the progress achieved by Qatar in establishing itself as a major sports hub, further boosting its tourism profile. He said the successful hosting of high-profile events such as the FIFA World Cup 2022, the AFC Asian Cup 2023, and the Qatar Grand Prix underscores the country's growing influence in global sports tourism. To Page 3

Qatar helps reunite 14 children with their families

Qatar mediation successful in reuniting 10 Ukrainian, 4 Russian children with their families

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Dr Majid bin Mohammed al-Ansari, Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), announced yesterday that Qatar has succeeded in reuniting 10 Ukrainian and 4 Russian children with their respective families through its mediation.

In his weekly media briefing, Dr Majid al-Ansari said that this mediation has been ongoing for months and has resulted in the reunification of 48 children with their families, 5 from Russia and 43 from Ukraine.

He praised the co-operation between the two parties to ensure that these children reach their families and ensure that they are spared the consequences of war.

Al-Ansari pointed out that this agreement came as a result of the great Qatari effort to achieve peace in general, and the great interest in this issue in particular, since the first day of this war, and the positive role that Qatar can play in achieving and making peace.

Noting that as always, the children are received at the Embassy of Qatar in Moscow, and then their arrival to their final destinations and their reunification with their families is followed up, under Qatari supervision.

Dr al-Ansari praised the efforts of HE Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatier, Minister of State for International Co-operation, in leading the negotiations and mediation processes, and the efforts of the parties



Dr Majid bin Mohammed al-Ansari briefing the media yesterday.

concerned from both sides (the Russian Federation and Ukraine). Stressing that these efforts are ongoing and other positive steps will be announced in the coming days.

He pointed out that there is a health and social care programme currently being conducted for the children in Doha, in the presence of the Russian and Ukrainian sides. Stressing that in the shadow of any conflict or war, it is necessary to work to ensure that children are spared the consequences of these conflicts, which is something that we lack greatly in the Gaza Strip, and now in Lebanon, where children have become targets due to the persistence of massacres and slaughters.

The official spokesman for the MoFA confirmed that from December, Qatari citizens will be exempted from entry visas to the United States, after Qatar was included in the visa waiver programme. Explaining that the inclusion of Qatar in the American visa waiver programme reflects the level of the strategic relationship between the two countries, and is the culmination of bilateral relations in various fields. To Page 3

15 massacred in Israeli strike on Gaza school

AFP
Gaza Strip

Civil defence rescuers in Gaza said an Israeli strike yesterday on a school-turned-shelter killed at least 15 people.

The vast majority of the besieged Gaza Strip's 2.4mn people have been displaced at least once by the war, with many seeking shelter in school buildings.

Civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said there were "15 martyrs, including children and women, and dozens wounded, some of them seriously, following an Israeli bombardment of Al-Faluja school in Jabalia camp in north Gaza."

Thursday's attack was the latest in a series of Israeli strikes on school buildings housing displaced people in Gaza, where fighting has raged for nearly a year.

A strike on the United Nations-run Al-Jawmi School in central Gaza on September 11 drew international outcry after the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said six of its staffers were among the 18 reported fatalities.

At least 41,534 Palestinians, a majority of them civilians, have been killed in Israel's military campaign in Gaza since the war began, according to data provided by the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

The United Nations has acknowledged these figures as reliable.

US pledges \$8bn more in aid for Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met Joe Biden at the White House yesterday to present his wartime "victory plan," after the US president announced an \$8bn surge in military aid for Kyiv's fight against Russia. But Zelensky's visit was clouded by a blazing row with Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump that underscored how November's US election could upend the support that Kyiv receives from its biggest backer.

Israel rejects US-backed Lebanon ceasefire plan

Reuters
Beirut/Jerusalem

Israel rejected global calls yesterday for a ceasefire with the Hezbollah movement, defying its biggest ally the US and pressing ahead with strikes that have killed hundreds in Lebanon and heightened fears of an all-out regional war.

An Israeli warplane struck the edges of the capital Beirut, killing two people and wounding 15, including a woman in critical condition, Lebanon's health ministry said. That took deaths from hits overnight and during Thursday to 28.

The strike killed the head of one of Hezbollah's air force units, Mohammad Surur, two security sources said, the latest senior Hezbollah commander to be targeted in days of assassinations hitting

the group's top ranks.

On the Israeli side of the border with Lebanon, the army staged an exercise simulating a ground invasion - a potential next stage after relentless airstrikes and explosions of communications devices.

Israel's air force is planning to assist troops in the event of a ground operation and will stop any arms transfers from Iran, Air Force Commander Major General Tomer Bar said.

Israel has vowed to secure its north and return thousands of citizens to communities there who have evacuated since Hezbollah launched a campaign of cross-border strikes last year in solidarity with Palestinian resistance movement Hamas.

Landing in the US to address the UN General Assembly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told reporters the military will keep hitting Hezbollah with



Volunteers work in a community kitchen to prepare meals for those who fled Israeli bombardment in southern Lebanon and found refuge in temporary shelters in Beirut, yesterday.

"full force and we will not stop until we achieve all our goals, first and

foremost returning the residents of the north safely to their homes."

COMMUNITY
See Pages: 6 & 7

PM in New York meetings



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary Peter Szijarto on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. During the meeting, they discussed relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to a number of regional and international issues of common interest.



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with Caretaker Prime Minister of Lebanon Najib Mikati on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The meeting dealt with bilateral co-operation between the two countries and the means to enhance it, in addition to the latest developments in Lebanon and ways to de-escalate, as well as several topics of joint interest.



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani participated in the joint meeting of the GCC Foreign Ministers of the five Nordic countries, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The meeting dealt with bilateral co-operation and the means to enhance it, in addition to discussing several topics of joint interest.



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with Prime Minister of Nepal Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. During the meeting, they discussed relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to a number of regional and international issues of common interest.



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia Dr Robert Golob, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. During the meeting, they discussed relations between the two countries and means to support and enhance them, in addition to a number of regional and international issues of common interest.



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani participated in the meeting of the Ministerial Committee assigned by the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The meeting dealt with developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, ceasefire efforts, the release of prisoners and hostages, the sustainable entering of humanitarian aid to all areas of the strip without obstacles.



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of Austria Alexander Schallenberg. They discussed relations between the two countries and means to support and enhance them, in addition to a number of topics of common interest.



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Singapore Dr Vivian Balakrishnan. They discussed relations between the two countries and means to support and enhance them, in addition to a number of regional and international issues of common interest.



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with Prime Minister of Netherlands Dick Schoof, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. They discussed relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to a number of regional and international issues of common interest. (QNA)

Qatar attends Group of Friends of Mediation ministerial meeting on sidelines of UNGA 79

QNA
New York

Qatar participated in the 14th ministerial meeting of the UN Group of Friends of Mediation, held under the title 'staying the course: strengthening mediation in a changing conflict environment,' on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 79) in New York. HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi chaired Qatar's delegation at the meeting.

In his remarks during the meeting, HE al-Khulaifi said that Qatar's various achievements in the field of mediation have greatly contributed to promoting peace, security, and stability in several regions such as Afghanistan, Lebanon, Sudan, the Horn of Africa, Chad, Venezuela, and Ukraine. He stressed that Qatar's ongoing diplomatic efforts in Gaza further demonstrate its steadfast com-

mitment to preventive diplomacy and mediation as the most effective means of resolving conflicts, as set out in the United Nations Charter.

He indicated that Qatar's long-standing success in mediation is guided by its constitution, which states that Qatar's foreign policy is based on the principle of promoting international peace and security by settling international disputes through peaceful means. HE al-Khulaifi noted that demand for Qatari mediation efforts is increasing due to its neutral approach that focuses on the rights of the conflicting parties.

He added that Qatar's commitment to addressing post-conflict challenges, such as peacebuilding and state-building, through development and humanitarian efforts, along with its deep understanding of the root causes of conflict and cultural sensitivities, enhances its success in the field of mediation.

HE al-Khulaifi said that the efforts of the Group of Friends of Mediation, in co-operation with



the United Nations, are gaining increasing importance in light of the escalating conflicts and changing geopolitical dynamics that threaten the global order. He noted that the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories has led to an escalation of tensions in Lebanon and across the region, which poses a serious threat to global peace and security, stress-

ing the need to put an end to the bloodshed.

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out that Qatar has been working, in co-operation with the Arab Republic of Egypt and the US, for several months to achieve an immediate and complete ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. He added that as progress has been made in facilitating humanitarian pauses,

it is vital that the violence stops immediately. There is an urgent need to establish a new path to peace that guarantees the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in line with relevant UN resolutions. This requires the support of our regional and global partners to make effective use of their influence. The UN Security Council must fulfil its responsibilities under the UN Charter, ensuring that its resolutions on the Israeli aggression on Gaza are fully implemented.

HE al-Khulaifi said that Qatar views the United Nations as an effective international body that acts as both a mediator and an advocate for mediation efforts.

He emphasised Qatar's support for the vision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on sustaining peace, as stated in his report entitled "Our Common Agenda." He added that on top of that, Qatar acknowledges the role played by the Secretary-General in providing good offices, as specified in the Charter of the United Nations. HE the Minister of State

at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed the need for the UN Group of Friends of Mediation to take a more proactive and systematic approach to promoting mediation. He believed that the group needs to establish a comprehensive framework that enhances co-operation between the various actors and clearly defines their roles, and direct co-ordination between trusted mediators is a key factor in achieving successful results.

He said that it is important to realise that the increase in conflicts and their evolving nature in the age of artificial intelligence can only be addressed through the commitment of all countries to international law and the United Nations Charter, especially the major powers, without double standards. Concluding his remarks, HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed that Qatar will continue to co-operate with its international partners to enhance ways to prevent and resolve conflicts, in addition to activating the role of mediation at the global level.

Minister of state for foreign affairs meets several officials in NY



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met separately with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela Yvan Gil, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of the Republic of Mali Abdoulaye Diop, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Co-operation of the Republic of Burundi Albert Shingiro, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Co-operation and Burkinabe Abroad of Burkina Faso Karamoko Jean Marie Traore, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany Tobias Lindner, and State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The meetings dealt with bilateral co-operation and the means to enhance it, as well as the latest regional and international developments. (QNA)



National Gendarmerie chief: France grateful to Qatar for exceptional contribution in securing Paris Games

Director-General of the French National Gendarmerie General Christian Rodriguez expressed his country's gratitude to Qatar for its outstanding contribution to the security of the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games this summer, which was a huge success. He also expressed his gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad al-Thani for Qatar's participation in securing the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In his remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he emphasised that the France-Qatar strategic partnership is obvious in the field of security and is witnessing remarkable development year after year and added that the security co-operation between France and Qatar dates back a long time and has never been interrupted. This co-operation is forward looking as it is constantly seeking to adapt to future security issues and challenges that face the two countries.

"We wish to adapt to tomorrow's threats and to use the new technologies while continuing to work together on the fundamentals of our work. In particular, Cybercrime and use of artificial intelligence, are key areas of focus," he said.

The director-general of the French National Gendarmerie pointed out that on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the relationship between the two forces that will be celebrated this year, an action plan between Lekhwiya and the French Gendarmerie shall be discussed. He also noted that the state visit made by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to France in February was a great moment for the bilateral relations between the two countries, which witnessed the signing of major agreements.

He indicated that the two Min-

istries of Interior in both countries have signed an action plan for 2024-2027, that opens up new areas of co-operation, including judicial police, combating documents fraud, and civil security. A declaration of intent between the National Gendarmerie and Lekhwiya was also signed to strengthen their already close co-operation. He added that this visit brings a close to a long sequence that started in 2022 when France provided its support to Qatar during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, which was a unanimously acclaimed success. Around 220 soldiers from the French National Gendarmerie were deployed in Qatar at that time.

"The way Qatar was able to rely on France in 2022, France was able to count on Qatar for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. And that's what friends all allies are for," he said.

"I am glad and proud that my country hosted the world during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. It was a great popular and sporting event and a true success in terms of

security and organization. We rose to the challenge. In this regard, I would like to congratulate the Qatari athletes who took part in the Olympic and Paralympic Games," he added.

He pointed out that the last two major sporting events that the world witnessed were the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games. They both were marked by excellent co-operation between our two countries. As a witness of that, out of the 43 countries that provided assistance to France during the Olympics, Qatar ranked as the fourth largest contributor, which showcases the trust and friendship the two countries share.

He indicated that the Qatari collaboration in securing the Paris 2024 Olympic Games was exceptional, as Qatar's security personnel worked with French Gendarmerie personnel "shoulder to shoulder," a phrase used by HE the Minister of Interior Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met yesterday with Director-General of the French National Gendarmerie General Christian Rodriguez, who is visiting the country. HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Lekhwiya congratulated the Director-General of the French National Gendarmerie on the success of the French Republic in hosting and securing the Paris 2024 Olympics. In turn, General Christian Rodriguez thanked HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Lekhwiya for the vital role of the Qatari forces in securing the Olympics. (QNA)

IT minister meets global leaders

QNA
New York

HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohammed bin Ali al-Mannai held key discussions with global technology leaders on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The meetings focused on enhancing collaboration, driving digital transformation, and building stronger partnerships in line with Qatar's commitment to its National Vision and Digital Agenda 2030. HE the Minister met on the fourth day of the General Assembly meetings with Brad Smith, President of Microsoft Corporation.

The main discussions focused on ways to enhance the cloud computing infrastructure in Qatar, as well as the adoption of artificial intelligence and advanced cloud computing technologies. Both sides also explored opportunities to develop existing partnerships and strengthen co-operation between Qatar and Microsoft Corporation.



HE the Minister also met with Mohamed Kande, Global Chairman of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), where they explored opportunities for collaboration in the areas of system integration and professional services related to AI and digital innovation. They discussed the critical role of AI in addressing the challenges of digital transformation and highlighted the importance of integrating advanced technologies to streamline business processes and drive efficiency.

In this context, HE the Minister met with Arvind Krishna, Chairman and CEO of IBM. The

two sides discussed vital topics, including artificial intelligence solutions, quantum computing in the government sector, and digital inclusion. They also explored potential avenues for enhancing collaboration.

