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# GULF TIMES



SATURDAY Vol. XXXXV No. 13147

September 28, 2024  
Rabia 125, 1446 AH

[www.gulf-times.com](http://www.gulf-times.com) 2 Riyals

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## Al-Muraikhi participates in reception hosted by Biden



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi participated yesterday in the reception hosted by US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden, in honour of the heads of delegations participating in the meetings of the UN General Assembly, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York. (QNA)

## Qatar says ending occupation key for sustainable peace

QNA  
New York

Qatar participated yesterday in a ministerial meeting on the situation in Gaza and the implementation of the two-state solution as a path toward a just and comprehensive peace.

The meeting was organised by the Arab-Islamic Ministerial Committee on Gaza with the European Union and Norway, held during the high-level week of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

The Qatari delegation was led by HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi.

In his statement, HE Dr al-Khulaifi noted that Gaza has for years faced a major humanitarian catastrophe, with the Palestinian people suffering from violence and violations in both Gaza and the West Bank. He said that Qatar rejects violence against civilians from any party and condemn the targeting of camps, widespread destruction, and the obstruction of humanitarian aid.

He noted that experience has shown that using force to impose realities on the ground only results in more suffering, expanding the cycle of violence.

HE Dr al-Khulaifi added that signs of this are starting to be seen with Israel's aggression on Leba-



HE Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi at the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

non, which cannot be separated from what is happening in Gaza. He stressed that this was all unacceptable under international law.

He highlighted Qatar's diplomatic efforts over the past year, in co-operation with Egypt and the US, to achieve a ceasefire, facilitate aid flows, and ensure the exchange of prisoners and detainees, which led to tangible results. He also reiterated Qatar's determination to continue its diplomatic endeavours despite the significant challenges, particularly the deep lack of trust between the parties, which remains a major obstacle to negotiations.

Furthermore, he expressed concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, which exacerbates the difficulty of the negotiations, warning that the conflict is spreading to regions repeatedly flagged as potential flashpoints. **To Page 3**

# Israel launches heavy air raids on south Beirut

QNA/AFP  
Beirut

Israel conducted a series of heavy air strikes targeting the southern suburb of Beirut. Thick plumes of smoke covered the sky over the area, and the sounds of massive explosions were heard across the capital and its suburbs, according to the Lebanese National News Agency.

Lebanon has been subjected to widespread Israeli assaults targeting various provinces and regions, particularly towns and villages in southern Lebanon. These attacks have resulted in nearly 3,000 people being killed or injured, prompting a large wave of displacement among residents from the targeted areas.

The strikes, heard across the Mediterranean city, sent huge clouds of smoke soaring above its densely populated southern suburbs.

Hezbollah has been fighting Israeli troops along the Lebanon border since Israel's aggression against Gaza on October 7.

Israel shifted its focus from the war in Gaza to Lebanon this week, unleashing air strikes on Hezbollah strongholds around the country.

While yesterday's strikes on south Beirut were not this week's first, they were by far the fiercest.



Smoke rises from the smouldering rubble at the scene of Israeli air strikes in the Haret Hreik neighbourhood of Beirut's southern suburbs yesterday.

Israel is defying calls from world leaders and aid agencies to halt the violence.

A source close to Hezbollah said the strikes levelled six buildings, and according to a preliminary toll, two people were killed and 76 wounded.

The bombing came moments after Netanyahu concluded his address to UN General Assembly delegates in New York.

Earlier yesterday, Hezbollah fired rockets into the northern Israeli city of Tiberias, saying it was responding to "savage" strikes on Lebanese towns and villages.

The UN has repeatedly condemned the sharp escalation of violence between Israel and Lebanon.

"We are witnessing the deadliest period in Lebanon in a generation, and many express their fear that this is just the beginning," the UN humanitarian co-ordinator in Lebanon, Imran Riza, said.

Diplomats have said efforts to end the war in Gaza were key to halting the fighting in Lebanon and bringing the region back from the brink of all-out war.

But despite months of mediation efforts, a Gaza ceasefire remains elusive.

## Qatar pledges extra \$100mn aid for Gaza

Qatar took part on Thursday in the Ministerial Meeting for Key Partners in Support of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on the sidelines of the 79th UN General Assembly in New York. HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lolwah bint Rashid AIKhatir represented Qatar at the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, HE AIKhatir announced Qatar's further \$100mn pledge as part of its response to the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, including backing UNRWA. She called for a unified international community stance in support of UNRWA as a key humanitarian assistance provider in Gaza amid adverse systematic measures by the Israeli government.



HE Lolwah bint Rashid AIKhatir addressing the meeting.

She expressed Qatar's pride in being among the first countries to sign the Statement of Shared Commitments on UNRWA, in recognition of the agency's crucial role in providing life-saving assistance to Palestinian refugees, stressing Qatar's position dismissing attempts to designate UNRWA as a terrorist organisation, as extremely dangerous and an

onset of uncontrollable evil. Qatar has continuously increased its donations to UNRWA, and was the first Arab country to sign a multi-year agreement with the agency in 2018, she noted, adding that Qatar will continue to co-ordinate with the agency to support efforts aimed at alleviating the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people, in addition to providing various forms of humanitarian assistance in line with its policy of solidarity with them.

HE AIKhatir said that this year's meeting is very important due to the ongoing Israeli aggression on Gaza, its military operations in the West Bank, and the recent aggression on Lebanon, which led to a serious humanitarian disaster and further destabilised the region.

## Qatar appreciates Ukraine, Russia for reuniting children with their families

Qatar announced the success of its mediation in reuniting 14 children in Ukraine and Russia with their families.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lolwah bint Rashid AIKhatir said that a medical team had provided special care and assistance to three children from Ukraine during these operations.

HE AIKhatir reiterated the appreciation of Qatar for both Ukraine and Russia for their co-operation and commitment to ensuring the safety and security of these children, and providing them with appropriate care, noting that the co-operation of Ukraine and Russia with Qatari mediation efforts, from the outset, constituted a significant factor in the success of these operations.

She expressed appreciation to Maria Lvova Belova, Children's Rights Commissioner for the Russian President, and Dmytro Lubinets, Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, for their tireless efforts that had led to the successful reunification of separated families. HE AIKhatir affirmed that Qatar's ongoing mediation efforts to reunite the children with their families in Ukraine and Russia are an extension of its approach to mediation and conflict resolution through peaceful means, in accordance with the principles of international law. These efforts also reflect Qatar's unwavering commitment to humanitarian principles and international solidarity. (QNA)

## Hurricane triggers 'catastrophic' floods

Tropical Storm Helene brought life-threatening flooding to the Carolinas yesterday after leaving widespread destruction as a major hurricane in Florida and Georgia overnight that killed at least 33 people, swamped neighbourhoods and left more than 4mn homes and businesses without power. Helene hit Florida's Big Bend region as a powerful Category 4 hurricane on Thursday at 11:00pm ET (0310 GMT yesterday) and left a chaotic landscape of overturned boats in harbours, felled trees, submerged cars and flooded streets. **Page 7**

# Saudi launches Global Alliance to implement two-state solution

QNA  
New York

Saudi Arabia has announced the launch of a new Global Alliance dedicated to advancing the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on behalf of the Arab and Islamic countries and European partners.

The "Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution" initiative was announced during the participation of Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah in the minis-

terial meeting on the Palestinian cause, held on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

In his speech, Prince Faisal emphasised that the war on Gaza triggered a humanitarian disaster, alongside the serious violations committed by the Israeli occupation forces in the West Bank, and the threat to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and religious sanctities, further entrenching the policies of occupation and violent extremism.

"Self-defence can never justify the killing of tens of thousands of civilians, the systematic destruc-

tion, forced displacement, and the use of starvation as a tool of war, incitement, dehumanisation, and the systematic torture in its most horrific forms, including sexual violence and other documented crimes according to UN reports," said the Saudi minister.

Pointing to Israel's escalation in the region, the Saudi foreign minister said: "These days we are witnessing a serious rise in tension affecting our sister the Republic of Lebanon and poses a significant risk of igniting a regional war, threatening both our region and the world at large."

Demanding an immediate end

to the ongoing war and all violations of international law, he said that those obstructing the peace process must be held accountable.

"We question the credibility and legitimacy of the global system when we stand powerless to stop the machinery of war, while some persist in selectively applying international law in blatant violation of the most basic standards of equality, freedom, and human rights," he said.

The minister emphasised that the establishment of an independent Palestinian state is an inherent right and a fundamental basis for peace, rather than a final outcome

to be negotiated within an elusive political process.

"We affirm our appreciation for the countries that have recently recognised Palestine, and we urge all nations to show the courage to make the same decision and join the international consensus represented by the 149 countries that recognise Palestine," he stated.

"Implementing the two-state solution is the best way to break the cycle of conflict and suffering, creating a new reality where the entire region, including Israel, can enjoy security and coexistence," Prince Faisal underscored. **Page 6**

## Al-Khulaifi meets Benin's FM, Iranian deputy FM



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, met yesterday with Benin's Foreign Minister, Olushogun Adjadi Bakari, and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht-Ravanchi, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York. During the meetings, they discussed the co-operation relations and avenues for enhancing and developing them, as well as the latest regional and international developments. **(QNA)**



## Al-Muraikhi meets Belarus FM



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Maxim Ryzhenkov, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The meeting dealt with discussing bilateral co-operation between the two countries and the means to enhance them, in addition to a number of issues of joint interest. **(QNA)**

**Official**

## Amir sends cables of congratulations to president of Turkmenistan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedov on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. **(QNA)**

# Qatar, Canada join hands to power initiatives of Generation Unlimited

**QNA**  
New York

Qatar participated in the Global Leadership Council meeting for the Generation Unlimited initiative organised by Canada, held on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Representing Qatar at the meeting was HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater.

The meeting was also attended by Canada Minister of International Development Ahmed Husen, Canada Permanent Representative to the United Nations Bob Rae, President of the UN Economic and Social Council Paula Narvaez, and Executive Director of Unicef Catherine Russell.

In her address at the event, HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation praised the fruitful partnership between Qatar and Canada and described the meeting as an important platform that brings together a diverse group of stakeholders, including governments, private sector leaders, development partners, civil society, and youth.

She emphasised that Qatar places great importance on the immense potential of young people and has made their development and empowerment a top priority. This has been implemented through various programmes and initiatives aimed at making a lasting impact on the lives of youth. HE AlKhater noted that through the Education Above All Foundation and the Qatar Fund for Development, Qatar provides educational and economic empowerment opportunities to millions of children and youth, working in more than 60 countries.

She highlighted the importance

of the Generation Unlimited initiative as a leading global partnership between the public and private sectors and youth, aimed at unlocking the potential of 1.8bn young people worldwide by equipping them with the right skills and opportunities, allowing them to positively contribute to their communities and create a better and more just world. She expressed gratitude to Unicef for its vital role in making a tangible difference in the lives of children globally.

HE AlKhater added that Qatar has an outstanding track record of forming meaningful partnerships and promoting multilateral co-operation, highlighting the commitment of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to educating one million girls in three years under the Charlevoix Declaration, she noted that Qatar reported educating 1.7mn girls by 2020 in response to this commitment.

She expressed Qatar's honour in collaborating with the Government of Canada to co-lead such an impactful initiative like Generation Unlimited and highlighted the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the State of Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development on development co-operation. She added that it was an honour to sign this memorandum of understanding a few days ago with Canada Minister of International Development Ahmed Husen, focusing on strengthening joint foreign aid policies, promoting economic and social development in developing countries, and reducing poverty in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

She also mentioned the establishment of a framework agreement for co-operation between the Education Above All Foundation and Global Affairs Canada to



enhance global co-operation in education. Under this framework, the Education Above All Foundation has committed \$40mn out of a total budget of \$95mn from 2024-2028.

HE AlKhater concluded by saying that solidarity and multilateral

action are more important than ever, reaffirming Qatar's steadfast commitment to working with the international community to address global challenges and prioritising humanitarian and development assistance, especially in areas where it is most needed.

