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Al-Attiyah wins Rally of Morocco to seal hat-trick of W2RC titles



Qatar's Nasser al-Attiyah celebrates with his co-driver Edouard Boulanger after winning his seventh Rally of Morocco title yesterday. The victory also ensured al-Attiyah wrapped up a third consecutive World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC) title, with wins at the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge and Rally Raid Portugal making up for his non-finish on this year's Dakar. In the final stage in Morocco yesterday, al-Attiyah finished eighth behind stage winner Sebastien Loeb but that was enough for him to seal the rally and world title. He finished with 202 points, 42 ahead of his closest rival Yazeed al-Rajhi of Saudi Arabia. **Sport Page 1**

GCC chief condemns Israeli move to seize UNRWA HQ

GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi has strongly condemned the decision by Israeli occupation forces to confiscate the land of the UNRWA headquarters in occupied Jerusalem. In a statement, the GCC secretary-general considered the decision a serious violation of international covenants and UN resolutions, threatening to undermine the agency's efforts to provide essential services to Palestinian refugees. Albudaiwi emphasised the council's support for UNRWA's vital role in providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees, calling on the international community to take responsibility in compelling the Israeli occupation forces to reverse this decision, thereby



GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi.

enabling the agency to effectively perform its duties, and ensuring the protection of its facilities and staff, as well as halting all attacks and illegal practices carried out by the occupation forces against the agency. **(QNA)**

Israeli strike injures 2 UN peacekeepers

Reuters
Beirut

Two UN peacekeepers were injured yesterday by an Israeli strike near their watchtower in south Lebanon, while blasts shook the peacekeepers' main base in the area for the second time in 48 hours as Israeli forces battled Hezbollah. The Unifil force said the incident was a "serious development", and that the security of UN personnel and property must be guaranteed.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has condemned the attacks on UN personnel.

The UN said both peacekeepers were from Sri Lanka.

An Israeli strike overnight in the heart of Beirut killed 22 people and wounded 139, caretaker prime minister Najib Mikati said. Lebanon's army said two soldiers were killed and three wounded when Israeli forces attacked one of its military posts in Kafra in the south.

Israel's expanded operation has displaced more than 1.2mn people, according to the Lebanese government, which says more than 2,100 people have been killed and more than 10,000 wounded in over a year of fighting. The toll does not distinguish between civilians and combatants, but includes scores of women and children.

The head of Hezbollah's media office, Mohammad Afif, promised Lebanese people displaced by Israeli attacks, most of whom are from Hezbollah's support base, that they would soon return to their homes.

He said the group's priority is defeating Israel militarily but it is open to diplomatic efforts to stop "the aggression".

The watchtower that came under Israeli fire yesterday is located at Unifil's main base in Naqoura. Unifil said an Israeli bulldozer



UN peacekeepers (Unifil) vehicles drive in Marjayoun, near the border with Israel, in southern Lebanon yesterday.

Western leaders: stop harming UN peacekeepers

Western leaders urged Israel yesterday to stop harming UN peacekeepers in Lebanon after explosions wounded two of them near the country's border. A spokeswoman for the Unifil mission said two Sri Lankan peacekeepers were hurt in the second such incident in two days. US President Joe Biden told reporters he was "absolutely, positively" asking Israel to stop firing at UN peacekeepers in Lebanon. France's President Emmanuel Macron said it was "absolutely unacceptable" that peacekeepers were "deliberately targeted". The foreign ministry summoned the Israeli ambassador, saying the incident constituted "serious

violations of international law and must cease immediately". Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni condemned the firing, which she said violated a UN resolution, as "unacceptable". Italy has more than 1,000 troops in Lebanon. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez demanded an "end to all violence" against UN peacekeepers in Lebanon. He called yesterday's incident "absolutely unacceptable". Ireland's foreign minister Micheal Martin called it a "shocking" and "unacceptable" development and "a very serious intensification of (Israeli forces') hostility towards UN forces". Ireland has about 350 soldiers in Unifil. **(AFP)**

had also knocked over barriers at UN positions near the Blue Line denoting the frontier between Lebanon and Israel, while tanks had moved into the vicinity.

The chief of staff of Ireland's Defence Forces, which has around 340 personnel serving in Unifil, said he believed yesterday's attack on the observa-

tion tower was deliberate. "An observer tower with a round from a tank directly into it, which is a very small target, has to be very deliberate, and it's a direct fire. So from a military perspective, this is not an accidental act. It's a direct act," Lieutenant General Sean Clancy told RTE television.

Lebanon to ask UNSC to issue a ceasefire resolution

Caretaker Prime Minister of Lebanon Najib Mikati announced yesterday that the government has decided, upon the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to formally ask the UN Security Council for a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire and the implementation of UN Resolution 1701. This took place following a cabinet meeting yesterday. Mikati condemned Israel's continuous violations of Lebanese sovereignty, calling the Unifil attack a "crime" and urging the international community to respond. Meanwhile, Lebanese caretaker Foreign Minister Abdullah Bou Habib discussed yesterday with the UN Resident Co-ordinator and Humanitarian Co-ordinator in Lebanon Imran Riza, the serious consequences of the ongoing Israeli attacks on Lebanon. **(QNA)**

Rain across Qatar



Qatar received the season's first showers yesterday, both inshore and offshore. The rain was preceded by strong winds. During the showers lasting nearly 90 minutes, the intensity varied from medium to a drizzle. Qatar Meteorology Department reported that the country received rain varying from 2.5mm (Qatar University) to 38mm (Al Daayen). Yesterday's minimum and maximum temperatures were in the 24C-29C and 34C-39C, range, respectively. There is no rain forecast today (Saturday) and the expected minimum and maximum temperatures are in the 25C-29C and 34C-40C, range, respectively. **PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam. Page 12**

Thousands trapped in Jabalia camp

Thousands of people are trapped in Gaza's Jabalia camp as Israeli forces attack the area, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) said yesterday, a week after Israel launched an offensive there. Palestinian medics said Israeli military strikes killed at least 41 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip yesterday, with nearly half of the fatalities occurring in Jabalia, the northern district which is the largest of Gaza's historic refugee camps.

"Nobody is allowed to get in or out; anyone who tries is getting shot," MSF project co-ordinator Sarah Vuylsteke said on X.

Five MSF staff were trapped in Jabalia, she said.

"I don't know what to do; at any moment we could die. People are starving. I am afraid to stay, and I am also afraid to leave," she quoted Haydar, an MSF driver, as saying.



An evacuating woman walks carrying an infant child in the Jabalia camp for Palestinian refugees in the northern Gaza Strip.

At least 15 of the fatalities in Jabalia since dawn were due to Israeli strikes targeting various areas, including a school sheltering

displaced individuals, the official Palestinian news agency Wafa said, citing medical sources. Gaza's Civil Defence said

dozens were wounded by Israeli quadcopter fire at the same school.

The Israeli military has sent troops into the nearby towns of Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahia as well as Jabalia. Hamas has said it will keep fighting Israeli forces.

Palestinian health officials have reported at least 130 deaths in the operation so far, while the military has told residents to evacuate areas where the UN estimates over 400,000 people are trapped.

UN officials expressed concern that the ongoing Israeli offensive and evacuation orders in northern Gaza could disrupt the second phase of its polio vaccination campaign set to begin next week.

Healthcare officials have reported that dozens of facilities in Gaza are under evacuation orders from the Israeli military, complicating humanitarian efforts amid the ongoing conflict. **(Reuters)**

QF community members share emotions, hopes on Palestine

Ghazal Othman, a Qatar Foundation (QF) alumna who, at the age of 13, lost her mother in Gaza, and left Gaza in 2021, says that last year has gone on forever. “We thought there was no way the world would let Gaza enter 2024 still suffering. We kept hoping the aggression against Gaza and the Palestinians would end by Ramadan, then by Eid. Yet we are here, about to welcome 2025, and the genocide still goes on. That is hard to accept,” she said.



Ghazal Othman

Othman noted that as an expatriate during the aggression, every second stretched into what felt like an eternity. “Each step I took was laced with guilt. Drinking a glass of water reminded me of the thirsty souls back home; bathing like a luxury they could no longer afford; and every bite of food stuck in my throat, weighed down by sorrow and shame. I recall the early days of the aggression when I could not bring myself to step outside. When I did, it was a difficult moment,” she expressed her anguish.

Othman said that the occupation did not just take her mother from her once, but twice. “The first was when she died because she was not allowed to travel for treatment abroad. The second time is during the recent genocide, where I find

myself wondering if she feels even more alone now that we all had to leave Gaza, leaving her behind. I fear I may never again be able to visit her grave – I do not even know if her grave still exists,” she explained.

“I have a sister in the West Bank, and it has been impossible for us to see each other since 2015. I have a sister in the US, a sister in Luxembourg, I am in Doha, and my family is in Egypt. We are dispersed, and that is the reality that life has imposed upon us,” lamented, Othman.

Muna al-Musalmani, a volunteer and QF alumna feels that while the events that followed October 7 were painful, Palestinians have been facing this for many years. “The first things that always come

to my mind are “Why does this happen? When did we stop caring? Did we fail to protect them?” “And these are not just questions I ask of myself, but of society,” she said.

“My hope, every day, is that Palestine will be liberated – it is just a matter of when. We know that it will be, God willing. One day, I hope I will go to sleep and wake up the next day and the news that Palestine has been liberated will reach us. I know we sometimes feel it is difficult to help the Palestinian people, or that the war will not stop whatever we do, but it is wrong to think this way,” said al-Musalmani.

An activist, John Carlos Burog, culture and politics student at QF noted that the first time he



John Carlos Burog

heard about Palestine was from a Filipino-Palestinian classmate, and he dug deeper, and learned of the travails and suffering of Palestinians. “I attended protests and talks to educate myself about the Palestinian cause, and felt both embarrassed and humbled by what I had not previously known. When I was studying in Washington, DC in January, I attended a march for Gaza, and it was amazing because I saw such a host of people advocating for Palestinians – Hispanics, Filipinos, orthodox Jews, African Americans,” he explained.

Prof Josef Meri, Palestinian-American senior fellow at Georgetown University and a visiting professor at Georgetown University in Qatar stated that in the weeks after



Muna al-Musalmani

October 7, he felt an extreme sense of dread and despair about the inability of governments to stop genocide and the loss of innocent lives.

“We should consider establishing programmes at high schools and at universities, and at elementary school level, where greater awareness of Palestinian culture and society, as well as interfaith relations, is promoted. There aren’t enough courses on Palestine that go beyond conflict and deal with the history, culture, and society of Palestine. Studies of Palestine are currently largely defined by political contours, but there is so much more to understanding Palestine,” he suggested.

“What I ultimately see is a Palestinian state established from the



Prof Josef Meri

ground up by like-minded people who are not afraid to set aside preconceived notions and actively engage with each other across lines of difference. That is essential for forging a future,” added the academic.

Qatar participates in 107th OPCW Executive Council meeting

QNA
The Hague

Qatar participated in the 107th session of the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) held in The Hague from Oct 8-11. The Qatari delegation was led by ambassador of the State to the Netherlands and its representative to the OPCW Dr Mutlaq bin Majed al-Qahtani.

In Qatar’s address to the session, Dr al-Qahtani highlighted recent painful events in the region, particularly the violent assault by Israel on Gaza, marked by continuous bombings with various

types of banned weapons and explosives, affecting innocent civilians, including children, women, and the elderly. He condemned the escalating attacks on Lebanon, calling them a blatant violation of international laws, customs, and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which is part of international law. He described these acts as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity that should be prosecuted.

Dr al-Qahtani reiterated Qatar’s support for Palestine’s request to the OPCW to investigate Israel’s alleged use of chemical weapons, and to bring those responsible for such acts to international criminal justice, providing justice for the victims and survivors of these bru-



tal crimes. Referring to the OPCW Director-General’s annual report, Dr al-Qahtani expressed Qatar’s strong support for efforts by the director-general and the OPCW’s Technical Secretariat to promote the universality of the Chemical

Weapons Convention. He urged all countries, particularly Israel, to join the CWC to prevent the use of these banned weapons and work towards a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction.

He outlined two main chal-

lenges in combating chemical terrorism: the first is preventing the use of these weapons in terrorist attacks and holding perpetrators accountable; the second involves addressing the challenges posed by new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and their use by non-signatory states and terrorist groups.

Dr al-Qahtani called for a comprehensive approach to combat chemical terrorism by combining robust regulatory frameworks, advanced technology, public awareness, and coordinated efforts to minimize the risks of chemical attacks. He emphasised the importance of building capacity, enacting national legislation, sharing intelligence, and establishing best

practices to identify and hold accountable those responsible for such terrorist acts. Qatar, he affirmed, supports countries’ compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions 1540 and 2663.

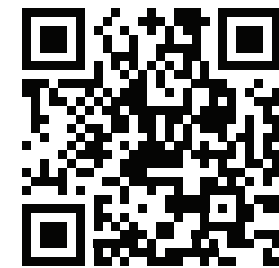
Dr al-Qahtani also acknowledged the recent OPCW report on progress in eliminating Syria’s chemical weapons, noting the importance of swift resumption of inspection operations and addressing outstanding issues in line with the CWC and related council resolutions. Regarding the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, he underscored that Qatar views it as a threat to international peace and security and supports OPCW efforts toward a peaceful solution as the most viable option.

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Qatar's winning membership of rights council will raise voice of support for vulnerable peoples: NHRC

HE the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah has said that Qatar's winning membership of the United Nations Human Rights Council by an overwhelming majority, which reached 167 member states of the United Nations, will greatly raise the voice of support for vulnerable peoples and their just causes, most notably the cause of the Palestinian people, who have been suffering from the burden of the Israeli occupation war machine for a whole year during which the occupation has committed all kinds of crimes in flagrant violation of international law and international humanitarian law. HE al-Attiyah added that the winning is also evidence of the international community's confidence in Qatar, given its contribution to promoting and protecting human rights and its voluntary pledges and commitments. She noted that this position occupied by Qatar is a true indication of the wise leadership's commitment and desire to implement human rights principles at the national, regional and international levels. She stressed that it came after tireless work, legal and moral commitment to human rights standards, and a deep belief in the importance of establishing human rights. HE al-Attiyah pointed out that NHRC looks with pride at Qatar's win and calls for more efforts to protect and promote human rights. **(QNA)**

Qatar strongly condemns targeting of Unifil in Lebanon

Qatar has expressed its condemnation in the strongest terms of the attack that targeted the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (Unifil), which resulted in injuries among personnel of the force of Irish and Indonesian nationalities, and considers it a flagrant violation of the provisions of international humanitarian law and Security Council Resolution No 1701. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed the need to conduct an immediate and independent international investigation to uncover the circumstances of this attack and called on the international community to take decisive measures to compel the Israeli occupation to immediately stop its aggressive attacks and repeated violations of international law. The ministry expressed Qatar's wishes of a speedy recovery for the injured. **(QNA)**

Tree planting, beach cleaning by GCC youth



The Ministry of Municipality, represented by Al Sheehaniya Municipality and Al Rayyan Municipality, in co-operation with the Ministry of Sports and Youth and Qatar Charity organised a number of environmental activities and events for the participants at the Gulf Youth Forum for Preparing Youth Leaders in Humanitarian and Development Work. These activities included cleaning of Zekreet Beach, and tree planting as part of the 10-mn tree planting initiative.