HE the Minister also met with Julie Sweet, President and CEO of Accenture. The meeting addressed the latest developments in the digital factory project, which Accenture is implementing from a technical standpoint. They also discussed the implementation of the best digital solutions within the project to enhance user experience and improve the qual-

ity of government services provided.

In a separate meeting, HE the Minister met with Joseph Ucuzoglu, Global Chief Executive Officer of Deloitte. Their discussions centred on system integration and professional services centred on AI.

The conversation focused on the role of consulting services in supporting AI-driven risk management, business continuity, and resilience planning, particularly in response to growing global challenges and disruptions.

These meetings are part of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology's efforts to enhance partnerships between the public and private sectors in driving innovation and strengthening digital infrastructure, which are key components in achieving the national development goals outlined in Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Digital Agenda 2030. Additionally, these discussions reinforce the Ministry's commitment to adopting and developing advanced technological solutions to enhance sustainability, innovation, and global competitiveness across sectors.

Pak ambassador lauds Amir's UNGA speech

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's speech at the opening session of 79th United Nations General Assembly represents the true sentiments of Arab and Islamic nations against unabated genocide of innocent Palestinians, Pakistan ambassador Muhemmed Aejaz said.

"The bold and principled stance of His Highness the Amir in his speech on ongoing aggression against Gaza has again highlighted the importance of reaching an imminent ceasefire on humanitarian grounds and permanent solution of Palestine issue," he explained in a statement issued by the Pakistan embassy yesterday.

"The Amir strongly opposed violence and targeting of innocent civilians by any party; a position Pakistan has always supported at all international forums. I also praise Qatar's tireless mediation efforts to stop aggression against people of Gaza and Pakistan fully supports Qatar's role as a mediator to reach a ceasefire first and then finding a just solution of Palestinian issue.

"His Highness the Amir rightly



Muhemmed Aejaz

said in his speech that 'the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within a just and permanent solution is in the interest of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples!'

"His Highness the Amir reiterated his stance in the speech that 'Qatar will spare no effort in working with its international partners and the United Nations to firmly consolidate the pillars of peace, security, sustainable development, human rights and the rule of law at all levels; Pakistan always stands with Qatar and making joint efforts to achieve these noble goals,' the envoy added.

Qatar helps reunite 14 children with their families

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Qatar is at the forefront of the Middle East and North Africa countries in the field of security and safety, according to international indicators, in addition to its commitment to global standards in the security fields.

He pointed out that this exemption from the US visa for Qatari citizens confirms the great confidence in the state of security enjoyed by Qatar, whether at the local level or in its relations with its international partners.

Pointing to Japan's announcement a few months ago that it would exempt Qatari citizens from visas, and before that the British government announced that Qatari citizens would be the first to be eligible for the new electronic travel authorisation programme, which reduces burdens and procedures. Uzbekistan announced in August 2023 that it would lift the need for a visa for Qataris.

Dr Majid bin Mohammed al-Ansari said that Qatar, through the MoFA, continues to do everything necessary to remove difficulties facing Qatari citizens, and to prove the strength of the Qatari passport, which is considered one of the strongest passports in the world, in terms of not needing entry visas and ease of movement between countries of the world.

Regarding the current situation in Lebanon, Dr Majid al-Ansari explained that there are a number of statements issued to stop this mindless war, as Qatar and a number of Arab countries issued a joint call with the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Japan, and a number of European Union countries, to cease fire in Lebanon, and to emphasise that the situation between Lebanon and Israel since October 8 is unbearable and represents an unacceptable risk of a large-scale regional escalation.

Regarding the entry of aid into the Gaza Strip, the official spokesman for the MoFA confirmed that preventing its entry has become a full-fledged crime

He added that since the beginning of the war on Lebanon, contacts have been ongoing with all parties and regional partners to reduce escalation and cease fire. Stressing that this attack on Lebanon is unjustified and represents a full-fledged war, and not as is being said that it is a limited escalation, as there are more than 600 dead in two days, and this number represents 50% of the victims of the 2006 war

that lasted a whole month.

Dr al-Ansari pointed out that the international community is required to stop this war and push the parties to stop the fighting. Especially since there is agreement that this escalation is a slide into a cycle of violence that cannot be accepted and cannot be tolerated in light of the complete absence of peace partners and political will that leads to an agreement. Pointing out that what is happening in Lebanon is not separate from the events in Gaza, he said but there is a path working on the Lebanese file that is more urgent and another in which many parties participate with the aim of stopping the war on Gaza. There is no doubt that there is a great overlap between the two files, but the reality of the matter is that we are talking about a state whose sovereignty is being violated, and a besieged sector that is being subjected to all forms of abuse by the Israeli occupation. He said, "there is no doubt that there is an overlap between the two files, but there are paths that work in parallel."

Regarding the entry of aid into the Gaza Strip, the official spokesman for the MoFA confirmed that preventing its entry has become a full-fledged crime. Recently, a statement was issued by 15 relief organisations saying that the residents of Gaza are

eating only one meal a day due to the delay in the entry of aid. These organisations indicated that 83% of the necessary food aid is prevented from reaching the besieged Strip due to the closure of the borders, stressing that this matter is the full responsibility of the Israeli occupation, as there is no justification for preventing the entry of aid.

Dr al-Ansari considered this measure a systematic starvation and the use of medicine and food as a weapon in this war, whose only victims are civilians, women and children, and that this matter will be repeated with Lebanon and others, if there is no clear international position that places Israel before its responsibilities.

At the beginning of the media briefing, Dr al-Ansari reviewed the activity of the Ministry and its officials during the past few days, which included more than twenty meetings at the ministerial level and 37 bilateral meetings held by various Qatari officials with their counterparts from different regions of the world, in which the aggression on the Gaza Strip and the war on Lebanon were at the forefront. These meetings emphasised Qatar's firm position on the necessity of stopping the war and for the international community to push towards stopping it immediately.



Between Two Hearts set for Carthage Theatre Festival

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Carthage Theatre Festival chose the Qatari play *Between Two Hearts* to participate in the official competition after it received high ratings from the selection committee. It won the most prominent awards of the 36th Doha Theatre Festival, most notably the Best Theatrical Play Award.

The play *Between Two Hearts* is produced by Msheireb Production Company, written by Taleb al-Dous and directed by Mohammed Youssef al-Mulla. The theatrical troupe is expected to begin rehearsals at the end of next month in preparation for participating in the festival scheduled to start on November 23, amidst a host of Arab, African and international shows.

The festival, headed by director and artist Mounir al-Araqi, is currently continuing preparations for the 25th session of the festival, which will include, in addition to the shows, a group of international seminars from November 25 to 27, 2024, titled 'Theatre, Genocide and Resistance: Towards a New Human Horizon'.

The Qatari show participating

in the festival revolves in a tragic form around the leader who controls the village and the farmers, as he searches for someone to give his son a heart in a surgical operation.

So, he bargains with "Shahid" in order to save his son's life, taking advantage of the condition of Shahid's son, who is also lying in the hospital after being hit by a stray or intentional bullet, awaiting treatment, so the bargaining continues with resorting to all methods of material enticement or moral terrorism in a dispute over the right to the heart that lives.

When a witness is forced to acknowledge by tricks and coercion, everyone moved to the hospital and the end has come with the death of the two hearts. To conclude the show with a hymn that clearly projects on every usurping occupier who wants to enjoy the wealth of others.

The Carthage Theatre Festival is supervised by the Tunisian Ministry of Culture and Heritage Preservation. This event was launched in 1983, to be organised like the Carthage Cinema Festival once every two years. In 2010 the Carthage Music Days were added to them, and the Carthage Poetry Days were added in 2018.

Qatar gets 3.2mn visitors until Aug, 26% more than last year

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In addition, al-Kharji said advancements in medical tourism and a robust Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions sector, which features 128 venues and 70,000 sqm of exhibition space, are diversifying the

country's tourism offerings.

He highlighted Qatar's commitment to global cultural connectivity, pointing out the country's role as a melting pot of more than 100 nationalities. Recognised as one of the safest countries globally, Qatar leverages its welcoming environment

to promote peace and understanding. Events like the Qatar International Food Festival, al-Kharji said, proves the country's dedication to showcasing diverse culinary traditions and fostering cross-cultural engagement.

He thanked public and private

sector partners for their contributions in advancing sustainable tourism: "Your commitment to diversifying services, encouraging innovation, and maintaining high service helps to strategically place Qatar on the international tourism landscape as a leading world-class destination"

HBKU hosts conference on relevance of Prophethood

The 2024 Conference on Prophetic Biography was held under the theme 'The Importance of Evidence of Prophethood in Contemporary Times', with the participation of a distinguished lineup of scholars, academics and specialists from Qatar and abroad.

The two-day conference was organised by Hamad Bin Khalifa University's College of Islamic Studies.

The event aimed at exploring historical and modern aspects of prophetic evidence and its relevance as proof of the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It delved into the critical role of the evidence of Prophethood in shaping contemporary Islamic thought and beliefs,

while addressing the challenges faced by Muslims today. It sought to provide a comprehensive study of the significance of this field and its impact on contemporary issues.

Addressing the opening session, Dr Aisha Yousef al-Mannai, director of the Mohammed bin Hamad Al-Thani Center for Contributions of Muslims to Civilisation and Chair of the Conference, stressed the importance of the conference and its theme which evokes the noble role of the Prophet on humanity.

Dr Recep Senturk, Dean of the College of Islamic Studies at HBKU, said the conference explored the essence of faith and emphasised the importance of guidance at a time that is increasingly characterised by



doubt and many epistemological and ideological challenges.

The conference sought to prove Prophethood through rational evidence that can address atheist ideas, denial of divinity and

religions, Dr Senturk added, stressing the importance of Prophethood in guiding people through divine laws that are not subject to interests and whims.

The conference sessions discussed exceptional issues in this field, most notably how to spread the Prophet's biography in the modern era under the dominance of Western values, the importance of scientific approaches related to the science of evidence to confront modern waves of atheism, and others.

The conference also dedicated a session for students, providing them with opportunities to communicate with their peers and specialised experts in order to enhance their academic careers. (QNA)

Qatar strongly condemns attack in Mali

Qatar voiced its strong condemnation of the attack that occurred in Bamako, the capital of the Republic of Mali, which resulted in deaths and injuries. In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated the State of Qatar's position rejecting violence, terrorism and criminal acts, regardless of the motives and reasons.

The Ministry expressed the State of Qatar's condolences to families of the victims, and to the government and people of Mali, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. (QNA)

PFAC pioneers new approaches to patient-centred care

The community-based Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) at Enaya and Daam Specialised Care Center of Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) continues to pioneer new approaches to person-centred care. The PFAC is a group of current and former patients, family members, and caregivers that works together to advance person-centric best practices at a hospital or healthcare organisation, a statement said.

Volunteer patients and families collaborate with employees (clinical, administrative, and support) to provide guidance on how to improve patient and family experiences. HMC has 120 PFAC members across its hospital and facility network.

Dr Hanadi Khamis al-Hamad, deputy chief for Long Term Care, Rehabilitation and Geriatric Care, and medical director of Rumailah Hospital and Qatar Rehabilitation Institute said many improvements



Dr Hanadi al-Hamad

had been made as a direct result of consultation with the PFAC.

"Since being established in 2020 as part of Enaya and Daam Specialised Care Center's Person-Centred Care Certification, the PFAC has played an integral role in helping us to improve care for our patients," she recalled.

"By valuing the insights of patients, families, and caregivers, we



Enaya and Daam Specialised Care Center

are working to shape a healthcare system that truly places patients at the centre of their care journey, creating a lasting impact on their well-being," she said.

The PFAC has contributed to many innovations and improvements by Enaya and Daam Special-

ised Care Center over the past two years. There has been an improved care environment with buildings co-designed with PFAC members. Upgrades include a refurbished therapy room, patient-friendly floor, ergonomic furniture, shaded garden, enhanced gym, new dental



Nasser al-Naimi

assessment room, and private patient and family room.

There is enhanced communication with patients and families using bedside Whiteboards, upgraded for better communication, including translation to Arabic and its component enhancements to better reflect patient wishes.

The clinical project on pressure

injury prevention and monthly activities at Enaya to enhance patient well-being were the other benefits.

The chief of Patient Experience and director of Hamad Healthcare Quality Institute, Nasser al-Naimi, said that by embracing person-centred care principles, Enaya and Daam ensure that patients feel heard, respected, and actively involved in their care.

"These are great examples of the real and lasting changes an active PFAC can make to the delivery of person-centred care. Their contributions are at the heart of person-centred care, ensuring that the patients' voices are heard," he said. "I urge anyone - current and former patients, their families and members of the community - to consider joining our PFACs across HMC." For more information on becoming a PFAC member, interested participants could send an e-mail to PersonCenteredCare@hamad.qa

'First Year of Marriage' programme for students

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF), in co-operation with the Student Counselling Center at Qatar University (QU), organised the "First Year of Marriage" programme, which will run until October 21.

The aim is to provide the necessary awareness for those about to get married and strengthen family ties through integrated training workshops for both males and females.

The workshops are presented by Dr Asmaa al-Dosari and Dr Latifa al-Mughaisib. This programme addressed several topics, including: the components of personal readiness for marriage, clarifying and developing the personal perception of marriage, choosing a life partner and testing compatibility, the enablers of making the decision to get engaged, in addition to managing the engagement period and the provisions of the

marriage contract. Sabeka Ahmed al-Nasr, a social consultant at the Ministry, said the programme aims to support the stability of fledgling families and help newlyweds prepare them for married life.

By providing them with knowledge and experiences that develop their skills and support them in marital communication, and provide them with awareness of how to deal with life's challenges and problems.

Each student will receive a certificate of attendance for the First Year of Marriage Program at the end of the programme. Fatima Haider, Senior Student Counselling Specialist at the Student Counselling Center at QU, expressed her gladness at hosting the "First Year of Marriage" programme, which comes in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. She stressed that this programme constitutes an important step towards raising awareness of the importance of building a strong and stable family, noting that the family is a fundamental pillar in supporting the stability and development of society.