## Qatar attends AHLC meeting for assistance to Palestinians

**QNA**  
New York

Qatar participated in the ministerial meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) for co-ordinating international assistance to the Palestinians, held on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Qatar's delegation was headed by HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi. In his remarks at the meeting, HE Dr al-Khulaifi emphasised the active role the AHLC has played over the years in stimulating and coordinating efforts to address the economic and humanitarian aspects of the Palestinian cause.

HE Dr al-Khulaifi pointed out that this year seems different due to the unprecedented violence taking place in the occupied Palestinian territories, stressing that stopping the bloodshed is the most urgent and pressing priority. This gives additional importance to the work of the committee in addressing the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the post-war recovery, and reconstruction.

The Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that the ongoing violence and violations in the occupied West Bank threaten even more dangerous escalation and undermine international efforts to provide the necessary support for lasting peace, including by preventing the diversion of Palestinian tax revenues, which risks weakening the already financially struggling Palestinian Authority.

He said that civilians in Gaza are facing one of the worst humanitarian and health crises in the world, noting that, in addition to widespread famine, there was destruction of infrastructure, healthcare sector, homes, a collapse of security, and no safe place in the strip.

He emphasised that facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid and basic needs on a large scale and protecting humanitarian workers is an obligation under international humanitarian law and Security Council resolutions, especially

given the extremely deteriorating humanitarian situation. He explained that there is no alternative to keeping all crossings open, which is what humanitarian actors are demanding, affirming that the flow of humanitarian aid is a collective responsibility.

The Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlighted Qatar's various humanitarian efforts, mentioning Qatar's participation in the emergency humanitarian response conference held last June. He also noted that Qatar had airlifted and shipped thousands of tonnes of food, medical supplies, relief materials, shelter items, ambulances, and two field hospitals, as well as evacuated thousands of wounded and sick civilians along with their companions. Additionally, Qatar pledged \$50mn as an initial aid package to assist the displaced.

He added that Qatar had increased its support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) with an additional contribution of \$100mn announced this week. This support reflects Qatar's recognition of the crucial and indispensable role of UNRWA in providing essential life services to Palestinians.

He also said that Qatar was among the main signatories of the joint commitments and political support declaration for UNRWA's role as the backbone of humanitarian assistance in Gaza, signed last July. He stressed Qatar's rejection of the systematic campaign against UNRWA, especially after the independent review group's report disproved the allegations against it and after UNRWA's sincere co-operation in implementing the recommendation.

He reiterated Qatar's welcome for the resumption of support from many donors, stressing the need for full resumption and even increased funding. The Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also noted Qatar's intensive diplomatic efforts with Egypt and the United States, which resulted in an agreement last November that secured the release of hundreds of prisoners and detainees from both sides.

## Qatar commends initiatives of Arab Bureau of Education for Gulf States

Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, participated in the 93rd Executive Council meeting of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, held at the bureau's headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The Qatari delegation was led by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi, member of the Executive Council.

Dr al-Nuaimi, who chaired the Executive Council for this year,

opened the meeting with a speech in which he commended the bureau's efforts during the current financial cycle. He also praised the programs for the upcoming cycle, designed to be progressive and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and future skills, as evidenced by the outcomes of the bureau's initiatives and events. He acknowledged the efforts of the bureau's centres to provide member states with the necessary educational and scientific competencies and skills.

Dr al-Nuaimi stressed the importance of supporting the bureau in achieving the projects and initiatives of its upcoming plan and urged member states to engage positively and continuously with the bureau to ensure its success. For his part, Director-General of Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States Dr Abdulrahman bin Mohammed al-Asmi, presented the third report on the progress of the bureau's programmes and those of its affiliated centres for the 2023-2024 financial cycle, along with plans for the

2025-2026 cycle. The meeting also discussed various activities and events to be held in the next financial cycle, including the fifth International Educational Conference, which aims to address educational challenges and establish professional relationships with regional and international expertise centres.

It is worth noting that the bureau will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year, marking five decades of expertise in implementing educational initiatives and activities. **(QNA)**

## Qatar takes part in high-level meeting on Libya's stability



Qatar participated in a high-level meeting on Libya, organised by the United States of America and the Italian Republic, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, with the participation of Chairman of the Presidential Council of the State of Libya Dr Mohammed al-Menfi. Qatar was represented at the meeting by HE Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs ambassador Faisal bin Abdullah al-Hanzab. During the meeting, HE al-Hanzab affirmed Qatar's firm position in support of Libya's unity and stability, and the realisation of its people's aspirations for stability and development, and its full support for the Libyan political track, relevant Security Council resolutions, and all peaceful solutions that preserve Libya's sovereignty. **(QNA)**

## QU participates in 'Study in Qatar' initiative



Qatar University (QU) participated in the 'Study in Qatar' initiative, which took place during the European Conference on International Education 2024 (EAIE), a four-day conference to promote academic co-operation and knowledge exchange in Toulouse, France. QU sought to attract international students to join its diverse range of academic programmes and highlighted its many initiatives, research centres and partnerships, in addition to offering visitors a glimpse into life in the QU campus and Qatar in general. This year, the EAIE included a variety of session formats such as panels, fishbowls, ignite talks, workshops, posters, and campfire discussions. A session titled 'Impact of Rankings on Internationalisation Efforts in the Mena Region,' was presented by QU's International Affairs Office director Cesar Wazen. He detailed QU's approach to rankings, which garnered significant interest from participants and highlighted how QU successfully maintained its focus on its mission while achieving remarkable results in international rankings.

# Shura Council takes part in Asian Parliamentary Assembly meetings

**QNA**  
Moscow

The Shura Council participated in the meetings of the Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, which concluded in the Russian capital, Moscow. Representing the Shura Council at the two-day meetings were Member of the Council and Vice-President of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly engineer Ahmed bin Hitmi al-Hitmi, and Member of the Council Khalid bin Ahmed al-Obaidan.

The meetings discussed several draft resolutions, including a draft resolution on promoting cultural diversity and protecting cultural heritage in Asia, a draft resolution on Asian integration through



information and communication technology aimed at improving access to technology and enhancing cybersecurity in the face of increasing digital challenges, and a draft resolution on combating corruption.

The meetings also addressed other issues, such as strengthening healthcare in Asia and devel-

oping sustainable healthcare systems, as well as the role of women parliamentarians in enhancing political participation and empowering women. At the conclusion of the events, the participants issued several decisions aimed at strengthening Asian parliamentary co-operation in areas such as sustainable development, social



justice, and enhancing regional peace.

The Shura Council chaired the sixth Gulf Co-ordinating Meeting, held on the sidelines of the committee meetings, where the Council reviewed the draft resolutions of the Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs, in addition to discussing the

budget of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly and implementing the proposed amendments to the core organisational documents of the assembly.

The Council's delegation also participated in the meeting of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly's Bureau, held on the sidelines of the committee meetings. Further-

more, the Gulf group in the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, led by the Shura Council, met with Member of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Hamzaev Sultanbievich.

The meetings discussed prospects for mutual co-operation between the two sides and ways to enhance it.

## Qatar attends Asian Co-operation Dialogue



Qatar participated in the annual ministerial meeting of the Asian Co-operation Dialogue, on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Qatar's delegation to the meeting was headed by HE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi. (QNA)



AJMI and Akhlaquna officials at the partnership announcement ceremony.

## AJMI, Akhlaquna announce partnership

Al Jazeera Media Institute (AJMI) and Akhlaquna Award have entered into a media partnership. The announcement was made at a ceremony attended by AJMI's Planning and Projects Department director Hamad al-Marri and Qatar Foundation's Office of Pre-University Education's Partnerships and Strategy director Maryam al-Hajri and other officials from both institutions.

Speaking on the occasion, al-Marri said: "We are proud to renew co-operation with Akhlaquna initiative, not only because this partnership reflects the success of the past year, but also because it highlights our shared commitment to spread noble values and enhancing media role in serving society."

"Our relationship with Akhlaquna initiative extends back a year, and we are confident that this cooperation will continue to achieve successes in promoting ethical values in local and Gulf communities."

Al-Marri stressed that the partnership with Akhlaquna Award adheres to the basic principles of media work adopted by AJMI, such as integrity, transparency, and credibility. Al-Hajri highlighted that the collaboration contributed to the success of the previous awareness campaign launched by the Initiative. "The partnership, this year,

**Al-Marri stressed that the partnership with Akhlaquna Award adheres to the basic principles of media work adopted by AJMI, such as integrity, transparency, and credibility**

will witness the launch of a new campaign under the slogan "Our Compassion is Strength", which focuses on promoting the virtue of mercy in the society through a set of values such as harmony and volunteering.

"As part of this year's co-operation, it was agreed to produce a series of short awareness videos that will be published on social media platforms, in addition to comprehensive media coverage of all the activities of Akhlaquna initiative."

Al-Hajri concluded her speech by praising the role of AJMI in facilitating co-operation and supporting community initiatives.

Akhlaquna is an initiative launched by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, during 2017 Qatar Foundation Alumni Awards Ceremony, emphasising the close link between science and good ethics, and reinforcing the message of ethics as the foundation for success in all walks of life.

The initiative highlights the inclusive ethics adopted by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) such

as mercy, tolerance, honesty, generosity, humility, honesty, justice and equality.

The award honours a number of personalities known for presenting beneficial initiatives and it is divided into four categories including children ethics category for ages 7-14, adolescent's category for ages 15-18, local individual contributions category from 19-45 years old and the fourth category for Arab Gulf countries for ages from 25-45.

The vision of the Akhlaquna Award revolves around spreading good morals and positive behaviours among society.

AJMI, launched in February 2004, combines expertise and practice, with theoretical and applied knowledge given through training courses covering various fields of communication science. The Institute aims to promote media industry in Arab world and the world at large, and to fulfil this commitment it co-operates with a group of international institutes and institutions to provide training material at the highest levels.

# Qatar renews support to LDCs in ministerial meeting in NY

**QNA**  
New York

Qatar participated in the ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), held on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lohwah bint Rashid AlKhatir represented Qatar at the meeting.

The meeting dealt with the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action and its main projects to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In her address to the meeting, HE AlKhatir said that the least developed countries face interconnected structural, economic, and environmental challenges that limit their ability to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. These challenges have negative impacts on individuals and communities and restrict their ability to enhance capacities to confront them.

She pointed out that the international community has given deserved attention to the least developed countries in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement, and other related United Nations conferences and documents, as well as in the Pact for the Future adopted earlier this week. HE AlKhatir added that these countries are looking forward to fulfilling commitments related to official development assistance, debt relief, financing for development, facilitating international trade and regional integration, technology transfer, capacity building, financing adaptation and mitigation measures



for climate change, and dealing with shocks, among others.

She expressed Qatar's pride in hosting the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in March 2023, noting in this context the pledge of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to allocate \$60mn to implement the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2022-2031.

She also highlighted Qatar's agreement with the United Nations, represented by its High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States, to fund projects in the least developed countries to support food security and strengthen their resilience in the face of crises.

HE AlKhatir stressed the importance of multilateral international efforts to confront global challenges. In this regard, she pointed out that Qatar has strengthened its partnerships with various United Nations organizations and specialized agencies by contributing to their core resources to enable them to support the efforts of developing countries, particularly the least developed ones, in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

HE AlKhatir also noted that Qatar is a major investor in the project for the Sustainable Development

Goals Acceleration Labs Network, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme. Additionally, she mentioned that His Highness the Amir had allocated \$100mn during his participation in the Climate Action Summit at the United Nations in 2019 to support sustainable agriculture, irrigation, food security, and crisis response in the Caribbean, the Pacific region, and some African countries.

She further mentioned that many countries within the group of least developed countries face developmental challenges, natural disasters, and humanitarian emergencies beyond their capacity. She noted that Qatar has been supporting the core resources of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to enable it to provide the necessary assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, who are living under inhumane conditions due to the brutal Israeli military aggression on Gaza.