Qatar University observes World Mental Health Day

QNA
Doha

Qatar University celebrated World Mental Health Day under the slogan, "It's Time to Prioritize Mental Health in the Workplace", in the presence of a number of university officials and with the participation of a number of state institutions working in the field of mental health.

This event, which was supervised by the Student Counseling Center, aimed to raise awareness of mental health issues and the importance of achieving them in the university environment, in addition to mobilising efforts to face challenges in this health field.

The event included a discussion session on achieving mental



health in the university environment, in which Dr Nawaf al-Zayoud, Co-ordinator of Graduate Studies, Department of Psychological Sciences, College of Education, Qatar University; Dr Abdullah al-Juhi, Assistant Medical Director and Director of the Psy-

chological Intervention Department at Naufar Center; and Dr Ahmed al-Atr, a psychiatrist at Hamad Medical Corporation, participated.

The speakers shed light on a number of important topics, including the importance of im-



proving the psychological well-being of employees and creating a healthy work environment for them.

They also addressed the psychological well-being of students and stressed its importance as one of the basic elements that af-

fect academic and social behaviour. They noted the role of Qatar University in creating a healthy environment for all its members through the Student Counseling Center, which has contributed significantly to providing psychological support services to stu-

dents to overcome psychological, behavioural, social and emotional difficulties and disorders that may affect their performance.

In a statement, Dr Mohammed Siddiq Majzoub, Director of the Student Counseling Center at Qatar University, said that the celebration of World Mental Health Day comes from the importance of mental health for the individual and its impact on society as a whole, pointing to the role of the centre in providing integrated services to university members to benefit from these services in an integrated manner.

The celebration of World Mental Health Day also witnessed an exhibition in which centres concerned with providing mental health services participated, as well as institutions and social centres interested in psychological and student counselling.

Public health services join forces to raise awareness on Mental Health Day

The Ministry of Public Health in partnership with Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), Sidra Medicine, and Naufar is celebrating World Mental Health Day, recognised annually on Oct 10.

The ministry said in a statement that this year's theme is "It's Time to Prioritize Mental Health in the Workplace" to highlight the importance of creating work environments that promote mental well-being and support employees psychological needs. Director of the Non-Communicable Diseases Prevention Department at the Ministry of Public Health Sheikh Dr

Mohammed al-Thani said: "In recent years, Qatar has prioritized the expansion of mental health services and support, with a focus on improving access, reducing stigma, and integrating physical and mental health care. It is a testament to the commitment of Qatar's public health sector providers that they are all working together to raise awareness on World Mental Health Day."

Globally, mental health issues are increasingly recognized as major contributors to illness and disability. While the workplace can be a source of stress, it can also play a key role in promoting well-being. Employers have a responsibility to foster a culture where mental health

is valued as a vital part of overall health. Organisations that prioritise mental health are more likely to reduce absenteeism, improve productivity, and enhance employee engagement.

Chair of Mental Health Services at HMC Dr Majid al-Abdulla said: "In an era where stress, burnout, and mental health conditions have become prominent in the workplace, now is the time for employers to prioritise mental health as a core pillar of their organisational culture. Employees who feel that their workplace cares about their mental well-being are more likely to be engaged, productive, and satisfied with their jobs."

For those experiencing mental health challenges, the first step towards recovery is often reaching out to a friend or healthcare professional, explained Dr Samya Ahmad al-Abdulla, Senior Consultant of Family Medicine and Executive Director of Operations at PHCC. Dr al-Abdulla emphasised: "Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength. Whether you're feeling overwhelmed by stress or anxiety, reaching out to a friend or professional can be the first step towards better mental health."

Chair of the Psychiatry Department at Sidra Medicine Professor Muhammad Waqar Azeem said that "at Sidra Medicine, we believe

that mental health is vital to overall well-being, and it is essential for workplaces to take an active role in supporting it. Studies have consistently shown that when mental health is prioritized, employees become healthier, happier, and more engaged, resulting in increased productivity. By advancing healthcare in Qatar and beyond, we are dedicated to setting a standard where mental health advocacy is at the core of our approach to exceptional care."

For his part, Assistant Director General at Naufar Dr Khalifa al-Kuwari said that "supporting and promoting staff mental health and well-being is important for both individuals and employers alike.

Naufar's Employee Assistance Programmes work with employers and their staff to help people overcome challenges, retain their employment, and live healthy and productive lives." The ministry stressed that anyone experiencing poor mental health, including stress, anxiety, and depression, can call the National Mental Health Helpline for free and confidential support. The helpline is staffed by a team of mental health professionals who can provide immediate assessment and support. It called on those who need such help to access the helpline by calling 16000, select the language, and then select 4 for Mental Health. **(QNA)**

Qatar chairs meetings of Unesco committee



The Conventions and Recommendations Committee of the Executive Board of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) held its meetings, chaired by HE Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to Unesco Dr Nasser bin Hamad al-Hanzab. The meetings discussed the committee's agenda, which include all issues related to the implementation of Unesco's normative instruments, such as the conventions and recommendations assigned to the organisation's Executive Board, whose work continues until the 23rd of this month. The committee is scheduled to examine reports received from member states on the implementation of Unesco's conventions and recommendations, and to study and discuss reports and complaints received by the organization regarding issues, questions and violations related to human rights in Unesco's areas of competence, such as the right to education, the protection of educational institutions, the right to cultural life and the protection of journalists. **(QNA)**

Aviation security course concludes



A course on aviation security inspection and handling security devices by the Airport Security Department concluded last week. The course, according to a statement from the Ministry of Interior, trained 12 officers from the department and two participants from Saudi Arabia on best practices for airport security inspections using modern devices and technologies. Lt Col Kholud Anber al-Naimi, director of the Women's Police Institute at the Police Academy and Maj Zayed Rashid al-Naimi, assistant director of the Airport Security Department, attended the closing ceremony.

Korean embassy announces events



By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The embassy of the Republic of Korea has announced a series of events as part of the ongoing Korea-Qatar 50th Anniversary celebrations. For three days, the embassy said that it will be staging the 'Korea-Qatar 50th Anniversary Korean Movie Night' at the Novo Cinema, at Msheireb Downtown Doha.

Film lovers can watch the following movies for free starting at 7pm: 'Detective K: Secret of the Lost Island' (October 17); 'How to Steal a Dog' (October 18); and 'Luck-Key' (October 19). Seat reservations are avail-

able at hupark24@mofa.go.kr and +97471957211 via WhatsApp.

On October 19, the embassy will host the Korean Speech Contest at Qatar University (QU) under the theme 'Hanguk: From My Perspective' third edition for female students. The contest will be held in collaboration with the South Korean Club at QU.

The participants will give the audience a glimpse of South Korea during the following categories: the 'Korean Speech Contest' and the 'Presentation Contest about Korea', which will be held from 12.30pm-5.30pm at the QU Ibn Al Bitar Building, Pharmacy (106).

Interested participants may send their topics and full presentations to korean.club@qu.edu.qa

Vulture spotted north of Qatar

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change spotted a Eurasian griffon vulture at Al Raqqah, north of Qatar, during a routine daily inspection tour by the Wildlife Protection Department. The ministry posted on its official X account that an environment inspector noticed the presence of this bird, which was last seen in Qatar around three years ago and a Qatari photographer captured its photo.





QU college hosts STEM Day for high school students



Qatar University (QU)'s College of Engineering hosted a STEM Day event, giving high school students the chance to experience the world of civil engineering.

The Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering organised the event with the aim of igniting interest in scientific fields, especially civil engineering, among Qatari youth.

The event offered students the opportunity to engage with various aspects of civil engineering through hands-on experiences and educational competitions in

areas such as structural engineering, environmental engineering, geotechnical engineering, surveying, transportation engineering, and construction management.

Speaking about the event, Dr Khalid Kamal Naji, dean of the College of Engineering at QU, emphasised the critical role that STEM education plays in shaping the future of Qatar's workforce and its alignment with the nation's strategic goals.

"This event is an essential part of our commitment to fostering a knowledge-based economy, which is a key pillar of Qatar Na-

tional Vision 2030. By engaging young students in STEM activities, we are preparing them to be the innovators, engineers and problem-solvers that our country needs to drive sustainable development across various sectors, particularly in infrastructure and technology."

Prof Alaa al-Hawari, head of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, highlighted the importance of the event in providing students with a unique opportunity to explore different engineering disciplines, especially civil engineering.

Safe driving awareness campaign concludes



Galfar Al Misnad, in coordination with the Ministry of Interior (MoI) recently held a function to mark the conclusion of its month-long safe driving awareness campaign for drivers, equipment operators and staff.

The session at Galfar's training hall in Jerry Al Sammur Plant Base Workshop was jointly presented by First Lt Mishal Ali al-Ghudhaidh al-Marri from the General Directorate of Traffic and Faisal al-Hudawi from the Public Relations Department of the MoI. They focused on the

latest updates of statutory traffic rules, various scenarios of accidents and violations that occur on Qatar roads, and elaborated on the fines.

In an interactive session with the employees, First Lt al-Marri clarified their doubts on the latest updates and compliance of categories of license to drive various types of vehicles.

Galfar Al Misnad has been conducting the campaign continuously over the past 18 years.

This year's slogan was 'Drive to Life - Be a Defensive Driver' with the prime goal to reduce

road traffic accidents and violations through sustainable and consistent initiatives.

Plant DGM P S Anwar Sadath explained various causes of accidents. Executive director Satish G Pillai, senior general managers Anupam Kar and Jayamohan and divisional managers Radhakrishnan, Salahudheen, Murali and Aparna were present.

More than 1,300 drivers, operators and staff members participated in various awareness sessions, and the best drivers and operators were felicitated based on their safety records.

QUYSC completes internship programme



The Qatar University Young Scientists Centre (QUYSC) successfully completed the 6th cycle of the Summer Research Internship Programme 2024 (SRIP24), which imparted hands-on experience in cutting-edge scientific disciplines to the participants.

The adjourning event celebrated their accomplishments, concluding a summer rich in research, capacity building and innovative ventures.

The event commenced with a welcome speech from QUYSC director and research support director Dr Saeed Hashim al-Meer, who congratulated the students and mentors, emphasising the importance of their contributions to the national research landscape. This year witnessed a huge surge of registered projects, with 650 students participating in 82 projects, reflecting a more than 100% increase compared to the previous year. In recognition of their hard work, 381 students who met the Key Performance Indicators and

requirements were awarded certificates for their participation in research projects across multiple disciplines, including artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, medical sciences, sustainable energy, and social sciences. The ceremony concluded with the recognition of the best projects, all of which aligned with the Qatar National Vision 2030 in promoting sustainable innovation and development. The first-place went to 'Development of Invisible Cloak to Hide the Object', 'IoT-based Air Quality Monitoring' and 'Investigating Antioxidant and Antimicrobial Activity of Pulicaria Undulata Plants' shared second place. The third place went to 'Advanced Fabrication Technologies for Dental Implants: Exploring the Role of 3D and 4D Printing'. These projects stood out for their alignment with national priorities and their contribution to future scientific advancements. The event also featured a poster exhibition showcasing novel research projects, highlighting the range

of innovative work undertaken by students. SRIP24 introduced a novel pedagogical approach, 'Innovation through Cognition Challenge', which resulted in various tangible outcomes such as prototypes, research publications, and posters, some of which were displayed at the event. This unique framework empowered students to transform theoretical research into real-world application.

In his reflective assessment of the programme, Prof Aiman Erbad, vice president for Research and Graduate Studies at QU, highlighted the critical role of research internships in national development. He remarked: "Initiatives such as SRIP24 are fundamental in enhancing our national expertise and nurturing the next generation of innovators. By presenting our students with real-world challenges and equipping them with the tools to solve them, we are fostering a cadre of thought leaders who will drive Qatar's development and innovative progress."

ONAM CELEBRATIONS

Kpaq holds cultural programmes



Kozhikode Jilla Pravasi Association Qatar (Kpaq) hosted Onam celebrations for its members and their families. The event, titled 'Kpaq Ponnadam 2024', began with traditional floral carpet arrangements and welcoming the mythical King Mahabali. The grand Onam lunch was followed by a meeting. Secretary Ravi Puthukkudi welcomed the gathering and president Shameer K P presided. General secretary Gafoor Calicut, Samskrithi Qatar's general secretary Shamsheer Areekulam, Kpaq women's wing chairperson Dr Reena, Kpaq former president and advisory board member Abdul Rahim Vengeri, former

president and current vice-president and cultural wing co-ordinator Vasu Vanimel, and secretary Smrithi spoke. During the event, a poster release ceremony was held for two upcoming events: 'Ente Kozhikode', a literary competition celebrating Unesco's designation of Kozhikode as a City of Literature, and a children's painting competition to be held on November 8 in Doha. Treasurer Shoukath J M proposed a vote of thanks. Thereafter, both adults and children participated in various games and cultural programmes. Prizes were distributed. Executive member Anju Nishin anchored the event.

Floral coin design in spotlight at Inpha event



Indo Arab Numis Phila Heritage Association (Inpha), the gathering of Indian members at the Qatar Philatelic and Numismatic Centre, celebrated Onam, the harvest festival of the southern state of Kerala. Instead of the traditional floral carpet, a floral design was created with coins from various countries around the world. The coins were from a collection owned by Ranjith Chennad. Onam feast, magic show by president Jayan Orma, song by Saleem Ali and fun games were organised. Chief co-ordinator Dr Moideen Kutty inaugurated the function. Venugopal and Subair K S offered felicitations. Suresh Babu welcomed the gathering.



FPAQ organises competitions



A get-together and competitions marked Season 2 of Onotsavam by Feroke Pravasi Association Qatar (FPAQ). Sree Chithira Thirunal College of Engineering, Trivandrum - Qatar chapter won the first prize in the mega flower carpet contest while Vibes Family Qatar secured second place and Team Pearl won the third prize. Sreedevi Murukan, Arun Das and Amina Shukoor received the prizes for the participating teams. Programme chairman Rashad Vembangal proposed a vote of thanks.

Toastmasters District 116 hosts mega open house



Toastmasters District 116, Qatar recently hosted a mega open house event attended by more than 90 leaders from various sectors. District director Sabeena M K, programme quality director Alarmel Mangai, and Region 8 adviser Jennifer Helen Ghosh led the event. There were testimonials from corporate and community leaders who shared their experiences with Toastmasters. Qatar Airways' national development manager Mohamed Eraky, DPS-Modern Indian School president Yasir Nainar, Doha Bank's Department for Strategy & Corporate Performance head Suhass Rogiye, Galfar Al Misnad Construction & Engineering official and Galfar Toastmasters president Subramanya Hebbagelu, KPMG's deputy manager for audit and assurance Rihan, Safari Group managing director Shaheen Backer, DPS Monarch International School vice-principal Madhu Uppal, Toastmasters past Region 11 adviser Sonny Varghese, DTAC chair 2019 Nahar al-Muttawa and past division director Anil Nair spoke. Club growth director Sherwin Olimpo proposed a vote of thanks.