Students upskill from QMC's podcast course

The 'Art of Podcast Making' course, organised by the Qatar Media Center affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, concluded after four consecutive days. The training course was dedicated to the age group from 14 to 20 years, and was presented by trainer Mohammed al-Saadi.

It sought to introduce participants to one of the most important digital media outlets that has become widely followed by different ages for the information and interviews it provides, some of which have garnered millions of views.

The course covered the most important knowledge that must be mastered in the world of podcasting, the difference between podcasting and vodcast and the advantages of each type, as well as the similarities between them and how to differentiate between them, whether at the reception level or at the work level, and the importance of that due to its repercussions on the nature of the content provided and the target group.

The training course also addressed how to prepare podcast content, what sources can be used, how to choose topics that



can be presented, the importance of choosing the right guests, as well as the need to interact with topics that have a popular base.

The participants in the course learned about a set of skills that those wishing to enter this field must possess, including how to control voice and body language, how to benefit from speaking skills, vocal communication, interaction with the guest, and dealing with the microphone.

At the end of the training course, certificates of participa-



tion were distributed to the attendees, and the Qatar Media Center shield was presented to the trainer, Mohammed al-Saadi. In a statement, Director of the Qatar Media Center Iman al-Kaabi expressed her happiness with the level of interaction with the training course, noting that the course is one of the distinguished training courses presented at the centre, as it shed light on one of the most rapidly spreading digital media.

She said that the Center aims through this training course to provide young people with skills and capabilities that enable them to enter this world that has become an important knowledge platform.

The Director of the Qatar Media Center called on all those wishing to benefit from the training courses provided by the Qatar Media Center to follow the centre's digital platforms and see what's new, noting that all training courses and workshops provided by the Center are free. (QNA)

British International Dental Centre opens

The British International Dental Centre celebrated its grand opening yesterday in Mirghab Tower, West Bay. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was led by the British ambassador Neerav Patel and the centre's founder, Dr Sarah Aalders, a statement said.

"For the past 30 years, the mission of both branches of the British International Dental Centre has been to create beautiful smiles through exceptional dentistry. We are excited to continue this legacy in our wonderful new location," said Dr Sarah.

Ambassador Patel lauded the dental centre for its outstanding achievements and dedication over the past three decades. "The dental centre offers cutting-edge care with state-of-the-art technology. Upon entering the centre, visitors are greeted by a stunning view of the Sheraton Grand Doha and the sea, creating a calming ambience, perfect for those who may feel apprehensive about visiting the dentist," the statement said.

Dr Sarah expressed her gratitude to Qatar's Minister of Public Health HE Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari for her vision and the stringent guidelines and licensing standards that have enabled to set up a dental clinic that meets the highest standards.



British ambassador Neerav Patel and British International Dental Centre's founder Dr Sarah Aalders with other dignitaries at the opening.

The centre deploys advanced dental techniques and technology, including the use of scanners instead of impressions, the latest gentle Guided Biofilm Therapy for dental cleaning, gum depigmentation using lasers, on-site milling of dental crowns, the latest 3D radiography with Sirona Cone Beam CT scans, operating microscope, intraoral cameras, and dental implants.

Dr Sarah explained that state-

of-the-art technology enhances communication between dentists and patients, leading to more accurate diagnoses, increased precision, and fewer complications. This results in more efficient and gentler treatments, along with reduced post-operative pain.

"In addition, our latest sterilisation technology offers outstanding cross-infection control, ensuring that our patients

feel secure," she said. The British International Dental Centre adheres to hygiene and health and safety guidelines from the World Health Organisation, the Ministry of Health Qatar, and Public Health England. "The British International Dental Centre comes highly recommended for both simple and complex dental treatments, as reflected by their 5,100 Google reviews with a 4.9-star rating," the statement added.



Qatar partakes in 5th Belt and Road initiative forum

Qatar participated in the 5th Belt and Road Initiative Tax Administration Co-Operation Forum (BRITACOF), which was held in Hong Kong from September 24 to 26. Qatar was represented by President of the General Tax Authority (GTA) Khalifa bin Jassim al-Kuwari, in the presence of Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region John Lee.

In a statement, the GTA confirmed that this participation underscores its dedication to promoting transparency and international collaboration in the tax sector, facilitating knowledge exchange with global counterparts, and aligning its tax framework with interna-

tional best practices. The GTA highlighted its key role in advancing sustainable economic development both locally and globally.

The BRITACOF featured significant participation from leaders and representatives of tax administrations worldwide, alongside delegates from international organisations, academic institutions, and the business sector.

The discussions focused on creating a robust platform to drive co-operation in tax management and capacity building among tax administrations supporting the Belt and Road Initiative, while strengthening constructive dialogue with other key parties. (QNA)

UNDP administrator praises collaboration with Qatar

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) takes pride in collaborating with Qatar as an influential global actor and ardent innovation investment partner, the UNDP administrator Achim Steiner has said.

In an interview with the Qatar News Agency (QNA), Steiner hailed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's UN General Assembly (UNGA) participation as "an expression of Qatar's respect and very active engagement in the UN".

He added that the UNGA is the world's only remaining platform for all countries to have a voice and to be represented with the same number of seats, which makes it a significant meeting place "despite many of the challenges that are faced by multilateralism in today's world".

Steiner also hailed His Highness the Amir's speech at the 79th UNGA, which clearly called for the urgent need to respect the rule of international law and ensure humanitarian responses.

He added the Qatar-UNDP partnership is active across 170 countries, and highlighted the accelerator labs collaboration with the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) across 115 countries, with Qatar and Germany becoming the two principle investors in enabling the UNDP to set up the labs across the world.

Steiner detailed the UNDP-Qatar co-operation in areas of crises, including Afghanistan and Yemen, and in Sudan.

He hailed Doha as "the most important non Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) contributor of core funding to the UNDP, and that is a very critical part of financing the work of the UNDP in developing countries across the world".

Speaking about the catastrophic impact of the war on Gaza on people and infrastructure, Steiner spoke highlighted the inability of children to attend schools and the devastation of health infrastructure, noting that providing humanitarian aid is of utmost importance because people in Gaza need to survive.

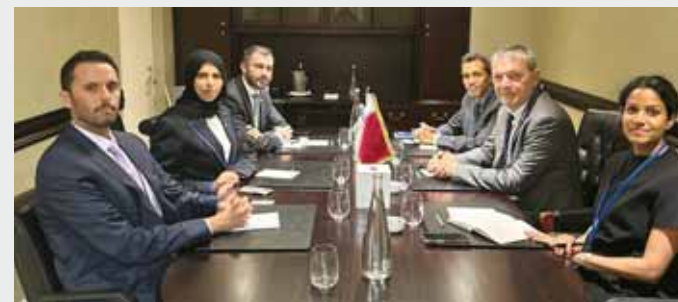
Steiner stressed that amid many conflicts worldwide and climate change, there is enormous pressure on countries to accelerate co-operation at the national and international levels. - QNA



AlKhatir holds meetings with top officials



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatir held meetings on Wednesday with UN under-secretary-general and executive director of the UN Office for Project Services, Jorge Moreira da Silva; United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) commissioner-general Philippe Lazzarini; and Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs Luminita Odobescu, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 79) in New York. During the meetings, topics of joint interest were discussed, including the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, in addition to the developments in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. - QNA



Qatar participates in high-level meeting on Sudan

Qatar has participated in a high-level ministerial event to enhance support for the humanitarian response in Sudan and the surrounding region.

The event was co-hosted by Saudi Arabia, the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Representing Qatar at the event was HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatir.

In her speech, HE AlKhatir highlighted the tragic situation in Sudan, where the ongoing

war has devastated infrastructure, displaced millions, and severely impacted health and education services.

She drew attention to the alarming levels of hunger, with 14mn people suffering from acute hunger and 13 areas on the brink of famine despite the country being an agricultural one, stressing that Sudanese women are disproportionately affected by violence and lawlessness.

HE AlKhatir emphasised that Sudan's crisis requires both political and humanitarian solutions, and warned against reducing Sudan's plight to a mere refugee issue.

She praised Saudi Arabia's diplomatic efforts through the Jeddah platform and commended Egypt's contributions.

She called for Sudan to be placed back on the international agenda and to remain a priority for the global community.

Qatar, HE AlKhatir noted, has provided \$75mn in aid through the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) since the start of the war, with additional contributions of over \$21mn from non-governmental organisations like Qatar Charity and the Qatar Red Crescent Society. - QNA

AJMN wins two Emmy awards

Al Jazeera Media Network has been honoured with two Emmy awards in the 45th Annual News and Documentary Emmy Award competition, a statement said.

The winners were announced on Wednesday in New York City by the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, recognising the network's outstanding journalism and storytelling in conflict zones and investigative reporting.

Gaza journalist Bisan Owda, with AJ+ English's *It's Bisan from Gaza and I'm Still Alive*, was recognised with the News Emmy Award for Outstanding Hard News Feature Story: Short Form, while Al Jazeera English's *Fault Lines* received the News Emmy for Outstanding Climate, Environment, and Weather Coverage.

Owda, a renowned journalist and influencer collaborating with AJ+, has been awarded an Emmy for her exceptional coverage of the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Since the events of October 7, Owda has been at the forefront of reporting, bringing the stories of ordinary Palestinians to a global audience amidst 11 months of war and devastation.

"This award is a testament to young Palestinian journalists and their professionalism," said Dima Khatib, managing director



of AJ+ Channels. "Bisan's reporting has humanised the Palestinian story after decades of mainstream media's systematic dehumanisation of Palestinians."

"Winning this Emmy is a win for humanity," she said. "We feel extremely proud of this bright moment amidst ongoing genocide, and Bisan will continue reporting."

This Emmy recognition follows other notable accolades for Owda's fearless reporting, including the Peabody Award and the Radio Television Digital News Association's Edward R Murrow Award.

The award for Al Jazeera English's *Fault Lines*, in the Outstanding Climate, Envi-

ronment, and Weather Coverage category, was for its film *Shark Fin Hunters*, which exposes wildlife trafficking that poses enormous risks for the future of our oceans.

Issa Ali, acting managing director of Al Jazeera English, said: "The great journalism that we do, and that done by our colleagues in other media organisations, is more important than ever in today's world. This award is a wonderful recognition of the talent, dedication, and hard work of our teams."

The team that worked on *The Shark Fin Hunters* included senior correspondent Josh Rushing, senior producer Jeremy



Young, executive producer Laila Al-Arian, cinematographer Rodrigo Galdos, producer Luis Del Valle de Pacha Films, editor Warwick Meade, additional photography by Jeremy Raff, and sound mixer Linus Bergman.

Rafi Mustafa and Anabelle Rojas provided crucial support.

Al Jazeera English has won one International Emmy in 2014 for *Witness' Miners Shot Down*, and three News & Documentary Emmy Awards: in 2019 for *Fault Lines' Adoption Inc.*, in 2018 for *Fault Lines' The Ban*, and in 2014 for *Fault Lines' Haiti in a Time of Cholera*.

MoEHE prepares for launch of 16th National Week for Scientific Research and Innovation

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), in collaboration with the Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation Council (QRDI), is preparing for the launch of the "16th National Week for Scientific Research and Innovation 2024".

The events are held annually under the slogan *Promising Researchers for Qatar* and include the 16th National Exhibition for Student Research.

The activities will take place from September 29 to October 3, 2024, at the Qatar National Convention Centre.

This year, some 70 primary schools participated in the exhibition, presenting 412 research projects involving over 800 students.

Furthermore, 162 middle and high schools participated, showcasing 808 research projects across various fields, with 1,559 students involved.

The research projects were evaluated through several stages to ensure objectivity in assessment and transparency in the judging decisions and results announcement.

The 16th National Week for Scientific Research and Innovation includes events, most notably the final rounds for student research, projects, workshops, and discussion sessions for teachers and students.

The National Exhibition for Student Research will also be inaugurated, alongside a fun corner and partner presentations on September 30, under the patronage of HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Naimi.

The events will conclude on October 3. - QNA



House in the Fields (Tigmi Nigren).

DFI presents 'Mosaics of Morocco'

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The Doha Film Institute (DFI) is presenting "Mosaics of Morocco", a film series featuring four Moroccan films, to mark the 2024 Qatar - Morocco Year of Culture.

The programme showcases both documentaries and narratives, highlighting the rich and evolving cultural heritage of Moroccan cinema.

The films, supported by DFI grants, reflect the deep cultural ties between the two countries, and offer a unique glimpse into Morocco's vibrant storytelling tradition.

The film series will be hosted at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) Auditorium from October 10-12.

First is a documentary by Tala Hadid, titled *House in the Fields (Tigmi Nigren)*, set to be screened on October 10, about the daily lives of two sisters, Khadija and

Fatima, in an isolated Amazigh village in Morocco's High Atlas Mountains.

Next is *Mica*, a narrative from director Ismael Ferroukhi, set on October 11 at 7pm. It follows a young boy from a disadvantaged background who is given the opportunity to train at an elite tennis academy.

Fragments From Heaven on October 12 (4pm) is a documentary that explores the vast Moroccan desert where nomads and scientists search for meteorites and uncovers pieces of the cosmos.

On the same day, *Indivision* (2023) will be screened at 7pm. The film digs deeper on the emotional and psychological complexities of inheritance, identity, and societal change - set in a decaying Moroccan villa.

The DFI noted that "Mosaics of Morocco" film series is part of its broader cultural initiative, in partnership with Katara, Qatar Museums, the MIA, and Aspire Park.

St Kitts & Nevis National Day marked in Doha

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The celebration of the 41st Independence and National Day of St Kitts and Nevis took place in Doha on Wednesday.

The first celebration of St Kitts and Nevis' Independence and National day in Doha was organised by Al Zaeem Holding and Manora Holding chief executive Khalil Ismail, Riva Group chief executive and managing director of Al Zaeem Holding Elisabeth Marascalchi, and Salah Khaled of the Unesco Doha office.

St Kitts and Nevis' Independence Day is celebrated every year on September 19.

This date marks the nation's freedom from British colonial rule, as it gained independence in 1983.

St Kitts and Nevis is a Caribbean island country made up of two islands located in the West Indies.

Their combined area is 269sq km. Its capital Basseterre is located on the island of St Kitts with estimated population of 48,400 (2024).