She added that Qatar has provided humanitarian aid, such as food, medicine, shelter materials, and medical supplies, to the besieged Palestinian people in Gaza and several least developed countries that have faced natural disasters or have been affected by wars and armed conflicts.

## GAC employees trained on radioactive materials safety



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change organised a training course for the General Authority of Customs (GAC) employees on the basics of protection against radiation, and radiation-emitting devices. The Radiation Protection Department presented the course, which focused on the raising the capabilities of GAC employees by enhancing their awareness about the proper and safe methods of dealing with radioactive materials. The course also introduced them to such materials and how to deal with them safely.

## Qatar says ending occupation key for sustainable peace

**From page 1**

HE Dr al-Khulaifi stressed that provocations, incitement, killings, and inflammatory rhetoric are detrimental to peace efforts and should be condemned, as stated in UN Security Council Resolution 2334. Despite this, he stressed that mediators were working tirelessly to achieve consensus. HE the Minister of State emphasised that ending the

conflict and occupation, and ensuring the Palestinians' right to self-determination, is essential for lasting peace. He further called for political will and genuine international pressure to achieve two main goals: first, ending the war in Gaza and the attacks in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, while preventing Lebanon from becoming another Gaza; and second, pursuing a true resolution to the Palestinian

issue by ending the occupation and implementing the two-state solution. He added that this should also involve granting Palestine full UN membership, which it rightfully deserves, and providing international support for recovery, development, and follow-up mechanisms. He said that peace was in the interest of all, and that Qatar stands ready to do everything to support sincere efforts to achieve it.



# MES honours student for academic excellence

MES Indian School, Abu Hamour branch, held a felicitation ceremony to honour Aditya Vivek (Grade 12) for his outstanding achievements in academics, both within and outside the school.

MES general secretary Hazmal Ismail, treasurer A T Usman, principal, vice-principal, parents and students were present.

Aditya was celebrated for his participation in the International Nuclear Science Olympiad in the Philippines, where he earned a bronze medal. He represented Qatar at the International Scientific Physics Olympiad in Russia and received the diamond award and honourable mention. He secured National Rank 1 at the IAAC and the IYMC, placing



in the top 15% worldwide, and earning a silver honour.



Aditya was also awarded the 'Proud of You' award by the Minis-

try of Education for his excellence in the Mathematics Olympiad. In

his reply, he expressed profound gratitude to his teachers, family and

peers who supported him throughout his journey.



## LIS hosts inter-school event



Loyola International School (LIS) hosted the Busy Bee Inter-School competition, drawing 126 kindergarten students from 16 schools.

The categories were Fable Fiesta, Palette Parade, Spelling Bee and Math Bee.

The participating schools were Greenwoods International School, The Scholars' International School, Doha Modern

Indian School, DPS-Modern Indian School, Brilliant Indian International School, Rajagiri Public School, Olive International School, Pearl School Al Thumama, Bhavan's Public School, Ideal Indian School, Podar Pearl School, Shantiniketan Indian School, Loyola International School Al Nasr, Oasis campus, DPS Monarch and Lovedale International School.

The judges, Andrea Koduru and

Christopher Almeida were full of praise for the participants.

"Choosing winners was no easy task. Every child brought something special to the stage," they said. Cluster co-ordinator Minaaz and her team of teachers were behind the success of the event. Principal Bhavana and school management appreciated the team, thanked the participating schools and congratulated all the students.

## DPS-MIS receives appreciation



DPS-Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS) earned appreciation for a cultural programme during a reception for Colonel Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, Cabinet Minister of Trade and Industry, Government of Rajasthan, India. DPS-MIS students presented a traditional Rajasthani Ghoomer, showcasing a lively display of Indian culture, at the event hosted by the embassy of India. Colonel Rathore, a renowned sportsman and Olympic medallist, interacted with the students, teachers and leadership of the school and commended their exceptional performance.

## Aurora Toastmasters holds meeting



Aurora Toastmasters, under District 116, Division G, held its 185th meeting, an open house, with the theme Slingshot. Prameetha Ajit, Muna Moiz, Suchita Mehta, Ruby Paul, Keerthi Kalyanam, Hemaladha Ramesh, Poornima Raj, Kamakshi Gopi, Sahitya Reddy, Pradnya Umrani, Ritu Maheshwari, Vinita Nangalia, Poornima Dhulipala, Nivedita Ketkar, Maithili Krishnan, Vaishnavi Angadi, Toyin Ikede and Pushpavathi Sakthivel were present.

## Open house conducted



Zeal Toastmasters Club hosted an open house, its 173rd meeting, with the theme 'Raising a Child'. The event provided a platform for members and guests to share their experiences and insights on parenting. Rafeek, Muna, Samreen Shahanshah, Mujib Kandy, Ravishankar J, Pritam, Sandra, Yatika, Merrin John and Elizabeth took on various roles. Area 26 director Nerieza Dimalao spoke on stepping out of the comfort zone. Jayant delivered a humorous speech on his personal experiences as a groom-to-be. Division 'B' director Seema Bhardwaj spoke about the benefits of joining Toastmasters.



## PMQ members sweep awards in Awqaf photo contest



First prize-winning entry.



Second prize-winning entry.



Muhammed Asharaf Kariyil



Nifiba Suneer



Abdul Saleem

Indian expatriate forum, Photography Malayalam Qatar (PMQ) members swept the top three places in the local segment for Nature and Wildlife category in the fifth edition of the Awqaf Photography Competition. HE Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Mohamed bin Ghanem al-Thani honoured the winners of the 'Waqf & Picture' competition, which attracted 694 photographers from 49 countries across various categories. In the local competition for the Nature and Wildlife category, PMQ's Muhammed Asharaf Kariyil was first, Nifiba Suneer was second and Abdul Saleem third, a statement said.



Third prize-winning entry.

## Ideal Literati contest organised



The Department of English of Ideal Indian School (IIS) hosted Ideal Literati - an inter-school dramatic monologue and extempore competition.

In extempore, Aditya Jain (DPS-Modern Indian School) was first, Avika Gaur (DPS Monarch International School) second and Afrin Salma (IIS) third.

In dramatic monologue, Mohamed Areeb (IIS) was first, Evelyn Johnly (MES Indian School) was second and Nezli Abdul Lathief (Shantiniketan Indian School) finished third.

The judges were toastmasters Najla Azad, Neha Yusuf, and Nirmala Raghuraman. IIS principal Sheik Shamim Saheb awarded trophies and certificates to the winners.

He thanked head of English and assistant headmaster - academics Anwar Sadath, event co-ordinator Ryhanath P I and their team and all section heads for their support.

The gathering was welcomed by Poornima Ramesh, and Shebin Basheer proposed a vote of thanks. Rishi Balan, Suhail Sadik and Aysha Ziya were the comperes of the competition.

## MES gets MoEHE award

The Department of Private Schools and Kindergartens at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) awarded MES Indian School with the 'My White Flag - Certificate of Appreciation Level' award for maintaining a zero-violations academic record for the academic year 2023-24.

In a congratulatory message, Dr Rania Mohammed, director of Private Schools and Kindergartens, complimented the school.

The key areas covered during field visits carried out by the MoEHE inspectors include school academic plans and policies, school administration, commitment to three subjects (Qatar History, Arabic and Islamic Studies), security, safety, and maintenance of school facilities, staff data management and approval, administrative data and documents, cleanliness and housekeeping, school/



student behaviour management, transport management, assistance to students with learning difficulties, school complaints handling procedures, code of ethics issued by the ministry and educating parents, and staff and

students about the same. The certificate was received by officiating president Dr Najeeb K P, general secretary Hazmal Ismail and principal Dr Hameeda Kadar at a ceremony at the MoEHE headquarters.

## Education ministry honours NIS



Noble International School (NIS) has been recognised with the prestigious 'My White Flag - Certificate of Appreciation Level' for the academic year 2023-24 for completing an academic year with zero violations. The achievement marks a significant milestone for the school as it signifies a year of exemplary conduct and adherence to the highest standards of academic integrity. The award was received by NIS chairman Hussain Muhammed U and treasurer Shoukath Ali Taj along with principal Shibu Abdul Rasheed, vice principal (academics) Jayamon Joy and head of section Asma Roshan from Omar Abdul-Aziz al-Naama, assistant undersecretary for Private Education Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and Dr Rania Mohamed, director of Private School and Kindergartens Department.

## MoEHE recognition for Mesisic Private School - Mesaim



MES Indian School, Abu Hamour branch (Mesis) was honoured with the 'My White Flag - Certificate of Appreciation Level' award by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's Department of Private Schools and Kindergartens. The school was recognised for its commitment to uphold high academic and administrative standards throughout the 2023-24 academic year.



## GCC praises launch of 'Global Alliance for implementation of two-state solution'

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) praised the launch of the "Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution" which was announced by Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Arab and Islamic countries and European partners during the ministerial meeting on the Palestinian cause held yesterday on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

The GCC Secretary-General Jaseem Mohamed Albudaiwi expressed the hope that this coalition will help grant the Palestinian people their legitimate rights

to establish their state and live in peace and security.

Speaking at the ministerial meeting titled "The Situation in Gaza and Implementing the Two-State Solution as a Path to Just Peace", organised by the Arab League, the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation, the European Union, and Norway on the sidelines of the General Assembly, the GCC secretary-general said that holding this important event comes at an extremely critical time, as the situation in Gaza has reached one of the most severe humanitarian crises of our modern era.

He emphasised the GCC's commitment to supporting all efforts aimed at alleviating the immense suffering of the Palestinian people.

He commended the ministerial committee formed by the extraordinary Arab-Islamic summit for its significant diplomatic efforts in garnering international support for a ceasefire, ending the Israeli aggression in Gaza, and enhancing recognition of the Palestinian state while ensuring the flow of humanitarian aid to the most needy populations.

Albudaiwi renewed the GCC's call for an international confer-



ence that includes all relevant parties to end the occupation and ensure the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the borders of 1967, with

East Jerusalem as its capital. He emphasised that this solution is the only way to achieve peace and stability for both Palestinians and Israelis.

He pointed out that the international community must recognise that the continued expansion of Israeli settlements and repeated violations of Islamic holy sites, particularly Al-Aqsa Mosque, exacerbate tensions in the region.

"These practices not only threaten the prospects for peace but also constitute violations of international law, complicating the path toward a two-state solution, which remains the only viable option for achieving a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace," he stressed. (QNA)

## Tens of thousands protest against Lebanon 'bloodbath' in Iran, Yemen



Iranians raise their national flag as well as Palestinian and Lebanon's Hezbollah flags during an anti-Israel protest in Tehran, yesterday.

AFP  
Tehran

Tens of thousands protested in Iranian cities and in the fighters-held Yemeni capital yesterday to condemn Israeli attacks on Lebanon and Gaza, AFP journalists and state media reported.

The demonstrates in Tehran and other Iranian cities were responding to call by authorities on Wednesday to demonstrate in support of the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon "and to condemn the barbaric crimes of the Zionist regime in Palestine," the official IRNA news agency said.

Yemen's Houthi fighters also organised a demonstration by tens of thousands in the capital Sanaa yesterday a day after firing a missile at Israel.

In Tehran after prayers yesterday, a protest took place around Enghelab Square in the city centre, an AFP journalist said.

Demonstrators carried portraits of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah as well as Palestinian and Hezbollah flags.

"Israel is destroyed. Lebanon is victorious," they chanted, deploring "a bloodbath in Lebanon."

Protesters also burned Israeli and US flags.

State television aired footage of other demonstrations in Semnan, Qom, Kashan, Kermanshah, Shiraz and Bandar Abbas.

In Sanaa, which has been held by the Houthis for a decade, tens of thousands of chanting protesters gathered, many waving rifles and placards.

"We say to our brothers in



Yemenis lift anti-Israel and US placards as well as yellow flags of Lebanon's Hezbollah movement during a rally held in the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa, yesterday, in protest against Israel's attacks on Lebanon and Gaza.