MES wins overall championship in CBSE Qatar football tourney



The boys and girls football teams of MES Indian School won the overall championship in the CBSE Qatar Cluster Football Tournament 2024-25, jointly organised by Mesis and Galileo School in three categories: U-14, U-17 and U-19. MES boys won the championship in U-14, while teams in U-17 (first runner-up) and U-19 (second runner-up) secured silver and bronze medals, respectively. The girls U-17 and U-19 teams bagged the championship in their respective categories, thus enabling the school to win the overall championship title. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar congratulated the winners and the coaches Binoy K K and Akbar Ali, teacher in charge Shani G R and team manager Gigi.

MES kindergarten holds Project Day



The Kindergarten section of MES Indian School conducted Project Day titled, 'Little Innovators: Golden Jubilee Extravaganza 2024'. The aim was to encourage creativity, problem-solving ability, and acquiring knowledge through hands-on projects. Treasurer A T Usman and director Faisal Mayan inaugurated the exhibition. Each child spoke briefly about their projects. The event was not only a celebration of young students' creativity but also a reflection of the school's commitment to holistic education, remarked the principal Dr Hameeda Kadar.

BPS teams excel in Qatar programming contest



Birla Public School (BPS) made a remarkable display at the Qatar Collegiate Programming Contest (QCPC) organised by Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar. Out of nine teams representing BPS, two teams excelled in the High School category. QCPC is the national level contest of the International Collegiate Programming Contest, one of the most prestigious events of its kind. The competition is organised at three levels: national, regional and world finals. BPS team 'The Two Indents,' with Raj Dave and Muhammed Rayan Savad from Grade XI, secured the second prize and a silver medal, along with a cash award of QR3,000. The school team, 'Runtime Terror', with Riaan Shah and Sri Sai Suhaas from Grade XII, took home the bronze medal and QR2,000. Both winning teams will represent Qatar in the upcoming Africa and Arab regional contest in Egypt in December (ACPC). The other seven teams from BPS, finished in the top 20 out of 74 participating teams. The management, staff and students of BPS congratulated the winners.

RPS celebrates Foundation Day



Rajagiri Public School (RPS) marked its Foundation Day with a grand celebration. Indian ambassador Vipul was the chief guest. Benny Nalkara, Provincial of Rajagiri, Kochi, delivered the keynote address. Dr Aju Abraham, member of the Board of Directors, and Dr Prashanth Palakkappilly, academic director, offered felicitations. Outstanding teachers were recognised. The celebration was further enlivened by cultural performances by students of Grades 10 and 12.

DPS-MIS principal speaks on women's leadership at seminar



DPS-Modern Indian School principal Asna Nafees was the keynote speaker at the InspireHER seminar, on 'Empowering Women in Leadership Roles', organised by the Indian Cultural Centre Youth Wing.



Doha Academy marks World Teachers' Day



Doha Academy celebrated World Teachers' Day on October 3, recognising the contributions of its educators across the Primary, Secondary Boys and Secondary Girls sections.

The event highlighted this year's theme, "Valuing Teachers' Voices".

Doha Academy delivered three celebratory sessions for teachers and students, each involving Yalla Toys' giant parrot mascot 'Yoko' to the delight of everyone.

In the Primary section, students' speeches reflected on the importance of teachers in their lives. A message from principal Edward Cooper celebrated the dedication of teachers, followed by an awards ceremony that recognised four outstanding educators: Iman Ossman, Rouba Farhat, Tasnim Mohamed and Menakshi Bakshi.

In the Secondary Boys session, student representative Ali al-Madadi spoke about his teachers being 'his family'. The session included a discussion with teachers sharing their experiences as students, offering a nostalgic and often humorous glimpse into their



own educational journeys. Teachers Rana Abou Ghneim, Bafana Provece, Celeste Marx and John Zacharias were recognised for their exemplary contributions.

In the final session, the Secondary Girls gathered for a celebration that included a speech from student representative Najla Abu-Ahmad. Teachers Joan Petagari, Celeste Smith, Maymouna Abo Noun and Damian Lance Moon-samy were honoured for their dedication to their students and to the school community.

Principal Cooper delivered a

message emphasising the critical role teachers play in shaping the future, stating: "Our teachers' voices are at the heart of education, and today, we celebrate their tireless dedication and the profound impact they have on our students and the community. I hope that you feel valued and that you know you have a voice in the growth and development of our school."

All of the teachers were voted for by a nomination survey sent to students, parents and all Doha Academy staff.

RPS opens new campus at Matar Qadeem



Rajagiri Public School (RPS) celebrated the grand opening of its new campus located at the Old Airport area (Matar Qadeem). The state-of-the-art facility boasts modern amenities, including a swimming pool, an auditorium equipped with an LED wall, and a spacious cafeteria. The inaugural ceremony was attended by a gathering of dignitaries, school officials, faculty, students and parents. Benny Nalkara, Provincial of Rajagiri, Kochi, was the chief guest for the event. A highlight of the ceremony was a skit presented by students of Grades 1-4. RPS has shifted Grades 1-4 to the new campus.

Swiss embassy joins QSW with beach cleanup



On the occasion of the recent Qatar Sustainability Week (QSW), the embassy of Switzerland in Qatar, in partnership with Deap Qatar Conservation, organised a beach cleanup near Al Areesh heritage site. The initiative, led by ambassador Florence Tinguely Mattli and Deap Qatar Conservation managing director Jose Saucedo, brought together members of the Swiss community, Swiss companies, friends of Switzerland, and other volunteers, resulting in the removal of over 210kg of trash.



Anti-Israel protest in Iraq



Iraqis raise pictures and flags in Tahrir Square in central Baghdad, during a protest against the ongoing Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, yesterday.

UN inquiry accuses Israel of seeking to destroy Gaza healthcare system

Reuters
Geneva

A United Nations inquiry said it found that Israel carried out a concerted policy of destroying Gaza's healthcare system in the Gaza war, actions amounting to both war crimes and the crime against humanity of extermination.

A statement on Thursday by former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay that accompanied the report accused Israel of "relentless and deliberate attacks on medical personnel and facilities" in the war, triggered by Hamas fighters' deadly storming of southern Israel in the first week of October last year.

"Children in particular have borne the brunt of these attacks, suffering both directly and indirectly from the collapse of the health system," said Pillay, whose 24-page report covering the first 10 months of the war will be presented to the UN General Assembly on Oct 30.

Israel's diplomatic mission in Geneva rejected the report's findings, calling them outrageous.

The UN inquiry's statement also

accused Israeli forces of deliberately killing and torturing medical personnel, targeting medical vehicles and restricting permits for patients to leave the besieged Gaza Strip. It cited the death of a Palestinian girl, Hind Rajab, in February along with family members and two medics who came to rescue her from under Israeli fire as they evacuated. The report said the ambulance was hit by a tank shell while within 50 metres of the family despite its route having been co-ordinated in advance with Israeli security forces.

'IRREPLACEABLE LOSS'

The World Health Organisation says over 10,000 patients requiring urgent medical evacuation have been prevented from leaving Gaza since the Rafah border crossing with Egypt was shut in May. The Palestinian health ministry says nearly 1,000 medics have been killed in Gaza in the past year in what the WHO called "an irreplaceable loss and a massive blow to the health system".

In cases where four hospitals were asked to evacuate by Israeli forces, the inquiry found that the orders were "not feasible" since they did not give medics the time to evacuate hundreds of patients

and Israeli forces did not assist them. The Inquiry has a broad mandate to collect evidence and identify suspected perpetrators of international crimes committed in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. It bases its findings on a range of sources including interviews with victims and witnesses, submissions and satellite imagery.

The commission has previously alleged both Israel and Hamas committed war crimes in the early stages of the Gaza war, and that Israel's actions constituted crimes against humanity because of the immense civilian losses. The term is reserved for the most serious international crimes knowingly committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilians.

Israel has not co-operated with the inquiry, which it says has an anti-Israel bias. The commission has accused Israel of obstructing its work and preventing investigators from accessing both Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The evidence gathered by such UN-mandated bodies has sometimes formed the basis for war crimes prosecutions and could be drawn on by the International Criminal Court.

Hundreds march against Ghana's damaging informal gold mining boom

Hundreds of people marched through Ghana's capital Accra yesterday in a peaceful protest against unlicensed gold mining, calling on authorities to act against the dangerous and environmentally damaging practice, Reuters reported from Accra. Illegal small-scale gold mining known "galamsey" in Ghana has picked up this year following an almost 30% rise in global gold prices. Small-scale mines produced 1.2mn ounces of gold in the first seven months of this year, more than in the whole of 2023, according to data from Ghana's mining sector regulator. But the boom in a practice that harms miners' health, pollutes waterways, destroys forests and cocoa farms, and fuels crime has spurred calls and protests to clamp down. It has also become a hot button electoral issue

as Ghana heads to the polls on Dec. 7 for a general election. Hundreds took part in an "environmental prayer walk" against galamsey yesterday that involved handing a petition for a ban on informal mining to the president's office. The march followed plans by labour unions for a nationwide strike against galamsey this week that were partially called off after the government made promising provisions, according to local media reports citing the organisers. The government is under pressure to appeal to voters that will elect the next president of the West African gold and cocoa-producing nation. Outgoing President Nana Akufo-Addo has grappled with the country's worst economic crisis in a generation and a massive debt overhaul that has heavily impacted people's livelihoods.

Putin cements ties with Iranian president in Central Asia meeting

Reuters
Moscow

Russia's Vladimir Putin held talks with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian yesterday in Turkmenistan, where the two leaders hailed their countries growing economic ties and similar views on world affairs, an entente viewed with concern by the US.

At odds with Washington and the European Union over Russia's war in Ukraine, something he casts as part of a wider existential struggle against an arrogant and self-interested West - Putin is keen to deepen ties with what he calls the Global East and Global South.

Putin, whose country is hosting a summit of the BRICS nations in Kazan on Oct 22-24, invited Pezeshkian to come to Russia on an official visit, a proposal the Iranian leader accepted according to Russia's state RIA news agency.

"Economically and culturally, our communications are being strengthened day by day and becoming more robust," Pezeshkian was cited as telling Putin by Iran's official IRNA news agency.

"The growing trend of co-operation between Iran and Russia, considering the will of the top leaders of both countries, must be accelerated to strengthen these ties," he said.

Pezeshkian last month committed his country to deeper ties with Russia to counter Western sanctions. The two countries say they are close to signing a strategic partnership agreement, something Pezeshkian said yes-



In this pool photograph distributed by the Russian state agency Sputnik, Russia's President Vladimir Putin meets with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of an international forum dedicated to the 300th anniversary of poet Magtymguly Fragi's birthday in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, yesterday.

terday he hoped could be finalised at the Brics summit in Russia later this month.

The United States regards Moscow's growing relationship with Tehran with concern. It has accused Iran of supplying Russia with ballistic missiles for use in the conflict in Ukraine, something Tehran has denied.

Russia says co-operation with Iran is expanding in all areas.

"We actively work together in the international arena, and our assessments of current events in the world are often very close," the Tass news agency cited Putin as telling Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the conference in the Turkmen capital of Ashgabat.

Pezeshkian, according to IRNA, noted that Iran and Russia had significant complementary capacities and could assist each other. "Our positions in the world are much closer to each other than to others," he was quoted as telling the Russian leader. Pezeshkian said earlier

that Israel should "stop killing innocent people", and its actions in the Middle East were backed by the US and EU. Russia has also criticised Israel, which says it is protecting its own security, for bombing civilian areas.

Putin was cited by Tass as telling Pezeshkian that economic ties between Moscow and Tehran were on the up.

In comments released by the Kremlin earlier yesterday, Putin told the conference in the Central Asian country that a new world order was being formed and that new centres of economic growth and financial and political influence were emerging.

Russia supported "the broadest possible international discussion" on the emerging multipolar world and was open to discussing it within various fora, including the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, and Brics, said Putin.

UNRWA chief says many Palestinian camps in Lebanon empty after air strikes

Reuters
Beirut

Most Palestinian refugees living in camps in southern Lebanon or near Beirut have fled following escalating Israeli strikes, the head of the United Nations agency on Palestine refugees said yesterday, drawing parallels with mass displacement in Gaza.

UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini told Reuters that the agency continued to provide services to the most vulnerable left behind - and that repeatedly fleeing was sadly "part of the history" of Palestinians.

"Now, that's part, unfortunately, of the plight, but if you compare with what happened also in Gaza recently, you might have heard me describing how people are constantly being moved like pinballs. And one of the fears is that we replicate a situation similar to the one we have seen until now in Gaza," he said.

Israel has ramped up strikes across southern Lebanon and on Beirut's once-densely populated southern suburbs over the last three weeks, issuing evacuation warnings for more than 100 towns in southern Lebanon and neighbourhoods near the capital.

They include evacuation warnings and strikes on the Burj al-Barajneh Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut's southern suburbs and Rashidiyeh Palestinian



Commissioner-General of UNRWA Philippe Lazzarini attends an interview with Reuters, in Beirut, yesterday.

refugee camp near the southern coastal city of Tyre.

Many of the Palestinians who arrived in Lebanon after Israel's creation in 1948, and their descendants, were living in 12 refugee camps around the country, which hosted about 174,000 Palestinian refugees.

Around 1.2mn people have been displaced in Lebanon and more than 2,100 people killed in the last year, most of them since Sept 23, according to Lebanese authorities.

Hezbollah began launching rockets at Israeli military posts last October in solidarity with its ally, Palestinian group Hamas, which had carried out a storming of Israel.

Israel retaliated with an intense military campaign in Gaza that has killed more than 42,000 people, including UNRWA staff.

Israeli leaders have accused UNRWA staff of collaborating with Hamas fighters in Gaza, leading many donors to suspend funding.

The UN launched an investigation into Israel's accusations and dismissed nine staff, while the records of others were still being reviewed.

In July, the Israeli parliament gave preliminary approval to a bill that would declare UNRWA a "terrorist organization." Asked about the move, Lazzarini said the agency "has never, ever been as much under assault and attack." "A year ago, it was primarily a financial existential threat, but today it's a combination of a political and financial threat. 2025 will be, again, a difficult year," he said.

He said he would have more clarity early next year on whether the UN would resume funding.

The agency was nominated to win this year's Nobel Peace Prize but just an hour before Reuters interviewed Lazzarini, the prize went to Japanese organisation Nihon Hidankyo, a grassroots movement of atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki and also known as Hibakusha.

"It would certainly have been also a great message for the Palestinian refugees community. But I do believe that if we look at the impact worldwide beyond the region, the choice of eradicating the nuclear weapon is certainly a good one," Lazzarini said.

Kenya to send more police to Haiti after new gang attacks

Reuters
Nairobi

Kenya will send 600 more police officers to Haiti next month to bolster an international anti-gang mission, President William Ruto said yesterday during a visit by the Haitian prime minister intended to speed up deployments to the force.