Their official language is English and their official



currency is East Caribbean Dollar.

St Kitts & Nevis' has 18 miles of lush rainforests, majestic mountains, golden shores and its welcoming people.

Currently St Kitts & Nevis has diplomatic ties with 122 countries in the world.

Qatar guest of honour at Riyadh International Book Fair

The activities of the Riyadh International Book Fair 2024, organised by the Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission of the Saudi Ministry of Culture, kicked off at the campus of King Saud University under the slogan *Riyadh Reads*.

Qatar is the guest of honour at the exhibition this year.

Over 2,000 local and international publishing houses are taking part in the exhibition, which will

continue until October 5.

The event features more than 800 pavilions and represents publishers from over 30 countries.

In a statement to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), the director of the Libraries Department at Qatar's Ministry of Culture Jassim Ahmed al-Buainain, who is also the director of the Doha International Book Fair, said that Qatar's selection as the guest of honour is an opportunity to showcase the strong cultural

and historical ties between the two brotherly countries.

The official indicated that the ministry is participating in a cultural programme accompanying the exhibition, holding seminars, lectures, and a poetry evening, in addition to having a Qatari folk band throughout the days of the festival.

Saudi Literature, Publishing and Translation Commission chief executive Dr Mohammed Hasan Al-

wan stated that the exhibition is a significant annual cultural event in the region.

The exhibition features a 10-day cultural programme with over 200 activities, including panel discussions, poetry evenings showcasing prominent poets of both classical and Nabati poetry, workshops across various knowledge fields, storytelling sessions, and diverse events aimed at educating and enriching children's skills. - QNA

Mada Centre launches third edition of Nafath Majlis

The Mada Assistive Technology Centre of the Ministry of Social Development and Family has launched the third edition of the quarterly event "Nafath Majlis".

The event aims to promote digital inclusion through assistive technology.

This event coincided with the Interna-

tional Week of Deaf People under the title "Sign Language Processing", sponsored by the Community College of Qatar, and the Qatar Manpower Solutions Company (Jusour), with the participation of Arab experts specialising in the field of access and assistive technology.

The third edition of the Nafath Majlis

focused on recent innovations in the field of automated sign language processing using artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, and information technology applications that contribute to enabling people with hearing disabilities to communicate more effectively with digital communities. - QNA

Fanar holds Arabic course for Sarajevo students

Under the aegis of the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, the Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre (Fanar) is holding an Arabic learning course for the students at the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

An Awqaf statement said the course is part

of Fanar's project to teach Arabic to non-native Arabic speakers.

The course is being attended by 49 male and female students at the university's Faculty of Islamic Studies Department. The course began on September 1 and will continue until October 7, with 80 teaching hours.



KSQ celebrates Engineers' Day



Karnataka Sangha Qatar celebrated Engineers Day and unveiled its silver jubilee logo recently.

In India, Engineers Day commemorates the 163rd birth anniversary of an extraordinary engineer and statesman, Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya.

Indian ambassador Vipul was the chief guest. The guest of honour was Abdulla Ibrahim Y A Fakhroo, head, operations & maintenance at Kahramaa's electrical transmission department.

Seenu Pillai, commissioning manager, Astad Project Management, gave a keynote speech on "Paradigm Shift in the Building Construction Industry."

Kishore V, an electrical engineer with Technip Energies delivered

a keynote on 'Energy transition around us.'

Mementos were presented to them by KSQ president Ravi Shetty and advisory committee member V S Mannangi.

Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) president A P Manikantan noted in his address that the ICC committee of 11 team members has seven engineers and he can see the difference they bring at the community level.

Ambassador Vipul lauded the efforts and contributions of Indian engineers in Qatar. He spoke about the achievements of Indians in the engineering field, highlighting those in the field of space programmes and information technology.

Being a mechanical engineer



himself, the envoy said that engineers can make anything possible with their innovative approach and determination.

Guest of honour Fakhroo appreciated the Indian engineering fraternity in Qatar and engineers in general for their huge contributions

and support to the development of Qatar. He also spoke about the achievements of Indian colleagues in his department.

Maintaining its tradition, in recognition of the contributions in the field of engineering and social support, KSQ conferred "Abhiyanta Shree" awards to its engineer members Harish Baliga (operations manager, Venture Gulf Engineering) and Subramanya Hebbagelu (quality control and assurance engineer with Galfar Al Misnad).

The silver jubilee logo was unveiled by ambassador Vipul. This session was conducted by Arun Kumar, senior most former president of KSQ. Community leaders including P N Baburajan, Milan Arun and KSQ advisory board members were present.

The programme was conducted by vice-president Ramesha K S, ICC general secretary Mohan Kumar proposed a vote of thanks.

ICC Wednesday Fiesta resumes



Colourful group dances captivated the audience at Indian Cultural Centre's Wednesday Fiesta which resumed after the summer break. ICC office-bearers and senior community leaders were present.

Expatriate sports body honoured



Expats Sportev has been officially recognised by the Indian Sports Centre (ISC), the governing body for sports under the embassy of India.

For years, Expats Sportev has played a pivotal role in fostering athletic excellence and organising major sporting events, most notably the Indian community sport meet on Qatar National Sport Day, a statement said.

The official recognition from the ISC highlights Expats Sportev's 'meritorious service in the field of sports.'

Expats Sportev president Abdul Ghafoor A R received the letter of recognition from Indian embassy first secretary Sachin Dinkar Shankpal at a ceremony at the Indian Cultural Centre (ICC).

ISC president E P Abdul Rahman, ICC president A P Man-

ikantan, and Indian Community Benevolent Forum president Shanavaz Bava commended Expats Sportev for its dedication to the community.

Expats Sportev executive members including Aseem M T, Shibili Yusuf, Shabir, Muhsin Omassery, Shafah Kannur, and Abdul Basith, were also recognised for their contributions to the success of the organisation.

Swimming competition organised

Indian Pharmacists Association Qatar (Ipaq) organised a swimming competition as part of the Ipaq Sports Fiesta 2024. The event saw 36 participants from four groups: Beta Blockers, Adrenergic Strikers, Vitamin Rockers, and Probiotic Boosters. Abdul Kareem secured the first position for Beta Blockers, Anwar took the second position for Vitamin Rockers, while Althaf won the third position for the Probiotic Boosters. The tournament was led by Jafar, Sulaiman Asker, Abdul Rahiman Eriyal, Haneef Peral, Shanavas Punnolly, Sameer, Shajeer, Prasad, and Saleem among others. Shanavas Kozhikkal announced the winners.



Grandparents' Day at M E S Indian School



The KG, Junior Sections of M E S Indian School celebrated Grandparents' Day recently. Addressing the students, principal Dr Hameeda Kadar emphasised the crucial role grandparents play in shaping and positively influencing young minds in educational pursuit and personal development.

In the KG Section, the tiny tots presented action song and dance and gave handmade cards to their grandparents as a token of love and appreciation. A photo session was also organised for grandparents and their grandchildren.

The event also featured fun and interactive games designed to involve both the grandparents and the students.

In the Junior Section, the programme featured the introduction of the Aseel Initiative 2024-25 through a performance in Arabic, followed by a dance, a song by the choir, fashion show for grand parents and grand children and games.

Winners of the video contest under the theme 'Generation of Love' were announced. Principal distributed prizes. All grandparents who attended the programme were given a gift featuring the school's golden jubilee celebration logo.

4th Qatar Indian School Youth Festival announced



The 4th Qatar Indian School Youth Festival, Kalanjali 2024, will be held from October 28 to 31 at Ideal Indian School. Indian ambassador Vipul made the official announcement of the event and released the 2019 - 2023 souvenir at a function. The envoy is the chief patron of the event. Community leaders, Kalanjali chairman Dr M P Hassan Kunhi, president and chief convenor Binu Kumar and other officials were present on the occasion.



Alert



The Houbara bustard is a favourite of Qatari falconers as they consider it a precious prey in the winter hunting season, abiding by the relevant regulations. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change has an ongoing initiative to promote the breeding of the bird by granting permits to Qatari citizens to start projects. **PICTURE:** Gulf Times news editor Bonnie James (Instagram: the.explorer7).

Youth conclave on Gandhian principles



As part of IYC's annual campaign, 'Porbandar Back to Gandhi', the Youth Conclave 2024 was held in Doha.

A table talk on the topic 'Back to Gandhi' served as a discussion platform for youth representatives from various socio-cultural organisations.

The session focused on the relevance of Gandhian principles in changing circumstances and gained attention for its practical exchange of ideas.

IYC general secretary Mashik Mustafa delivered the welcome speech, while chairperson Shahana Ilyas presided.

The discussion began with a keynote address by Qatar University faculty member and former KSU vice-presi-

dent, Nayeem Mullungal. Youth representatives from various organisations, including OICC Incas Youth Wing (Ajat Abraham), Samskruti (Sreenath Sankarankutty), KMCC (Saleena Kooloth), Youth Forum (Arif Ahmed), Incas Youth Wing (Lijo Erayi), Focus Qatar (Safeerussalam), Kwiq (Asha Chungath), World Malayali Council (Subina Vijay), and RSC (Ubaid), participated.

The event conveyed the message that Gandhian principles must be passed on to the next generation through our own actions.

IYC programme chief co-ordinator Hafil Ottuvayal proposed a vote of thanks.

Indian Women's Association marks Hindi Diwas

Indian Women's Association (IWA) celebrated Hindi Diwas in Doha with a special focus on women empowerment. The event aimed to highlight the critical role of women in society, their empowerment through education and skill-building, and the importance of Hindi as the mother language.

The celebration brought together women from various backgrounds, uniting them under a common cause: advancing women's rights, equality, and

leadership through the cultural and linguistic richness of the language Hindi.

"We are delighted to host such an event which celebrates both Hindi Diwas and the incredible strength of women," Indian Women's Association president Priya Bhedi said.

"Empowering women through the richness of Hindi language and culture will foster an inclusive and progressive community where women thrive as leaders," she added.



Bapputty Kabeer condolence meeting held at NIS

A condolence meeting was held at Noble International School (NIS) in Doha to mourn Bapputty Kabeer, a prominent figure in the Indian expatriate community in Qatar.

He was the founder and general manager of Al Ansari Group and vice-chairman of NIS.

The school chairman Hussain Muhammad U presided. Vice-chairman Adv Abdul Raheem Kunnummal, treasurer Shoukath

Ali Taj, vice-principal Robin K Jose and representatives from different socio cultural organisations AP Khaleel, Ayyub E K, Fasil Hameed, Siraj Iritty, K P Azeez, Shukoor, Mohammed Shameer, and Mustafa Kalpakancheri paid homage to the Kabeer.

NIS secretary Mashood Thiruthiyad welcomed the gathering and principal Shibu Abdul Rasheed proposed a vote of thanks.



DISASTER

Storms, heavy rains kill four in Mumbai

Storms and heavy rains have killed at least four people in Mumbai, India, forcing schools to close and disrupting train services. Some parts of the city had received over 230 millimetres of rain during a five-hour period on Wednesday evening. Local television broadcast images of harried commuters making their way through knee-deep water that partially submerged vehicles in different parts of Mumbai on Wednesday night. One 45-year-old woman drowned in the suburb of Andheri. Two labourers were also killed after being struck by lightning in Kalyan, while another woman drowned near a waterfall in Khopoli, according to local media reports.

CRIME

UK police investigating cyberattack at train stations

British police yesterday said they had launched an investigation into a cyberattack after passengers at the country's major railway stations saw an Islamophobic message when they tried to use Wi-Fi services. The Wi-Fi system, which is managed by communications group Telent, was quickly taken offline after passengers said a message was displayed which referred to terror attacks. "We received reports at around 5:03pm (16:03 GMT) of a cyberattack displaying Islamophobic messaging on some Network Rail Wi-Fi services," British Transport Police said. The police said they were working with Network Rail to investigate the cyber security incident "at pace".

ENTERTAINMENT

Radiohead reworks *Hamlet* for new stage production

Shakespeare will meet Radiohead in a new stage production of *Hamlet* due to premiere next year, set to a reworked version of the band's *Hail to the Thief* album. Alternative rockers Radiohead had a string of best-selling singles including *Creep*, *Paranoid Android* and *No Surprises*. Frontman Thom Yorke's lyrics for the 2003 album were originally a response to the election of George W Bush as US president and his "war on terror" that followed the September 11 attacks. The singer-songwriter is deconstructing and reworking the album for the production, which will be performed by some 20 musicians and actors.

RULING

Hong Kong editor jailed for sedition

A Hong Kong judge yesterday jailed a former chief editor of pro-democracy news outlet Stand News for sedition, handing down a 21-month prison term in the landmark case. The sentencing of Chung Pui-kuen is the latest crackdown on free speech in the former British colony that has seen critics of China jailed or forced into exile, following huge pro-democracy protests in 2019. The 55-year-old and fellow chief editor Patrick Lam, 36, were in charge of Stand News, a Chinese-language website that gained a massive following during the protests, before it was raided and shut down in December 2021.

China on 'alert' after Japan warship sails through Taiwan Strait

AFP
Beijing

China's military was on "high alert" yesterday and Beijing said it had lodged a complaint with Tokyo after a Japanese warship sailed through the Taiwan Strait for the first time.

Japan's top government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi declined to comment on the reports at a regular briefing because they concerned military operations.

But Beijing confirmed its military had responded to "the activities of a Japanese Self-Defence Force ship entering the Taiwan Strait".

"China is highly vigilant about the political intentions of Japan's actions and has lodged stern representations with Japan," foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said.

The US and its allies are increasingly crossing through the 180km Taiwan Strait to reinforce its status as an international waterway, angering China.

The Sazanami destroyer made the unprecedented passage on Wednesday, several Japanese media outlets said. Military vessels from New Zealand and Australia also sailed through the fiercely contested waterway on the same day, Wellington's defence ministry said yesterday.

A defence official said one of its ships made its first passage through the Taiwan Strait in seven years, alongside an Australian guided missile destroyer to assert the "right of freedom of navigation".

The official added the mission was not conducted with Japan.

Japanese media said the three nations planned to conduct military drills in the contested South China

Sea. China's defence ministry also confirmed yesterday that vessels from the three countries "had a transit operation through the Taiwan Strait".