Lebanon that you will be victorious, God willing," said Houthi supporter Mortada al-Mutawkil. "This war is not the first nor the last with the Israeli enemy, but God willing it will be more painful for Israel than the 2006 war."

Another protester, Mohamed Mushki, said: "No matter how long the war lasts and no matter how big it is, we are on their side, all the Yemeni people, on the side of the Lebanese and Palestinian people until victory, God willing."

In Bahrain, two protests denounced the war in Gaza and bombing campaign on Lebanon. Several hundred people marched in a village north of Manama, voicing solidarity with Gaza and Lebanon, and in the capital scores of people raised Palestinian and Lebanese flags

and called for an end to ties with Israel.

"The people demand an end to normalisation," the protesters chanted.

Hamas stormed Israel in the first week of October, triggering a war with Israel and near-daily cross-border fire from Hezbollah in Lebanon against Israel, which has hit back.

Those exchanges have intensified dramatically over the past week. Israeli raids on Lebanon since Monday have killed hundreds in the deadliest violence since Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war.

As the violence escalates, analysts say Iran is walking a tight-rope by trying to support Hezbollah without getting dragged into a full-blown conflict and playing into its enemy's hands.

## Empty seats as Netanyahu speaks at UN



Empty seats are pictured as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses the 79th UN General Assembly in New York yesterday. Delegates representing Lebanon, Iran, the Palestinians and others exited the room as Netanyahu took the rostrum for his speech.

## Beirut soup kitchen struggles to keep up as attacks intensify

Reuters  
Beirut

Chains of volunteers spoon rice and vegetables into meal containers while others stir huge pots of boiling rice, as a soup kitchen in Beirut struggles to keep up with demand from displaced people escaping Israeli strikes.

Josephine Abu Abdo, a chef and one of the founders of Nation Station, said the kitchen is serving 700 meals a day and is at maximum capacity, but she then hears 1,000 meals are needed.

"The challenge is that we can't keep up. We feel like we are just a drop in the ocean," Abu Abdo said, while a team of volunteers of different ages from all over Lebanon hurriedly packaged up food.

Nation Station was founded to help victims of the devastating 2020 Beirut port explosion, growing from a team of five to a hundred over time. It serves some traditional Lebanese dishes, such as zucchini stuffed with rice and meat, bulgur and tomato, vegetable soup and cabbage salad.

When the Israeli strikes across Lebanon intensified on Monday, forcing around 40,000 into shelters within days, the volunteers cooked more food without any funding, distributing it as an



Volunteers at non-profit organisation 'Nation Station', prepare meals to be distributed for people who were displaced due to ongoing hostilities between Hezbollah and Israeli forces, in Beirut, Lebanon.

emergency response to the centres housing the displaced.

"We worked from the small savings that we had for the first three days. Then, many people started donating," Abu Abdo said.

"The donation that we receive will cover us for two or three days. We will see, one day at a time and we will make a decision," she added.

Israeli attacks have killed more than 600 people in Lebanon since Monday, with the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah at its most intense in more than 18 years. Hezbollah has been firing rock-

ets into Israel for almost a year in support of its ally Hamas, which is fighting Israel in Gaza.

Tens of thousands of people on both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border have fled their homes and Israel has declared the safe return of its residents as one of its war aims.

"We are all trying our hardest to make a little bit of a difference and to help out. It's like the least we can do and unfortunately we are used to this," May Ayash, a professional chef who volunteers at the kitchen said.

## Five trapped hippos die amid drought

Five hippopotamuses have died while trapped in a mud pool in northeastern Namibia, where a severe drought has caused a major river to dry up, the environment ministry said yesterday. The dead were among 130 hippos stranded for days in a pool along the Chobe River on the border with Botswana after the water in the pool evaporated, ministry spokesman Romeo Muyunda said.

"Unfortunately five hippos have died from one of the ponds in the Zambezi Region," he said. "We are suspecting that they might have died from starvation but we are not ruling out diseases such as anthrax." (AFP)

## 48 dead in Sudan paramilitary attacks

Two days of attacks by Sudanese paramilitaries on the Darfur city of El-Fasher killed 48 people, a medical source said yesterday, after world leaders appealed for an end to the country's suffering. AFP reported from Port Sudan. Artillery fire from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) killed 30 people and wounded dozens yesterday alone, a medical source at El-Fasher Teaching Hospital said, as the paramilitaries and regular army vie for control of the North Darfur state capital.

The shelling comes a day after an assault on a market brought "18 dead to the hospital" on Thursday, "some of them burned and others killed by shrapnel", the source said, requesting anonymity for their own protection in light of repeated attacks on health workers and hospitals.

The plight of Sudan, and El-Fasher in particular, has been under discussion this week at the UN General Assembly in New York after 17 months of devastating fighting between the RSF and the regular army.

## SA woman turns 118, among the oldest in the world

AFP  
Touwsrivier

A South African woman celebrated her 118th birthday yesterday as one of the oldest people in the world with a small party at her care home.

Margaret Maritz was born on September 27, 1906, according to a copy of her identity card shown to journalists by a charity that helped to organise the party in Touws River, 180 kilometres northeast

of Cape Town. The document has not been independently verified but if confirmed would make Maritz older than Japanese national Tomiko Itooka who was born on May 23, 1908 and is listed by the US-based Gerontology Research Group as currently the world's oldest living person.

Flanked by two of her 14 children, Maritz blew out a candle on a large pink birthday cake at the party in the small town of Touws River.

"She talks about her life as a

young woman, (saying) you must respect your mother and your father. She didn't drink, she didn't smoke," said a senior nurse at the home, Gregory Elroy Adams.

"We must be grateful," said one of her daughters, Liza Daniels, 67. "I don't know if I will reach that age one day. But for me it's a very, very big privilege to have a mother that reaches this age."

According to the Guinness World Records website, the oldest verified person is French national Jeanne Calment, who died in Au-

gust 1997 at the age of 122 years and 164 days.

"Several people have been claimed to be older than Jeanne, but there has never been enough evidence to authenticate them," it says.

The oldest known South African died in March 2023 just two months before turning 129. Johanna Mazibuko was born on May 11, 1894 according to her identity papers, although these were not confirmed as authentic by authorities.



Margaret Maritz with her two daughters, Getryda Maritz, 81, and Liza Daniels, 67, attends her 118-year birthday celebrations in Touwsrivier in the Western Cape province, South Africa, yesterday.

## US judges warned to prepare for election-year security risks at courthouses

By Nate Raymond  
Reuters

Top security official in the US federal judiciary warned judges earlier this week that courthouses could face security threats as the November 5 election approaches, noting that they are often targeted "during times of increased national tension".

Paul Gamble, the chief of the facilities and security office of the Administrative Office of the US Courts, stressed in a memo reviewed by Reuters that was dated

September 23 that no court facilities had been impacted by any recent election-related security events.

However, he said that law enforcement and intelligence organisations had alerted the court system "about security concerns related to events and incidents connected to the upcoming election, including recent suspicious letters sent to state officials".

He attached an alert the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the US Postal Inspection Service issued earlier this month after election officials in multiple states received letters containing suspicious substances.

The alert contained a picture of one such letter from a sender identified as "United States Traitor Elimination Army".

Gamble advised courts to discuss potential local threats with the US Marshals Service and others involved in security preparedness; co-ordinate with local law enforcement about protective measures that could be implemented; and review procedures for emergency notifications and the safe handling of mail.

The Administrative Office, the judiciary's administrative arm, had no comment.

Early voting is already underway in sev-

eral states ahead of the November 5 election, in which Democratic Vice-President Kamala Harris is facing Republican former president Donald Trump in the presidential contest.

Courts are bracing for a surge in election-related litigation, some of which is already underway.

The judiciary has sought to bolster security following an increase in threats to judges nationally, as documented in a Reuters investigation.

Serious threats against federal judges rose to 457 in fiscal year 2023, which ended on September 30, from 224 in fiscal year

2021, according to the Marshals Service, which is charged with providing protective services to members of the judiciary.

The spike spanned a period that began around the 2020 presidential election, when courts heard a series of highly politicised cases, including failed lawsuits by Trump and his backers seeking to overturn his loss to Joe Biden, the current US president.

The judiciary is also guarding against the risk of cyber breaches by foreign actors who could seek to interfere with election-related litigation and spread misinformation.

## Judge orders dictionary to remove pejorative definition

AFP  
Buenos Aires

An Argentine judge has ordered the publishers of a major Spanish dictionary to remove a pejorative definition of the word "Jewish" from its listing, local media reported late on Thursday.

The fifth and last definition of the word "Jewish" in the *Dictionary of the Spanish Language*, which is published by the Royal Spanish Academy, is of a person said to be "greedy or usurious".

The dictionary cautions that this usage is "offensive or discriminatory".

The other four definitions are "Hebrew"; a person "who professes Judaism"; a "native of Judea, a country in Asia Minor"; and "belonging or relating to Judea or the Jews".

Judge Ariel Lijo ordered the academy to "immediately remove the fifth definition of the word 'Jewish' for representing hate speech and incitement to discrimination on religious grounds", according to a ruling cited by the Infobae news portal.

He also ordered that the link to the word on the dictionary's website be blocked in Argentina until it complied with the request.

## US fines Air Canada \$250,000

Reuters  
Washington

The US Department of Transportation said yesterday that it had fined Air Canada \$250,000 for operating flights in 2022 and 2023 in prohibited Iraqi airspace.

The agency had jurisdiction because those flights had United Airlines' designator code.

The violations occurred on numerous flights between the United Arab Emirates and Toronto in airspace that was prohibited by the Federal Aviation Administration to US operators.

Air Canada must pay \$125,000 of the fine and owes another \$125,000 if it violates the order again within a year.

Air Canada stopped codesharing with United on the route in January 2023.

Emirates was fined \$1.5m by the Transportation Department in June for operating flights carrying JetBlue Airways' code over Iraqi airspace.

# Hurricane triggers 'catastrophic' US floods, with more than 30 dead

Reuters/AFP  
Washington

Tropical Storm Helene brought life-threatening flooding to the Carolinas yesterday after leaving widespread destruction as a major hurricane in Florida and Georgia overnight that killed at least 33 people, swamped neighbourhoods and left more than 4mn homes and businesses without power.

Helene hit Florida's Big Bend region as a powerful Category 4 hurricane on Thursday at 11.10pm ET (0310 GMT yesterday) and left a chaotic landscape of overturned boats in harbours, felled trees, submerged cars and flooded streets.

Police and firefighters carried out thousands of water rescues throughout the affected states, including in Atlanta, where an apartment complex had to be evacuated due to flooding.

Helene came ashore in Florida with 140mph (225kph) winds, weakening to a tropical storm as it moved into Georgia early yesterday.

By early afternoon, the storm had been downgraded to a tropical depression and was packing maximum sustained winds of 35mph (55kph) as it slowed over Tennessee and Kentucky, the National Hurricane Centre (NHC) said.

Helene's heavy rains were still producing catastrophic flooding in the southern Appalachians, the NHC said.

More than 50 people were trapped on the roof of a hospital at midday yesterday in Unicoi County, Tennessee, about 120 miles northeast of Knoxville, local media reported, as floodwaters swamped the rural community.

Rising waters from the Nolichucky River were preventing ambulances and emergency vehicles from evacuating patients and others there, the Unicoi County Emergency Management Agency said on social media, but emergency crews in boats were conducting rescues.

In western North Carolina, Rutherford County emergency officials warned residents near the Lake Lure Dam just before noon to immediately evacuate to higher ground, saying "Dam failure imminent."

In nearby Buncombe County, landslides forced interstates 40 and 26 to close, the county said on X.

The extent of the damage in Florida began emerging after daybreak.

In coastal Steinhatchee, a storm surge - the wall of seawater pushed ashore by winds - of 8-10' (2.4-3m) moved mobile homes.