At least 10 countries have promised to send a total of about 2,900 troops to participate in the Kenyan-led Multinational Security Support (MSS).

But only about 430 have deployed since the UN-authorized



Prime Minister of Haiti Garry Conille (left) delivers his remarks during a joint press conference with President of Kenya William Ruto at the State House in Nairobi, yesterday.

mission got under way in June, nearly 400 of them from Kenya.

Heavily-armed gangs, which control most of the capital Port-

au-Prince, have continued to gain territory. Last week, members of the Gran Grif gang carried out one of the country's deadliest

attacks in recent years, killing at least 115 people in a farming region, according to a local mayor.

Ruto told reporters the mission was improving security in Haiti, calling the fight against gangs "the battle that we can win." He said the additional 600 officers committed by Kenya were in training and would be ready for duty next month. Standing next to Ruto, Haitian Prime Minister Garry Conille praised the police response to last week's massacre.

"The police and the (Kenyan) contingent were able to deploy by road within - really, virtually - hours to make sure that the city in question was quickly protected," Conille said.

CONFLICT

24 killed in South Sudan attacks: UN

Attacks and counterattacks by rebels and government forces in South Sudan have killed 24 people, mostly civilians, this week, the UN and local authorities said yesterday, AFP reported from Juba. Violence is rife in the world's youngest nation, which has lurched from crisis to crisis since independence 13 years ago, and which last month pushed back long-delayed elections once again. Wednesday's attacks in the southern Central Equatoria state involved a faction of the National Salvation Front (NAS) group and government forces. The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) voiced alarm at the "inter-connected incidents" which it said resulted in the deaths of 24 people, including 19 civilians. "I am deeply concerned by these brutal acts and urgently call on the government of South Sudan to conduct an immediate investigation to bring perpetrators to justice swiftly," UNMISS head Nicholas Haysom said in a statement.

TRAGEDY

Seven teens, driver killed in SA crash

Seven high school boys and a driver were killed in a head-on collision in eastern South Africa yesterday, authorities said, in the latest of a series of deadly crashes on the country's roads, AFP reported from Johannesburg. The vehicle carrying the students crashed into a truck on the N2 highway about 100 kilometres northeast of the coastal city of Durban in the early morning hours, government and rescue officials said. The seven high school teenagers in the vehicle and their driver were killed, IPSS medical rescue spokesperson Samantha Meyrick told AFP. The driver of the truck was in a critical condition. It appeared that the driver of the vehicle carrying the students lost control and it veered into the oncoming lane and collided with the truck, the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government transport office said.

Hurricane Milton leaves 16 dead as Florida cleans up

AFP/Reuters
Washington

The death toll from Hurricane Milton rose to at least 16 yesterday, officials in Florida said, as residents began the painful process of piecing their lives and homes back together.

Nearly 2.5mn households and businesses were still without power, and some areas in the path cut through the Sunshine State by the monster storm from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean remained flooded.

Milton crashed into the Gulf Coast late on Wednesday as a Category 3 storm, smashing communities still reeling from Hurricane Helene two weeks ago, which killed 237 people across the US southeast, including in Florida.

On Siesta Key, a beautiful barrier island near Sarasota where the storm made landfall, Milton left a desolate landscape.

Some streets were still flooded yesterday. Fallen trees and debris – sofas, beds, chairs and appliances, much of it left behind by Helene – were strewn haphazardly on roadsides.

Resident Mark Horner, who moved there six years ago, said that while his

house was largely spared, the island “got hit really hard” and people were reassessing the future.

However, the 67-year-old sounded a note of optimism, telling AFP: “Our paradise will come back. It’s just a little shocking to absorb it.”

Tornadoes, not floodwaters, were behind many of the storm’s deaths.

In Fort Pierce, on Florida’s Atlantic coast, four people died in a tornado spawned by Milton.

“They did find some people just outside dead, in a tree,” 70-year-old resident Susan Stepp told AFP. “I wish they would have evacuated.”

At least six people were killed in St Lucie County, four in Volusia County, two in Pinellas County, and one each in Hillsborough, Polk, Orange and Citrus counties, officials said.

The storm downed power lines, shredded the roof of the Tampa baseball stadium and inundated homes, but Florida avoided the catastrophic devastation that officials had feared.

“The storm was significant, but thankfully this was not the worst-case scenario,” Governor Ron DeSantis told reporters.

The National Weather Service (NWS) issued a record 126 tornado warnings across

the state on Wednesday, wrote hurricane expert Michael Lowry.

“It is not easy to think you have everything and suddenly you have nothing,” said Lidier Rodriguez, whose Tampa Bay apartment was flooded.

Search operations were ongoing yesterday, and the Coast Guard reported the spectacular rescue of a boat captain who rode out the storm clinging to a cooler in the Gulf of Mexico.

“This man survived in a nightmare scenario,” Dana Grady of the Coast Guard’s St Petersburg sector said in a statement.

On Thursday President Joe Biden urged people to stay inside until downed power lines and debris are cleared.

Many areas had still been clearing debris and repairing damage from Hurricane Helene, which slammed into the Gulf Coast late last month before battering much of the southeast US.

During a 72-hour period this week, the Florida Department of Transportation removed 2,200 truckloads of debris – more than 40,000 cubic yards – from Pinellas County barrier islands near the mouth of Tampa Bay, DeSantis said yesterday.

A cubic yard is about twice the size of a washing machine.

“I don’t think there’s ever been that



An aerial view shows people paddling through a flooded street in South Daytona, Florida. – AFP

much debris removed in such a short period of time,” he said.

Florida’s back-to-back battering by Helene and Milton has become election fodder as Republican Donald Trump spreads conspiracy theories claiming that Biden and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris are abandoning victims.

Biden snapped back on Thursday, telling the former president, “Get a life.”

Experts said yesterday that human-induced climate change made Hurricane Milton wetter and windier.

“Heavy one-day rainfall events such as the one associated with Milton are 20-30% more intense and about twice as likely in today’s climate,” the World Weather Attribution group of climate scientists said in a report.

The effect boosted Milton’s wind strength by about 10%, making what would have been a Category 2 storm a more destructive Category 3, on a five-point scale, the report said.

Milton left some weary Floridians fed up and others digging in for the long haul.

In Orlando, on the east coast, 58-year-old Joe Meyer was loading his car after five days in a hotel to return home to Madeira Beach, south of Tampa.

Helene had hit his house “like a bomb went off” and he had to swim to a neighbour’s house. Milton left less water but more wind damage.

“We’ll probably sell” and move to a less flood-prone location in the area, he said.

“We’re just to the age now where moving everything up, moving everything down – it’s just become too much for us.”

Obama blasts ‘crazy’ Trump in first rally for Harris

AFP/Reuters
Pittsburgh

Former US president Barack Obama lashed out at “crazy” Donald Trump on Thursday and urged voters to back Kamala Harris as he brought his star power to the 2024 election campaign trail for the first time.

Obama, whose White House term ended in 2017, is still popular with his party’s base.

As he hit the stump in the must-win state of Pennsylvania, Obama also chided black male voters for what he called hesitancy in supporting Democrat Harris because they “just aren’t feeling the idea of having a woman as president?”

Obama trained his fire on Trump during a pumped-up rally in Pittsburgh, comparing the Republican’s long speeches to late Cuban communist leader Fidel Castro’s and calling the billionaire out of touch with ordinary people.

America’s first black president admitted that “this election’s going to be tight” as many voters were still struggling with high prices.

“I get it why people are looking to shake things up,” Obama said to a crowd of supporters. “I understand people feeling frustrated, feeling ‘we can do better.’ What I cannot understand is why anybody would think that Donald Trump will shake things up in a way that is good for you, Pennsylvania.”

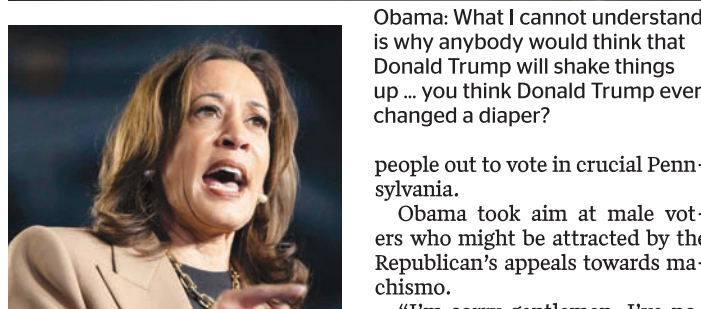
“You think Donald Trump ever changed a diaper?” he added.

Obama said Trump only cared about his own ego and money.

He stressed that Harris was raised in the middle class and believed in American values, which he contrasted with Trump’s mis-truths and deliberate attempts to deceive, including recently about the government’s response to hurricanes.

“When did that become okay?” Obama asked.

He declared the election to be as much about character and values as policy, while highlighting Har-



Harris: I think (Trump’s rejection of a second debate) is a disservice to the voters. I also think it’s a pretty weak move.

ris’ “concrete plans” on housing and taxes.

“Kamala is as prepared for the job as any nominee for president has ever been,” he said. “With Kamala you’ve got actual plans. Trump – concepts of a plan.”

The popular Democrat called Trump’s schemes to sell bibles as “crazy” and used the same word to describe the 78-year-old former president’s embrace of conspiracy theories.

As the crowd booed Trump, his successor in the White House, Obama added: “Don’t boo – vote.”

“Kamala is as prepared for the job as any nominee for president has ever been,” he added.

Vice-President Harris’s campaign said that Obama’s appearance, the first in a series in battleground states before the November 5 election, was designed to get

Obama: What I cannot understand is why anybody would think that Donald Trump will shake things up ... you think Donald Trump ever changed a diaper?

people out to vote in crucial Pennsylvania.

Obama took aim at male voters who might be attracted by the Republican’s appeals towards machismo.

“I’m sorry gentlemen, I’ve noticed this, especially with some men who seem to think Trump’s behaviour, the bullying and the putting people down, is a sign of strength,” he said. “And I am here to tell you that is not what real strength is.”

Earlier, in a surprise stop before the rally at a campaign field office in Pittsburgh, Obama made an unusually direct appeal to black men, whose support polls show Harris has struggled to mobilise.

Saying that he had some “truths” that he wanted the black community to hear, Obama said that “you’re coming up with all kinds of reasons and excuses, I’ve got a problem with that.”

“Because part of it makes me think – and I’m speaking to men directly – part of it makes me think that, well, you just aren’t feeling the idea of having a woman as president,” he said.

Harris was in battleground Nevada for a town hall hosted by the Spanish language network Univision on Thursday and later spoke at

a rally in Arizona aimed at reaching out to Latino voters.

When a woman asked Harris at the town hall to name three of Trump’s virtues, she replied: “I think Donald Trump loves his family, and I think that’s very important. But I don’t really know him, to be honest with you. I don’t have much more to offer you.”

In Arizona, Harris addressed the devastation caused by Hurricane Milton in Florida, saying that the federal government “has mobilised thousands of personnel” to recover and rebuild the region.

The White House said that Harris had also taken part in a virtual briefing on Milton, which has sparked a political storm between Republicans and Democrats.

Trump was in the hotly contested state of Michigan on Thursday, unveiling new details of his protectionist plans for the US auto industry, including sweeping tariffs on vehicles not made in America.

Trump also ramped up his personal attacks on Harris, branding her “dumber than hell” and assailed the auto industry capital Detroit itself as run down as he was speaking to the city’s economic club.

“Our whole country will end up being like Detroit if she’s your president,” he said.

Harris meanwhile said she had accepted an offer for a CNN town hall on October 23 in Pennsylvania, after Trump turned down a final televised debate with her.

“I think it’s a disservice to the voters,” Harris said in Arizona about Trump rejecting a second debate. “I also think it’s a pretty weak move.”

Democrats are hoping Obama could give Harris a boost in a race that has been locked with Trump for weeks, after her initial boost in the polls after she took over from President Joe Biden as the party’s nominee in July.

Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama delivered rapturously received speeches backing Harris at the Democratic National Convention in August.

Trump seeks military aircraft protection

Reuters
Washington

Donald Trump’s campaign has requested the use of military aircraft and vehicles to protect the former president as he campaigns during the final weeks of the presidential campaign, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* reported yesterday.

The request follows two recent assassination attempts against the Republican presidential candidate.

It also comes after Trump’s campaign last month said he had been briefed by US intelligence officials on alleged threats from Iran to assassinate him.

A representative for the US Secret Service, which is charged with protecting presidential candidates, said that “the former president is receiving the highest levels of protection” but confirmed the Trump campaign had requested more.

“The Secret Service will remain vigilant and continue to adjust and enhance its protective posture as needed to mitigate evolving threats,” the representative said.

US President Joe Biden, speaking to reporters, said he has authorised security to protect Trump as if he were a sitting president, and if Trump’s request falls in that category it should be granted.

Representatives for Trump’s campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

According to the *New York Times*, Trump’s campaign has been in contact with White House chief of staff Jeff Zients and acting Secret Service Ronald Rowe asking for military assets to protect the Republican candidate, who is facing US Vice-President Kamala Harris in the November 5 presidential election.

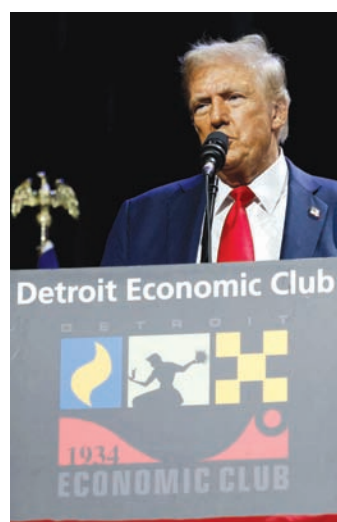
Trump’s campaign told officials that it has had to move, reschedule or cancel campaign events because of lack of adequate protection, the *Times* reported, citing four people briefed on the matter.

His campaign also asked for expanded flight restrictions over his homes and campaign rallies as well as prepositioned ballistic glass at events in battleground states, the *Washington Post* reported, citing e-mails it had obtained and unnamed sources.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence has acknowledged the September briefing to Trump but did not confirm any specifics.

The alleged shooters in the two separate attempts have no known reported ties to Iran.

The US Secret Service faced widespread criticism after the first assassination attempt against Trump in July that led to the resignation of its director and other security changes.



Trump addresses the Detroit Economic Club at the Motor City Casino in Detroit. – AFP

Record wildfires ravage Peru’s ecosystems and wildlife

A record number of fires tore through Peru over the past few weeks, wreaking havoc across the country’s ecosystems as grasslands, dry forests, coastal areas, and the Amazon were set ablaze.

In northern Peru, spectacled bears fled burning dry forests to nearby towns where some were shot by frightened residents.

Jaguars in the southern Amazon, with nowhere to flee, were left charred on trees.

Grasslands and wetlands that play a key role in storing water were left in ashes.

“The rainforest is usually impervious to fire,” said Paul Rosolie, a conservationist and founder of JungleKeepers, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that patrols and preserves the Amazon in Peru, adding that they’ve seen burned turtles, snakes, birds, and jaguars after recent patrols.