The Chinese military "stayed on high alert and monitored these passages", spokesman Zhang Xiaogang said.

"These operations will undermine China's sovereignty and security," he said.

"The (Chinese military) will remain on high alert and take all necessary measures to counter these threats and provocations," he added. In response to the "foreign warships transiting the Taiwan Strait", Beijing yesterday said it "consistently handles such matters in accordance with laws and regulations".

The foreign ministry said it remained "highly vigilant against any actions that may threaten China's sovereignty and security".

Last week, China's Liaoning aircraft carrier sailed between two Japanese islands near Taiwan for the first time, accompanied by two destroyers.

The ships entered Japan's contiguous zone - an area up to 24 nautical miles from the country's coast - Tokyo said, calling the incident "totally unacceptable". China said it had complied with international law.

It followed the first confirmed incursion into Japanese airspace by a Chinese surveillance aircraft in August.

The *Yomiuri Shimbun* daily cited unnamed government sources as saying Prime Minister Fumio Kishida had ordered Wednesday's Taiwan Strait journey out of concern that doing nothing following China's intrusions could encourage Beijing to take more assertive actions.

AUKUS defence ministers meet in London



UK Defence Secretary John Healey, US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin, and Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles pose for a picture ahead of the AUKUS defence ministers meeting at Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, London, yesterday.

46 people drown during festival celebrations in India

AFP
Patna, India

At least 46 people, including 37 children, have drowned while celebrating a Hindu festival in eastern India, a local government official said yesterday.

The victims drowned in separate incidents in Bihar state while bathing in rivers and ponds swollen by recent flooding, an official from the Bihar Disaster Management Department said.

"People ignored dangerous water levels in rivers as well as ponds while bathing to celebrate the Jitiya Parv festival," said the official, who requested anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media.

The drownings occurred from Tuesday across

15 districts of Bihar state. Authorities were still working to recover three other bodies, the official said. The Bihar state government has announced compensation for each of the victims' families, the government official said.

Last year local media reported 22 people drowned during a 24-hour period in Bihar, most while marking the same festival.

At least 116 people were crushed to death in July at an overcrowded religious gathering in Uttar Pradesh state, the worst such tragedy in more than a decade.

India is hit by torrential rains and flash floods each year during the June-September monsoon season.

The monsoon is vital for agriculture, and therefore for the livelihoods of millions of farmers.

But it is also responsible for widespread destruction each year in the form of landslides and floods that kill hundreds of people across South Asia.

More than 200 people were killed in the southern Indian state of Kerala in July when torrential monsoon downpours caused landslides that buried tea plantations under tonnes of rock and soil.

Experts say climate change is increasing the number of extreme weather events around the world, with damming, deforestation and development projects in India exacerbating the human toll.

A 2021 study by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research tracking monsoon shifts from the mid-20th century suggested that it was becoming stronger and more erratic.

Prisoners wrongly freed under UK early release scheme

Around three dozen prisoners were mistakenly freed from jail under an expansion of the early release scheme put in place by the British government to tackle prison overcrowding in England and Wales, the justice ministry said yesterday.

Around 1,750 convicts were freed this month as part of a government scheme that made some prisoners eligible for release after serving 40% of their sentences behind bars, down from 50%. Thousands more are expected to be let out.

A justice ministry spokesperson said in a statement, confirming a report by the *Daily Mirror* newspaper on Wednesday, that a very small number of offenders, charged incorrectly and sentenced under outdated legislation, had been released wrongly. "The convictions remain valid with offenders monitored since their release and they will soon be back behind bars," the spokesperson said.

Fire at Amritsar textile factory



Firefighters extinguish a blaze which broke out at a textile factory in Amritsar, India, yesterday. The cause of the fire remains unknown at this time, and the extent of the damage has yet to be assessed.

Philippines' lower house cuts vice-president's funding

Reuters
Manila

The Philippines' lower house of congress has slashed funding for Vice-President Sara Duterte by nearly two-thirds in the proposed 2025 budget, as a deep split between Duterte and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr looms over midterm elections next year.

The lower house, led by House Speaker Martin Romualdez, a cousin of the president, voted 285-3 to approve budget spending of 6.352tn pesos (\$113.5bn) for 2025, a 10% increase over this year. Funding for the vice-president was cut by more than 1.3bn pesos, leaving Duterte's office with 733mn pesos.

"Our job will continue no matter what our budget is," Duterte told reporters. Romualdez said the proposed budget, which has

to be reconciled with the senate's version, would be enough for the vice-president's office to maintain its services.

Duterte appeared only once in the lower houses during budget deliberations, and pushed back strongly against scrutiny of her spending by some members of Congress. Her subsequent absences sparked criticism and calls from lawmakers to significantly reduce or cut her budget entirely.

"She was invited three times, but she did not show up," Romualdez said. "As representatives of the people, we expect all public officials to fulfil their duties, especially when it comes to the national budget."

The vice-president holds a largely ceremonial role with no real power unless the president vacates office or appoints the vice-president to a cabinet position.

Japanese court acquits longest-serving death row prisoner

AFP
Shizuoka, Japan

The world's longest-serving death row prisoner was acquitted yesterday, more than half a century after his murder conviction, when a Japanese court ruled that evidence had been fabricated.

Ailing health prevented 88-year-old former boxer Iwao Hakamada from being in the court to learn the outcome of his retrial, which was granted a decade ago after a long campaign by supporters.

But his 91-year-old sister Hideko, who often speaks for him,

bowed deeply to the judge who declared Hakamada innocent.

"Everyone - we won the acquittal, it's all thanks to your support," she said outside the Shizuoka District Court, close to tears with her voice cracking.

Hakamada spent 46 years on death row after being convicted in 1968 of robbing and killing his boss, the man's wife and their two teenage children.

"Investigators tampered with clothes by getting blood on them" which they then hid in a tank of miso, or fermented soybean paste, said yesterday's ruling.

It slammed the use of "inhumane interrogations meant to force

a statement... by imposing mental and physical pain".

"The prosecution's records were obtained by effectively infringing on the defendant's right to remain silent, under circumstances extremely likely to elicit a false confession," the ruling said.

Hundreds of people queued in the morning to try to secure a seat for the verdict in a murder saga that has gripped the nation and sparked scrutiny of Japan's justice system.

Prosecutors have two weeks to appeal, according to Japanese media.

Japan is the only major industrialised democracy other than the US to retain capital punishment, a

policy that has broad public support.

Hakamada is the fifth death row inmate granted a retrial in Japan's post-war history. All four previous cases also resulted in exonerations.

His lead lawyer Hideyo Ogawa said Hakamada sometimes seems like he "lives in a world of fantasy" after decades of detention, mostly in solitary confinement.

Describing his battle to obtain an acquittal in 2018, Hakamada said he felt he was "fighting a bout every day".

"Once you think you can't win, there is no path to victory," he said.

Hakamada appeared not to be immediately aware of the decision,

after Japanese media reported that supporters had removed the batteries from his TV remote control yesterday.

Hideko had told reporters she wanted to tell him the news soon after the verdict, but at the right moment.

He was filmed shortly after the decision leaving home to go for a walk, dressed in a short-sleeved shirt and a green hat.

Hakamada initially denied having robbed and murdered the victims in 1966 but then confessed following what he later described as a brutal police interrogation that included beatings.

Ogawa said after the verdict that

58 years had been "too long" to settle the case but "the fact that the judge found falsification on three major issues was also a very significant milestone".

The Supreme Court upheld Hakamada's death sentence in 1980 but his supporters kept up the fight to reopen the case.

A retrial was granted in 2014 and Hakamada was released from prison, although legal wrangling meant the proceedings only began last year. Supporter Atsushi Zuke-ran, wearing a T-shirt saying "Free Hakamada Now", said outside the court that the case was "a painful reminder of how Japan's criminal justice system must change".

Air strikes, shelling rock Khartoum

Air strikes and shelling rocked Khartoum yesterday as the army attacked paramilitary positions across the Sudanese capital, witnesses and a military source told AFP.

The clashes began at dawn, several residents reported, in what appeared to be the army's first major offensive in months to regain parts of the capital controlled by the rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

It comes the same day Sudan's de facto leader, army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, addressed the UN General Assembly in New York.

On the ground, Sudanese army forces were "waging fierce fighting against the rebel militia inside Khartoum", a source in the military told AFP, referring to the RSF.

The source, requesting anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media, said army forces had crossed three key bridges over the Nile - which had separated parts of the capital held by the army from those under RSF control.

Since April 2023, when war broke out between Burhan's Sudanese Armed Forces and his former deputy, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, the paramilitaries had largely pushed the army out of Khartoum.

In its last major offensive in February, the army regained much of Omdurman, the capital's twin city across the Nile and part of greater Khartoum.

The government loyal to the army is based in Port Sudan on the Red Sea coast, where the army has retained control.

The RSF meanwhile has taken control of nearly all of the vast western region of Darfur, rampaged through central Sudan and pushed into the army-controlled southeast. - AFP

IMF board approves \$7bn Pakistan loan agreement

AFP
Islamabad

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has agreed to loan Pakistan \$7bn to bolster its faltering economy, approving a relief package the government said would not have been possible without the support of China.

Although the South Asian nation's economy has stabilised since it came close to defaulting last summer, it is dependent on IMF bailouts and loans from friendly countries to service its huge debt, which swallows up half of its annual revenues.

The three-year loan programme "will require sound policies and reforms" to support Pakistan's ongoing efforts to strengthen its economy "and create conditions for a stronger, more inclusive, and resilient growth", the IMF said in a statement.

Pakistan in July agreed to the deal - its 24th IMF payout since 1958 - in exchange for unpopular reforms, including cutting back on power subsidies and widening its chronically low tax base.

Speaking on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Wednesday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the deal came through thanks to the "tremendous support" of Saudi Arabia, China, and the UAE.

"In the final phase (of negotiations), the IMF's conditions were related to China. The way the Chinese government supported and strengthened us during this time is something I am truly grateful for," he told reporters, shortly before the deal was announced.

At the end of 2023 Pakistan - long locked in a cycle of political and economic crises - had amassed a total debt of more than \$250bn, or 74% of GDP, according to the

Pakistan to sell fighter jets to Azerbaijan

Pakistan's military said yesterday that the country has signed a contract to sell JF-17 Block III fighter jets to Azerbaijan.

The aircraft is co-produced by the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex and developed jointly with China, with whom Islamabad has grown increasingly close as ties with traditional military ally the United States have weakened over the last few years. The military did not provide the cost or quantity of jets agreed to, but said in a statement that the sale was part of Islamabad's efforts to enhance defence co-operation with friendly countries and bolster the air power capabilities of Azerbaijan. - Reuters

IMF's latest report on the country. About 40% of its debt is owed to external creditors in foreign currencies.

Its biggest single foreign creditor is China and Chinese commercial banks, at just under \$30bn, followed by the World Bank at more than \$20bn, according to the report. Pakistan last year came to the brink of default as the economy shrivelled amid

political chaos following catastrophic 2022 monsoon floods and decades of mismanagement, as well as a global economic downturn.

It was saved by last-minute loans from friendly countries as well as an IMF rescue package, but its finances remain in dire straits, with high inflation and staggering public debts.

New York mayor charged with years of corruption

AFP
New York

New York's scandal-plagued Mayor Eric Adams was charged yesterday with wire fraud, soliciting illegal foreign campaign donations and bribery conspiracy - stunning charges that fuelled calls for him to resign.

The grand jury indictment follows a sweeping probe into the mayor's conduct and whether he conspired with the foreign named government to receive illegal contributions in return for favourable treatment.

A defiant Adams told reporters that he looked "forward to defending" himself, and he dismissed demands to step down, urging New Yorkers to "wait to hear our side of the story".

However, US District Attorney Damian Williams, whose federal office is bringing the charges, said the mayor was "secretly being showered" with gifts for years, breezing past "bright red lines".

"The conduct alleged in the indictment - the foreign money, the corporate money, the years of concealment - is a grave breach of the public's trust," Williams said at a news conference.

He said the investigation is ongoing: "We will hold more people accountable."

The 57-page document accuses the mayor of the most populous city in the United States of crimes going back a decade, when Adams took office as Brooklyn's borough president.

He accepted luxury international flights, hotel suites and free high-end restaurant meals

including from at least one foreign government official, the charges allege.

As he began planning to run for mayor in 2018, Adams "not only accepted, but sought illegal campaign contributions to his 2021 mayoral campaign, as well as other things of value, from foreign nationals", according to the court documents.

"As Adams's prominence and power grew, his foreign-national benefactors sought to cash in on their corrupt relationships with him, particularly when, in 2021, it became clear" he would become mayor, reads the indictment.

"Adams agreed, providing favourable treatment in exchange for the illicit benefits he received."

Scandal has swirled around Adams for months with several

high-ranking allies resigning as others were indicted or raided by federal agents.

The drama escalated with a pre-dawn raid of his official residence early yesterday.

Adams, who is up for reelection in 2025, had sought to brush off the mushrooming investigations.

However, many city and state officials are demanding he resign, including on Wednesday when influential New York congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said he must step down "for the good of the city".

Fellow New Yorker Hakeem Jeffries, the Democratic House Minority Leader, stopped short of that call, saying that while the indictment was "a serious and sober moment for New York City", the mayor was "entitled to the presumption of innocence".

'Unsurvivable' hurricane races towards Florida

Reuters/AFP
Tallahassee

Driving rain flooded roadways and closed down airports in Florida as an intensifying Hurricane Helene marched toward the state's Panhandle region, bringing the threat of a potentially deadly storm surge to much of the coastline.

The storm had strengthened into a Category 2 hurricane early yesterday and had maximum sustained winds of 105mph (169kph) as of 11am (1500 GMT), according to Michael Brennan, the director of the National Hurricane Centre (NHC).

Helene was forecast to continue gaining power on its northward path toward Florida's Big Bend region, where it was expected to make landfall in the evening, possibly as a Category 4 storm with sustained winds in excess of 130mph (209kph).

Officials pleaded with residents in the path of the storm to heed mandatory evacuation orders or face life-threatening conditions.