In Treasure Island, a barrier island community in Pinellas County, boats were grounded in front yards.

The city of Tampa posted on X that emergency personnel had completed 78 water rescues of residents and that many roads were impassable because of flooding. The Pasco County sheriff's office rescued more than 65 people overnight.

The US Coast Guard said it had saved nine people from storm waters.

Video posted online showed a coastguard crew pulling a man and his dog wearing life vests from the ocean on Thursday after his sailboat became disabled off Sanibel Island.

Kevin Guthrie, Florida's emergency management director, urged residents in the affected areas to stay off the roads.

"I beg you, do not go out," he said at a morning press briefing. "We have 1,500 search and rescue personnel in the impacted areas. Please get out of the way so we can do our jobs."

Officials had pleaded with residents in Helene's path to heed evacuation orders, describing the storm surge as "unsurvivable", as NHC Director Michael Brennan warned.

In Perry, near where Helene slammed into the coast as a powerful Category 4 hurricane, houses lost power and the gas station was flattened.

"Once the eye (of the storm) got to us, that's when everything started to intensify," Larry Bailey, 32, who sheltered in his small wooden home all night with his two nephews and sister, told AFP. "I am Floridian, so I'm kind of used to it, but it was real scary at one point. It's like, was my house gonna get blown away or not?"

In Taylor County, the Sheriff's Department wrote on social media that residents who decided not to evacuate should write their names and dates of birth on their arms in permanent ink "so that you can be identified and family notified".

Some residents had stubbornly stayed put.

Ken Wood, 58, a state ferry boat operator in Pinellas County, said he should have heeded evacuation orders rather than rid-



A gas station is seen after Hurricane Helene made landfall in Perry, Florida. - AFP

ing out the storm at home with his 16-year-old cat, Andy.

"I'll never do that again, I swear," he said. "It was a harrowing experience. It roared all night like a train. It was unnerving. The house shook."

Down the hill from his house, the storm flooded some homes with chest-deep salt water. One house caught fire and burned down, shooting 30-foot flames in the stormy sky, he said.

"Old Andy seemed like he didn't care," Wood said. "He did fine. But next time we leave."

Some of Wood's neighbours were not as fortunate.

Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri said first responders were unable to answer several emergency calls from residents overnight due to the conditions.

Yesterday county authorities found at least five people dead.

Two other people in Florida died, Governor Ron DeSantis confirmed.

Georgia Governor Brian Kemp cited 11 storm-related fatalities in his state so far, while North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper said there had been two deaths in his state.

At least 13 people had died during the storm across South Carolina, the Charleston-based *Post and Courier* newspaper re-

ported, citing local officials.

Helene was unusually large for a Gulf hurricane, forecasters said, though a storm's size is not the same as its strength, which is based on maximum sustained wind speeds.

A few hours before landfall, Helene's tropical-storm winds extended outward 310 miles (500km), according to the NHC.

By comparison, Idalia, another major hurricane that struck Florida's Big Bend region last year, had tropical-storm winds extending 160 miles (260km) about eight hours before it made landfall.

Airports in Tampa, Tallahassee and St Petersburg suspended operations on Thursday but reopened yesterday, though extensive delays were expected.

More than 4.6mn homes and businesses were without power midday yesterday in Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas and other states, according to the tracking website Poweroutage.us

With typhoon Yagi battering Asia, storm Boris drenching Europe, extreme flooding in the Sahel, September so far has been an unusually wet month around the world.

Scientists link some extreme weather events to human-caused global warming.

"Helene traveled over exceptionally warm ocean waters in the Gulf of Mexico," Andra Garner, a climate scientist at Rowan University in New Jersey, told AFP. "It's likely that those extra-warm ocean waters played a role in Helene's rapid intensification."

"We also know that storm surges from hurricanes are getting worse because our sea levels are rising as we warm the planet," she added.

Curtis Drafton, a search and rescue volunteer, 48, in Steinhatchee, Florida raised similar concerns on the ground as he tackled the storm's aftermath.

"We have got to start wondering: is this the new normal? Is it going to happen every year?" he told AFP. "We have a lot of talk about once-in-a-lifetime storm, but we had one similar last year."

# Trump, Zelensky 'make nice' after tensions over Ukraine war

AFP  
New York

Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky held high-stakes talks yesterday following a series of attacks by the White House hopeful on the Ukrainian president as the looming US election raises questions over long-term US support for its ally in its war with Russia.

Foreign policy hawks have voiced fears that a second Trump term would spell disaster for Ukraine's defence, as the Republican has repeatedly defended Russia's President Vladimir Putin while voicing scepticism over US funding for Kyiv.

Zelensky had met Trump's election rival Kamala Harris, as well as President Joe Biden, on Thursday and both pledged their support to Zelensky.

Trump - who this week accused the Ukrainian of refusing to "make a deal" to end the conflict - vowed to bring peace if he wins a second term in office as the two men ad-

ressed reporters after their tete-a-tete at Trump Tower in New York.

"It's a shame but this is a war that should have never happened and we'll get it solved. It is a complicated puzzle...too many people dead. Too many beautiful cities," he said.

Before the meeting - which lasted less than an hour - Trump had hailed his alliance with Zelensky, but added: "I also have a very good relationship - as you know - with President Putin."

Zelensky responded that the pair shared a "common view that the war in Ukraine has to be stopped" and that it is imperative that Ukraine prevail.

Later in a post on X, Zelensky described his meeting with Trump as "very productive".

"I presented him our Victory Plan, and we thoroughly reviewed the situation in Ukraine and the consequences of the war for our people," Zelensky wrote. "Many details were discussed. I am grateful for this meeting. A just peace is needed."



This handout photograph released by the Ukrainian presidential press service shows Zelensky and Trump during a meeting yesterday in New York. - AFP



Harris with Zelensky at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on the White House campus during their meeting on Thursday. - Reuters

The meeting initially looked like it would be scrapped after Zelensky told *New Yorker* magazine in an interview that Trump "doesn't really know how to stop the war" and that his running mate JD Vance is "too radical".

The interview was published

amid Republican outcry over the Ukrainian leader's trip to Pennsylvania with Democratic politicians to thank US workers for manufacturing ammunition that is helping Ukraine's war effort against Russia.

Trump, who refused to say

whether he wants Ukraine to defeat Russia during his debate with Harris earlier this month, hit back at Zelensky at a campaign rally in North Carolina on Wednesday, berating him as "a man who refuses to make a deal" for peace.

Zelensky is in New York this week for the UN General Assembly, and has been looking to shore up support for his country's war effort as it struggles on the battlefield in the third year of Moscow's invasion.

The Ukrainian leader presented a so-called "victory" plan to Biden and Harris at the White House on Thursday, with Biden announcing a new military aid package worth nearly \$8bn for Kyiv.

Standing with Zelensky at her side, Harris did not mention Trump by name but said there were "some in my country who would instead force Ukraine to give up large parts of its sovereign territory".

Zelensky's row with the former president underscored how the US election in November could upend the support that Ukraine receives

from its biggest backer.

Trump has echoed many of Putin's talking points, saying at a rally earlier this week that Ukraine could not beat Russia, highlighting its 1812 defeat of Napoleon but ignoring more recent military defeats.

House Republicans have launched investigations into Zelensky's Pennsylvania trip, suggesting it amounted to election interference, and calling for the Ukrainian ambassador in Washington to be fired.

When Trump was president, he asked Zelensky for potentially damaging political material on Biden ahead of the 2020 election while withholding vital military aid that had already been approved by Congress - leading to the first of his two impeachments.

However, the Republican had maintained good relations with Zelensky, pleased that the Ukrainian defended him over his conduct. Trump spent much of the impromptu news conference reminding reporters of Zelensky's support.

# Chinese nuke-powered sub sank this year: US official

Reuters  
Washington

China's newest nuclear-powered attack submarine sank earlier this year, a senior US defence official said, a potential embarrassment for Beijing as it seeks to expand its military

capabilities. China already has the largest navy in the world, with over 370 ships, and it has embarked on production of a new generation of nuclear-armed submarines.

A senior US defence official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said China's new first-in-class nuclear-powered attack submarine sank alongside a pier some-

time between May and June.

A Chinese embassy spokesperson in Washington said they had no information to provide.

"We are not familiar with the situation you mentioned and currently have no information to provide," the Chinese official said.

The senior US official said it was not clear what caused it to sink or

whether it had nuclear fuel on board at the time. "In addition to the obvious questions about training standards and equipment quality, the incident raises deeper questions about the PLA's internal accountability and oversight of China's defence industry - which has long been plagued by corruption," the official said, using an acronym for

the People's Liberation Army.

"It's not surprising that the PLA Navy would try to conceal" the sinking, the official added.

The mishap "raises questions about production and safety standards of the PLA Navy's first-in-class nuclear-powered attack submarine - one of the Chinese defence industry's most advanced

platforms," said James Char, a China defence expert at Singapore's S Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

"As well as sowing doubts about the survivability of the new submarine, it also reminds us of the potential pitfalls armed forces around the world may face when it comes to handling nuclear material."

# Former defence minister Ishiba to be Japan's PM

AFP  
Tokyo

Japan's next prime minister Shigeru Ishiba yesterday outlined his ideas to reshape the nation's military alliance with Washington, after winning the conservative ruling party's leadership race.

The seasoned 67-year-old former defence minister beat arch-nationalist Sanae Takaichi - who would have been the country's first-ever woman leader - in the final round.

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has governed almost uninterrupted for decades and holds a majority, meaning Ishiba will be elected premier by parliament on Tuesday.

In a press conference yesterday, Ishiba vowed to restore confidence in the party after a funding scandal and gave a cautious run-down of his key reform pledges.

"Japan wants to fulfil our proactive responsibility and start discussions about how to build peace in this region," he said when asked about his proposals for an Asian Nato.

It could be an expansion of several existing blocs such as the so-called Quad that groups Japan, the US, India and Australia, he said.

Establishing a military training facility for its troops in the US, as Germany has done, could be an "extremely effective" way to strengthen the bilateral alliance and would allow Japanese forces to "train at their maximum capability".

He said he wanted to call a snap election to shore up his mandate "as

soon as possible" but declined to say when. Ishiba had come close to the top job before, including in 2012 when he lost to nationalist Shinzo Abe, Japan's longest-serving leader who was later assassinated.

The military model-maker with an affinity for 1970s pop idols says his experience tackling tough issues, such as agriculture reforms, makes him qualified to lead.

Recent days and weeks have seen separate incursions into Japanese airspace by Chinese and Russian military planes, as well as North Korean missile tests.

"I have worked on national security matters for a long time and I will be committed to protecting Japan's territory," he said.

Following the result, China's foreign ministry spokesman said the country wants to improve ties with Japan.

"The long-term, sound and steady development of China-Japan relations serves the fundamental interests of the two peoples," he said.