“The forest is their world, so when you burn it, they die.”

The Global Wildfire Information System, which tracks wildfires by satellite, shows around 10,400 fires in Peru in 2024, more than double the

previous record in 2020 and nearly 2.5 times the total area burned.

Record fires have been recorded across South America this year, with Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay registering the largest numbers.

“This year there’s been more regions, more ecosystems, and more species affected,” said Luis Zari, a legal specialist for the Peruvian Society of Environmental Law (SPDA), adding that both human and environmental factors led to such widespread fires.

Aside from less rainfall and higher temperatures after the end of the El Niño weather phenomenon, Zari says a failed government response and human-started fires led to widespread destruction.

Peru’s President Dina Boluarte acknowledged the country lacked logistics to fight the fires when she declared a state of emergency in September.

“There’s nothing in Peru, that’s the problem, there’s no help,” said Robyn Appleton, founder of the Spectacled Bear Conservation (SBC), an NGO that protects spectacled bears in Peru’s northern dry forests. – Reuters

Supercharged hurricanes trigger ‘perfect storm’ for disinformation

By Manon Jacob
AFP

Monster hurricanes slamming the United States in recent weeks have triggered a torrent of misinformation, with politicians and social media users reviving conspiracy theories about weather manipulation ahead of the November 5 presidential election.

False accusations of the government waging “weather warfare” spread online with social media posts claiming that the storms were “deliberately deployed against red states” likely to vote for Republican Donald Trump.

“We are in a geoenvironmental ‘meltdown’ perpetrated by Globalists who want to ‘control’ the whole of humanity,” said one post on X.

Rumours also focused on the Alaska-based High-frequency Active Auroral Research Programme (HAARP), which was formerly run by the US military, and cloud seeding, despite a lack of evidence linking the technologies to the formation of large storms.

The wave of falsehoods emerged after Helene became the deadliest hurricane to hit the US mainland since 2005’s Katrina, and Milton quickly followed, making landfall in Florida on October 9.

Both storms ravaged entire neighbour-

hoods, forcing widespread evacuations and causing massive power outages.

Ethan Porter, a professor and researcher at the George Washington University Misinformation/Disinformation Lab, said some people are using misinformation “as a convenient way to express their political beliefs.”

He said the focus is less on the details, but rather the underlying message – “that neither science nor government should be trusted, that climate change isn’t real, and that somehow, Democrats are responsible for the unfolding catastrophe.”

Pro-Trump Republican Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene has repeatedly told her followers that the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration authorises programmes that “control the weather.”

Methods such as cloud seeding can help increase rain and snow in localised areas, but they cannot create storms like Helene.

Experts told AFP that it is concerning that politicians are engaging with such narratives.

“This is coming at a time of real political tension,” said Callum Hood, head of research at the Centre for Countering Digital Hate. “The social media landscape is a friendlier place for hate and disinformation than it has been in a long time, particularly on X.”

University of Miami professor Joseph Uscinski, who researches why people believe in conspiracy theories, agreed: “We have members of Congress who are pushing ideas that

this is real, when, in fact, it’s not.”

The situation highlighted the sharp divide over climate change, as scientists warned that supercharged storms were the result of warmer ocean temperatures.

Storms, also amplified by warmer air, show a potential to impact inland areas as well as coastal regions that have historically been in the path of destruction.

“Hurricane Helene showed us that it is not (only) the coast we have to worry about. A hurricane with a lot of moisture passing through a mountainous area – such as Asheville – is a bad combination,” Jayantha Obeyesekere, director of the Sea Level Solutions Centre at Florida International University, told AFP.

Nature Conservancy chief scientist Katharine Hayhoe said weather control narratives help defer the responsibility of curbing emissions.

She worries such logic brings a false sense of security and comfort for people trying “to make sense of what is rapidly becoming a very scary world?”

These conditions create “a ‘perfect storm’” for disinformation, Hayhoe said, highlighting how disbelief can further delay action on the ground or prevent proper resilience and mitigation plans against a warming climate.

“It moves us in exactly the opposite direction from where we need to be going,” she said.



CLAIM

S Korean drones 'scattered leaflets over Pyongyang'

North Korea yesterday accused South Korea of sending drones to scatter a "huge number" of anti-North leaflets over its capital Pyongyang, in what it called a political and military provocation that could lead to armed conflict. South Korea's joint chiefs of staff said it could not confirm the North's accusations but also referred in its statement to Pyongyang's practice of sending into South Korean airspace balloons with bags of trash attached. North Korea's foreign ministry said the drones were flown over Pyongyang at night this week and last and that the intrusion demanded retaliatory action, the state news agency KCNA reported.

CRIME

Philippines arrests alleged Chinese scam farm boss

A Chinese man accused of running a network of scam farms across the Philippines has been arrested. Lin Xunhan was detained in Binan city south of Manila, amid a crackdown of online businesses accused of defrauding clients and which have been linked to other crimes. The 33-year-old native of the Chinese province of Fujian "is a figure of significant concern within the landscape of organised crime in the Philippines", the presidential anti-organised crime commission said. "Since 2016, (Lin) has systematically built a network of scam farms, often employing legal businesses as fronts to obscure his illicit activities" in the country, it said.

CRISIS

Bangladesh fisherman killed, dozens detained by Myanmar

Bangladesh yesterday said Myanmar's navy fired on fishing boats that had strayed into its territorial waters, killing one man and detaining dozens more. Six Bangladeshi vessels fishing near Saint Martin Island, a small outcrop at the mouth of the Naf river that divides the two neighbours, strayed into Myanmar's territorial waters on Wednesday. Dhaka said Myanmar's navy then attacked the vessels, killing a 60-year-old man and abducting 57 others. "Bangladesh urges Myanmar to take immediate steps to prevent the recurrence of such unwarranted actions," the foreign ministry said in a statement, adding it had lodged a diplomatic protest.

OBITUARY

Voice of Japan's beloved robot cat 'Doraemon' dies

A Japanese actor who was the voice of "Doraemon", a cartoon cat robot beloved by children in Japan and other countries has died, her agency said yesterday. Nobuyo Oyama was 90. For a quarter of a century until 2005, Oyama lent her endearingly hoarse voice to the titular blue feline from the 22nd century with his "magic pocket" and its supply of fantastical gadgets, including a door that lets you travel anywhere. She "passed away on September 29 due to old age", her agency said. Her funeral was attended by close relatives. "Doraemon" is still on air as one of the longest-running Japanese anime series, popular across Asia and farther afield.

Clashes on South China Sea and Ukraine dominate East Asia Summit

AFP
Vientiane

The US and its allies clashed yesterday with Russia and China at a summit in Laos dominated by disputes on maritime claims and Ukraine.

World leaders descended on the normally tranquil, temple-lined streets of the Laotian capital Vientiane, which marked a rare occasion bringing together the top US and Russian diplomats.

The East Asia Summit came on the heels of meetings of the Asean bloc, where the Philippines has led the charge in criticising Beijing's actions in the hotly disputed South China Sea.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, meeting Asean leaders before the full summit, reiterated calls for freedom of navigation in the bustling waterway.

"We remain concerned about China's increasingly dangerous and unlawful actions on the South and East China Seas, which have injured people, harmed vessels from Asean nations and contradict commitments to peaceful resolution of disputes," Blinken said.

China has deployed military and coast guard vessels in recent months in a bid to eject the Philippines from a trio of strategically

important reefs and islands in the South China Sea.

It has also been ratcheting up pressure over a disputed island group controlled by Japan in the East China Sea, rattling Tokyo and its allies.

Blinken also warned China over Taiwan, where the new leader delivered an annual speech in which he vowed that the self-governing democracy would resist annexation.

"China should not use it in any fashion as a pretext for provocative actions," Blinken told reporters.

Despite disagreements, tensions over the past year have markedly eased between China and the US, with President Joe Biden supporting dialogue to reduce the potential for conflict.

Biden and his political heir Vice-President Kamala Harris, who both skipped the summit ahead of elections, have taken a different approach to Russia, believing Moscow's diplomatic overtures are insincere. Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov were spaced apart by the leaders of South Korea and India at the summit.

Blinken said he did not speak to Lavrov but that neither walked out when the other addressed the summit. "I think it's safe to say that we heard each other. I didn't hear anything new, unfortunately, about the

ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine," Blinken said.

Lavrov told reporters that the US was "destructive" in Asia.

He also attacked the "militarisation" of Japan, where security-minded new Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has in the past called for a Nato-style Asian pact with an unstated goal of deterring China.

"The Japanese are obviously being pushed to such a course by the US," Lavrov charged.

Japan's foreign ministry said that Ishiba, on his first foreign trip since taking over, reiterated "serious concerns" about the "intensification of Chinese military activities in areas surrounding Japan" in a meeting with Premier Li Qiang.

Li made a veiled swipe at Ishiba during an Asean-related meeting on Thursday, warning of the danger of "attempts to introduce bloc confrontation and geopolitical conflicts into Asia".

In an interview with AFP at the summit, EU chief Charles Michel called for disputes to be resolved "through peaceful means" in the South China Sea.

The wide differences between the big players on international issues - especially the Middle East crisis - meant it was not possible for the leaders to agree a joint summit statement, an Asian diplomat said.

Pro-Palestinian demonstration

A pro-Palestinian demonstrator holds a placard during a rally near the US embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, yesterday.

Japanese atomic bomb survivors' group wins Nobel Peace Prize

Reuters
Oslo

Japanese organisation Nihon Hidankyo, a grassroots movement of atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, won the Nobel Peace Prize yesterday, in a warning to countries that have nuclear weapons not to use them.

Many survivors of the only two nuclear bombs ever to be used in conflict, who are known in Japanese as "hibakusha", have dedicated their lives to the struggle for a nuclear-free world.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee said in its citation the group

was receiving the Peace Prize for "its efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again".

"The hibakusha help us to describe the indescribable, to think the unthinkable, and to somehow grasp the incomprehensible pain and suffering caused by nuclear weapons," the committee said. "I can't believe it's real," Nihon Hidankyo co-chair Toshiyuki Mimaki told a press conference in Hiroshima, site of the August 6, 1945 atomic bombing during the closing stages of World War II, as he held back tears and pinched his cheek.

Mimaki, a survivor himself, said the award would give a major boost to its efforts to demonstrate that the abolition of nuclear weapons was possible.

"(The win) will be a great force to appeal to the world that the abolition of nuclear weapons and everlasting peace can be achieved," he said. "Nuclear weapons should absolutely be abolished."

In Japan, hibakusha, many of whom carried visible wounds from radiation burns or developed radiation-related diseases such as leukaemia, were often forcibly segregated from society and faced discrimination when seeking employment or marriage in the years following the war.

Taiwan says four Foxconn workers detained in China

Four people working for Taiwanese tech giant Foxconn in China have been detained, Taipei said yesterday, describing the circumstances as "quite strange". The employees were detained by public security in the central city of Zhengzhou for the equivalent of "breach of trust" under Taiwan law. Taipei's top China policy body, the Mainland Affairs Council, said in a statement. "The circumstances surrounding this case are quite strange," the council said.

Foxconn "has declared the company suffered no losses, and the four employees did not harm the company's interests in any way", it said, without providing details about when they were detained or their roles. Foxconn, also known by its official name Hon Hai Precision Industry, is the world's biggest contract electronics manufacturer and assembles devices for major tech companies, including Apple.

'Earthquake' drill

People take part in an "earthquake" drill for disaster risk reduction in Surabaya, Indonesia.

Everest climber's remains believed found after 100 yearsAFP
Kathmandu

A documentary team discovered human remains on Mount Everest apparently belonging to a man who went missing while trying to summit the peak 100 years ago, National Geographic magazine reported yesterday. Climate change is thinning snow and ice around the Himalayas, increasingly exposing the bodies of mountaineers who died chasing their dream of scaling the world's highest mountain.

Briton Andrew Irvine went missing in 1924 alongside climbing partner George Mallory as the pair attempted to be the first to reach Everest's summit.

Mallory's body was found in 1999 but clues about Irvine's fate were elusive until a National Geographic team discovered a boot, still clothing the remains of a foot, on the peak's Central Rongbuk Glacier. On closer inspection, they found a sock with "a red label

that has A C IRVINE stitched into it", the magazine reported.

The discovery could give further clues as to the location of the team's personal effects and may help resolve one of mountaineering's most enduring mysteries: whether Irvine and Mallory ever managed to reach the summit.

That could confirm Irvine and Mallory as the first to successfully scale the peak, nearly three decades before the first currently recognised summit in 1953 by climbers Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay. "It tells the whole story about what probably happened," Irvine's great-niece Julie Summers told National Geographic.

Irvine was 22 when he went missing. He, along with Mallory, was last spotted by one of the members of their expedition on the afternoon of June 8, 1924, after beginning their final ascent to the summit that morning. Irvine is believed to have been carrying a vest camera - the discovery of which could rewrite mountaineering history.

Bangladesh party backs crimes against humanity trial for ex-PM

AFP
Dhaka

Bangladesh's top Islamist politician says he supports the extradition of ousted premier Sheikh Hasina to face trial for crimes against humanity in the same tribunal that convicted his colleagues.

Shafiqur Rahman is the leader of Jamaat-e-Islami, whose members were hounded, driven underground and sentenced to death during Hasina's autocratic 15-year rule.

Her government justified the crackdown on the nation's largest Islamist party by accusing it of sponsoring extremist attacks -

charges Rahman denies.

After Hasina's toppling and exile in neighbouring India following a student-led revolution in August, the ban on Jamaat's activities was lifted.

Rahman is leading its public revival. Now back in the political mainstream, he says Hasina must be extradited to face trial with her allies for abuses committed during her tenure.

"We don't believe in the theory that just because we faced injustice, someone else should also face injustice," the 65-year-old said at his party office in the capital Dhaka.

"But people want them to be tried. If they don't face trial,

these criminals will commit more crimes."

Dozens of Hasina's allies were taken into custody after her regime collapsed, accused of culpability in a police crackdown that killed more than 700 people during the unrest that deposed her.

Several cases accusing Hasina of orchestrating the "mass murder" of protesters are being probed in a deeply contentious war crimes court her government set up.

The International Crimes Tribunal was ostensibly created to try Bangladeshis accused of committing crimes against humanity during the country's devastating 1971 independence war against Pakistan.

The United Nations and rights

groups criticised its procedural shortcomings, and it became widely seen as a means for Hasina to eliminate political opponents.

The tribunal hanged five of Jamaat's top leaders, sparking protests that led to the deaths of around 500 people.

Rahman said it was important Hasina and her loyalists faced a fair trial, the kind denied to his executed comrades.

He said he was confident that the tribunal, if reformed, could meet the task.

"Whenever there is any crime against humanity in this country, there is no problem with it being explored in the tribunal," he said.

"If there is any disparity of law, if there is any contradiction with the constitution or human rights, that can be amended."

At the same time, Rahman said Jamaat would challenge the tribunal's former wrongdoings by posthumously appealing the death penalty verdicts handed to his former colleagues.

"We will prove that we faced injustices in the court which hanged our leaders," he said.

Jamaat's headquarters was shuttered for more than a decade but reopened days after Hasina's downfall. It is now swarming with party activists. The party will contest the next national elections, expected sometime in the next two

years - but Rahman says they are in no rush.

Instead he wants the caretaker government, led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, to first fulfil its pledge of a democratic overhaul.

The election would not be meaningful without reforms," Rahman said.

So far there had been no alliance struck with its previous coalition partner, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), he said.

But Rahman did support the return of exiled BNP leader Tarique Rahman, convicted of graft charges during Hasina's government, and who has lived in London since 2008.

British skull auction sparks Indian demand for return

AFP
New Delhi

Furious Indian politicians, activists and academics have demanded a 200-year-old skull listed for auction in former colonial ruler Britain, alongside at least 25 other remains, to be re-

turned home. Activists say the 19th century remains of their ancestor represent the colonial violence meted out to India's Nagaland state.

While the skulls were withdrawn from sale after an outcry, Nagaland state's chief minister has called for its return.

"The human remains of any deceased person belongs to those peo-

ple and their land," Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio wrote in a public letter.

Besides the Indian skull, other remains listed were from Africa, elsewhere in Asia, and South America.

The private British auction house, Swan Fine Art, near Oxford, had hoped to sell them for around \$180,000.

The Naga skull, attached to animal horns, had been offered with a starting bid of £2,100 (\$2,746) before its withdrawal.

There was no immediate response from the auctioneers.

Dolly Kikon, a Naga anthropologist, said the sale of any such item was unacceptable. "Auctioning Indigenous human remains in the

21st century shows how descendants of colonisers enjoy impunity to perpetuate racism and colonial violence on communities," Kikon said.

"If we have laws to stop the traffic of animals and birds, why don't governments stop the auction of Indigenous human remains that were stolen from the people?" she added.

Kikon, a professor at the Univer-

sity of California Santa Cruz, is also a member of Recover Restore and Decolonise (RRaD), which works to repatriate the Naga community's ancestral remains from museums abroad.

"The Naga people believe they (the auctioneers) will do the right thing and return our ancestral remains," she said.

Congress party complains over outcome of Haryana polls

Reuters
New Delhi

India's main opposition Congress party has complained to the election panel about concerns regarding the counting of votes in state elections in Haryana won by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), it said.

The partial rejection of the outcome, which gave the BJP 48 state constituencies against 37 for the Congress, was unusual in the world's most populous democracy, where the credibility of elections has rarely been questioned in recent decades.

The Congress, projected by exit polls to win the election in the northern breadbasket state, had said earlier it would not accept the "totally unexpected, completely surprising and counter-intuitive" result.

Senior Congress leaders who met the Election Commission of India (ECI) said they told it of complaints from 20 of the state's 90 constituencies, and had been assured their concerns would be looked into.

"The Election Commission was handed over written complaints from seven constituencies while the remaining complaints will be submitted in another two days," the party said in a statement.

In a letter to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, the election

panel said the Congress's rejection infringed the norms of free speech.

"Such an unprecedented statement...unheard in the rich democratic heritage of the country, is far from a legitimate part of free speech and moves towards an undemocratic rejection of the will of the people," it said.

The BJP did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Media reported BJP spokesperson Anil Baluni as saying the Congress was defeated because it lost its connection with people in the state, rather than because of any discrepancies in vote counting.

Indian law allows candidates to complain to the ECI about counting issues and seek redress. If unsatisfied by its response, they may appeal to the courts.

The Haryana elections were Modi's first test of popularity since his return in June as prime minister for a record third straight term, albeit with the help of allies, after having fallen short of an absolute majority.

Last month, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, whose family has given India three prime ministers, said he did not view this year's general elections as a free exercise, but as one structured to favour Modi, without citing evidence.

Its Haryana win would be a shot in the arm for the BJP prior to regional polls in the more politically significant states of western Maharashtra and mineral-rich Jharkhand.

Artist at work



British artist Billy Childish paints during the Frieze Art Fair at Regent's Park in London.

'Irrational' EU standards, unfair rules hurt ties: India

Reuters
New Delhi

India's trade minister yesterday said the European Union's "irrational standards" are hurting business ties and additional tariffs on select imports would force India to retaliate, in his sharpest criticism of the bloc's policies amid trade pact talks.

"Irrational standards set by the European Union act as a trade barrier to expanding trade," the minister, Piyush Goyal, said at an event in the New Delhi with Indian and European businesses in attendance.

Goyal also slammed the bloc for "unfair rules" such as a proposed EU carbon border

tax known as the carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM), adding such measures disrespect and seek to demolish the premise of the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

Major agriculture-exporting countries, including Brazil, India, Indonesia and the US, have raised objections to the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR).

The EUDR was adopted on May 16, 2023, and seeks to prevent the import of specified goods contributing to deforestation and forest degradation in the EU market.

The EU last year approved the world's first plan to impose tariffs on imports of high-carbon goods including steel, cement and aluminium, aiming to reach net-zero greenhouse emissions by 2050. EU officials have been try-

ing to win over countries like China, South Africa and India, that are opposed to CBAM.

The bloc has also extended safeguard duties on select steel imports, that were set to expire this year, till 2026, impacting Indian shipments. "For five-six years now, we have only been negotiating irrational duties," Goyal said, adding India may now have to take measures "not conducive" for good commercial ties.

In 2022, India and the EU agreed to relaunch talks on a free trade agreement, initially aiming to complete talks by the end of 2023, but have failed to make significant progress on a deal.

The two sides previously launched talks in 2007, but they were frozen in 2013 due to lack of progress.

Half-brother to succeed Ratan Tata

Late Indian tycoon Ratan Tata's half-brother was yesterday appointed to succeed him as chairman of a collective of philanthropic institutions that wield indirect control over the \$165bn Tata Group. Noel Tata succeeds Ratan, who died Wednesday after turning the Tata Group conglomerate into a global giant. Ratan was until his death the chairman of Tata Trusts, which through a complex ownership structure has a roughly 66% stake in the group's holding company Tata Sons. Tata Sons is the single largest shareholder in firms like IT giant Tata Consultancy Services and Tata Motors - which owns British luxury carmaker Jaguar Land Rover. "It was unanimously decided to appoint Noel Naval Tata as chairman of the various trusts that constitute the Tata Trusts and also designate him as chairman," a press release said.

Bachchan turns 82



Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan gestures to fans gathered outside his residence to celebrate his 82nd birthday in Mumbai, India, yesterday.

India prepares to build two nuke-powered subs

Reuters
New Delhi

India yesterday approved plans to construct two of a new class of nuclear-powered attack submarines, two defence officials said, in a project estimated to cost about Rs450bn (\$5.4bn).

As India scrambles to modernise its military in the face of China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean region, it is focusing on boosting naval capabilities, and improving domestic weapons-making capacity.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet gave the go-ahead for the first two submarines of a new class of six the Indian Navy plans to make, the officials added, speaking on condition of anonymity, but stopped short of providing delivery dates.

China, the world's largest naval

force, with more than 370 ships, has been a security concern for India since ties nosedived in 2020 after 24 troops died in clashes along their Himalayan frontier.

Faster, quieter and capable of longer underwater stays than conventional diesel-powered craft, which makes them more difficult to detect, nuclear-powered attack submarines rank among the most potent naval weapons in the world.

Only a handful of nations make them now, such as China, France, Russia and the US. India, which leased two nuclear-powered attack submarines from Russia in the past but since returned them, has been in talks with it to lease another. The new submarines will be built at the shipbuilding centre in the port of Visakhapatnam. Construction major Larsen and Toubro is also expected to join the project, one of the sources added.

Starmer looks to move on from clumsy first 100 days

AFP
London

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer marks 100 days in office this weekend, already seeking to reboot his new Labour government after a stuttering return to power following 14 years in opposition.

Starmer's first weeks in office have been overshadowed by rows about gifts to ministers and a cut in welfare payments for millions of pensioners that have tanked his personal poll ratings.

He has also faced accusations of discouraging overseas investment

by repeatedly blaming the former Conservative administration for bequeathing Labour a dire economic inheritance and warning that further pain lies ahead.

"It hasn't gone well," said Steven Fielding, a political scientist at the University of Nottingham and author of several books on the Labour party.

"If this is a start of a march towards (Starmer's pledge of) national renewal, the first footsteps were very uncertain," he said.

Observers note the early missteps were largely self-inflicted: failing to shut down the "freebies" row and misjudging anger over removing winter fuel payments for 10mn

elderly people. While Starmer promised a "government of service", he was accused of hypocrisy for accepting thousands of pounds' worth of clothes and tickets when he was asking Britons to make sacrifices.

Even though the donations were within parliament's rules, Starmer announced he would return around £6,000 (\$7,840) worth - but only after the scandal had been allowed to grow for several weeks.

"He's clearly a very good administrator," Fielding said of Starmer, a human rights lawyer and chief state prosecutor before entering politics.

"(But) there have always been questions about his political anten-

nae." Labour, he said, had been "flat-footed" in taking control of the news agenda.

Observers say the decision to delay the budget until the party's fourth month in office left a vacuum that newspapers - particularly right-wing, Tory-supporting ones - were only too happy to fill with negative stories.

Scheduling the budget for October 30 meant the winter fuel cut gained more attention because it was announced in isolation, while government departments are in limbo about what they can announce, experts say.

Labour grandee Harriet Harman has said early "clunkiness" was to be

expected, since Labour had not been in government since Gordon Brown was prime minister in 2010.

Starmer, known to be ruthless when things are not going well, has already attempted a reset by parting company with his chief of staff, civil service veteran Sue Gray, who oversaw Labour's landslide vote triumph.

Her departure last weekend and the appointment of Labour insider Morgan McSweeney is expected to add a sharper political edge to government messaging.

"They do need to tell a more uplifting story about what they are doing," said Patrick Diamond, a Downing Street policy adviser

when Labour was last in Number 10.

The government can point to several positive policy announcements in its first months, including on green energy, homebuilding and workers' rights, he pointed out.

Labour has launched a publicly owned clean energy company, lifted a de facto ban on new onshore wind farms and pledged to cut planning regulations to help build 1.5mn new homes.

On Thursday, it unveiled employment legislation that includes a ban on zero-hour contracts, improvements to sick and maternity pay, and measures aimed at making it harder for employers to sack staff.



CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

Production Editor

Amjad Khan

- 📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- ✉ editor@gulf-times.com
- ☎ 44350478 (News),
- ☎ 44466404 (Sport),
- ☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)
- ☎ 44350474
- 📘 facebook.com/gulftimes
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Europe and the polycrisis

Every historical period is defined by its own challenges. After World War II, Europe had to find a way to end the recurring and relatively independent crises linked to market cycles, domestic politics, and great-power competition that had torn it apart for decades. It met this challenge by building stable nation-states and effective welfare systems.

Since the turn of the century, Europe has been confronting a new challenge: responding to a highly complex polycrisis, comprising a broad set of interlinked crises. Many of these crises could, on their own, prove catastrophic.

But none unfolds in a vacuum. On the contrary, today's interconnected crises compound and reinforce one another. For example, a demographic crisis destabilises the welfare state, undermining economic well-being, which in turn fuels social and political disruption. A significant and lasting decline in social and political cohesion can contribute to other kinds of crises, such as the current crisis of liberal democracy, while hampering states' ability to respond to still other threats, like climate change.

The general failure to address the escalating polycrisis effectively has contributed to a sense of impending doom among a European public that feels increasingly powerless. But the existential threats can be overcome by learning to control what is not yet controlled.

Political, financial, and international institutions tend to be wired for the cyclical-crisis management of the past, making them ill-suited to respond to the current polycrisis, which demands both robustness and flexibility. Europe faces an added challenge here: its institutions, which depend on consensus, consistency, and compromise, struggle to cope with narrow, complex, and diverse interests. But just as Europe is the most in need of institutional transformation to meet today's existential challenges, it is also

The general failure to address the escalating polycrisis effectively has contributed to a sense of impending doom among a European public

particularly well equipped to achieve it, thanks to its considerable experience evolving through crisis and balancing solidarity with freedom. The key will be to develop a clear vision of the future, deepen co-operation in key areas, and devise a new organisational framework. Europe needs an explicit strategy for tackling the polycrisis that synchronises time horizons to improve short-term crisis management (essential to break self-reinforcing crisis mechanisms) and establish shared long-term objectives (essential to maintain momentum). Smaller, more autonomous, and more flexible units should be responsible for implementing this vision. A culture of decisiveness and accountability is essential.

The vision's longer-term component should reflect generational ambition. India has a roadmap for becoming a developed economy by 2047, a century after independence. China plans to achieve "national rejuvenation" by 2049, the centennial of the People's Republic. Europe should anchor its own strategy in 2045, 100 years after it started anew following the horrors of WWII.

The second imperative is to build robust new frameworks covering three critical elements of European security: finance, defence, and social welfare. The new financial architecture must aim to increase investment in Europe in order to boost productivity and support technological innovation in critical sectors.

As for defence, the Ukraine war has exposed Europe's existing architecture as shaky and slow. A new framework – capable of handling continent-wide procurement, supporting interoperability between security forces, and giving Europe a technological edge – is badly needed.

Likewise, the new design for social welfare must be coherent, fiscally viable, and responsive to the needs of modern societies. In recent decades, Europe has allowed liabilities and funding gaps to grow in a range of areas – including health care, housing, education, and energy – owing to a lack of consensus concerning what the modern welfare state should look like. Given that safeguarding the European way of life is essential to long-term social solidarity, this cannot continue.

The third key imperative for Europe as it faces polycrisis is to devise a new organisational pattern, based on flexibility, adaptability, and subsidiarity. Issues need to be tackled at the level where they unfold. Global challenges – such as climate change, nuclear proliferation, artificial intelligence, and financial stability – demand more structured international co-operation and regulation.

Europe cannot afford to delay action until after the next shock. If it is to weather the polycrisis, there is a need for strategic reflection, collective leadership, and out-of-the-box thinking today, guided by the shared ambition of "Refounding Europe" by 2045.

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Ukraine needs security guarantees

By Ana Palacio
Madrid

With Israel conducting a ground offensive in Lebanon, and Iran raining ballistic missiles on Israel, fears are rising that the conflict in the Middle East will soon spiral and draw in powers like the US. But Ukraine is still fighting its own war – one that it will have no chance of winning if its international partners, especially the US and the European Union, turn their attention elsewhere.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, well aware of this risk, has sought to bring Ukraine back into sharp focus. His visit to the US last month included meetings with US President Joe Biden and the candidates in next month's US presidential election, Vice-President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump, as well as an appearance at the UN General Debate.

Ukraine's achievements are worth touting. When the Kremlin launched its full-scale invasion in 2022, it envisioned a swift victory. Soldiers had supplies for a five-day mission, which was supposed to end with a parade in Kyiv (they had reportedly even packed ceremonial uniforms). Today, the once-feared Black Sea fleet is in shambles, and Ukraine has even managed to capture some Russian territory. Zelensky's leadership has fostered a more solid sense of national identity in the people he leads than perhaps any leader in recent history.

But Russian forces continue solidifying their gains in the eastern Donbas region, and Ukraine is struggling with shortages of both ammunition and recruits. Against this backdrop, Zelensky presented his "victory plan" – a strategy aimed at strengthening Ukraine's position on the battlefield, in order to increase its leverage in negotiations with Russia – to US leaders.

The response was mixed. While Biden reaffirmed his "unwavering support" for Ukraine, and authorized the release of \$8bn in military aid, he refused Zelensky's request for permission to use US missiles to strike targets deep inside Russia. This was a major disappointment to Zelensky, but for Biden, the risks are simply too high.

In fact, just days before Biden and Zelensky met in the White House, Russian President Vladimir Putin amended Russia's nuclear posture to interpret an attack by a non-nuclear state, if backed by a nuclear power, as a "joint attack," which might justify a nuclear response. While Biden has so far not allowed Putin's nuclear saber-rattling to cow him into submission – his administration has continued to support Ukraine, despite a long series of nuclear threats from the Kremlin – he remains keen to avoid escalation.

In any case, Zelensky will soon be dealing with a different US president, and whereas Harris has pledged to "ensure Ukraine prevails" in the war against Russia, Trump says that he will seek a negotiated settlement immediately after the election. When Zelensky was in the US, Trump initially refused to meet with him at all, though he eventually did – after touting his "very good



US President Joe Biden meets with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, on September 21, 2023. (Reuters/File Picture)

relationship" with Putin. Zelensky also sparked a backlash from Republicans when he visited an ammunition factory in Pennsylvania and criticised Trump's running mate, JD Vance, for opposing continued US support for Ukraine, which Vance argues should cede territory to Russia in a peace deal.

If the US abandons Ukraine, Zelensky will have few options. Biden has succeeded in rallying international support for Ukraine and maintaining cohesion among Nato allies, precisely because he restored America's credibility as an ally and partner after Trump turned the US into a laughingstock. Harris might be able to sustain Biden's record – though, with Europe's commitment to Ukraine already wavering, it would not be easy – but Trump would not and could not do the same.

It should be no surprise, then, that Zelensky is attempting to secure an airtight security guarantee: his victory plan includes a bold – and justified – demand for a formal Nato invitation for Ukraine. Putin believes, in defiance of history and international law, that Ukraine is part of Russia, rather than a sovereign country. This makes Ukraine fundamentally vulnerable to Russian interference, incursions, or worse.

The security assurances offered in Budapest in 1994, when Ukraine relinquished its nuclear arsenal, were insufficient to overcome this vulnerability. Only the kinds of robust security guarantees that accompany full Nato membership can credibly prevent Putin, or any future Russian leader, from violating Ukraine's territorial integrity. The US, however, has been reluctant to support Ukraine's bid for Nato membership, at least while the war is ongoing.

While Europe cannot override the US here, some suggest that it can help safeguard Ukraine

another way. Traditionally, Nato membership has preceded EU accession, with Nato accession ensuring the political and economic security that EU membership demands. In Ukraine's case, however, EU membership could theoretically be used to anchor the country within Western institutions, without requiring Nato to provide mutual defence.

But it is far from clear that EU membership alone would shield Ukraine from future Russian aggression. So, if Nato guarantees remain out of reach for Ukraine, even after the war ends, alternative security arrangements must be found. South Korea's guarantees under its alliance with the US might offer an effective model, especially given that Ukraine could end up being divided, at least temporarily, much as the Korean Peninsula was in 1945.

Ultimately, however, Nato is the best equipped to safeguard Ukraine. And it has good reason to do so. The Ukraine war is not just a regional conflict; it represents a broader struggle over the principles on which global stability rests, including national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the rule of law. It is also a litmus test for Western credibility, after America's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

If Ukraine is to survive the current war, let alone start down the long path toward reconstruction, it needs more than symbolic support or vague security assurances. It needs concrete guarantees. Nato should provide them. – Project Syndicate

• Ana Palacio, a former foreign minister of Spain and former senior vice president and general counsel of the World Bank Group, is a visiting lecturer at Georgetown University.

Policymakers' green-tech fantasy

By Daniel Gros
Milan

US President Joe Biden's administration included generous green subsidies in the Inflation Reduction Act, which aims to build a "clean-energy economy powered by American innovators." Former European Central Bank president and Italian prime minister Mario Draghi has delivered an influential report to the European Commission arguing that the European economy's future depends on a dual competitiveness and decarbonisation strategy. And China has invested heavily in turning the "new three" industries – solar photovoltaic, lithium-ion batteries, and electric vehicles (EVs) – into export engines.

The details are different, but the underlying idea is the same: supporting high-tech green industries is the key not only to a sustainable future, but also to a prosperous one. But how credible is this logic? Can a large economy like the US, the European Union, or China really be built on a foundation of green tech?

Probably not. For starters, energy represents only a small share of these economies, and in most industries, energy amounts to just 2-5% of total costs. Of course, that share is much higher – more than 10% – for certain energy-intensive sectors, such as cement, iron and steel, and building materials. But these sectors are unlikely to contribute much to an economy powered by green tech.

More important, the green transition will require much less new technology than is widely assumed. For the foreseeable future, the bulk of the zero-carbon power the world needs will be provided by existing technologies: solar panels, wind turbines, and



FILE PHOTO: A drone view shows power-generating windmill turbines at a wind park in La Regrippiere, near Nantes, France.

batteries. Solar cells have been around for almost a half-century, though the earliest versions were so bulky and expensive that they were used only for satellites. Wind turbines have been around for even longer. Even lithium-ion batteries have been on the market for more than 30 years.

Yes, there is room for further research and development; new ways to produce these goods can be discovered. But the impact of further advances in these technologies will be limited. For example, while it is possible to improve "smart" grid management – including by deploying artificial intelligence – losses in the electricity and transmission systems are largely unavoidable. Ultimately, rapid adoption of renewables depends not on cutting-edge innovation, but on the humdrum task of driving down the cost curve of known technologies.

Another reason why it would be difficult to build a strong economy on green-tech foundations is that solid-state goods, such as solar modules and batteries, are best suited for mass production.

This means that they require large up-front investment, and as production scales up, both costs and prices fall. Last year, Chinese exports of solar modules were 33% higher in terms of generation capacity, but their value actually fell slightly, because unit prices decreased by one-third. Something similar is likely to happen for batteries.

In other words, a country seeking to lead in green tech might find itself spending ever-larger sums to increase its capacity to produce goods whose prices continue to fall. China, with its large savings surplus, can afford such investments – and the entire world benefits if two solar-module factories are built where one would be enough (especially if the alternative is more ghost cities) – but the US and the EU cannot.

Even for China, the extent to which rising exports in the "new three" industries have translated into higher GDP growth is unclear. While they are producing goods with significantly more high-tech content than the "old three" export engines – household appliances, furniture, and clothing

– they are, for the time being, mostly operating at a loss. And when it comes to EVs, the model and brand – neither of which has anything to do with green tech – matter much more than performance, and here Chinese producers do not have a natural advantage. In any case, EVs hardly count as a separate industry from the batteries on which they depend.

A key obstacle to the rapid roll-out of renewables profits are stubborn "soft costs" – such as permitting, planning, and marketing – which are generally much slower to fall than hardware costs. When it comes to diffusion of solar power, for example, these costs are estimated to be at least as important as the cost of the panels themselves.

One of the costliest elements of the net-zero transition will be the insulation of buildings. In the EU, this task – which requires only known materials, skilled artisans, and efficient planning – often comprises a large share of total estimated investment needs. The countries that make the fastest progress on this front will be those with better-skilled construction workers and less cumbersome homebuilding and planning procedures – not those that produce the most high-tech equipment.

The task of decarbonising the energy sector and, subsequently, the entire economy is as urgent as it is monumental. But rather than focus on becoming a green-tech "leader" – a strategy that will not necessarily lead to economic dynamism – policymakers should shift their attention to the often-unexciting activities that will actually accelerate progress. – Project Syndicate

• Daniel Gros is Director of the Institute for European Policy-Making at Bocconi University.

Little progress at key meet ahead of COP29 climate summit

AFP
Paris

A key meeting ahead of the UN COP29 climate summit ended yesterday in frustration with countries making little progress over how to fund a new finance deal for poorer nations.

Delegates were urged to put aside differences and move negotiations forward during the two-day "pre-COP" in Azerbaijan, which is hosting the talks in November.

Not all countries were represented so smaller gains, rather than concrete breakthroughs, were hoped for during the Baku meet.

However, the gathering wrapped with nations no closer to resolving the same sticking points that have hindered the talks for months, attendees told AFP.

"Despite some hopeful talk of coming together, countries remain quite far apart," said Iskander Erzini Vernoit, co-founder and director at the IMAL Initiative for Climate and Development, who was present in Baku.

At COP29, countries are supposed to agree on a new goal for "climate finance" that meets the needs of the world's poorest countries in dealing with global warming.

The existing amount of \$100bn a year is considered insufficient and rich countries are under pressure to raise their contribu-

tions by at least a factor of 10.

Donors have still not said how much they are willing to pay, frustrating those advocating for a larger financial commitment from the countries most responsible for climate change to date.

"It is outrageous that just weeks before COP29, developed countries did not say how much money they are willing provide for this new finance goal," said Mariana Paoli from Christian Aid.

Some developed countries want the pact to offer mixed layers of finance: one from governments, another from multilateral lenders, and private capital.

However, Paoli said without developed countries agreeing to pay from their coffers

without strings attached "any number at COP will be a meaningless figure".

Most climate finance comes as loans, and developing countries say it worsens their debt problems.

They are pushing for unconditional grants to finance clean energy and climate adaptation measures, and want funding for disaster relief known as "loss and damage" included in any new deal.

Rebecca Thiessen from the non-governmental organisation coalition CAN said it was "positive" to hear rich nations at Baku talk of a pact in trillions instead of billions.

"The scale of need has been recognised, but no figure has been put on the table," she said.

Kyrgyzstan opens probe into glacier destruction

Kyrgyzstan has opened a criminal probe into the destruction of glacial ice by a private company, a rare move pointing to concerns over water shortages in the Central Asian country.

Glaciers are thick masses of ice that form on land from centuries of compressed snow.

They provide a vital source of freshwater in Kyrgyzstan, a land-locked country home to thousands of them, but rising temperatures due to climate change and mining operations are putting them at risk.

The glacial ice in the southern Osh region was destroyed when a private company "illegally built a road to a coal mine" in the area, allegedly in collusion with a state-owned firm, prosecutors said on Thursday.

"As a result of the illegal actions of the private company, glaciers and soil spanning an area of 9,392sq m were destroyed," they added.

Prosecutors said they had opened a criminal case into environmental safety violations and the "abuse of an official position", without elaborating.

Acting as water towers, glaciers are crucial sources of freshwater and play an important role in Kyrgyzstan's food security, as melting ice is used for irrigation and agriculture.

Concerns over water shortages in Central Asia are mounting, with climate change, leaky Soviet-era infrastructure and disputes over water ownership all contributing to the problem. - AFP

Gunmen kill 21 coal miners in southwest Pakistan

Reuters/AFP
Quetta

Dozens of attackers armed with guns, rockets and hand grenades stormed a cluster of small private coal mines in southwestern Pakistan yesterday, slaying some miners in their sleep and shooting others after lining them up, killing at least 21 in the restive region, police said.

The attack by around 40 armed men days before Pakistan hosts a summit of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) grouping is the worst in weeks in the mineral-rich province of Balochistan bordering Afghanistan and Iran.

"The armed terrorists remained for around 1-1/2 hours in the mining area," regional police official Asif Shafi told Reuters. "They fired rockets and hurled grenades at the mines and miners' quarters."

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack on the mines of the Junaid Coal Co in the Duki area, which also injured six.

One of the wounded, Juma

Khan, told AFP from hospital that he was shot in the arm while bullets rained down on the room as he was sleeping.

"There was heavy firing followed by some blasts of hand grenades," he said.

Among the dead were four Afghan nationals; another four were injured. Afghanistan's ministry of foreign affairs strongly condemned the attack in a statement, and assigned its Quetta consulate to facilitate the transfer of the bodies.

Businesses and shops were shut in Duki as hundreds of people gathered along with the bodies of the dead in a protest to demand the arrest of the attackers, police said.

"We are protesting here for our protection as terrorists always attack mine workers and coal-loaded vehicles and law enforcement agencies fail to provide protection," said Mohammad Ghous, 36, from a neighbouring district who joined the protest. "Our lives don't matter to the government."

"We were receiving threats from the militants for some time but there was no information about the



Labourers gather to protest against the killings of coal miners in an overnight attack in Duki district of Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province. - AFP

attack," said mine owner Khairullah Nasar, who is also the chairman of the district council.

The attackers burnt down all 10 mines, along with the equipment and machinery within, he added.

A decades-long insurgency in Balochistan by separatist militant groups has led to frequent attacks against the government, army and Chinese interests in the region to press demands for a share in mineral-rich regional resources. Several attacks have targeted migrant workers, including some from Afghanistan, employed by smaller, privately operated mines.

The attacks have risen in recent months, said provincial Governor Jafar Khan Mandokhel, who called

the miners' killing an inhuman act.

"On one side you talked about your independence and your rights and on the other hand you are killing innocent labourers," he told a news conference, referring to the separatist militant groups, adding: "We condemn it strongly and we will take all-out action against it."

The government was "determined to root out all forms of terrorism", Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said in a statement.

"The provincial government has ordered an investigation and a case has been registered against unknown assailants under the terrorism law," a government official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Besides the separatists, the region is also home to Islamist militants, who have resurged since 2022 after revoking a ceasefire with the government.

Two Chinese nationals working for a power plant were killed this week in a blast in Karachi, for which the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), one of several insurgent groups battling the government, claimed responsibility.

The BLA was also behind Balochistan's most widespread violence in years in August, which targeted police stations, railway lines, and highways, killing 70.

Armed men who stormed the residence of labourers from the eastern province of Punjab last month killed seven.

Bosnia's top court suspends school module presenting war criminals as heroes

Bosnia's constitutional court has suspended a part of the curriculum introduced in primary schools in the country's Serb-dominated region presenting the Serb war crimes convicts from the 1992-95 war as heroes.

The education ministry of the Serb Republic, one of multi-ethnic Bosnia's two autonomous regions, introduced a module on the Bosnian war and its causes from the Serb perspective for final graders in the school year starting in September.

It portrays Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic and military leader Ratko Mladic, both jailed for life over war crimes and genocide by the Hague-based international war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, as historic figures who enabled the creation of the Serb Republic.

Bosnia's war, which claimed more than 100,000 lives and drove about 2mn from their homes, was ended by the US-sponsored Dayton peace agreement, which split the country into a Serb Republic dominated by Orthodox Serbs and a Federa-

tion dominated by Muslim Bosniaks and Catholic Croats.

At its plenary session yesterday, the court decided to suspend the curriculum section dealing with the war and the creation of the Serb entity with immediate effect, responding to a request filed by 13 members of the national parliament.

Explaining the move to suspend the module pending a final decision, the court said the implementation of that section of the curriculum risked causing further segregation and divisions among students of different ethnic backgrounds.

In practice the multi-ethnic court has limited powers of enforcement.

The Serb Republic has withdrawn Serb judges in protest at the continued presence of foreign judges who serve in the court under the peace deal. Serb leaders say they do not respect the court's decisions and have ignored them in the past.

Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik has repeatedly called for the secession of the region from Bosnia and its unification with Serbia. - Reuters

Plotters of 2021 Pakistan bus bombing killed

Two militants involved in the 2021 attack that killed nine Chinese engineers were shot and killed in a shootout in a central Pakistani district yesterday, counter-terrorism officials said.

They said the militants who had been convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment were being moved out of a prison in Sahiwal district due to a threat when some men attacked the police van they were in.

Two of the five militants in the van were killed in cross-fire between police and the attackers, it said. "Unknown terrorists attacked one of the police vans to free their accomplices," said a counter-terror police official, who asked to remain anonymous, adding that both men died "as a result of firing" from their would-be jail breakers.

The two were masterminds of the attack that had killed a total of 13 people, including the nine Chinese engineers, near a hydropower plant in Dadu in northern Pakistan in July 2021.

Pakistan's main cities, especially Islamabad, are on a high alert ahead of the Shanghai Co-operation Conference (SCO) which is scheduled to be held in the capital on October 15-16.

Pakistan is seeking to curb all movements of Chinese nationals during the summit because of the risk that they could be attacked.

The shootout came within hours of an attack that killed 21 miners in southwestern Balochistan province, the hotbed for militants, including the Baloch Liberation Army, which has been attacking Chinese nationals and their interests. - AFP/Reuters

Zelensky hopes war with Russia will end next year

AFP
Berlin

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky voiced hope yesterday that the war with Russia will end next year, speaking during a visit to Berlin to ask for sustained military support.

As Ukraine faces a gruelling third winter at war, Zelensky has been seeking support on a two-day whirlwind tour of European capitals that took him to London, Paris and Rome.

Visiting Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Zelensky, dressed in his trademark military clothes, thanked Germany for its backing and said that "it is very important for us that this assistance does not decrease next year".

He said that he would present Scholz with his plan for winning the war, voicing hope that the conflict would end "no later than next year, 2025".

"Ukraine more than anyone else in the world wants a fair and speedy end to this war," Zelensky said. "The war is destroying our country, taking the lives of our people."

Scholz pledged Germany and EU partners would send more defence equipment this year, and German aid worth €4bn in 2025, vowing that "we will not let up in our support for Ukraine".

Scholz said he and the Ukrainian leader agreed on the need for a peace conference that includes Russia, but that a peace "can only be brought about on the basis of international law".

"We will not accept a peace dictated by Russia," Scholz said.

Zelensky later wrapped up his tour by meeting German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

The Ukrainian leader has been seeking fresh military and financial aid from his European allies amid fears of dwindling support if Donald Trump wins the US presidency next month.

A scheduled Ukraine defence meeting today at the Ramstein US air base in western Germany was



postponed after US President Joe Biden called off a state visit to Germany because of Hurricane Milton.

Germany has been Ukraine's biggest military aid supplier after the United States.

However, Scholz has rejected sending the German long-range Taurus missile system, fearing an escalation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato)'s tense standoff with nuclear-armed Russia.

Zelensky had started the day at the Vatican for talks with the 87-year-old leader of the world's almost 1.4bn Catholics - his second private audience with Pope Francis since Russia's February 2022 invasion.

Francis has repeatedly called for peace in Ukraine and regularly prays for its "martyred" people, but he sparked outrage in Kyiv earlier this year after giving an interview in which he urged Ukrainians to "raise the white flag and negotiate".

In a post on social media yesterday, Zelensky said his talks with the Pope had focused on the "incredibly painful" question of people captured and deported from Ukraine to Russia, saying he hoped the Holy See could help.

The Vatican said Zelensky had discussed during the visit "the state of the war and the humanitarian situation in Ukraine" and ways to reach a "just and stable peace".

In Paris on Thursday, Zelensky held talks with

French President Emmanuel Macron, after which he denied media reports that he was discussing the terms of a ceasefire with Russia.

"This is not the topic of our discussions," he told the press. "It's not right. Russia works a lot with media disinformation."

Zelensky has rejected any peace plan that involves ceding land to Russia, arguing Moscow must first withdraw all troops from Ukrainian territory.

Russian forces have made advances across the eastern frontline and targeted the power grid as Ukraine faces its toughest winter since the full-scale Russian invasion started in February 2022.

Russia said yesterday that its forces had captured the frontline villages of Zhelanne Druge and Ostrivske, the latest in a string of territorial gains.

Russian strikes overnight on the southern Ukrainian region of Odesa killed four people, including a teenage girl, and wounded 10 more, according to the regional governor.

Zelensky has pushed for clearance to use long-range weapons supplied by allies, including British Storm Shadow missiles, to strike military targets deep inside Russia.

Washington and London have stalled on giving approval over fears it could draw Nato allies into direct conflict with Russia.

In Germany, Scholz's refusal to deliver Taurus missiles is controversial, even within his own three-party coalition with the Greens and the liberal Free Democrats (FDP).

"We must supply Ukraine with significantly more air defence, ammunition and long-range weapons," the Greens' European MP Anton Hofreiter told the *Rheinische Post*. "Restrictions on the range of weapons supplied do not contribute to de-escalation but rather enable further Russian attacks."

The FDP's defence expert Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann told the same newspaper: "I very much hope that Zelensky will make it clear to the Chancellor once again that if Ukraine loses this war, this will not be the last war in Europe."

Poland's government, president clash over ambassador picks

Poland's pro-European government has again clashed with conservative President Andrzej Duda, urging the head of state to cease blocking its choice of several dozen ambassadors.

In power since a year ago, the coalition government has decided to replace numerous envoys to countries across the world - of which a good portion were named by its nationalist predecessor.

For his part Duda - a firm supporter of the previous administration whose presidential mandate expires in less than 300 days - decried the recalls as "manipulations" by the current government.

"We need an ambassador in Israel," Polish Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz told the press yesterday, pointing to the broadening conflict in the Middle East.

And the day before Prime Minister Donald Tusk judged the president "extremely irresponsible" for "blocking the nomination of ambassadors in countries such as the United States, Israel, Ukraine or Nato".

"Security, Mr President!" Tusk wrote on X. Duda hit back on the same social media platform, arguing that Warsaw's ambassadors to the United States and Ukraine could not be recalled by the government because "only the President of the Republic of Poland has the right to do so".

Under Polish law, the government bears responsibility for foreign policy.

However, both the government and president have interpreted the clauses outlining their "co-operation" after their own fashion, as well as the president's formal power to appoint and dismiss ambassadors "on the proposal of the foreign affairs minister with the prime minister's approval".

The row is one of many betraying a difficult cohabitation between government and head of state in the eastern European country.

Tusk's government frequently accuses the conservative head of state of blocking important reforms, notably with regards justice and women's rights. - AFP

Innovative treatment at Sidra helps teen regain mobility

A teenager has regained mobility with innovative treatment at Sidra Medicine. Diagnosed at birth with Arteriovenous Malformation (AVM) of his foot, life for then-14-year-old Simon Saade was a constant struggle. In his early childhood, Simon underwent several corrective procedures abroad. However, the procedures did not produce the desired results, causing one of his legs to become longer than the other, forcing him to rely on crutches to balance his movement. Simon also continued to face health risks.

The Saade family, originally from Lebanon but residing in Qatar, were advised to seek treatment at Sidra Medicine. Understanding the complexity of Simon's case, Sidra Medicine's Interventional Radiology Department (IR) formulated a personalised treatment plan that included several sessions of embolisation. The IR team's treatment of Simon's AVM focused on managing the symptoms and reducing his risk of bleeding, which in turn helped improve his quality of life. Endovascular embolisation is a minimally invasive procedure that uses a catheter navigated through a small incision in the groin.



Simon Saade (sitting) and his father Bernard (sixth right) with the Sidra Medicine IR team.

Dr Walid Mubarak, Interventional Radiology attending physician and Clinical Lead at Sidra Medicine, said: "What makes this intervention stand out is its minimally invasive nature and selectivity, allowing us to access the third-degree branches of the foot." "This cutting-edge approach is not available in many children's hospitals, as it requires going deep into the vascular system," he said. "The impact of the procedure is almost immediate, eliminating the need for long hospital stays." "Simon was able to go home the next day, with only a small band-aid on his thigh," Dr Mubarak added.

This was the first phase of Simon's treatment programme, promising a quick and effective recovery without the usual side effects of traditional surgeries. "The doctors at Sidra Medicine explained everything clearly, ensuring I was involved every step of the way," Simon said. "The Interventional Radiology team prioritised my wellbeing, and their goal was to get me walking again," he added. "The procedures they performed led to a faster recovery with less pain and without any complications, unlike anything I'd experienced before." Following his embolisation at Sidra Medicine, Simon needed

vascular corrective surgery - a procedure that could only be performed abroad. The IR team at Sidra Medicine facilitated this process by creating a 3D printed model of Simon's foot. This effectively illustrated the malformation and the issues from the procedure he had in his early childhood. The detailed model was then sent to a specialist surgeon in France, enabling them to meticulously plan for the corrective surgery. After the corrective surgery in France, he needed plastic surgery to help in his recovery process.

His parents chose to come back to Sidra Medicine for the procedure. Despite undergoing numerous procedures over several years, Simon's recovery after each embolisation was remarkably swift and nearly painless. The youth regained his ability to walk without crutches and could do all the activities of a normal teenager. The backpack full of medical supplies, which had been a constant companion, was finally retired to the back of the closet. Five years on, Simon is a university student and is no longer hindered by pain while walking.

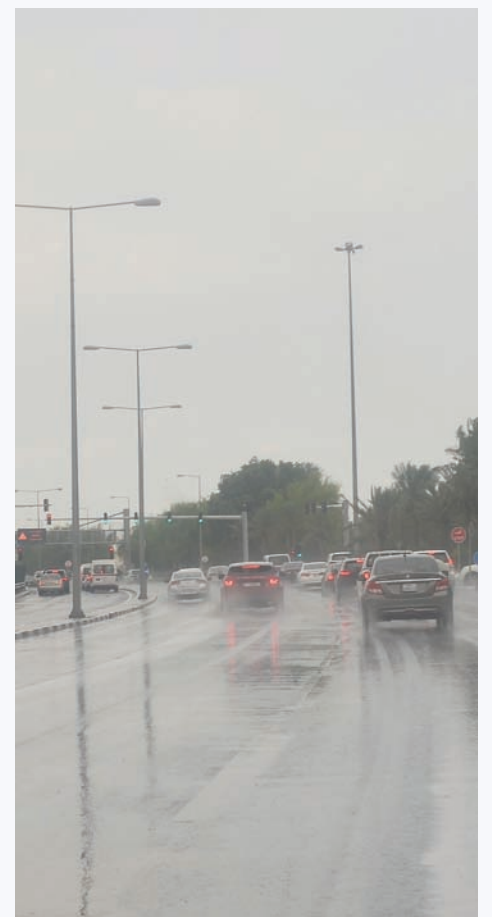


Municipalities monitoring rainfall

All the municipalities across Qatar have closely monitored the progress of work at the Unified Operations Centre to ensure full readiness and immediate response to public reports on rain accumulation round the clock as many parts of the country experienced rainfall yesterday. The Ministry of Municipality stressed that is keen to monitor the situation closely and would immediately handle any reports regarding rain water accumulations to help enhance public safety.

Qatar receives season's first showers

Qatar received the season's first showers, both inshore and offshore yesterday. During the rain lasting nearly 90 minutes, the intensity varied from medium to a drizzle. The showers were preceded by strong winds. The Qatar Meteorology Department reported that the country received rain varying from 2.5mm (Qatar University) to 38mm (Al Daayen). The amount of rain recorded in other locations across Qatar is as follows: Ras Laffan (7.3mm), Ain Snaa (14.1mm), Umm Al Hawaya (5.3mm), Madinat Al Shamal (3.5mm), Imgaitna (22.4mm), Mesameer (6.4mm), Simsima (25.8mm), Al Ghuwaryriyah (15.4mm), Semaisima (10.3mm), Doha (2.9mm), Al Busaier (16.4mm), Madinat Khalifa (14.2mm), Bani Hajer (17mm), Khalifa Tennis Complex (4.4mm), Al Muntazah (10.5mm) and Al Sadd (27.3mm). Yesterday's minimum and maximum temperatures were in the 24°-29° Celsius and 34C-39C, range, respectively. There is no rain forecast today, and the expected minimum and maximum temperatures are in the 25C-29C and 34C-40C range, respectively. **PICTURES:** Shajji Kayamkulam



Vibrant cultural events ahead

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Doha is gearing up for a vibrant autumn packed with cultural events: from exhibitions showcasing jewellery, fashion, and Arabian horses to film festivals and a major tourism mart. Part of October extravaganza is the literary celebration, the Katara Arabic Novel Festival, running from tomorrow (October 13) until October 20 at Katara - the Cultural Village. This event will honour Moroccan novelist Tuhami al-Wazzani as its personality of the year, celebrating pioneers of the Arabic novel. The festival will also feature a book fair and engaging family workshops, reflecting the spirit of the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture, a year-long initiative designed to foster deeper understanding and con-



Moscow Ballet La Classique to present Swan Lake.

nection between the two nations. The Pearl Cirque, from October 17-27 at The Pearl Amphitheatre, promises a spectacular family outing. The iconic amphitheatre transforms into a grand circus tent, hosting acrobats, fire dancers, clowns, and a dazzling array of other performers. Music lovers will be treated to a double dose of exceptional talent on October 17 as internationally acclaimed Indian singer Shreya Ghoshal will take the stage at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC). The following day, October 18, the

QNCC will host the world-renowned Moscow La Classique Ballet in a stunning performance of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. Luxury and craftsmanship take centre stage from October 24-29 at Galleria Al Hazm with the Asjad Jewellery Exhibition, now in its sixth edition. The event showcases exquisite pieces from renowned designers and brands. The Galleria will also host the Zinatha Exhibition from October 31 to November 8, a premier fashion showcase featuring elegant abayas, jalabiyas, fine cosmetics, and more, appealing to discerning women across the Gulf.



The Qatar Travel Mart.

November 6-9 will witness Al Shaqab International Arabian Horse Show at the Longines Indoor Arena. Film enthusiasts can look forward to the Ajyal Film Festival taking place from November 16-23, celebrating international family-friendly cinema, including a "Made in Qatar" programme that showcases local talent. According to Visit Qatar, families will also enjoy the Katara Children's Festival from November 23-25, featuring Moroccan cultural elements in honour of the Year of Culture. The third edition of the Qatar Travel

Mart will take place from November 25-27 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre, bringing together tourism stakeholders from around the globe and promoting Qatar as a leading travel destination. The 6th Qatar International Art Festival, set from November 25-30 at Katara, will showcase the work of more than 300 artists from more than 65 nationalities, reinforcing Qatar's position as a hub for art and culture. This festival will feature painting and sculpture exhibitions, art conferences, workshops, and cultural performances.