Helene's surge - the wall of seawater pushed on land by hurricane-force winds - could rise to as much as 20' (6.1m) in some spots, as tall as a two-storey house.

"A really unsurvivable scenario is going to play out" in the coastal area, Brennan said, with water capable of destroying buildings and carrying cars pushing inland.

The hurricane was about 255 miles southwest of Tampa as of 11am ET, but tropical storm force winds were extending 350 miles out from its centre and were already affecting the Florida Keys and southwest Florida, Brennan said.

Strong rain bands were whipping parts of coastal Florida, and rainfall has already lashed Georgia, South Carolina, central and western North Carolina and portions of Tennessee.

Atlanta, hundreds of miles north of Florida's Big Bend, was under a tropical storm warning.

In Pinellas County, which sits on a peninsula surrounded by Tampa Bay and the Gulf of Mexico, roads were already filling with water before noon.

Officials warned the storm's impact could be as severe as last year's Hurricane Idalia, which flooded 1,500 homes in the low-lying coastal county.

Videos posted on the county's social media site showed some swamped beachside roads and water rising over boat docks.

Airports in Tampa, Tallahassee and St Petersburg all suspended operations.

Governor Ron DeSantis warned north Florida residents to flee before time runs out.

"You have time to get to a shelter, but you've got to do it now," he said at a morning news briefing. "Every minute that goes by brings us closer to having conditions that are going to be simply too dangerous to navigate."

The White House said President Joe Biden's administration "stands ready to provide further assistance to Florida, and other states in the path of the storm".

DeSantis has mobilised the National Guard and positioned thousands of personnel to prepare for possible search and rescue operations and power restoration.

Helene is expected to be a full-fledged hurricane as it rolls through the Macon, Georgia, area today, forecasters said.

It could bring 12" of rain or more, potentially devastating the state's cotton and pecan crops, which are in the middle of harvesting season.

"The current forecast for hurricane Helene suggests this storm will impact every part of our state," Georgia Governor Brian Kemp said.

After making landfall across the Florida coast, Helene is expected to move more slowly over the Tennessee Valley today and tomorrow, the NHC said.

Storm surge was forecast to reach 15-20' (4.6-6.1m) in the Big Bend area of Florida's Panhandle region where the storm is ex-



This image obtained from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) shows Hurricane Helene yesterday. - AFP

pected to come ashore. Numerous evacuations were ordered along Florida's Gulf Coast, including Sarasota and Charlotte counties.

Pinellas County officials ordered evacuations of long-term healthcare facilities near the coast, including nursing homes, assisted living centres and hospitals.

Not everyone heeded the evacuation orders.

In coastal Dunedin, Florida, about 25 miles west of Tampa, state ferry boat operator Ken Wood, 58, planned to ride out the storm with his 16-year-old cat, Andy.

"We're under orders, but I'm going to stay right here at the house," Wood told Reuters by telephone. "The storm looks like it'll be a bit west of us, but who knows? I'm sure it'll be interesting to say the least."

John Dailey, the mayor of Tallahassee, Florida's capital city that is in the direct path of Helene, said the hurricane could be the strongest storm to ever make a direct hit on his city.

Helene could produce "unprecedented damage like nothing we have ever experienced before as a community," Dailey told reporters on Wednesday.

Reinsurance broker Gallagher Re said preliminary private insurance losses could reach \$6bn, with additional losses to federal insurance programmes approaching a potential \$1bn.

Energy facilities along the US Gulf Coast scaled back operations and evacuated some production sites.

The director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Deanne Criswell, said at a White House briefing that she would travel to Florida today to assess the damage.

Helene was expected to dump up to 15" (38.1cm) of rain in some isolated spots after making landfall in Florida, causing considerable flash and urban flooding, the NHC said.

NHC deputy director Jamie Rhome said about half of lives lost in hurricanes typically came from flash flooding caused by torrential rain, often among people who drive into flooded roads and are swept away.

He urged those in affected areas to use extreme caution.

Rhime added that the expected hurricane-force wind impact area stretched around 180 miles (290km) north from the Florida panhandle to southern Georgia.

"You need to prepare for prolonged (energy) outages. Those trees are going to come down in strong winds, block roads," Rhome said.

Helene could become the most powerful hurricane to hit the United States in more than a year.

Category 3 Hurricane Idalia hit northwestern Florida in August 2023.

Meanwhile Hurricane John, which killed three people when it slammed into Mexico on Monday but then dissipated, regained hurricane strength yesterday and was expected to again strike the country's Pacific coast, Mexican officials said.

Algeria says Moroccans require visa once again

Algerian authorities resumed visa requirements for Moroccan nationals entering the country, state news agency APS reported yesterday, accusing its neighbour of abusing visa-free entries to allow criminal activities over the border in a fresh measure against Rabat.

The two countries had lifted visa entry requirements about 20 years ago.

Morocco has not yet commented on the move.

A dispute over the status of the Western Sahara has been at the heart of worsening ties between the two countries.

Morocco views the Western Sahara as its territory, while Algeria hosts and backs the Polisario Front, which seeks an independent state there.

Algeria said yesterday that Morocco had abused the visa-free entry to "organise at a large scale networks of organised crime and drug and human trafficking as well as illegal immigration and acts of espionage", according to a foreign ministry statement quoted by APS.

It also accused Morocco of sending "Zionist" spies holding Moroccan passports to Algerian territory.

The statement did not provide any evidence supporting these accusations.

However, earlier this month, authorities in the Algerian city of Tlemcen said they had arrested seven people, including four Moroccans, accused of belonging to a spy ring. - Reuters/AFP

Shootout in Mexico leaves 11 dead

A shootout between Mexican authorities and an alleged criminal group in the northern state of Nuevo Leon left 11 of the armed attackers dead, the state government said late on Wednesday.

That morning, the criminals had pulled up to the local police station in the small municipality of General Teran, about 100km southeast of industrial hub Monterrey, and shot at the building, according to the government.

The men are believed to have belonged to a criminal group that operates out of Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, on the border with Texas, the state security minister told local media.

The minister did not name the group, although security experts say the Northeast Cartel is present in the area.

After the shooting, the state police's civil force, the national guard and the army kicked off a search for the group and came upon a convoy of around eight trucks carrying armed men along the highway east of Monterrey. Shooting broke out at the start of the chase, the government said.

In the end, 11 of the criminals were killed by authorities. No security personnel were wounded in the fight, according to the state. - Reuters



Kremlin says new nuclear doctrine is a 'warning' to the West

AFP
Moscow

The Kremlin said yesterday that an updated nuclear doctrine that will allow Moscow to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states should be seen as a warning to the West.

Russian President Vladimir Putin (pictured left) on Wednesday announced plans to broaden Russia's rules on the use of its nuclear weaponry, allowing it to unleash a

nuclear response in the event of a "massive" air attack.

The proposals would also permit Moscow to respond with nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states if they are supported by nuclear powers - a clear reference to Ukraine and its Western backers.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the planned changes "must be considered a specific signal".

"A signal that warns these countries of the consequences if they participate in an attack on our country by various means, not neces-

sarily nuclear," he told reporters.

Without mentioning Ukraine by name, Peskov said Russia's "nuclear deterrence is being adjusted on account of elements of tension that are developing along the perimeter of our borders".

He also said there was "no question" of Russia boosting its nuclear arsenal.

The proposed changes to Russia's nuclear doctrine, which Putin himself has the power to approve, come as Ukraine is seeking permission from Western allies to use long-range precision weaponry to strike targets

deep inside Russia - thus far without success.

Kyiv says it is necessary to target Russia's airfields and military infrastructure that it uses to launch attacks on Ukraine, though the White House is cautious about enabling further escalation.

The West has accused Putin of irresponsible nuclear sabre-rattling throughout the Ukraine conflict, with the Kremlin leader having issued multiple apparent threats about Moscow's willingness to deploy its nuclear weapons.



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Needed: Global climate assembly

It has been nearly ten years since countries came together in Paris and agreed finally to get serious about averting a climate disaster. But while there is an emerging consensus on the structural economic reforms needed to transform sectors such as energy, transportation, and agriculture, the necessary investments are not being made fast enough.

Instead, our governance systems are struggling to muster an adequate response to what is an increasingly obvious and severe climate and ecological crisis. Although many governments have proposed robust climate measures, these often trigger a social backlash, because they are perceived as unjust and inequitable. Many see policies that pit the old against the young, the city against the country, or the Global North against the Global South. Such controversies are tailor-made for social media, where they ripen and then rot in a hothouse of misinformation, incendiary rhetoric, and polarisation. Although the argument for the necessity of major reform has been won, the argument for how to do it fairly has not. This challenge will become only more difficult the deeper we get into the net-zero transition. Most people care deeply about addressing the climate crisis: in a survey conducted across 18 G20 countries, 71% of respondents agreed that major action is needed immediately to reduce carbon emissions. But trust in government action is lacking, with only 39% believing that their own government will act effectively.

One way to address this gap is to allow citizens participation in the elaboration and implementation of climate policies and measures designed by governments. Instead of having climate policies imposed by technocrats from above, governments should embrace approaches that combine “top-down” with “bottom-up” methods, with the latter bringing together ordinary people who are tasked with shaping a shared vision of the future.

Rather than leaving anyone behind, we can forge a new social contract rooted in solidarity, equity, and fairness

Successful examples of those participatory methods already exist. Citizens’ assemblies in France are decision-making bodies composed of randomly selected, demographically representative individuals who deliberate on a specific issue of public concern and provide policy recommendations. In addition to fostering consensus on divisive topics, citizens’ assemblies educate the public about complex policy issues and give citizens a direct role in decisions that affect their lives. These elements are especially important for issues like the net-zero transition, which entails major economic changes that can leave communities feeling divided. Unlike politicians, assembly members make decisions free from electoral pressures and lobbying. Notable examples include Ireland’s assemblies on marriage equality and abortion, which led to national referenda and breakthrough legislation; and France’s climate assembly, which helped shape its most ambitious climate bill to date.

Brazil’s long standing participatory approach to policymaking has also proved successful. For example, its Climate Plan is being developed through a governance structure that includes several ministries of the federal government together with representatives from the scientific community, subnational governments, the private sector, and civil society. Moreover, a climate participatory platform (involving both digital and in-person exchanges) has been launched to invite all Brazilian citizens to propose solutions. The National Environmental Conference and the National Social and Economic Development Council, by prioritising the Climate Plan, have further contributed to strengthening this bottom-up process.

Such methods can steer climate policy proposals away from sources of polarisation, and toward opportunities for collaboration and deliberation. Among G20 countries, 62% of people favour using citizens’ assemblies for decision-making, and that number has risen above 70% in countries like Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, and South Africa, and to over 80% in Kenya. More than 170 citizens’ assemblies have been held in more than 30 countries, each with the goal of accelerating climate action in ways that support a fair and just transition for all.

Drawing on the model of the World Social Forum, what we need now is a Global Social-Climate Forum, or a Global Citizens’ Assembly for People and Planet, to bring citizens together from every country, not just to chart a collective path forward, but to reimagine our politics and encourage a global ethical stock-take. This would be an opportunity for humanity to come together, to understand each other’s aspirations and anxieties, and to co-create a green transition that benefits everyone. Rather than leaving anyone behind, we can forge a new social contract rooted in solidarity, equity, and fairness. — Project Syndicate



UK Labour Party struggles at first conference in power



Ministers say they did not anticipate scale of problems UK faces



Government must offer clear direction soon, party figures say



Donations row, pension cuts cloud Labour’s annual conference

By Elizabeth Piper, Andrew MacAskill, Alistair Smout
Liverpool

A bumpy start, or just rather flat? Regardless, few at Labour’s annual conference in the northern English city of Liverpool are enjoying the kind of celebration they expected from the party’s first gathering since its return to power after 14 years. Overshadowed by a row over the use of donations and cuts to winter fuel payments for pensioners, Britain’s new government is under pressure to offer a vision of hope to supporters who say that just 80 days after winning a landslide election, the party is losing the support of many Britons who lent them their votes.

Ministers are trying to offer a vision of better days ahead but four sources close to the government said they had been floored by the problems discovered, including large funding gaps and difficult decisions not taken by the previous Conservative government once it realised it would lose the July election.

A senior Labour lawmaker said new ministers were “literally finding files stuffed down the back of cabinets which the Conservatives deemed too hard to deal with”.

Facing a politics-weary public, Labour has sought to level with the country by

warning that things will get worse before they get better, with tough medicine required to fix the finances.

But many supporters are wondering whether that downbeat message has been overplayed and has only allowed what sources say is a largely hostile right-wing media to fan the flames.

“We have only been in government for two months, but it feels like three years,” said Maurice Glasman, a Labour politician in the House of Lords (upper house of parliament).

“The honeymoon hasn’t lasted, there’s disaffection, a lack of clear direction, and a lack of affection from the Labour base.” A poll by Opinium said Prime Minister Keir Starmer had suffered a 45-percentage-point drop in his popularity, making him less liked than ex-Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

With debt as a proportion of economic output at the highest levels since the early 1960s, Starmer has tasked finance minister Rachel Reeves with sorting out the public finances and to encourage business to step in with funding rather than resorting to public money to spur stuttering growth.

But for supporters who fought for Labour to win the July election, the cuts to winter fuel payments to pensioners and the promise of more cost-saving measures in the budget next month is not a message they want to hear.

Glum conference

For many at the conference in Liverpool, an event that should offer a chance to bask after the once-dominant Conservatives suffered their worst election defeat has been, as one party activist put it, “a bit flat”.

The dispute over how Starmer and his senior minister used donations from wealthy backers to buy clothing, host parties and enjoy foreign holidays has added to the dismay. “It has overshadowed what should have been our victory lap,” said one Labour official on the left wing of the party. “It is such an unnecessary mistake and it has been handled badly.”

But one source close to Starmer said the conference was the most positive one in years and that the furor around the donations had not distracted the government even if it had consumed more media attention than was ideal.

Labour cites several accomplishments in almost three months in office – among other things, launching a national wealth fund, ending some public sector strikes with new pay deals and starting a reset in relations with the European Union. But the over-arching narrative that things will only worsen before they improve has done little to boost the public mood. Matt Wrack, outgoing president of the Trades Union Congress, said the government’s message of gloom – repeatedly blamed on Conservative government

policies – was “politically naive” and “fraught with danger”.