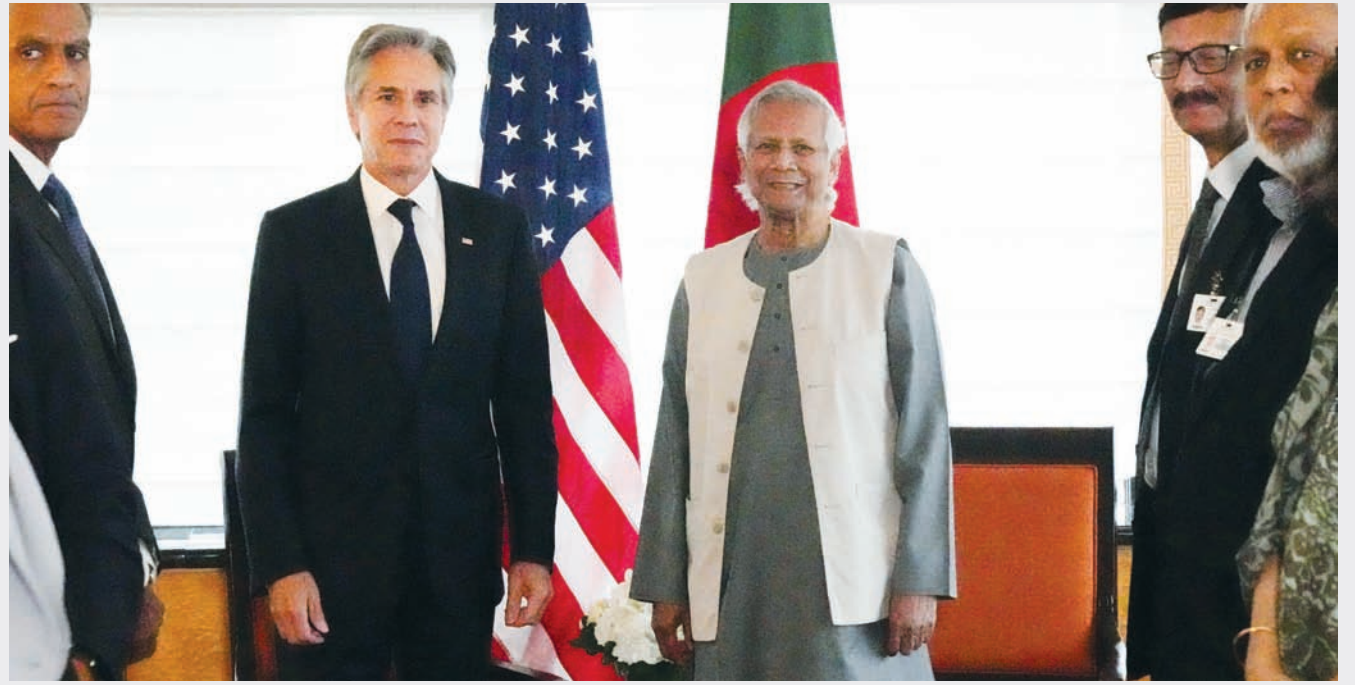
South Korea's foreign ministry said the country hopes to "maintain the positive momentum in Japan-South Korea relations".

At home, Ishiba will be tasked with breathing life into the economy, as the central bank moves away from decades of monetary easing that has slashed the value of the yen.

Ishiba supports the Bank of Japan's exit from its unorthodox ultra-loose policies, and the Japanese currency surged after yesterday's result.

He has also pledged to revitalise rural regions and proposes creating a government agency for disaster prevention.

## Blinken, Yunus meet in New York



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Bangladeshi chief adviser and head of the interim government Muhammad Yunus in New York.

# 15 dead, dozens missing after landslide at Indonesia mine

AFP  
Jakarta

A landslide at an illegal gold mine in western Indonesia has killed at least 15 people and buried dozens of others in the abandoned pit with rescue workers struggling to locate the missing, officials said yesterday.

Unlicensed mines are common across the mineral-rich southeast Asian archipelago, where abandoned sites attract locals who hunt for leftover gold ore without proper safety equipment.

The landslide hit a remote site in West Su-

matra province on Sumatra island on Thursday evening after heavy rains in the area, provincial disaster mitigation agency spokesperson Ilham Wahab said. "The information we can provide was that a landslide occurred at a gold mine, causing several people to be buried. Efforts to search for the victims are ongoing," he said.

Ilham added that 15 people were killed and three injured, with rescuers searching for 25 others.

Footage showed rescuers loading one of the dead into an ambulance near the disaster site in the district of Solok.

The Solok district disaster agency said in a statement that the landslide took place at an

abandoned "illegal" mine. "The landslide location is on an old mining pit that had been abandoned by previous miners," it said.

Ilham said all activities at the site had been halted as search efforts for the missing were ongoing.

Search efforts were being hindered by the remote location, with rescuers including police officers, soldiers and civilians having to walk for hours from the nearest village to reach the area, Ilham said.

"The location is quite far, the terrain is tough. This has hampered evacuation efforts but people are helping so that this evacuation process can be carried out quickly," he said.

## China says 'supervised' Manila supply mission to disputed reef

China yesterday said it had "supervised" a Philippine ship as it delivered supplies to a grounded vessel at a disputed reef in the South China Sea, after a string of tense encounters in the area this year. Beijing claims almost all of the economically vital waterway and continues to press its assertions there despite an international tribunal ruling that they have no legal basis.

Tensions between China and the Philippines have flared in recent months during a series of confrontations in the waters around the contested Second Thomas Shoal and Sabina Shoal.

However, in July, the two sides said they had reached a provisional deal on resupply missions to a Philippine ship, the Sierra Madre, which is grounded on the Second Thomas Shoal with a garrison on board, aimed at asserting Manila's claims to the reef. Beijing's coast guard yesterday said Manila had conducted a resupply mission "in accordance with the provisional agreement".

## Manila hosts defence exhibition



Philippines' Secretary of National Defence Gilberto Teodoro (centre left) talks to visiting foreign military officers at the Asian Defence and Security Exhibition (ADAS) in Manila.

# Australia sees rapid surge in mpox cases

AFP  
Sydney

Australia has seen a rapid rise in mpox cases in the past three months, with one health expert concerned that low vaccination rates could be driving a spike outside cities.

So far this year, 737 cases have been recorded, with the vast majority of cases occurring in the last few months.

In comparison, there were 26 cases last year and 144 cases in 2022. The majority of this year's new cases occurred in the south-eastern states and only two cases were reported to be women.

A spokesperson for the Australian department of health and aged care said that cases have been increasing since May this year.

Australia has responded by

lifting restrictions on who can be vaccinated, allowing for "people of all ages who are at risk of exposure to mpox" to be eligible.

Matthew Shields, a Sydney sexual health physician and GP, told the national broadcaster ABC that the virus was being detected outside metro areas - where vaccination rates are lower.

Mpox is caused by a virus transmitted to humans by infected animals that can also be passed from human to human through close physical contact.

Deadly in some cases, it causes fever, muscular aches and large boil-like lesions on the skin.

The virus gained international prominence in May 2022, when clade 2b spread around the world.

In July 2022, the World Health Organisation declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, its highest level of alarm.

# Myanmar junta bombs opposition-held town

AFP  
Yangon

Myanmar's junta carried out fresh air strikes on an opposition-held town yesterday, hours after issuing an unprecedented invitation to its enemies for talks on the country's civil war.

Thursday's surprise call for discussions was likely a sop to mainly ally China and a nudge towards controversial fresh elections, analysts said, and two prominent armed groups swiftly dismissed it.

The offer came with the junta reeling from battlefield reverses to ethnic minority armed groups and

pro-democracy "People's Defence Forces" that rose up to oppose the military's seizure of power in 2021.

The groups have seized several lucrative border crossings and last month took Lashio, a city of 150,000 people - the biggest urban centre to fall to rebels since 1962.

The call was "the first time that the regime has expressed a willingness to have a dialogue with the post-coup resistance forces," said Richard Horsey of the International Crisis Group.

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing has long spoken of "annihilating" the groups, he pointed out.

Hours after the offer, military jets bombed Lashio, in northern Shan

state, now in the hands of fighters from the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA).

"I heard two explosions," a resident said, asking for anonymity for security reasons.

"I heard five people were killed and a lot of people were wounded."

One Yangon-based diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said of the junta's offer: "So far I haven't seen the inclination towards serious reconciliation."

AFP has contacted for comment the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), ethnic armed groups that hold territory in the north. The MNDAA could not

be reached. The Karen National Union, which has fought for decades for autonomy along the Thai border, said talks were only possible if the military agreed to "common political objectives".

That included the military staying out of politics, accepting a new, federal constitution, and being held accountable for "war crimes and crimes against humanity", spokesman Padoh Saw Taw Nee said.

"If they don't agree with it, then nothing will happen... We will keep putting pressure on them politically, militarily," he said.

The military is highly unlikely to agree to such terms.

A spokesperson for the "Man-

dalay PDF", which has seized territory in the hills around second city Mandalay, also dismissed the offer.

"This invitation won't make any changes to our way," said Osmond. "We will keep doing what we have to do." But even if nothing comes of the invitation, just issuing it could still have value for the regime, said Horsey.

"It would allow them to portray themselves - for example to China, which is pushing for a deal - as wanting peace, even while they continue with their campaign of indiscriminate airstrikes."

China is a major ally and arms supplier to the isolated junta and its sprawling Belt and Road Initiative

includes key projects in Myanmar.

Last month Beijing's foreign minister said it supported the junta's plan to hold fresh polls and return the conflict-torn country to a "democratic transition".

"China hopes that all relevant parties will stop fighting and hold talks," a foreign ministry spokesperson told a regular press briefing yesterday. Independent analyst David Mathieson said that in addition to Beijing, the offer was likely aimed at neighbouring countries and some western diplomats who may see elections as a "vehicle to reduce violence and pursue a process of de-escalation", despite their inevitable flaws.



# Naomi Campbell banned from running charity

AFP  
London

**F**ormer supermodel Naomi Campbell has been barred from running a charity after an inquiry found funds raised by an organisation she founded was spent on spa treatment and room service

charges. The inquiry into Fashion for Relief, identified “multiple instances of misconduct”, including use of charity money to pay for a five-star hotel stay for Campbell in the south of France.

The finding by the UK Charity Commission means Campbell, 54, has now been disqualified from running a charity for five years.

Two other trustees also received bans.

The watchdog probe found that between April 2016 and July 2022, only 8.5% of Fashion for Relief’s overall expenditure went on grants to charities.

Campbell, who in 1987 became the first black model to feature on the cover of UK *Vogue* in 20 years,

achieved worldwide fame in the 1990s and remains a highly influential figure in the industry.

In June, an exhibition dedicated to her opened at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum.

Speaking in Paris after receiving an honour from the French government, the British celebrity denied any responsibility for the mishan-

dling of donations. “I was not in control of my charity. I put the control in the hands of a lawyer,” she told reporters after she was made a Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters.

The model added that she was “investigating to find out what and how - as everything I do and every penny I ever raised goes towards

charities”. Campbell’s charity held a string of glitzy, star-studded events to raise funds for good causes in London and Cannes.

These were said to include projects ranging from supporting child refugees, to helping victims of the Ebola crisis and the 2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami.

# India cuts target for fast-track sex crime courts as states falter

Reuters  
New Delhi

**T**he Indian government has slashed its goal to create thousands of new tribunals to try sex crimes speedily after states like West Bengal, where the recent brutal rape-homicide of a doctor shook the nation, fell far short of targets, according to three federal government officials and an internal document.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government moved to establish fast-track special courts (FTSC) in 2019 to try exclusively sex crimes, after the Supreme Court that year criticised state governments for being slow to deliver justice to victims.

The court singled out Bengal and Uttar Pradesh for taking too long to reach judgment on cases involving child victims. Most sex crimes are tried by India’s heavily burdened state courts, but Modi’s government planned to incentivise state governments to establish 1,023 FTSCs by March 2021 by funding 60% of costs.

Each FTSC is staffed by one judicial officer and seven support staff. The government had projected 2,600 FTSCs by 2026 but has now revised its target to 790 due to low interest from states and a lack of judges, according to the officials and the document, an undated summary from this year of progress on the FTSC project.

Just 752 FTSCs have been established nationwide as of August, according to publicly available government data. Some states were

slow to sign up to the project, with Bengal only joining last year.

The opposition-led state - whose Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is under scrutiny for her handling of sex crimes - was earlier set a target of 123 fast-track tribunals by March 2021, according to the officials and the document.

But only six tribunals are operational in Bengal, where there are some 48,600 cases of rape and other sexual offences pending judgement.

Top West Bengal judicial bureaucrat Siddhartha Kanjilal blamed the slow response on a lack of judges but said authorities were working with the Calcutta High Court, its top tribunal, on appointing retired officials to FTSCs.

“There have been delays,” he said. “We, as well as the Calcutta High Court, are seized of the matter.”

The Indian law and justice ministry and the office of Banerjee, a vocal critic of Modi, did not respond to requests for comment.