He told Reuters that Labour needed to quickly explain how it would reduce National Health Service waiting lists, improve education and make it easier for young people to buy a home rather than just complaining about its inheritance.

“If Labour doesn’t recognise this and address it then it is a major political problem and the future is pretty bleak for them, to be honest,” he said.

Labour Together, a think tank formed to take Labour back to the centre ground after it lurched left under ex-leader Jeremy Corbyn, warned the governing party in a report on Saturday that its electoral coalition was “fragile”.

“A volatile electorate and historic lows for turnout, trust in politics and vote share for the two main parties create a challenging path to re-election for this government,” it said.

The senior Labour lawmaker said voters should forgive a young administration for missteps in its first days of power.

But Labour needed to move on from the blame game soon.

“To be an effective government you have to have a theory of the state, what are we looking for,” Glasman said. “If you haven’t got, and I don’t think they have, a real defined sense of direction, this time next year it (perception of the government) is going to be quite surreal.” — Reuters



Wendy Nichols, Britain’s Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice Shabana Mahmood, British MP Ellie Reeves, British MP Pat McFadden, Labour general secretary David Evans and Britain’s Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner stand on stage at the Britain’s Labour Party’s annual conference in Liverpool on Wednesday. (Reuters)

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Black seeds: A cure for every disease

Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), said: "Use this Black Seed regularly, because it is a cure for every disease, except death." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

What is the Black Seed?
Its botanical name is *Nigella sativa*. It is believed to be indigenous to the Mediterranean region but has been cultivated into other parts of the world including the Arabian peninsula, northern Africa and parts of Asia.

The Black seeds originate from the common fennel flower plant (*Nigella sativa*) of the buttercup (*Ranunculaceae*) family. It is sometimes mistakenly confused with the fennel herb plant (*Foeniculum vulgare*).

The plant has finely divided foliage and pale bluish purple or white flowers. The stalk of the plant reaches a height of 12 to 18 inches as its fruit, the black seed, matures.

The Black Seed forms a fruit capsule which consists of many white trigonal seeds. Once the fruit capsule has matured, it opens up and the seeds contained within are exposed to the air, becoming black in colour.

The Black seeds are small black grains with a rough surface and an oily white interior, similar to onion seeds. The seeds have little bouquet, though when rubbed, their aroma resembles oregano. They have a slightly bitter, peppery flavour and a crunchy texture.

The Black Seed is also known by other names, varying between places. Some call it black caraway, others call it black cumin, onion seeds or even coriander seeds. The plant has no relation to the common kitchen herb, cumin.

Muslims' use of the Black Seed:

Muslims have been using and promoting the use of the Black Seed for hundreds of years, and hundreds of articles have been written about it. The Black Seed has also been in use worldwide for over 3,000 years. It is not only a prophetic herb, but it also holds a unique place in the medicine of the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*.

It is unique in that it was not used profusely before the Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, made its use popular. Although there were more than 400 herbs in use before the Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, and recorded in the herbals of Galen and Hippocrates, the Black Seed was not one of the most popular remedies of the



Ahmed Al Fateh Islamic Centre in Manama, Bahrain.

time. Because of the way Islam has spread, the usage and popularity of the Black Seed is widely known as a "remedy of the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*." In fact, a large part of this herbal preparation's popularity is based on the teachings of the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*.

The Black Seed has become very popular in recent years and is marketed and sold by many Muslim and non-Muslim businesses.

Its nutrients:

The Black Seed is rich in nutritional values. It contain almost 40% fixed oils and 1.4% volatile oils. It also contains around 15 amino acids, proteins, calcium, iron, sodium, and potassium. Among its most effective compositions are thymoquinone, dithymoquinone, thymohydroquinone, and thymol. The magazine *Food Chemistry* found the Black Seed to be high in protein, carbohydrates, essential fatty acids, vitamins A, B1, B2, C and niacin as well as calcium, potassium and iron. These are the very nutrients that modern science has found that we most lack. It also provides many of the same nutrients that the FDA recommends to help prevent disease and slow down the aging process.

Dr Michael Tierra, author of *Planetary Herbology*, also found the Black Seed to be high in the

above nutrients. In addition, he found a remarkable number of sterols, especially beta-sitosterol, which is known to have anti-carcinogenic properties. The *Journal of American Scientists* reports that Black Seed has a number of useful properties such as antihistamine, antioxidant, antibiotic, antimicrobial and broncho-dilating effects.

The benefits and uses of the Black Seed:

The Black Seed is an excellent herb with many benefits and uses, especially when it comes to maintaining a strong and healthy immune system. The prophetic reference in describing the Black Seed, as having a healing for all illnesses is not exaggerated as it first appears. The Black Seed has been used for a variety of medical problems for several thousand years. These uses range from stomach aches to asthma, cancer to coughs, and the traditional use as a spice. The Black Seed is also used as: a carminative (rids the body of gas from the intestines), a digestive (aids in the digestion of foods), a diuretic (increases urine flow by ridding the body of excess water), an emmenagogue (promotes and regulates menstruation), a galactagogue (increases the production of milk), a resolvent (dissolves boils and

swelling), a stimulant (increases the flow of adrenaline and energy), a stomachic (relieves stomach disorders), a sudorific (increases perspiration), a tonic (improves bodily functions), and a vermifuge (expels worms). Caution should be taken when using the Black Seed by pregnant or potentially pregnant women, as high doses of this product could induce spontaneous abortions.

To ensure that you are taking the Black Seed look for the words *Nigella Sativa*. Only this plant, as opposed to true cumin or coriander has the ability to "heal all diseases."

Research suggests that the Black Seed is an effective anti-tumour treatment for certain types of cancer, including breast cancer and fibrocystic breast disease. The Black Seed may also be of possible benefit in treating high blood pressure. Except its potential to cause spontaneous abortions (and only at high dosages), there may be little if any toxic side effects to using the Black Seed.

Recent research has provided evidence that most illnesses arise because of an imbalance or dysfunctional immune system, which cannot perform its primary function of defending the body optimally. Researches also indicate that the Black Seed contains an ability to significantly boost the

human immune system - if taken over time.

The role of the Black Seed in increasing human immunity was not clear before 1986, when Dr Qaadi and his colleagues started a series of researches in the United States. Afterwards, many researches were launched in various countries. Dr Qaadi proved that the use of the Black Seed strengthens immunity since the ratio of the T assist-ant lymph cells increased by an average of 72% compared to the restraining cells. Also, there was a considerable development in the activity of natural killer cells with an average of 74%.

The results of many modern researches supported the findings of Dr Qaadi. Amongst them are the results published by the *International Immunity* magazine in August 1995 about the effect of Black Seed on the outer lymph cells and the activity of white blood multi-nucleus cells. In September 2000, the *International Immunity* magazine also published a research on the effect of the Black Seed oil in preventing cytomegalovirus on laboratory rats. The Black Seed oil has been tested as an anti-virus substance and the immunity acquired during the early stages of the disease was measured through determining the natural killer cells and other things.

In October 1999, the European

magazine *Cancer* published an article on the effect of thymoquinone on abdomen cancer in rats. Likewise, in May 1998, a magazine specialised in anti-cancer researches published an article on the extracts of the Black Seed as a treatment for cancer tumours. On April 2000, the *Ethanol Medical* magazine wrote about the toxicity and immunity effects of ethanol extracted from the Black Seeds. Also, in February 1995, *Medical Plants* magazine published an article on the effects of the Black Seed stable oil and thymoquinone on white blood cells. Many other researches came out supporting these facts.

More research is being done on the effectiveness of the Black Seed. Research trials are also being planned in various countries to study its actual effects on humans. However, we don't need to look any further than the Prophet's, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, words that tell us there is healing in this plant. As long as we trust in Allah and take the prescription His Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, has given us, we will all be evidence of this magnificent plant's abilities to heal all diseases.

Nonetheless, more is needed to be learned about the appropriate doses of this herb for various medical problems. We pray that Allah may guide Muslim physicians to take a closer look at this plant and begin prescribing it for all of our physical ailments.

Conclusion:

The Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, told us that the Black Seed is a cure for every disease. The Arabic word '*Shifaa*' (cure) came without the definite article which means that it is an indefinite word that covers most cures. This means that the Black Seed contributes to the cure of every disease. It has been scientifically proved that the immunity system is the only system that has the ability to combat diseases and produce cells that kill viruses.

Based on these facts, we can conclude that the Black Seed is a cure for every disease because it strengthens the immunity system which is responsible for curing diseases and combating viruses.

These scientific facts are obvious. No one can claim the credit of knowing these facts fourteen centuries ago, except a Prophet. Allah Almighty Says about His Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, (what means): "Nor does he speak of (his own) inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed." [Qur'an 53: 3-4]

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>

Miswaak: The natural toothbrush

The *Miswaak* was known before Islam, but Islam added a religious perspective to its usage.

The Prophetic guidance:
The Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), recommended Muslims to clean their teeth using a *Miswaak* every day; especially upon waking up, when performing ablution, before prayer, when reciting the Qur'an, before sleeping, when entering the house, and when the mouth has a foul odour.

There are many Prophetic narrations that talk about *Miswaak*. Following are some of them:

'Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, related that the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said: "Ten things are part of one's natural disposition: Trimming the moustache, growing a beard, (using) the *Miswaak*, sniffing water, cutting the nails, washing hands, plucking armpits, shaving pubic hair, and conserving water." [Muslim]

Furthermore, he, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, highlighted its importance, saying: "If it were not that it would create hardship for my people, I would have ordered them to use the *Miswaak* with every ablution and with every prayer." [Al-Bukhari]

Medical discoveries:

The *Miswaak* is a natural tool for brushing the teeth. It is taken from the roots and branches of particular desert trees. It differs from one region to another, but in Arabia and Asia it is taken from the Arak tree. This is the most famous variety, and is the kind that was used by the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*.

Its scientific name is *Salvadora Persica*. It is a tree that grows in hot equatorial countries, especially in desert valleys. It is widespread in the South of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Egypt, and elsewhere.

Salvadora Persica is an upright ever-green small tree or shrub, seldom more



than one foot in diameter, reaching a maximum height of three metres. The leaves are small, oval, thick and succulent with a strong smell of cress or mustard.

The *Miswaak* is also obtained from other trees. In Africa, for example, it is cut from lime and orange trees, and in America some are cut from the Senna tree.

As the Arak tree is so well-known, and as it was the kind that the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, used, it has been scientifically studied. The following summarise the various discoveries regarding *Miswaak*.

Health effects of Miswaak:

Physically, the *Miswaak* is a natural toothbrush. It is composed of a compact group of minute natural fibres that perform exactly the same function as a normal toothbrush except that it is made of natural rather than plastic fibres. For this reason it may be more gentle on the gums.

Miswaak's natural toothpaste is made up of many substances that are important for cleaning teeth. Many researchers have studied the *Miswaak* in depth, and

have proven that *Miswaak* contains over ten different natural chemical compounds considered essential for good oral and dental hygiene.

They are: fluoride, silica, tannic acid, resins, alkaloids (salvadorine), volatile oils (sinigrin), sulfur vitamin C, sodium bicarbonate, chlorides, calcium, benzyli-sothiocyanate (BIT), and others including salicylic acids, sterols, trimethylamine, saponins, flavonoids.

Some of these components are stain removers and teeth whiteners, some protect teeth against caries, some are bactericidal and antiseptic, some help in healing and to repair tissues, some promote remineralisation (building) of tooth enamel, and some give the pleasant taste and smell.

Cytotoxicity:

Results of cytotoxic tests showed no cytotoxic (cell damaging) effects from using freshly cut *Miswaak*. However, the same plant used 24 hours after cutting did contain harmful components. Based on these findings, researchers recommend cutting the used portion of the *Miswaak* after it has been used for a day

and preparing a fresh part.

Scientific comparison between *Miswaak* and toothbrushes:

A clinical trial study on Ethiopian schoolchildren, comparing *Miswaak* with the conventional toothbrush, found *Miswaak* to be as effective as the toothbrush in removing oral deposits. The study also found instruction and supervision to be important since the children in the sample were not familiar with techniques for using *Miswaak*.

How to use Miswaak:

The method of preparing a *Miswaak* for use is to cut a branch or root of the Arak tree into pieces between 10cm and 20cm in length, and between 4mm and 14mm in diameter. Occasionally some are thicker than this.

Fresh *Miswaak* is brown in colour, with a hot, pleasant taste. People usually strip off some of the *Miswaak's* thin bark from one end, then chew that end a little to separate the fibres so that they become like the fibers of a normal toothbrush. They then use it to brush their teeth.

Length and diameter:

A length of 15cm is recommended, which is convenient to grip, and easy to manipulate in a confined space. The diameter is normally less than 1cm, which provides a supple stick firm enough to transmit the pressure of the cleansing action to the teeth without breaking.

Freshness: *Miswaak* should be freshly cut so that it is supple, easily chewed, and still rich in active constituents. The root should be whitish-brown in colour; a dark brown colour indicates that the *Miswaak* is no longer fresh.

If a stick is dry, the end for chewing should initially be soaked in fresh water for 24 hours. It should be noted that soaking for unduly long periods causes loss of active constituents and diminishes the therapeutic properties, although the mechanical effects on the teeth can still occur.

The end: Before *Miswaak* is used, the end should be washed with water. It is

then chewed repeatedly until the fibres stand out like the bristles of a toothbrush. These fibres should be trimmed every 24 hours.

Brushing technique:

The techniques employed for removing plaque mechanically are similar to that for the toothbrush and the chewing stick; i.e., vertical and horizontal brushing. The cleaning movement should always be directed away from the gingival margin of the teeth (away from the gums) on both the buccal (outer cheek) and lingual (inner cheek) surfaces.

Care should be taken to avoid damaging the soft tissues of the mouth. Satisfactory cleaning can be achieved if this procedure is followed for five minutes.

There are two basic holds: Pen-grip (three-finger) or palm-grip (five-finger-grip). In each case the aim is to ensure firm but controlled movement of the brush end of the *Miswaak* within the oral cavity, so that every area of the mouth is reached with relative ease and convenience.

When to use Miswaak:

In general, the *Miswaak* should be used a minimum of five times a day (i.e. before each prayer). However it is recommended to use it all the time, whenever possible.

Common mistakes in *Miswaak* use:

1. The end is either too thin or too thick.
2. Keeping it in the mouth while doing other things.
3. Not cutting the end every day.
4. Forgetting that teeth have five faces (inner, outer, two sides, and biting/chewing face), and only using *Miswaak* to clean the outer faces.

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>



Qatar stresses need for equity in precision health

The global importance of making precision healthcare open to all has been spotlighted by Qatar Foundation (QF) and the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations in New York, on the sidelines of the 79th edition of the UN General Assembly (UNGA).

In a Qatar-hosted session on *Precision Health for All: The Role of International Partnerships*, the nation's efforts and ambitions in the field of precision health were outlined to an international audience including scientists, academics, policy experts, and health industry leaders.

At the session, HE the Minister of Public Health Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari said: "As part of Qatar National Vision 2030, we are implementing a strategy to refocus healthcare towards delivering precision health. Genomic sequencing and genetic screening programmes are currently an integral part of our research agenda and the healthcare system."

"The infrastructure we have established in this field benefits researchers from within and outside Qatar to discover new genes and uncover new disease mechanisms, paving the way for the advancement of biology and medicine, and the discovery of new treatments," she said.

"The Qatar Precision Healthcare Institute has mapped the Qatari and broader Arab genome, identifying unique variants

related to disease causes and pharmacogenomics," HE Dr al-Kuwari continued.

"These biological samples are stored in a biobank, and this data is currently being applied to provide precision healthcare services in Qatar," the minister added. "And the integration of whole genome sequencing and other omics technologies into Sidra Medicine's newborn screening programme is contributing to the early diagnosis of rare diseases."

"We recognise the immense potential for health, well-being, and economic benefits in shifting our focus from disease treatment to prevention," she said. "Achieving this transformation requires strong global partnerships to enhance healthcare outcomes and make preventative care a cornerstone of medical practice worldwide."

HE Dr al-Kuwari called on scientists, specialists, thought leaders, and experts to collaborate in realising the full potential of precision health, both in Qatar and beyond.

The session, attended by more than 100 people, was moderated by Dr Hilal Lashuel, the research, development, and innovation adviser to the QF Chairperson's Office and executive director of research, development and innovation at the QF.

Dr Lashuel pointed out that more than 80% of the genetic data used in research



Panelists at the session.

and to develop drugs comes only from people of European descent, which means the vast majority of the world's population – especially those from Africa, Middle East, Asia and Latin America – remain underrepresented in genomic studies.

"This limits our ability to understand genetic diversity and how it impacts health and disease in other groups," he said. "If a population is underrepresented in research today, it will be under served by the precision health solutions of tomorrow."

"Developing diagnostics and therapies based on data from only one population or ancestry risks reinforcing existing health inequalities and leaving large segments behind," he added.

Dr Lashuel highlighted that the equity problem cannot be solved by simply collecting samples from different populations as we often see today.

"Achieving equity in genomics and genomic medicine demands an intentional, systemic approach to dismantling barriers – barriers to research participation, access to care, technological advancements, and the integration of genomics into healthcare systems," he stated. "It also requires diverse perspectives that are just as important as diverse data sets in working towards creating a future where healthcare is not only personalised, protected, and predicted, but also inclusive."

Dr Khaled Machaca, senior associate dean for research, innovations, and commercialisation at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar, a QF partner university, spoke of the importance of recognising that all countries can contribute to advancing precision health, saying that while some may not have advanced genomic sequencing capabilities that are on par with the more developed countries, what they do have is the power of data.

"If we take the Middle East, Africa, and India, they collectively represent a third of the total world population – that's very powerful data," he said. "Big pharma today is buying small companies not for the technology they have, but for the data they have."

"If these countries in the region are willing and able to get together, to share and curate data, that would be an extremely powerful resource and a potential game changer, which would put the region in a position of power, and this is where partnerships play a crucial role," Dr Machaca said.

Dr Ann Aerts, head of the Novartis Foundation, who attended the session, said: "The true yardstick of success of any healthcare effort is how accessible it is to every human, regardless of their location and financial status."

"Qatar and Qatar Foundation have done



HE the Minister of Public Health Dr Hanan Mohamed al-Kuwari addressing the session.

an exceptional job in setting up a precision health system from the ground up in a short amount of time," she said. "More importantly, they haven't stopped there but are now looking to pass on their knowledge and lessons learned to other countries in the region and further, particularly less developed ones."

"This is a strong testament to their commitment to equity in healthcare and we very much look forward to partnering with them in the near future to make precision health more equitable," Dr Aerts said.

The QF also hosted a session at the UNGA on *Transboundary Dialogue for a Changing Ocean: Science Diplomacy and the Future of the ROPME Sea Area*.

Experts discussed the future of the ROPME Sea Area – the hottest and most anthropogenically affected sea in the world – and explored the opportunities for transboundary collaboration and science diplomacy to conserve our unique ecosystems.

Panelists also spoke about the fate of biodiversity hotspots around offshore energy infrastructure.

Qatar firmly on global art map, says curator

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The thriving art scene in Qatar and the wider Gulf region takes centre stage at the "Art is About Art" exhibition, highlighting how venues such as the "Fire Station: Artist in Residence" have firmly placed the nation on the global art map.

"I love the art scene in the whole region, the Arab Gulf region, and Qatar is very special," exhibition curator Dirk van Lierop told *Gulf Times*, expressing his admiration for Qatar's dedication to promoting both local and international artistic connections.

He noted that artistic places in Doha like the Fire Station: Artist in Residence are not only focused on showcasing Qatari culture but also serve as platforms for international exchange.

About the exhibition, van Lierop shared the long-term vision for its expansion, while stressing that current efforts are focused on its successful presentation.

"It took a lot of work, more than one and a half year of preparation to put this exhibition, but the vision is there to expand it," he said. "We are looking for a partner to help us with that."

"Art is About Art" is co-curated by Alejandra Barillas in collaboration with the Atelier Art Society and the Netherlands embassy in Doha.

Dutch ambassador Ferdinand Lahnstein echoed van Lierop's view in his remarks, lauding Doha's burgeoning role as an artistic hotspot.

"Doha is a city that has firmly established itself as a cultural hub, bringing together diverse perspectives and artistic impressions," the envoy said.

He cited how the "Art is About Art" exhibition beautifully captures the spirit of cultural connection, calling art a universal language that transcends borders.

"From classic to contemporary, art place a huge role in how we express ourselves and connect with the world," Lahnstein said. "It is something we are incredibly proud, and we are excited to share that passion with art here in Doha."

The envoy expressed pride in the Netherlands' contribution to the exhibition, which features Dutch artists Han Nooyen and Annemiek Roumen, alongside Qatar's own Yousef Ahmad.

The exhibition showcases five renowned global artists, including Abdul Rahim Salem from the UAE and Jonathan Ardon from Guatemala, offering a profound exploration of human emotions, creativity, and spirituality.

Alongside "Art is About Art" is another powerful exhibition, titled "Eternal Echoes: The Silent Cry of Gaza" by Al Jazeera journalist Hayat El-Yamani.

Both exhibitions are open to the public until November 2.



Dutch ambassador Ferdinand Lahnstein with curator Dirk van Lierop.



The buses will be used to transport volunteers.

Al Abdulghani Motors donates vehicles for QM

Qatar Museums (QM) has announced the donation of two buses by Al Abdulghani Motors for the newly launched QM Community Service Section.

These buses will transport volunteers to archaeological sites, public art installations, and cultural institutions, a QM statement said.

The vehicles have been enhanced with LED screens, 5G connections, and other flexible display capabilities that will allow the QM to conduct a variety of experiential educational programmes in remote locations such as schools and archaeological sites.

As the main sponsor of the QM Volunteer Programme, ConocoPhillips Qatar's funding made possible the refit of the donated vehicles

to meet the specific requirements.

This collaboration reflects a shared vision of promoting community engagement and cultural preservation, which is central to the Qatar National Vision 2030.

The launch at the National Museum of Qatar (NMQ) was attended by QM chief executive Mohammed Saad al-Rumaihi and Al Abdulghani Motors chief executive Abdul Ghani Nasser al-Abdulghani.

In a press statement, al-Rumaihi said: "We are honoured to be in a space where organisations from different industries are extending their support to our operations. I am looking forward to the inaugurations as important milestones for our future vision."

Regarding the partnership, al-Abdulghani said: "We are delighted to include this educational and cultural collaboration in our community service programmes, in line with our commitment to innovation in the mobility sector, and our continuous endeavour to participate in delivering benefits to all groups across Qatar."

These vehicles will play a pivotal role in programmes such as "Youth Hub", which engages schools and universities, and "Darb Al Matahef", which promotes Qatar's archaeology and culture and underscores the importance of public-private partnerships in achieving the country's cultural and educational goals, the statement added.

Zwara programme 'elevating Qatar's design landscape'

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The Zwara programme, a transformative initiative by M7 and Qatar Museums, continues to transform Qatar's creative scene by offering a platform for emerging designers to push the boundaries of innovation, according to participants.

Two of the four Doha-based designers, Stephen Amoyo of the Philippines, presenting *The Waiting Chair*, and Abdul Basit of Pakistan, with his innovative "WeaveO" console, credit the programme for allowing them to explore their design ethos and connect with the local artistic community.

The Zwara exhibition is running at M7's Learning Space until December 18.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Amoyo said: "It was unexpected for me. When I was chosen, I felt so lucky and blessed."

"Through the programme, I learned so much about myself and my design ethos," the multidisciplinary designer said.

"Ironically, my design is about creating community, and that's exactly what I found here," he added, highlighting how Zwara offered a safe and supportive space for designers to experiment, something he deeply appreciated.

Amoyo presents *The Waiting Chair*, a piece drawing inspiration from the late designer Virgil Abloh's creative ethos and the iconic work of Jean Prouvé.

It embodies his vision of a flexible, modular design that mirrors Doha's ever-evolving urban landscape.

"Doha today is a sum total of globalisation, urbanisation, and change," he pointed out. "I wanted my design to reflect that flexibility, not just as furniture, but as art."

Basit, meanwhile, brings a fusion of tradition and modernity with his "WeaveO" console.

His work seamlessly blends traditional Qatari Sadu weaving with the Dutch Art Movement, offering a modern take on the geometric patterns and motifs that are deeply rooted in Bedouin culture.

He lauded the Zwara programme for providing opportunities to emerging furniture designers, which in the past tended to be focused on fashion.

"Zwara is all about giving new platforms to young artists. It's a 10-month mentorship pro-



Left: Stephen Amoyo presents *The Waiting Chair* at the exhibition at M7.



Abdul Basit showcases the 'WeaveO' console.

Left: Stephen Amoyo presents *The Waiting Chair* at the exhibition at M7.

PICTURES: Joey Aguilar

gramme that allows us to explore and create," Basit said.

"For me, the inspiration for WeaveO came from my exposure to Qatari culture, which is incredibly hospitable," he said. "The design mirrors the physicality and colours of both Sadu weaving and modern art forms."

The Pakistani designer noted that his reflection on Qatar's creative landscape paints a promising future.

"The art scene here is vibrant," he said. "Qatar is developing its architecture, museums, and cultural landscape. They give you exposure to heritage, culture, and design in a way that's thoughtful, not chaotic."

In addition to Amoyo and Basit, two other designers are showcasing their works at the exhibition. Interior designer Hammam al-Abdulla presents *Nusj*, a reimagined version of Marcel Breuer's *Wassily Chair*.

His design incorporates asymmetrical lines and a woven structure, reflecting both personal and communal aspects of life. Galyiah al-Mohannadi, another emerging designer, unveils *Saraab*, an experimental bookcase inspired by Charlotte Perriand's *Bibliothèque*.

Using locally sourced polychromatic glass, al-Mohannadi's bookcase invites interaction, with rotating, modular units that allow for various configurations.

Qatar Creates, F1's Pierre Gasly extend partnership

Qatar Creates has announced the continuation of its partnership with F1 driver Pierre Gasly of the BWT Alpine F1 Team, reinforcing its commitment to uniting the worlds of art and sport.

Returning for a second year, this collaboration will feature exclusive helmet designs for three key races in the 2024 F1 season: Mexico and Qatar.

In a new addition to this partnership, Qatar Creates is launching a global open call for artists to submit helmet designs, offering creatives worldwide the chance to contribute to this unique fusion of sports, art, and culture.

The three selected winning designs will be worn by Pierre Gasly during his two key races, providing a unique opportunity for artists to showcase their creativity on a global stage.

The previous collaboration unveiled two custom-designed racing helmets crafted by Qatari artists Shouq al-Mana and Alanoud al-Ghamdi.

Alanoud's helmet, inspired by Qatari desert flora, fauna, and national symbols, was auctioned for charity



F1 driver Pierre Gasly holding two custom-designed racing helmets crafted by Qatari artists Shouq al-Mana and Alanoud al-Ghamdi in previous collaboration.

after the main race on October 8, 2023 with 300 premium replicas made available for purchase.

Al-Ghamdi's helmet, which incorporated her work the *Egal*, inspired by a piece of cultural men's headwear that is part of the national attire, was worn during qualifiers before being exhibited at the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic

and Sports Museum.

Building upon its mission to bridge art and culture with the world of sports, Qatar Creates remains committed to providing unprecedented opportunities for artists and showcasing their talents on a global stage.

Each helmet will be meticulously crafted by artists, celebrating their cultural heritage and artistic vision.

The alliance is set to weave art and culture into the fabric of the sports industry, offering unique opportunities for talented artists and showcasing Qatar Creates on a global platform.

The helmets will be soon revealed, symbolising a convergence of artistic ingenuity and high-speed performance within the world of Formula 1.

This partnership not only highlights the talent of artists from around the world but also emphasises the global reach and cultural significance of Formula 1.

Artists wishing to participate in this project are invited to submit their helmet designs by September 30 for the Mexico race, and by October 20 for the Qatar race.