Bengal has now been set a goal of 17 special tribunals by 2026, according to the undated government document and a second August 30 summary on the status of FTSCs in the state.

India’s strained judicial system has a backlog of tens of millions of cases. State courts of first instance are short of about 5,000 judicial officers, roughly 20% of the judges they have been allocated by state authorities, government data show.

In one notable instance of delay, a district court in Ajmer this August sentenced six men to life imprisonment for their role in mass rapes

that occurred in the early 1990s.

One of the Ajmer victims, who cannot be named under Indian law, said she was abandoned by her husband after he learned of the assault and the sentence from a traditional court had come way too late for her: “I am of a grandmother’s age now and have no expectations or hope left.”

By contrast, FTSCs focus on specific crimes and can try them speedily. They are also allowed to hire judges on contract, including retired judicial officers.

In 2022, the last year for which comprehensive data is available, FTSCs passed judgement on 83% of cases on the docket. By contrast, Indian courts overall ruled on just 56% of the sex-crime cases taken on that year.

The original FTSC targets were set by the federal law and justice ministry using a formula that took into account the number of outstanding cases in each state and a target for each tribunal to conclude 165 cases annually, one of the officials said. Like his colleagues, the official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk to media.

In a country where cases can drag on, FTSCs “have particular relevance in cases involving vulnerable victims and witnesses,” said G S Bajpai, vice chancellor of the National Law University Delhi, who has advised the government on criminal law reforms.

Senior lawyer Shobha Gupta, who has represented many rape victims, said FTSCs can be useful but that appeals still go through the slow traditional court system.

## Two climate activists jailed in UK



Supporters of the two Just Stop Oil environmental protesters, Phoebe Plummer and Anna Holland gather with placards outside Southwark Crown Court in London yesterday, during their sentencing. A UK judge yesterday jailed the two climate activists who threw soup at Vincent van Gogh’s “Sunflowers” at London’s National Gallery in 2022 for terms of two years and 20 months respectively. Just Stop Oil protestors Phoebe Plummer, 23, and Anna Holland, 22, were convicted at London’s Southwark Crown Court of criminal damage in July.

# Foreign diplomats observe elections in Kashmir

Reuters  
Srinagar

**F**oreign diplomats from 15 countries were allowed to observe local elections in India’s Jammu and Kashmir, as New Delhi highlighted the first vote in the territory in a decade.

It was the first time India has invited foreign diplomats to witness voting in the region, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government stripped of its partial autonomy five years ago, though Delhi has hosted similar trips on

other occasions and a G20 meeting on tourism there last year.

More than 9mn voters are eligible to choose members for the region’s 90-seat legislature in the three-phase election, the second phase of which ended on Wednesday. The vote is the first in the region since 2014.

The visitors included diplomats from embassies of the US, Mexico, Singapore, Spain and South Korea, among others, officials in Srinagar and New Delhi said. They visited polling stations across the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley.

“It is a rare opportunity to come to Kashmir and see the electoral process in action and see democracy. It looks very smooth, everything is very professional,” said Jorgan K Andrews, deputy chief of mission at the US embassy.

Until 2019, Jammu and Kashmir had a special semi-autonomous status that was revoked by Modi’s government.

Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party-led (BJP) government has said that the move has helped restore normalcy in the area and boosted development.

## UK buys semiconductor factory to secure supply for military

The British government has bought a struggling factory from the US firm Coherent to secure domestic manufacture of gallium arsenide semiconductors, used in military technology. The government said the plant in Newton Aycliffe was the only secure domestic manufacturer of the semiconductors. It said the purchase would preserve 100 skilled jobs. While British governments rarely buy or run companies, the semiconductor sector, which makes chips for digital and industrial devices, has been a focus of late due to its critical role in the economy and national security. Three years ago, the state bought another British semiconductor factory, Newport Wafer Fab, to prevent it being sold to a Dutch firm owned by a Chinese company. “This government recognises the importance of semiconductors as a critical technology for the future of the UK and a significant enabler of the government’s growth and clean energy missions,” the government said yesterday.

## Film promo



Bollywood film producer Sajid Nadiadwala (left) and actor Aamir Khan attend the trailer launch of the Indian Marathi-language film *Yek Number* in Mumbai.

# UK ‘rethinking tax raid on foreign wealth’

Reuters  
London

**B**ritain’s Labour government is reconsidering part of its plan to toughen up tax rules on wealthy foreigners living in the country, known as its non-dom tax, media reports said yesterday.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s Labour Party was elected in July on a promise to rebuild Britain, and has said it will increase taxes on the wealthiest to help invest in public services and infrastructure.

Britain’s non-dom tax system, which enables people living in Britain to pay little or no UK tax on money earned overseas, has long been a point of contention in Britain, and the former Conservative government had also set out plans to toughen the rules. But the Labour Party said it would go further, expanding Britain’s inherit-

ance tax regime to include foreign assets held in trusts designed to mitigate such levies.

The *Financial Times* said Finance Minister Rachel Reeves was now ready to water down the plan over fears that it would fail to raise any money. It said no final decision had been taken.

A spokesperson for the Treasury said the media reports were speculation and that the Office for Budget Responsibility, the country’s fiscal watchdog, would certify the costings of all measures announced at the budget on October 30. “We are committed to addressing unfairness in the tax system so we can raise the revenue to rebuild our public services. That is why we are removing the outdated non-dom tax regime and replacing it with a new internationally competitive residence-based regime focused on attracting the best talent and investment to the UK,” the spokesperson said.

# British theatre and cinema legend Maggie Smith dies

AFP  
London

**O**scar-winning British actor Maggie Smith, a star of stage and screen for more than seven decades, died in hospital in London yesterday, her sons announced, prompting a flood of tributes.

“It is with great sadness we have to announce the death of Dame Maggie Smith. She passed away peacefully in hospital early this morning,” Chris Larkin and Toby Stephens said in a statement.

Smith - who won a Tony, two

Oscars, three Golden Globes and five Baftas - achieved late-career international fame for her depiction of the acerbic Dowager Countess of Grantham Violet Crawley in the hit television series *Downton Abbey*.

The Bafta TV and film academy said in a statement that it was “saddened” to hear of her death, calling her “a legend of British stage and screen”.

It gave her a special award and fellowship to acknowledge her acclaimed career, which Prime Minister Keir Starmer said had made her a “true national treasure”.

Born in 1934 in Oxford in central England, the daughter of an Oxford

professor of pathology, Smith made her stage debut in 1952 with the Oxford University Dramatic Society.

She won a best actress Oscar for *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* in 1969 and for best supporting actress for her depiction of Desdemona in *Othello* in the same year.

“An intensely private person, she was with friends and family at the end,” her sons, both actors, said.

“She leaves two sons and five loving grandchildren who are devastated by the loss of their extraordinary mother and grandmother,” they said, adding their thanks for all the “kind messages and support” they had received.

Famed for her scene-stealing charisma, Smith’s long and successful career got started with a string of successes in London’s West End and on Broadway in the 1950s.

She famously appeared opposite Laurence Olivier in an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Othello* in 1959.

This led to her joining Olivier’s celebrated 1960s National Theatre company where she earned critical acclaim alongside her husband, the actor Robert Stephens.

Smith’s marriage to heavy-drinking Stephens, with whom she had her two sons, collapsed in 1973 and they divorced two years later.

She remarried shortly after to the screenwriter Beverley Cross, who died in 1998.

In recent decades, some of her best known films included *Gosford Park* (2001), *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (2012) and *The Lady in the Van* (2015).

Her work on the wildly popular *Downton Abbey* and the “Harry Potter” films also introduced her to a younger generation.

Such was the appeal of *Downton Abbey* she said in 2017 she could no longer go out without being recognised.

“It’s ridiculous - I led a perfectly normal life until *Downton Abbey*,”

she told the British Film Institute.

“I would go to theatres, I would go to galleries and things like that on my own. And now I can’t,” she said.

Actor Hugh Bonneville, who played the son of the dowager duchess in the period drama, said: “Anyone who ever shared a scene with Maggie will attest to her sharp eye, sharp wit and formidable talent.”

“She was a true legend of her generation and thankfully will live on in so many magnificent screen performances. My condolences to her boys and wider family.”

Smith was made a Dame of the British Empire in 1990 by Queen Elizabeth II.



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# Putin draws a nuclear red line for the West

President Vladimir Putin has drawn a “red line” for the US and its allies by signalling that Moscow will consider responding with nuclear weapons if they allow Ukraine to strike deep inside Russia with long-range Western missiles. But some in the West are asking: does he actually mean it? The question is critical to the course of the war. If Putin is bluffing, as Ukraine and some of its supporters believe, then the West may feel ready to deepen its military support for Kyiv regardless of Moscow’s threats. If he is serious, there is a risk – repeatedly stated by Moscow and acknowledged by Washington – that the conflict could turn into World War Three. In the latest in a long series of warning signals, Putin on Wednesday extended the list of scenarios that could lead to Russia using nuclear weapons.

## “Concern is warranted only when Russia signals actual preparations”

Both those criteria apply directly to the situation that would arise if the West allows Ukraine to strike deep inside Russian territory with Western long-range missiles such as US ATACMS and British Storm Shadows, something Putin has said would need Western satellite and targeting support. “It was a very clear message: ‘Don’t make a mistake – all these kind of things may mean nuclear war,’” said Nikolai Sokov, a former Soviet and Russian diplomat. Bahram Ghiassae, a London-based nuclear analyst at the Henry Jackson Society think-tank, linked the timing of Putin’s remarks to Ukraine’s lobbying of the West for long-range missiles and the fact that President Volodymyr Zelensky is making his case to US President Joe Biden this week. “Putin is saying: just stop it right there,” Ghiassae said. Reaction from Kyiv was swift, with Zelensky’s chief of staff accusing Putin of “nuclear blackmail”. “In my opinion, this is yet another bluff and demonstration of Putin’s weakness. He will not dare to use nuclear weapons because that will make him a complete outcast,” Anton Gerashchenko, a former adviser to Ukraine’s internal affairs minister, said on X.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Putin’s warning was irresponsible and poorly timed, and that it was not the first time he had been “rattling the nuclear sabre”. Andreas Umland, an analyst at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, accused Putin of playing mind games. “This is a psychological PR operation, by the Kremlin, without much substance. It is designed to scare leaders & voters of countries supporting Ukraine,” he wrote.

Fabian Hoffmann, a doctoral research fellow and defence expert in Oslo, said he did not believe Putin’s comments could be ignored, but that it was important not to overreact. “Russian nuclear use is not imminent,” he said on X. “Concern is warranted only when Russia signals actual preparations.” Hoffmann said next steps could be removing warheads from storage and pairing them with delivery vehicles for a tactical strike, before ratcheting up preparations for large-scale nuclear use by readying silos and putting bombers on alert – all of which US intelligence agencies would detect. And Russia security expert Mark Galeotti wrote: “Talk is easy and has political impact, but evidence of actual willingness to use nuclear weapons is both absent and something we can detect if it ever happens.” Nevertheless, Putin was more specific than in the past about the circumstances that could prompt nuclear use. His spokesman said on Thursday that his comments were meant as a signal to Western countries that there would be serious consequences if they participated in attacks on Russia. - Reuters

It could do this, he said, in response to a major cross-border conventional attack involving aircraft, missiles or drones. A rival nuclear power that supported a country attacking Russia would be considered a party to that attack.

“The French don’t like chaos,” senior RN lawmaker and party spokesman Laurent Jacobelli told Reuters. “We are not here to cause chaos, we are pragmatic.” Pouria Amirshahi, a Green party lawmaker who was part of the leftist alliance that won the most seats in this summer’s vote, said the stability of the new government was based on “a sort of resignation” on the left, and the fact that “the RN has no interest in bringing down the government right away.” “They want to calmly prepare to govern,” he said. The upcoming graft trial “will prevent Marine Le Pen from accelerating the

# France’s new govt is fragile but don’t write it off just yet

By Elizabeth Pineau, Michel Rose  
Paris

It’s a mess, but it might just hold. Despite looking like the most unstable French administration in recent history, despised by the left and propped up by the far-right, Prime Minister Michel Barnier’s fragile minority government may last longer than many think, lawmakers and analysts told Reuters. That’s because Marine Le Pen’s National Rally party, which could join forces with other disgruntled parties to topple the government at will, has no real interest in owning an even bigger mess that might damage its presidential hopes in 2027. It also faces an awkward corruption trial due to begin in Paris next week. Meanwhile, Barnier has sought to placate Le Pen and neutralise the far-right’s power over his right-wing team by appointing ministers who share RN anger on immigration and crime, leaving Le Pen’s party with less to grumble about.

The left – still irked that it won the most seats in this summer’s legislative election, only to see its prime ministerial candidate overlooked for the top job – says it will issue no-confidence motions against the government but knows it doesn’t have the numbers on its own for those threats to count. Say it softly but, after months of turmoil since Macron called the snap vote, a fragile stability now prevails. “The French don’t like chaos,” senior RN lawmaker and party spokesman Laurent Jacobelli told Reuters. “We are not here to cause chaos, we are pragmatic.” Pouria Amirshahi, a Green party lawmaker who was part of the leftist alliance that won the most seats in this summer’s vote, said the stability of the new government was based on “a sort of resignation” on the left, and the fact that “the RN has no interest in bringing down the government right away.”

“They want to calmly prepare to govern,” he said. The upcoming graft trial “will prevent Marine Le Pen from accelerating the



French Prime Minister Michel Barnier walks following a government seminar at the Hotel de Matignon in Paris yesterday.

- Le Pen’s RN has no real interest in toppling new Barnier government
- Barnier seeks to neutralise RN by picking ministers who share views on immigration, crime
- 2025 budget bill is first real test for new government

upheaval that she is calling for but which she does not really want”, he added. On Monday, Le Pen, her party and 26 other RN members will go on trial in a Paris criminal court on charges of embezzling European Parliament funds. Le Pen and the RN have denied any wrongdoing. If they are found guilty, they could face 10 years in prison and a 1mn euro fine, while also face being barred from office for up to five years. The trial is due to last seven weeks. Jacobelli was calm about the impact the trial could have on perceptions of the RN, but confident the party would prevail. “Obviously, this will be discussed at a time when we would prefer to talk about the problems and the future of the French,” he told Reuters. The upcoming 2025 budget bill, which needs to reach lawmakers by mid-October at the latest, provides the first real test of Barnier’s government. It’s politically toxic. New Finance Minister Antoine Armand and Budget Minister Laurent Saint-Martin must find billions

of euros in spending cuts and tax increases to close a bigger-than-expected deficit. Although discussions will be tough, especially as France is under pressure from the EU and bond markets, the RN has little reason to shut down France by blocking the bill, experts said. “They’re looking for respectability so, for them, playing a partner role in the making of the budget is very clearly part of their electoral strategy,” said Christopher Dembik, an economist with Swiss bank Pictet, who believes the government will survive until summer at least. “Barnier has perfectly understood that to last, whether he likes it or not, he needs the RN.” That reliance was made abundantly clear this week. After Armand incurred Le Pen’s wrath by suggesting publicly he would exclude the RN from budget talks, Barnier was forced to call her to reassure her that RN would be involved, and Armand was strong-armed into inviting them, sources said. On Wednesday, right-wing interior minister Bruno Retailleau

said he would look into toughening immigration laws after the far-right pounced on the death of a 19-year-old girl allegedly murdered by a Moroccan man in the country illegally. This new orthodoxy is causing unease among centrist lawmakers, who are now part of Barnier’s government but have been told not to upset their arch-enemy. “That the prime minister calls Le Pen to tell her ‘I’m sorry if my economy minister has offended you,’ that’s shocking to me,” said Erwan Balanant, a member of the pro-European centrist MoDem party. Macron, relegated to a weakened role after the election debacle though confident that Barnier and his team won’t kill his legislative legacy, now holds little sway over the daily flow of French political life. That leaves the government’s new, unlikely bedfellows to muddle through alone. “I don’t know how long (the government) will last,” Balanant continued, “but we need to move forward, to prepare a budget, so we have to work!” – Reuters

# The slow mpox response is another pandemic wake-up call

By Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala  
New York

It feels like a movie we have already seen. A new viral strain is killing people in some of the world’s poorest countries, and although vaccines against the pathogen exist, production shortages and regulatory barriers are preventing them from reaching those in need. The response to the mpox outbreak in Central Africa suggests that we have not learned the lessons of Covid-19, when inequitable access to vaccines prolonged the pandemic and worsened its economic consequences. Even more alarmingly, it demonstrates how unprepared we are for a new global health crisis.

There are two silver linings, however. The first is a matter of luck. While the coronavirus was transmitted very easily because it was airborne, mpox spreads much more slowly via close contact, which has limited its toll. The World Health Organisation (WHO) counts around 100,000 confirmed mpox cases since January 2022, and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention reports 724 mpox deaths in 2024. Second, this crisis presents an opportunity. By working together to clear the roadblocks to the mpox response, governments, international organisations, and the biopharmaceutical sector can better prepare for future pathogens. The easiest roadblocks to dismantle are regulations that make it harder for vaccines to be manufactured and distributed across borders.

Mpox vaccines received regulatory approval in the European Union, Japan, the US, and Canada after an outbreak in 2022. Yet in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the country hit hardest by the outbreak that started last year, regulatory authorities didn’t approve mpox vaccines until June, placing an additional hurdle in the way of incoming donated shots. Many low-income countries rely on the WHO to assess vaccine safety and efficacy, and WHO approval is also necessary for Gavi and Unicef to start large-scale vaccine orders and distribution. Despite the WHO’s hard work, its rules prevented it from declaring mpox to be an emergency and authorising emergency use of mpox vaccines until mid-August, when the disease’s spread had made it a public-health problem of international concern. The WHO’s declaration paved the way for Unicef to launch a tender for up to 12mn doses through 2025. In parallel, the WHO worked with manufacturers and regulators to gather the data



necessary for full “pre-qualification” of mpox vaccines (which also covers non-emergency use). The first of these was granted on September 13, and a few days later, Gavi reached an agreement with the manufacturer, Denmark’s Bavarian Nordic, to purchase 500,000 doses for delivery this year. To avoid such delays in future emergencies, countries must be better prepared to receive vaccines. Governments could start recognising regulatory approvals by other countries, and they can use the negotiations on a proposed WHO Pandemic Agreement to give national and regional regulators and the WHO new tools to speed up approvals. Smooth cross-border trade is vital in health emergencies. During the Covid-19 pandemic, multi-country supply chains helped ramp up production and distribution of desperately needed personal protective equipment, test kits, and billions of vaccine doses. By 2021, global trade in medical products was worth \$1.5tn, up 29% from 2019, according to World Trade Organisation data. But there were disruptions along the way, with several governments restricting exports and cutting off vaccine access for many import-dependent countries. Another issue is evident in the fact that, until US President Joe Biden’s recent donation of 1mn mpox vaccine doses, the DRC had received only a few hundred thousand, even though its population is above 100mn. Here, we see a problem that goes beyond trade barriers: there has been far too little headway toward diversifying vaccine manufacturing and building extra production capacity. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, 80% of world vaccine exports came from only ten countries, which meant that export restrictions in just a few of them were sufficient to disrupt global supplies. Decentralising vaccine and diagnostics production to more developing countries would help to shock-proof supplies. But doing

so requires action across multiple fronts by governments, international organisations, and the private sector. Intellectual property is one front. During the pandemic, WTO members reached a hard-fought decision on Covid-19 vaccine IP that provides tools to diversify production capacity. For mpox and future health threats, pharmaceutical companies have a responsibility to be proactive. By preparing to reach voluntary agreements with potential partners, they can rapidly scale up production around the world as needed. Given that the Medicines Patent Pool has a proven track record of facilitating such agreements, we should focus on making this approach work even better. Developing countries, for their part, should ensure that their legislative and regulatory frameworks are ready to support local or regional manufacturing, whether through voluntary licenses from patent holders or by taking advantage of flexibilities in WTO IP rules. The WTO, the WHO, and the World Intellectual Property Organisation can help governments in this area. But IP is not the only issue. Governments also must agree on where to locate regional production hubs to enable economies of scale. Here, the Regionalised Vaccine Manufacturing Collaborative’s efforts to organize and scale vaccine manufacturing on a regional basis can help governments. New production facilities in Africa and elsewhere will need sustained demand to continue operating. The pooled procurement approach put in place by the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust during the Covid-19 pandemic represents a step in the right direction. Looking ahead, the World Bank’s Pandemic Fund could help finance long-term purchasing commitments, as this would be an investment in a global public good. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the WTO Secretariat worked with vaccine manufacturers and member-state governments to identify and address trade-related bottlenecks that were holding back vaccine production and distribution. We stand ready to do our part for mpox and whatever other threats lie in the future. Governments, civil society, and the private sector should stop talking past each other on these issues and start working together. – Project Syndicate

• Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General of the World Trade Organisation, is a former board chair of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

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A significant draw for attendees was the barista competitions.

Right: The embassy of Rwanda showcases high-quality coffee at the exhibition.

Right: Visitors get a chance to taste the coffee being served by baristas. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam and Joey Aguilar



Several companies displaying their products at the exhibition.

# International coffee exhibition highlights Qatar's role in industry



Ali Husnain



The exhibition features an array of educational activities and workshops.

**By Joey Aguilar**  
Staff Reporter

**I**nnovation, education, and global coffee commerce takes centre stage at the Doha International Coffee Exhibition 2024, set to conclude today at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC).

The three-day event brought together more than 100 participants and exhibitors, including coffee connoisseurs, businesses, and nearly 20 embassies from coffee-producing countries.

The event, organised by Amazing Productions, showcased the latest coffee machines, educational workshops, and exciting barista competitions.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, exhibition organiser Ali Husnain stressed the importance of the event in highlighting Qatar's potential as a future coffee hub in the region.

"The participants and exhibitors have brought unique offerings. This is a coffee event so we've got a variety of exhibitors showcasing latest machines, as well as activities, and, of course, many different types of coffee," he said.

Husnain noted that the presence of the embassies added an international flair to the event, providing insights into global coffee production processes.

"These embassies are here to showcase the production power of their countries, how their farms operate, and their contribution to the global coffee supply chain," he said.

A significant draw for attendees was the barista competitions, where local coffee professionals demonstrated their skills in latte art and the V60 showdown.

"We have more than 55 participants in one of the competitions, and this year has been more crowded and more fun," Husnain said. "The local coffee community is playing a major role, with big names in the industry representing different companies from around the world."

He added that the local coffee scene has impressed him, with many individuals crafting their own coffee creations: "The locales are making their own lattes and coffee, and it really impresses me."



Wilbert Zamora shows some of Costa Rica's Café Don Mayo coffee products.

It is learnt that the exhibition also played a vital role in fostering cross-cultural exchange, with companies from around the world introducing their products to the Qatar market.

Wilbert Zamora, a representative of Costa Rica's Café Don Mayo, underlined the importance and opportunity of sharing knowledge with the region's coffee enthusiasts.

"We represent Café Don Mayo from Costa Rica, where we are the farmer producers. We handle the entire process, from growing the beans to exporting both green and roasted beans," he said. "Visitors are curious to learn about the different processes involved in coffee production, not just the final product in their cup."

Zamora lauded the Qatar market for its high standards.

"The market here is strong, and customers demand quality," he said. "We maintain high standards, and visitors appreciate knowing exactly what they're buying."



The exhibition at the DECC displays new coffee machines and equipment.



## International Shopping Exhibition opens at Katara

Katara - the Cultural Village is hosting an International Shopping Exhibition, offering an array of goods from around the world. The event opened yesterday and runs until October 13. Admission is free. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam

