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Wounded Palestinians receive treatment at the Kamal Adwan Hospital after an Israeli air strike in Beit Lahiya, yesterday.

Dozens martyred as Israeli army targets 2 Gaza UNRWA schools

Reuters
Cairo

Officials in Gaza said rescuers were still recovering bodies and the injured from the rubble after an Israeli strike that killed dozens in Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza late Saturday.

At least 87 people were dead or missing following the air strike on Beit Lahiya, the health ministry in the Palestinian territory said, one of the highest death tolls for months from a single attack.

It marked an intensification of Israel's offensives against Palestinian resistance group Hamas in Gaza.

Israel's government has spurned several attempts by the United States, its main ally and military backer, at brokering cease-fires in both Gaza and Lebanon.

In Gaza, the health ministry said rescue operations following the strike in Beit Lahiya were being hindered by communications problems and by ongoing Israeli military operations.

The strike came two weeks into a major assault around Jabalia, just south of Beit Lahiya.

Several Palestinians were martyred and injured yesterday after the Israeli occupation army targeted two schools sheltering displaced people in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip.

Palestinian News Agency (WAFA) quoted local sources as saying that the Israeli occupation fired artillery shells at the UNRWA-run Hafsa School that was housing displaced people around Abu Rashid Pool

in Jabalia camp, which resulted in killing and injuring several Palestinians.

The sources added that the Israeli occupation army pounded Abu Hussein primary school at Jabalia camp, which led to the martyrdom and injury of many Palestinians.

At least 87 people were dead or missing following the air strike on Beit Lahiya on Saturday night, the health ministry in the Palestinian territory said

The Israeli occupation army set fire to Hamad school, which was sheltering displaced people, along with the Indonesian hospital in northern Gaza, the sources pointed out, adding that the fire extended to the hospital's electric generators.

Additionally, several Palestinians were killed after Israeli fighter jets bombarded the Al-Fakhoura area in the northern Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military announced yesterday the death of a brigade commander in a blast in northern Gaza.

Colonel Ahsan Daksa, commander of the 401st Brigade, was killed in the Jabalia area when an explosive struck him as he left his tank, military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said in a briefing.

Hagari said that another battalion commander and two officers were lightly wounded in the incident.

As the fighting has continued, two of the three remaining hospitals in northern Gaza have been hit and patients, medical staff and displaced people injured.

Hamad Hospital to be modernised

Renovation work to start next year; several services will be relocated

QNA
Doha

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) is embarking on a major modernisation programme for Hamad General Hospital (HGH) which will see a comprehensive upgrade of systems and facilities.

HMC's Chief of Health Facilities Development, Hamad Nasser Abdulla al-Khalifa, said the renovation, expected to last a total of three years, will significantly enhance the patient experience. "For more than 40 years, Hamad General Hospital has played a major role in supporting the health of Qatar's population. The hospital has been the foundation of Qatar's hospital system, and now is the time for an upgrade of systems and facilities," al-Khalifa said.

"Throughout this process, HGH will continue to provide a wide and important range of specialist healthcare services to patients"

"Phase one of the renovation work, which will concentrate on upgrading the two inpatient towers and the ground floor below the towers, will start in 2025. This renovation programme will deliver single rooms and advanced technical systems, and create modern environments that will all improve the care experience for patients following the essential work," added al-Khalifa.

In the coming months, the two inpatient towers will be vacated, and several outpatient clinics will be relocated to other hospitals, but Hamad General Hospital will continue to be the busiest hospital within HMC's network.

Medical Director of Hamad General Hospital, Dr Muna al-Maslamani, said, "More than 370 beds remain open, cov-



ering medical, surgical, and critical care services as well as our Trauma and Emergency Center. Hamad General Hospital will also continue to operate the Bone and Joint Center, Pediatric Emergency Centers, and Fahad Bin Jassim Kidney Center."

I stress that throughout this process, Hamad General Hospital will continue to provide a wide and important range of specialist healthcare services to patients, Dr al-Maslamani said.

HMC's Chief Medical Officer, Dr Abdulla al-Ansari, explained that in recent years HMC has significantly expanded capacity across its network. "Since 2016, we have opened nine new hospitals. These include Aisha Bint Hamad Al Attiyah Hospital, the second largest of HMC's hospitals, and the Medical Care and Research Center, both opened in the last two years. These two new HMC hospitals will be the main facilities receiving the relocated services. With this additional capacity available across the system, now is the perfect time to vacate patients from HGH and upgrade the jewel of HMC's hospital network."

Despite the closure of some beds at Hamad General Hospital, HMC's overall bed capacity is increasing. The opening of new beds and services at Aisha Bint Hamad Al Attiyah Hospital, among other HMC facilities, ensures that patients continue to receive high-quality care without interruption.

Qatar condemns settlers' storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque courtyards

Qatar has strongly condemned the storming of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque courtyards by hundreds of settlers under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces and deemed it a flagrant violation of international law and an act of provocation to the feelings of Muslims worldwide.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned of repercussions of the repeated Israeli attempts to compromise the religious and historical status quo of Al-Aqsa Mosque. It stressed that the international community should shoulder its moral and legal responsibility toward Jerusalem and its sanctities.

The ministry reiterated Qatar's unwavering position on the just of the Palestinian cause and the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people, including the full right to perform their religious rituals without restrictions, and establish their independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. (QNA)

South Beirut partially destroyed by Israeli bombs

AFP
Beirut

Just a month ago, south Beirut's bustling streets were packed with traffic, families strolling about and youths in cafes, but now silence dominates the abandoned Hezbollah bastion, interrupted only by the sound of Israeli bombs.

Escalating Israeli attacks since late September, after nearly a year of low-intensity cross-border exchanges, have reduced much of the Lebanese capital's once densely-packed southern suburbs to rubble and sent many of its residents fleeing.

On September 27, days into Israel's intense air campaign on Lebanon, massive Israeli strikes killed Hezbollah's elusive leader Hassan Nasrallah in the heart of the Iran-backed group's south Beirut

stronghold, toppling several apartment buildings and spreading fear of even greater violence.

Cracks snaked down nearby buildings as torn-off asphalt and burst pipes leaked sewage and tap water.

"About 320 buildings were destroyed in Beirut and its suburbs" in less than a month of war, Mona Fawaz of the Beirut Urban Lab told AFP.

The devastation has surpassed the damage caused by Israel's last war with Hezbollah in 2006, said Fawaz, who records cases of "urbanicide", the destruction of cities in conflict, focusing now on Lebanon and the Gaza Strip.

The Burj al-Barajneh neighbourhood, unscathed in 2006, has been heavily damaged in the bombardment this time around.

Once again, families from south Beirut are forced to seek ref-



Civil defence members put out a fire at a damaged site, in the aftermath of Israeli strikes on Beirut's southern suburbs, yesterday.

uge elsewhere in the country or abroad. Many live in rented apartments

or with relatives, while others are crammed in schools-turned-shelters.

Lebanon state media reported four Israeli strikes on Beirut's southern suburbs yesterday, saying Hezbollah-linked financial associations were among the targets, after the Israeli military issued evacuation orders for the area.

At least three branches of Al-Qard Al-Hassan, which Israel accuses of financing Hezbollah, were hit in the strikes, the National News Agency reported, after the Israel army warned it would imminently begin attacking the association and issued evacuation orders for more than a dozen buildings in Beirut's southern suburbs.

Israel struck dozens of south Lebanon villages and towns overnight and targeted Nabatiyeh city for a third time this week, Lebanese state media said yesterday.

Qatar participates in inauguration ceremony of Indonesian president



Qatar participated in the inauguration ceremony of Prabowo Subianto as president of Indonesia. HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohammed al-Attiyah represented Qatar. HE Dr al-Attiyah, along with his accompanying delegation, were welcomed upon arrival in Jakarta by Indonesian Minister of Investment Rosan Roeslani. He was accorded formal reception ceremony on this occasion. (QNA)



Call to strengthen global co-operation, expertise against financial crimes



Attorney-general inaugurates anti-money laundering workshop

Attorney-General HE Dr Issa bin Saad al-Jafali al-Nuaimi inaugurated yesterday a workshop entitled "Improving Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism Regime (A holistic approach to mitigate financial crimes)", organised by the Public Prosecution in co-operation with the US Departments of Justice and Treasury.

Attended by US ambassador to Qatar Timmy Davis, the workshop brought together high-level officials from about 16 countries, including attorneys-general, assistant attorneys-general, public prosecutors, judges, and officials from agencies concerned with combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

The attorney-general delivered an inaugural speech stressing the need for international co-operation and the exchange of expertise and experiences between countries and co-operation between the various judicial, executive and legislative authorities to limit the spread of the crimes of money laundering and financing terrorism. The increase in organised crime activities and their negative impacts affect the interests of all countries given the money laundering and terrorist financing activities that take place within the international environment and across national borders, which requires multifaceted measures and global, regional, bilateral and national judicial arrangements, measures and follow-ups, he said.

He stressed that Qatar attaches great importance to the issue of combating money laundering and terrorist financing, and places this within its national strategy within the framework of the general directions adopted in the field of criminal policy, especially in the field of combating organised crime, primarily money laundering and terrorist financing, through the numerous efforts of national institutions and the states accession to relevant international agreements.

He added that Qatar has spared no effort in recent years to develop the system for combating money laundering, financing of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons, by updating the legislative framework, establishing and strengthening specialised institutions, and implementing intensive regulatory reforms to ensure technical compliance with international standards.



It has also worked to develop its human and technological resources to keep pace with reforms and achieve high levels of results expected from this system, he added.

He pointed out that the results of the 2023 mutual evaluation of Qatar and its success in building an effective anti-money laundering and terrorist financing system that achieves technical compliance with the international standards required to combat money laundering and terrorist financing crimes, in which all relevant authorities in the country participated, represented by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Justice and Finance, the Qatar Central Bank, the Supreme Judicial Council, the Public Prosecution and other entities. He noted the important role played by the Public Prosecution in Qatar in combating money laundering crimes, related predicate crimes and terrorism financing crimes, as it is the exclusive authority responsible for judicial investigation and criminal prosecution, in addition to being the authority supervising the implementation of targeted financial penalties.

He stressed that the Public Prosecution in Qatar, keen to play its important role in combating money laundering and financing terrorism, has worked to strengthen its systems and capabilities in supporting national and international efforts to combat cross-border financial crime and confront the new challenges created by the economic transformations witnessed by the world through the spread of financial technology and virtual currencies.

Although these tools provide opportunities for innovation and development, they are also exploited for illegal purposes. Therefore, international co-operation and the exchange of expertise and advanced technologies are essential to confront these challenges, and the role of central authorities in countries comes at the forefront of these efforts by strengthening this co-operation, direct communication, exchange of information and expertise, and cooperation in investigations and trials.

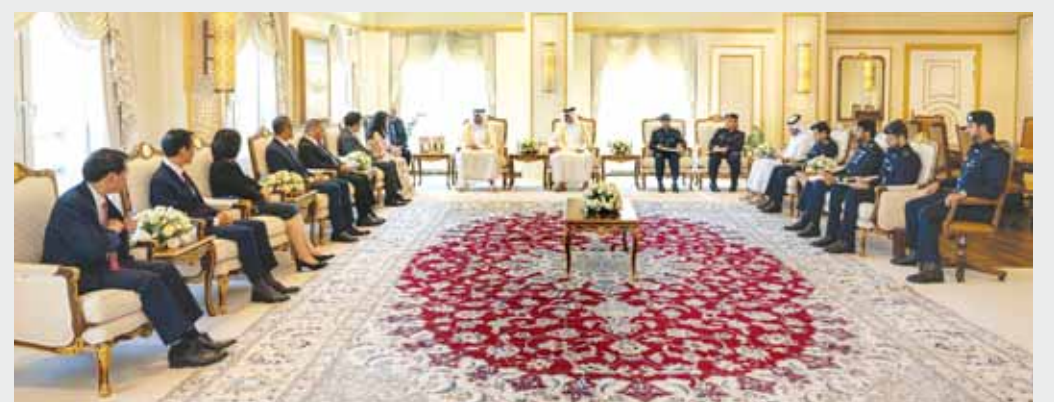
He said the Public Prosecution is keen to co-ordinate directly with its international and regional partners in the field of international co-operation and capacity building to implement the recommendations arising from the mutual evaluation and develop its work methods to achieve higher levels of effectiveness in its areas of competence.

The four-day workshop will be attended by specialists and experts in the field of combating money laundering and terrorist financing, as well as officials from public prosecutions, law enforcement agencies and financial institutions. The workshop aims to enhance capabilities, exchange best practices and discuss legal frameworks and modern technologies in the field of combating money laundering and terrorist financing, which will contribute to strengthening an integrated system to effectively reduce financial crimes and find innovative solutions to current and future challenges.

The workshop represents a rich opportunity to highlight and exchange views, experiences on everything related to money laundering issues, such as banking supervision on combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

In his speech, the US ambassador noted the co-operation between the American authorities and the Public Prosecution to organise this workshop, which deals with a very important topic at the present time, which will enhance and improve efforts to combat financial crimes, and work to put an end to terrorists, criminals, terrorist organisations and any other parties. He added that the workshop is an opportunity to exchange experiences and knowledge through important discussions, in addition to learning ways to improve capabilities, especially with the presence of a large group of experts, specialists, public prosecutors and judges from the US and around the world. During the workshop, important topics will be addressed, such as schemes in financial crimes, new applications, some studies, and investigation techniques. (QNA)

Minister of State for Interior Affairs meets Asean member states ambassadors



HE the Minister of State for Interior Affairs Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Faisal bin Mohammed al-Thani discussed the latest developments in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), during a meeting with ambassadors of the bloc's member states yesterday. The meeting discussed bilateral security co-operation between Qatar and the Asean member states and ways to boost them. The meeting was attended by Brunei Darussalam ambassador Mohamed Bahrain Abu Bakar, Indonesian ambassador Ridwan Hassan, Vietnamese ambassador Nguyen Huy Hiep, Malaysian ambassador Mohammad Faizal Razali, Philippine ambassador Lilibeth Velasco Pono, Thailand's ambassador Sira Swangsilpa, Charge d'Affaires at Singapore's embassy in Doha and Chair of the Asean Committee Sumaya Baqavi. (QNA)

Attorney-general meets participants in anti-money laundering workshop



Attorney-General HE Dr Issa bin Saad al-Jafali al-Nuaimi yesterday met separately with a number of judicial, legal experts participating in the "Improving the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing Terrorism Regime" workshop, organised in Doha, by the Public Prosecution in co-operation with the US Departments of Justice and the Treasury, from October 20-23. HE Dr al-Nuaimi met with Jill Rose, Deputy Director of the US Justice Department's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training; Judge Frank D Whitney, US District Judge for the Western District of North Carolina; Judge Dhari Jaber Farhood Karafi, Deputy Chief Public Prosecutor of Iraq; and Judge Mohammed al-Amin, Attorney-General of Mauritania. The meetings discussed regional and international efforts to combat money laundering and terrorism financing and ways to enhance co-operation between the judicial, executive and legislative authorities in this field, in addition to discussing the key topics on the programme of the workshop. (QNA)



Al-Hammadi bids farewell to Cuban envoy

HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi met yesterday with Cuban ambassador to Qatar Alain Perez Torres, on the occasion of the end of his tenure. HE Dr al-Hammadi thanked the ambassador for his efforts in supporting and strengthening bilateral relations, wishing him success in his new duties. (QNA)



International recognition for Qatar Tourism, Visit Qatar

Qatar Tourism and Visit Qatar celebrated big wins for their innovative digital solutions at two prestigious international awards ceremony.

Visit Qatar has won the 'Enterprise AI Tech Awards' in the Best Use Case of Gen AI 2024 category for its Visit Qatar GenAI Chatbot and Trip Planner.

The announcement was made on October 3 at the 8th Middle East Enterprise and Analytics Summit. This award is a testament to Visit Qatar's commitment to redefining the travel experience by adopting

the latest technologies and continuously striving for service excellence across all its offerings. Visit Qatar has built a reputation for its cutting-edge digital platforms and is leading the way in AI-driven tourism.

It is the first tourism entity in the region to introduce GenAI on its website.

The GenAI Chatbot has redefined how travellers experience Qatar and the Trip Planner is aiming to set new standards in travel and tourism.

The GenAI Chatbot and Trip Planner

seamlessly communicate in over 50 languages, accurately answering inquiries, breaking barriers, and making travel planning accessible to a global audience.

Qatar Tourism's Service Excellence Academy has been honoured with the Gold Travel Weekly Magellan Award for its groundbreaking Destination Education Programmes. The Qatar Specialist and Qatar Host programmes, renowned for their world-class training, were instrumental in securing this prestigious recognition.



The Qatar Specialist programme leverages cutting-edge digital technology to provide international trade partners with exceptional learning experiences. This innovative approach empowers them to effectively sell and promote Qatar as a premier global destination. Meanwhile, the Qatar Host programme offers a comprehensive curriculum designed to equip frontline service professionals with the skills necessary to deliver unparalleled experiences to Qatar's visitors.

CRA issues consumer protection policy to enhance telecom consumers experience

The Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) has issued the Communications Consumer Protection Policy and Regulation, setting a new standard for consumer rights and service provider obligations in Qatar's telecommunications sector.

This is fully aligned with Qatar's telecommunications law and regulatory framework, ensuring that consumers are protected under a comprehensive and legally grounded structure that demands higher levels of transparency and responsibility from service providers.

The policy outlines the key objectives and principles that will govern consumer protection efforts in Qatar.

This policy establishes the foundation for ensuring that consumers' rights are not only recognised but actively safeguarded in an era of rapid technological change.

The regulation is a detailed set of rules and procedures that service providers must adhere to. It covers critical aspects such as advertising standards, marketing



Amel Salem al-Hanawi, director of the Consumer Affairs Department at CRA.

practices, billing transparency, contract fairness, data privacy, and customer notifications.

Specific provisions are included to address common consumer concerns, including unsolicited direct marketing, spam, and the safeguarding of personal data.

The regulation also lays out clear processes for handling consumer complaints and disputes, ensuring that consumers have continuous access to essential emergency services without disruption.

"The Communications Consumer Protection Policy and

Regulation we have issued marks a crucial step in our ongoing commitment to creating a fair and transparent communications environment in Qatar.

"Aligned with Qatar's telecommunications law and regulatory framework, our goal is to protect consumers by ensuring they receive clear information, fair contracts, and reliable services while holding service providers to the highest standards," said Amel Salem al-Hanawi, director of the Consumer Affairs Department at CRA.

"By issuing this instrument, we are reinforcing our commitment to fostering a competitive and consumer-friendly communications market, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Digital Agenda 2030," she added.

The new policy repeals the Telecommunications Consumer Protection Policy issued in January 2014.

Also, all previous regulatory instruments issued by CRA or the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (previously known as ictQATAR) and

related to consumers will be repealed after the transition period set out in the Communications Consumer Protection Regulation.

These instruments include CRA's Code of Advertising, Marketing and Branding issued on September 25, 2014; CRA President Decision No 11 of 2016 issuing the Spam Regulation; and CRA President Decision No 12 of 2016 issuing the Premium Services Regulation.

The issuance of the Communications Consumer Protection Policy and Regulation reflects CRA's proactive approach in safeguarding consumer rights and maintaining a balanced relationship between consumers and service providers. By setting clear expectations and stringent requirements, CRA is ensuring that Qatar's telecommunications sector remains a leader in innovation and consumer protection.

Communications Consumer Protection Policy and Regulation can be accessed at <https://www.cra.gov.qa/en/document/communications-consumer-protection-policy-and-regulation>

MoPH raises awareness on importance of preventing eye diseases

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has intensified efforts to raise awareness on the importance of preventing eye diseases, as well as on the early detection and diagnosis of conditions that can lead to visual impairment or blindness, as part of this year's World Sight Day.

World Sight Day is a global initiative launched by the World Health Organisation and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), observed on the second Thursday of October each year.

The initiative aims to promote blindness prevention programmes by raising awareness, educating, and engaging the community.

It emphasises the importance of early diagnosis and timely treatment of diseases that can lead to blindness, particularly in light of the rising number of individuals affected by visual impairment.

The IAPB currently estimates that about 2.2bn people worldwide are affected by visual impairment. The agency has warned that this number may increase, potentially impacting half of the global population by 2050.

Director of the Non-Communicable Diseases Prevention Programs Department at MoPH, Sheikh Dr Mohamed bin Hamad al-Thani, affirmed the ministry's commitment to exerting efforts and continuously striving to provide the best health services to maintain eye health.

This includes developing health and awareness programmes that target all segments of society, raising public awareness of eye health and safety among community members, highlighting common eye diseases, treatment and prevention methods, and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to access comprehensive eye care services.

Sheikh Dr al-Thani also stressed the importance of early eye examinations for detecting potential eye conditions and preventing eye diseases, particularly given that many individuals spend extended periods in front of screens.

The results of the most recent national survey, announced in 2023, revealed a significant improvement in eye health among Qatar's population.

The survey, conducted by the Ministry of Public Health in collaboration with the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), focused on detecting visual impairment and blindness among individuals aged 50 and above.

The survey's findings indicated that the percentage of individuals suffering from severe visual impairment or blindness has significantly decreased, with about 8.1% of adults over the age of 50 experiencing visual impairment.

Of this group, 0.2% suffer from severe visual impairment, while the percentage diagnosed with blindness does not exceed 0.3% of participants.

Additionally, the survey identified the leading causes of blindness in Qatar as diabetic retinopathy at 33%, followed by cataracts at 20%, glaucoma at 13%, retinal diseases at 13%, and uncorrected refractive errors at 6.7% of participants.

Sheikh Dr al-Thani stated that the results of this survey, when compared to the previous survey conducted in 2009, clearly demonstrate the advancements in ophthalmology in Qatar.

He highlighted that the incidence of blindness has decreased nearly fourfold, while cases of severe visual impairment have declined by about eightfold.

Additionally, effective surgical coverage for cataract treatment at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) hospitals has seen remarkable improvement, rising from 63% in the previous survey to over 95%.

MoPH emphasised that all individuals with diabetes or glaucoma should commit to annual eye examinations and maintain ongoing follow-ups with eye specialists to prevent the development of eye diseases.

Furthermore, monitoring blood sugar levels is crucial, particularly in light of the survey results revealing that 40% of participants have diabetes, with 38% of these individuals having not undergone any examination or follow-up with an eye doctor in the past two years.

Consequently, this increases their susceptibility to the risks of diabetic retinopathy and other complications. (QNA)

Qatar Precision Health Institute holds genomics workshop for teachers

As part of its ongoing co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Qatar Precision Health Institute, a national centre for research and implementation under Qatar Foundation, organised recently a workshop on genomics for primary school science teachers.

The workshop addressed the concepts of genomics and featured training for teachers on how to leverage interactive genomics stations to familiarise primary school students with the science through the 'Genome Heroes' game. The workshop focused on introducing the principles of genomics and simplifying information to familiarise primary school students with relevant modern scientific concepts and developments.

Dima Darwish, head of Scientific Education at Qatar Precision Health Institute, spoke about the

importance of genomics, its impact on treating diseases, and its role in developing health care through precision medicine or personalised practices.

"While we, as experts, with the contribution of all community members, draw a map of the Qatar genome, which is of utmost importance at the local and regional levels, we find it difficult to deliver basic information about genomics to our children. The Genome Heroes game helps lay the foundations for spreading knowledge about genomics to the next generation," she noted.

Teachers were briefed on the latest specialisations in the field of precision medicine, including genetic counselling, pharmacogenomics and bioinformatics, and other topics. Participants were also familiarised with the 'Genome Heroes' game, which seeks to convey basic



A session from the workshop.

information about genomics and its importance to the future of healthcare through games and stories that introduce players to the concept of cells, DNA, genetics, and mutagenic repair. The application is the first educational game worldwide to simplify genomic concepts in Arabic and English. The workshop proved to be a success, as teachers engaged in interactive discussions about

genomics, how to simplify teaching complex concepts, the challenges that students may face, and potential solutions to overcome them. Darwish added: "We want children to realise that there is a wonderful and interesting science called genomics, and to base their future dreams on this science, which will propel Qatar as one of the world's leading countries in the field of precision medicine."

Sony and Fnac Qatar host cinematography workshop

Sony Middle East and Africa, a leader in consumer electronics, in collaboration with Fnac Qatar, recently hosted an exclusive workshop at Katara - the Cultural Village in Doha.

Designed to empower attendees to transform their creative vision into thriving businesses, the workshop was guided by renowned cinematographer and Sony Alpha ambassador, Mohammad Almorohen, who shared invaluable insights into mastering both the art and business of wedding videography.

The global wedding photography market size is set to expand from \$21.83bn in 2023 to \$36.80bn by 2030.

The workshop, titled "The Art of Wedding Cinematography: Unlocking Business Growth and Success", aimed to equip participants with advanced creative techniques and business strategies allowing them to stand out in a highly competitive market.

Almorohen emphasised the importance of storytelling and creativity in wedding videography, while also offering practical guidance on how to build a sustainable business around one's artistic vision.



Focusing on Sony gear, this masterclass emphasised the critical role lenses play in capturing cinematic moments. Through hands-on activities and gear selection tips, participants gained the tools to unlock new levels of creativity and business success in wedding cinematography. Participants also exchanged personal experiences, from overcoming early struggles and strategies for scaling their businesses.

Jobin Joejeo, managing director at Sony Middle East & Africa, said: "At Sony, our mission is to

enable creative professionals to harness the full potential of their skills while unlocking new opportunities for business growth. Through workshops like this, we aim to provide creatives with the knowledge and tools to elevate their work and create memorable experiences for their clients. Our goal is to ensure that attendees leave not just inspired, but empowered to apply new techniques that will help them stand out in the wedding videography industry."

Through this initiative, Sony

MEA reaffirms its ongoing commitment to supporting wedding cinematography by providing professionals with the tools, knowledge, and inspiration they need to succeed.

This workshop is part of a broader strategy by Sony to empower videographers in the region through hands-on learning experiences that help them elevate their craft, explore creative techniques, and thrive in the business of wedding videography.

The workshop attracted notable videographers and creative professionals from across the region, providing a unique platform to network and exchange ideas. Attendees learned from Almorohen's vast experience and gained insights into leveraging their creativity for business success in the dynamic and growing wedding industry.

A professional director of photography, Almorohen started his professional career path in 2006 and has since conducted numerous trainings and workshops across various universities, art colleges and cultural centres intending to spread knowledge and personal experiences to fuel growth and success.



Al-Nabit meets Chief of General Staff of UK



HE the Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces Staff Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad bin Aqeel al-Nabit met with the visiting Chief of the General Staff of the United Kingdom General Sir Roland Walker. The meeting discussed a number of topics of common interest along with military co-operation between the two sides and ways to enhance and develop them. The meeting was attended by a number of senior officials and officers from both sides. (QNA)



Panel to study constitutional amendments at Shura Council holds third meeting



The committee concerned with studying the amendment of articles in the constitution at the Shura Council held its third meeting yesterday, headed by its Chairman Dr Sultan bin Hassan al-Dhabet al-Dosari. During the meeting, the committee continued its discussion of the draft constitutional amendments and decided to continue studying it in its next meeting. (QNA)

Benin National Assembly Speaker meets Qatar's charge d'affaires

Speaker of the National Assembly of Benin Louis Viavonou met with Charge d'Affaires of the Qatari embassy in Cotonou Hamad bin Dhaen al-Kuwari. The meeting discussed co-operation between the countries. (QNA)



Rental dispute panel set to enhance accessibility for users

The Rental Dispute Committees that pertain to the Ministry of Municipality have recently introduced new electronic financial services, including electronic deposits, which allow applicants to transfer monthly rent payments via an electronic link, sent to them through various means according to their preference. Speaking to local Arabic daily *Arrayyah*, Rosa al-Shammari, head of the Office of the Rental Dispute Resolution Committees Headquarters said the applicants can call the service on 184 to receive the link or obtain it in person, saving time and effort. Besides, the Committees have launched a 24/7 instant transfer service, allowing the monthly rent deposit to be transferred to the applicant's account and accessible on the same day the request is submitted. She explained that the guide to the rights and duties of landlords and tenants is currently under review, with a proposal to have it available in multiple languages, including Arabic and English, and it is expected to be launched



Rosa al-Shammari, head of the Office of the Rental Dispute Resolution Committees Headquarters.

in the first quarter of next year. However, currently to submit an application to open a rental dispute case, it has to go to the committees' headquarters, but in the near future this service will be available online. It takes around one week or a maximum of fourteen days to set a date for the first session for a submitted dispute. Besides, there are dedicated counters to receive the applications and requests of the elderly and persons with special needs. The committees resolved 3,598 related cases in 2023 with an accomplishment rate of around 90% of the received cases. Most of

these cases were regarding unpaid rental value. For regular cases, it takes around 21 days to resolve, and some of these cases are resolved from the first session. However, when the case requires engineering or accounting technical expertise, the case can take up to three months to resolve. She pointed out that it has been found that around 15% of the received disputes are often resolved through friendly reconciliation among the parties of the dispute. Accordingly, there are plans to launch an office for reconciliation, which would eventually reduce the time of litigation among the litigators.

Global recognition for Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani Holy Qur'an contest

The Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani Holy Qur'an Competition has won the Croatian International Award for Service to the Holy Qur'an.

This, according to an official statement from the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, is in appreciation of efforts in serving the Holy Qur'an worldwide.

The award was received during the closing ceremony of the European competition held in the Croatian capital Zagreb. Contestants from 41 countries participated in the competition that was organised by the General Secretariat of the European International Competition at the Islamic Sheikhdom under the supervision of the Secretary-General of the European International Competition Khaled Yassin. The Qatari delegation to the competition was headed by Khaled Shaheen al-Ghanim, assistant under-secretary for Islamic Affairs at Awqaf.

The delegation included Malallah Abdulrahman al-Jaber, director of the Department of Da'wa and Religious Guidance and chairman of the Organising Committee of the Sheikh Jassim Holy Qur'an Competition. Also, the delegation had several members of the competition organising committee. These included Dr Saad Fadel al-Kuwari, assistant director of the Department of Islamic Affairs; Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz al-Thani, head of the Religious Guidance Department; and Youssef Hassan al-Hammadi, head of the Scholarships Section at the department of Da'wa and Religious Guidance.

Sheikh Jassim Holy Qur'an competition has received this honorary award for recognition of the efforts of the global competition and its support for external Qur'anic competitions.

The competition extensively supports and ensures the success of several Qur'anic competitions outside Qatar. This is in line with Qatar's efforts to spread and teach the Holy Qur'an worldwide and to motivate the participants in these competitions to interact with Qur'an and develop their skills in memorising and reciting the holy book. This support also strengthens the cultural relations and rap-



prochement between different people and exchanges religious and spiritual knowledge while embodying Qatar's social responsibility and commitment to spreading the values of tolerance and mercy.

Sheikh Jassim Holy Qur'an competition has also provided financial support for a number of international competitions. This amounted to QR1.6mn. The Russian Federation

Holy Qur'an Competition and the European International Competition for Memorisation and Recitation of the Holy Qur'an held in Croatia received supported. Also, the competition supported the Holy Qur'an Competition in the Bosnia and Herzegovina. Khaled Yassin expressed his thanks and great appreciation to Awqaf for being the first supporter and permanent main partner in organising the event.

QNL to organise study day on ancient libraries in Morocco

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

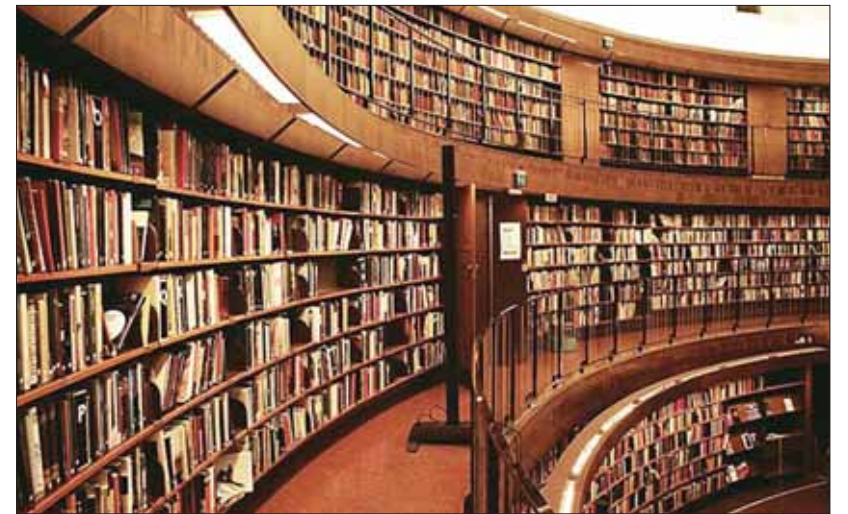
Qatar National Library (QNL) is organising a study day as part of the activities of the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture celebrations, titled "The Ancient Libraries of Morocco: From Preserving Manuscripts to Beacons of Knowledge".

The study day will provide an in-depth exploration of the historical development of ancient Moroccan libraries, tracing their founding and evolution to their current state.

These libraries have experienced periods of flourishing and openness to external influences, which contributed to the development of scholars, elites and societies.

However, they have also faced challenges, crises and disasters that led to a loss of prestige and vitality, often due to human actions.

Through three presentations, participants will delve into this heritage, revisiting key historical stages and addressing important questions: How did these libraries facilitate the transfer of knowledge and the circulation of texts within intellectual circles? In what ways did they serve as bridges for communication between local society and scientific in-



Initiative is part of the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture celebrations.

stitutions abroad? What does the future hold for books and paper in an increasingly digital world, and what is the fate of libraries and their patrons?

The speakers will be: Dr Abdelmajid al-Khayali, Head of Human Resources, Finance and Scientific Research at the Hassania Library in Rabat; Dr Mustafa al-Tubi, University Professor and Head of the Research Team on Moroccan Manuscript Heritage at Ibn Zohr University,

currently on a scientific mission at the Hassania Library. Abdelfattah Boukhouf, director of the Qaraouiyyine Library in Fez, Morocco, and the moderator Dr Moez Dridi, senior archivist at QNL.

The event will be held on November 13, 2024, from 4.30-7.30pm in Arabic, with simultaneous interpretation provided in English. It will be open for the public and registration is via the link: <https://events.qnl.qa/attend/wkJPd>

ARPM Tender Committee announces the following Tender

Tender No.	Subject	Fees QR.	Tender Bond QR.	Opening Date	Closing Date
ARPM/200/2024/TEN/DOH	Tender for Upgrade of CCTV Systems at Najada Hotel, Including MOI-SSD Approval	1,000	10,000	21-Oct-24	03-Nov-24
ARPM/201/2024/TEN/DOH	Tender for Professional Cleaning & Maintenance of Grease Traps at ARPM Hotels	500	10,000	21-Oct-24	17-Nov-24
ARPM/202/2024/TEN/DOH	Tender for Wireless Network Enhancement & Replacement of Existing Switches at Souq Waqif Boutique Hotels	1,000	10,000	21-Oct-24	17-Nov-24

- Interested parties can collect copies of the tender documents from ARPM Purchasing Department, via email to m.aseef@arpm.com.qa and L.cabral@arpm.com.qa during working hours 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Fri & Sat Closed)
- A payment of a non-refundable document's fees should be deposited in cash to:

- Beneficiary Name: Al-Rayyan Projects Management (ARPM)
- Account No. 0013-022375-004 (Qatar National Bank)
- IBAN No. QA86QNBAA00000000013022375004

- And the original deposit receipt should be submitted upon receiving of the terms and conditions.
- A tender bond (as stated above), issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar and valid for 120 days from the closing date should accompany tenders. **The executed tender bond should be included with the technical offer.**
- All tenderers MUST collect their original bonds from ARPM – Purchasing department upon expiry of the Tender Bond, unless alternative instructions are issued by ARPM.
- Proposal to be submitted in sealed envelopes as per the RFP requirements in both HARD COPY & SOFT COPY on CD or USB.
- Copies of valid **Company Commercial Registration, Computer Card & Authorization Letter** must be submitted in order to collect the tender documents.
- The successful tenderer is required to submit a performance bond issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar equivalent to 10% of the total contract sum and shall be valid for a period expiring 150 days after contract expiry.
- Offers should be valid for 120 days commencing from the closing date (as stated above).
- ARPM has the right to increase or decrease the scope of services by 20% with the same terms and conditions.
- ARPM is not bound to accept the lowest tender or any other tender and is under no obligation to show any reasons thereof.
- Bids should be submitted not later than 12:00 noon on the closing date and must be deposited into the Box, provided in the ARPM Purchasing office, located at the 9th Floor, ARPM, Head office and should be in sealed envelopes addressed to the Chairman - Tenders Committee, quoting the Tender Number and Subject.
- Offers arriving thereafter may not be considered.

CHAIRMAN – TENDER COMMITTEE
TEL: 40341804

UDST hosts alumni event in partnership with LinkedIn

University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST), in collaboration with LinkedIn organised an exclusive alumni gathering.

The event included sessions by Rami Sabri, director, Public Sector for LinkedIn Mena and Mohammed al-Hayder, founder of Takallam for Training and Development.

Held at the university campus, the gathering aimed to equip both recent graduates and experienced professionals with the necessary tools and strategies to thrive in today's dynamic job market.

Rami Sabri delivered an engaging session on "How to Rock Your LinkedIn Profile," providing expert advice on optimising LinkedIn presence and building a strong professional network.

Mohammed al-Hayder led an inspiring workshop titled "Reignite Your Career," focusing on finding motivation, reigniting professional drive, and strategies to navigate career growth.

For the first time at UDST, the



The event aimed to equip graduates with the necessary tools for career development.

event featured a carefully curated exhibition showcasing alumni-owned businesses, providing a unique opportunity to explore the entrepreneurial spirit within the university community.

Dr Salem Al-Naemi, president, UDST stated: "This exclusive event reflects UDST's continuous commitment to supporting the professional development of our alumni. We have prepared them to be leaders and innovators in Qatar and beyond. Today, we host

them to connect and showcase how each one is contributing, in their own unique way, to the development of Qatar's economy."

UDST's exclusive alumni event showcased the university's dedication to supporting its graduates' career journeys. By offering unique opportunities for professional development and networking, UDST aims to empower its alumni to achieve remarkable success and make impactful contributions to the community and the nation.

Stars of Science crowns Season 16 Top Arab Innovator

Qatar Foundation's (QF) Stars of Science TV programme wrapped up its 16th season on Saturday night in which the jury and online public voting determined the Top Arab Innovator and the second and third placeholders.

Stars of Science host Khalid al-Jumaily announced Yaman Tayyar from Syria as the Top Arab Innovator for his invention 'Geno', a microfluidic mixer designed to produce lipid nanoparticles for gene therapy.

Tayyar said that being crowned as the Top Arab Innovator and receiving validation from experts in the field makes the win even more impactful and this only marks the beginning of a long journey of innovations.

He underlined that Stars of Science provided him with tremendous support that helped him achieve his innovation within three months instead of the full year that was initially planned.

Tunisian Haytham Yahyaoui won the second place for his Alzheimer's early detection app 'NeuroVox', which utilises voice analysis and artificial intelligence (AI) for early diagnosis.

Nada ElKharashi from Egypt won the third place for her project,



'Biovolt', which generates electricity from air humidity using bacterial nanowires.

President of Qatar Science and Technology Park Dr Jack Lau said that the three finalists dedicated themselves to presenting their pioneering innovations throughout the season, showcasing the talent and vision of young inventors in the region and highlighting the unlimited potential of science and technology.

Qatar Science and Technology Park firmly believes in empowering bright minds to become leaders and inventors capable of shaping a promising innovative future to serve all segments of society, Dr Lau added.

Stars of Science has called on innovators interested in participating in its 17th season to apply before December 31 through www.starsofscience.info

Beginning with initial designs to now prototypes competing for the grand prize, the three contestants went through the stages of developing their innovation during the programme's 16th season, highlighting their creativity and ability in passing rigorous development stages.

QF's Stars of Science TV programme represents a key platform for Arab inventors that transforms ideas into practical solutions, making it a leading programme in the Arab world in the field of innovation that supports and encourages innovation among Arab youth.

The programme also contributed to developing technological solutions for the communities of the young participating inventors by benefiting people's health and lifestyles as well as developing economic opportunities and promoting sustainable development. (QNA)

GU-Q series presents Pulitzer Prize-winner Hisham Matar

Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) will host a literary conversation featuring Pulitzer Prize-winning author Hisham Matar in dialogue with internationally acclaimed novelist Kamila Shamsie.

This event, part of the university's distinguished Qalam series, will take place on October 23 at 6.30pm in the GU-Q Auditorium.

The celebrated Libyan-British author Hisham Matar is best known for his memoir *The Return*, which won the Pulitzer Prize and was named one of the *New York Times* 100 Best Books of the 21st Century.

His debut novel, *In the Country of Men*, a powerful exploration of life under dictatorship, was shortlisted for the 2006 Booker Prize.

His latest work, *My Friends*, continues his exploration of exile and human connection, receiving criti-



Hisham Matar and Kamila Shamsie.

cal acclaim with the Orwell Prize for Political Fiction, a place on the Booker Prize longlist, and a National Book Award finalist recognition.

Kamila Shamsie, GU-Q's inaugural Writer-in-

Residence, will lead the discussion, exploring Matar's literary journey and the broader themes of his work.

Shamsie's renowned works include *Burnt Shadows*, shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction in 2009, and *Home Fire*, which won the 2018 Women's Prize for Fiction.

GU-Q dean, Safwan Masri underscored the significance of this latest event, saying, "Hisham and Kamila's shared experiences as storytellers promise to make this a deeply engaging dialogue that will resonate with anyone who has grappled with the search for home, whether literal or metaphorical."

Launched in September 2024, Qalam has previously hosted Nobel Laureate Abdulrazak Gurnah, underscoring GU-Q's commitment to bringing global literary voices to Qatar.

LIQUIDATION ANNOUNCEMENT "2"

Based on the Extraordinary General Assembly Resolution

To Liquidate

MIMAR PROJECTS FOR GENERAL CONTRACTING L.L.C
(The Company)

(under Voluntary Liquidation)

The Liquidator
Linsar Karuppanveetil Shamsudheen

Kreston SVP Chartered Accountants

Announce the Liquidation of

MIMAR PROJECTS FOR GENERAL CONTRACTING L.L.C
Commercial Registration No. (37809)

Any party who has any claims from this Company should send a registered letter, including all supporting documents, to P.O. Box 82297, Doha - Qatar

7712 9898 or 6668 8575 or info@krestonsvp.com
Within the remaining legal period of 20 days.

VCUarts Qatar priority deadline for academic year 2025

Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) invites potential students to send in their applications before the priority deadline of November 15. Applications submitted before the priority deadline will be reviewed first by the admissions team, and decisions will be made by the second week of January on these applications. Students can apply to the University's four-year undergraduate programmes. Those seeking to augment their undergraduate qualifications or enhance their existing careers can do so through VCUarts Qatar's MFA in Design programme. The final deadline for applications is January 15, 2025.



CAN WALK with Naseem Healthcare:



Qatar observes Breast Cancer Awareness Walkathon
Over 350 people participated in the annual Breast Cancer Awareness Walkathon of Naseem Healthcare, CAN WALK on Friday, October 18th, at Aspire Park, Doha. The event aimed to raise awareness about breast cancer and its early detection.

The walkathon was graced by the presence of Ms. Fatima Mapari, a breast cancer survivor, who delivered an inspiring speech. Ms. Mapari shared her personal journey and emphasized the importance of early detection and treatment. Her words resonated with the audience, inspiring them to take proactive steps towards their health.

The CAN WALK with Naseem Healthcare was a resounding success, with participants from all walks of life coming together to show their support for the cause. The event was a testimony to the community's commitment to fighting breast cancer and creating a healthier supportive environment in our society for all.

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Ministry of Commerce and Industry
دولة قطر - State of Qatar



Kia Telluride 3.8L

Manufacturing Year 2019 - 2024



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Al-Attiya Motors and Trading Company
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Qatar, Indonesia seal MoU to offer scholarships to Afghan students

Qatar and Indonesia have inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that provides Afghan students scholarships to pursue study in Indonesia.

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatir signed the MoU via video conference with Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi.

The MoU aims to establish a co-operation framework to build human capacities of the Afghan people by providing scholarships to study in Indonesia.

In attendance were the Acting Director of Asian Affairs Department, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Al-Johara Fakhro, and Director for South and Central Asian Affairs at the Indonesian foreign ministry Jatmiko Prasetyo.

HE AlKhatir gave a speech hailing the deep and historical Qatar-Indonesia relationship across multiple areas, citing that 2023 Qatar-Indonesia Year of Culture that celebrated both nations' Islamic heritage and art.

She expressed Qatar's pride in the work of several national companies in Indonesia, a G20 member, stressing that the MoU adds international development as another dimension to Qatari-Indonesian



relations, with both countries co-operating to support global human development, specifically in Afghanistan.

The scholarship programme is part of the two countries' broader shared vision and mission to support education and development projects in Afghanistan locally and globally, with a particular focus on creating opportunities that empower Afghan youth to build a brighter and more prosperous future in their country, she added.

Affirming Doha's plans to press on unwavering support for Afghanistan, HE AlKhatir spoke about Qatar's \$75mn pledge to support the Central Asian country.

She stressed the MoU would boost the Qatar-Indonesia mutual commitment to



establish a framework of co-operation to help build human capacities of the Afghan people by providing scholarships for Afghan students to study in Indonesia, affirming that it will be a rich and enjoyable journey for them in Indonesia.

HE AlKhatir affirmed that Qatar will continue to provide humanitarian and development assistance to the Afghan people, in partnership with Indonesia and other sisterly and friendly countries in the fields of health, food security and capacity building, expressing her belief that the partnership with Indonesia will support the coming generation in Afghanistan.

Marsudi said the collaboration to offer scholarships to Afghan students affirms their shared commitment to building a

brighter future for Afghanistan, and reflects and embodies the spirit of solidarity and co-operation.

She added that the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan underscores the urgent need for education, especially for Afghan women and girls, noting that Indonesia does not only provide academic paths, but also enhances the resilience and hope of the Afghan people in order to rebuild their homeland.

The minister pointed out that Qatar and Indonesia have enhanced access to education for Afghans by signing an MoU to provide humanitarian and development assistance, and hosting the International Conference on Afghan Women's Education in Bali in December 2022, which succeeded in mobilising interna-

tional support for the education and empowerment of Afghan women.

There are more than 20 Afghan students benefiting from scholarships, she added, expressing happiness to launch this strategic scholarship co-operation with Qatar as a key supporter.

Marsudi noted that the signing of the MoU will enable more Afghan students to pursue higher education at Indonesian universities, expressing her particular gratitude for Qatar's generous support in making this initiative possible.

She said that Indonesia provided this year 10mn polio vaccine doses and humanitarian aid to the Afghan people affected by natural disasters, in addition to its co-operation with a local non-governmental organisation to organise a psychosocial project that includes 400 Afghan women, providing them with the opportunity to participate in social life and enabling them to overcome their challenges.

Affirming her belief in the importance of creating a favourable environment for Afghan women and providing further job opportunities, Marsudi highlighted her country's readiness to help develop a business model for Islamic microfinance that is appropriate for Afghanistan. - QNA

Qatar advances 25 places in the UN's E-Government Development Index

Qatar achieved remarkable progress in the UN E-Government Development Index (EGDI) 2024 by moving from the 78th place to the 53rd among 193 other countries.

This composite index, published by the Economic and Social Affairs Department of the UN, measures the success of governments in using e-services to improve the lives of individuals and companies, in addition to evaluating the comprehensive development of e-governments worldwide.

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), the National Planning Council (NPC), the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA), and other government entities, has implemented 29 integrated projects across six main pillars.

This is aimed at positioning Qatar in top rankings within the index by 2030, in line with the objectives of the Digital Agenda 2030 that seeks to develop an advanced, sustainable digital infrastructure and achieve comprehensive digital transformation that enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of online services in Qatar.

This is also an achievement that reflects the ongoing efforts of the MCIT to improve the digital infrastructure and boost the efficiency of telecommunications in the country.

Assistant Undersecretary for Digital Government Affairs at the MCIT Mashaal Ali al-Hammadi said: "Qatar's achievement of ranking fifth globally in the 2024 E-Government Development Index reflects the joint efforts of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the National Planning Council, and

the Communications Regulatory Authority."

"This four-way collaboration has directly contributed to the qualitative advancement of the country's digital transformation," he said. "We remain committed to continuing our work with all relevant entities to enhance Qatar's digital standing on the global stage, in line with the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030."

Director of the MoEHE's Information Systems Department Dr Mona Salem al-Fadhli affirmed that the progress achieved by Qatar in the EGDI for 2024 reflects the impact of the digital initiatives launched by the ministry across all educational levels.

She indicated that such initiatives eased access to educational services and their governance besides providing integrated digital services to students.

The impressive achievement reflects the ongoing efforts of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to improve digital infrastructure and boost the efficiency of telecommunications in the country

Within the framework of digital transformation, Dr al-Fadhli added that the MoEHE is carrying out projects to improve its technological infrastructure and promote its digital services, which enhances students capabilities and their digital skills.

She further said that advanced digital educational platforms have been developed in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which contributed to improving Qatar's ranking in the EGDI.

CRA public relations and communication manager Engineer Hussain Abdulla Salatt said: "Qatar's ranking in the 2024 E-Government Development Index is a clear reflection of CRA's critical role in shaping the nation's digital future."

"By establishing robust regulatory

frameworks, we have driven the expansion of advanced telecommunications networks and strengthened digital infrastructure," he said. "These efforts have significantly improved the quality of e-services provided for both citizens and residents, and are vital in advancing our national vision of universal digital transformation."

Director of the International Indices Development Department at NPC Maha Ali al-Merekhi said: "Qatar's achievement in the 2024 E-Government Development Index is the result of our continuous efforts in formulating national policies and strategies that ensure Qatar's excellence in various international rankings."

"The joint plans of government entities and their collaboration have contributed to building an advanced digital infrastructure that enhances the efficiency of services

digital solutions and enhancing the maturity of e-government services.

The MoEHE has supported the endeavours exerted to improve Qatar's ranking in the Human Capital Index (HCI) by promoting digital education and developing digital skills of students, which was reflected in Qatar's ranking in the index.

The CRA played a major role in improving the digital infrastructure of the country by expanding communications and improving internet quality, which directly contributed to achieving this great accomplishment within the Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (TII).

Such positive results are due to the great improvement achieved by Qatar in the dimensions of the EGDI; Qatar ranked fifth globally in the TII, advanced 27 places in the Online Services Index (OSI) achieving 58th ranking, and advanced to 90th place in the HCI by advancing 15 places.

Qatar is expected to achieve remarkable progress in the EGDI within the next two years, especially following the launch of the Digital Agenda (DA) 2030 that is based on six strategic pillars, including the development of a comprehensive digital government that provides easy-to-use and transparent digital government services for both individuals and companies.

The DA 2030 is also aimed at building a cutting-edge, secure and sustainable digital infrastructure while promoting community competitiveness within the digital world.

The EGDI report, issued by the UN, assesses the development of governments in 193 countries based on the average score in three main indices, namely OSI, TII and HCI, which reflects the capability of such countries to provide advanced digital services. - QNA

Ministry announces recall of KIA, Rolls-Royce, Mercedes models

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in cooperation with Al-Attiya Motors and Trading Company, Qatar's Kia dealership, has announced the recall of KIA Telluride 3.8L, 2019-2024 models, as in case there is an external impact with excessive force to the front power seat side cover and/or seat slide knob, the power seat switch back cover may dislodge resulting in internal misalignment of the seat motor control switch.

A misaligned seat motor control switch with a stuck seat slide knob can lead to continuous operation and overheating of the seat motor.

The MoCI, in co-operation with Al Fardan Automobiles, Qatar's Rolls-Royce dealership, has also announced the recall of Rolls-Royce SPECTRE, 2024 model, as signal interference in the electronics of the braking system may cause failure of the brake power assistance system.

Similarly, the MoCI, in co-operation with Nasser Bin Khaled and Sons Automobiles, Qatar's Mercedes dealership, has announced the recall of Mercedes C-Class, 2022 model, as there may be a gap between the inner lining of the roof and the lining of the rear pillars of the rear window.

The ministry added that it will co-ordinate with the dealerships to follow up on the maintenance and repair works and will communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out.

QRCS carried out projects worth over \$130mn for Palestinians over two decades

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) said that despite all the challenges, it has carried out dozens of humanitarian and development projects worth more than \$130mn in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem over nearly two decades.

QRCS Secretary-General Faisal Mohamed al-Emadi said, in an interview with the QNA, that since the eruption of the recent war on the Palestinian people in Gaza, the QRCS has been in a state of full alert, through the Emergency Information Management Centre at its headquarters in Doha, its sectors and departments concerned with the response, and its representative office in Gaza, which was established in 2008, as well as its relief teams in Egypt and Jordan.

The QRCS, he said, succeeded in providing 4,766 tonnes of relief aid carried by 116 aircraft within the Qatari humanitarian air bridge from Doha to Al-Arish, Egypt, and from there to the Gaza Strip via the Rafah crossing, in addition to a Qatari aid ship, in order to meet the needs of the people of the Strip for food, shelter, healthcare, water and sanitation.

Al-Emadi revealed that the number of beneficiaries of this aid so far is estimated at about 1mn people, at a total cost exceeding \$13mn, noting that the QRCS seeks during the coming period to continue with the assistance through a package of projects announced on its website.

The QRCS will be able, thanks to the donations, to provide new assistance in the areas of urgent

relief: food, health, medical convoys, shelter, water, sanitation, education, and clothing for school students, with a total value of QR46mn, benefiting nearly half a million people.

To a question about the aspects of co-operation and co-ordination mechanisms with partner agencies to implement relief interventions in the Gaza Strip, Al-Emadi explained that given the magnitude of the Qatari response to the humanitarian ordeal in Gaza, there were many state institutions involved in this response.

"Therefore, the QRCS was keen to co-operate with a number of partner agencies, whether governmental and non-governmental, such as the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), which was and still is a major supporter of a large part of the QRCS's interventions in the crisis," he said.

The official added that the latest form of this support was funding a partnership agreement between the QRCS and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) to provide cash assistance worth \$4.5mn to 4,400 Palestinian workers and patients from the Gaza Strip who are currently stranded in the West Bank.

Al-Emadi said that the QFFD also contributes to supporting the operation of the QRCS's field hospital in the Gaza Strip which oversees response, in co-operation with several entities such as the Palestinian Red Crescent, the Egyptian Red Crescent, and the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organisation.

The official touched on the



tragedy of the Gaza Strip that has been going on for over 18 years of siege, restrictions and closure of crossings, in addition to the Strip being subjected to aggression more than once during that period, which made living conditions more difficult for the vast majority of the Strip's residents.

Al-Emadi highlighted the latest ongoing aggression, saying that it remains the most horrific and bloody, with no one in the Strip safe from the brutal bombing.

He pointed out that all this is happening in parallel with preventing and obstructing the arrival of any form of relief aid to the affected people of Gaza, turning life in the stricken Strip into a hell of displacement, disease, starvation and systematic targeting.

Relief workers were not spared from the ravages of the aggression either, he said, saying that as more than 300 humanitarian workers were killed while performing their humanitarian duty in the field.

The QRCS, Al-Emadi said, was shocked by the death of one of its medical workers in Gaza hospi-

tals - a consultant and assistant professor of kidney diseases, and a graduate of the QRCS programme for specialised medical scholarships in Jordan.

Regarding the QRCS's ability to continue responding to the developments of the crisis after the aggression expanded to include many areas of Lebanon, the official said: "We are closely following the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Lebanon."

Al-Emadi said that in light of this crisis, the QRCS was one of the first humanitarian organisations to take the initiative to provide urgent food, health and relief assistance, having allocated QR1mn from its disaster response fund as a first phase of urgent relief intervention to meet the needs of 1,000 displaced families for food and non-food items, through co-ordination between its representative office in Lebanon and the Lebanese Red Cross.

To mobilise community support for Lebanon, he called on all those who are able to donate to the relief projects announced on



Faisal Mohamed al-Emadi

last year, the office's work team was transferred to the city of Port Sudan so that its members could resume interventions and humanitarian aid provided in various states, which include the sectors of food security, water and sanitation, health, shelter and non-food items.

He said that more than 845,000 people have benefited from this aid so far, at a total cost of \$4.7mn, noting that most of this aid was delivered to Sudan via the Qatari air bridge, with the support of the QFFD and other institutions in Qatar.

"The most recent activities of the office were the distribution of 2,000 food baskets for the benefit of 12,000 beneficiaries in Gedaref State, eastern Sudan, in addition to visiting several hospitals and health centres in the state to assess needs, in preparation for carrying new humanitarian interventions there in co-ordination with the relevant authorities," Al-Emadi said.

He touched on the QRCS's plans to alleviate the suffering of those affected by these crises and others with the onset of winter.

The official said that the new version of the Warm Winter Campaign for 2024-2025 was recently launched, under the slogan *Their Warmth is a Duty*, and includes a series of projects and winter aid to be implemented with the support of the people of Qatar, to help more than 179,000 people in 13 priority countries, including Palestine, Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. - QNA

Call for need to care for the elderly

PPC marks Qatar Population Day

The Permanent Population Committee (PPC), in co-operation with the Centre for Empowerment and Elderly Care (Ehsan), marked Qatar Population Day under the theme "Elderly in the State of Qatar: A Better Future Through Sustainable Care," in line with the UN celebrations of World Population Day, in the presence of HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad and HE the Secretary-General of the National Planning Council (NPC) and Chairman of the PPC Abdulaziz bin Nasser bin Mubarak al-Khalifa.

In his opening speech, HE al-Khalifa noted that this year was dedicated to highlighting an important segment of Qatari society, which is the elderly, who receive great attention at the family and state levels.

He emphasised the need to develop care systems, especially health and social care, in a way that responds to the challenges resulting from, and that will result from, the significant increase in the numbers of this social segment and the growing needs of it and to



address the challenges and difficulties that hinder the community participation of the elderly.

In her speech, HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad said that honouring the elderly is an occasion that we all take advantage of to appreciate a generation that has given everything it has for us. She noted that the elderly are the memory and torches on the path of our development, and honouring them is a right, and caring for them is a national goal and duty affirmed by Qatar National Vision 2030.

She added that strengthening the role of the elderly requires empowering them, and it is a duty to provide them with a decent life. She stressed that respect for the



elderly stems from our religion and national values.

UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Representative in Muscat (GCC Office) Jocelyn Fenard emphasised the importance of the existing co-operation between the NPC and UNFPA on the one hand and UNFPA on the other hand. He noted that investing in the potential of the elderly and ensuring their well-being and health, as well as their integration into society and continued participation as active citizens, requires developing knowledge to understand prevailing trends, designing informed policies, and implementing well-organised programmes.

The activities of Qatar Population Day 2024 witnessed the holding of a symposium on the

importance of intensifying studies, research, and surveys specialising in the conditions of the elderly and their economic, health, psychological, and social needs, in addition to expanding mental and psychological health services for the elderly and integrating them into public health and community protection programmes and systems, as well as updating legislative and legal texts related to the rights of the elderly and the services necessary to meet their

health, psychological, social, economic, and recreational needs, in addition to developing practical plans in national strategies to evaluate the competencies of the elderly and re-employ them in development efforts.

The symposium also recommended the need to encourage financial planning and promote a culture of saving among young people as essential tools to ensure their well-being when they grow old, provide comprehensive health insurance in the public and private sectors for the elderly, rehabilitate public transportation and provide it with equipment that enables the elderly to use it easily, expand mobile home care services to serve the elderly, provide special windows at govern-



ment agencies to facilitate and expedite transactions for the elderly, and produce dramatic works studied by specialists in elderly issues, aiming to change the stereotype about them and enhance the level of community awareness of their issues.

The recommendations stressed the importance of activating the role of the private sector in supporting programmes and action plans for the elderly, working to integrate the elderly into the digital community, creating a comprehensive national database for the elderly, encouraging major companies, institutions and various bodies, such as banks, to organise sports, cultural and social festivals and forums targeting the elderly and their families. (QNA)

QC chairman: Amir's visit to Italy will open new horizons for economic ties

The Chairman of Qatar Chamber Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim al-Thani said that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Italy aims to strengthen the distinctive bilateral relations, stressing that the visit reflects the depth of these relations and the ongoing efforts of both nations to develop them across various fields, notably energy, economy, education, health, culture, and technology.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Sheikh Khalifa said he was optimistic that the Amir's visit would open new horizons for economic and trade co-operation between Qatar and Italy, noting that trade relations between the two countries have evolved greatly, and they continue to grow, which enhances mutual investment opportunities.

He explained that Italy, as a member of the Group of Eight (G8), the European Union, and



Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim al-Thani

the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an important trade partner for Qatar with the bilateral trade witnessing significant growth in recent years, reaching QR20bn in 2023.

Sheikh Khalifa said that there are numerous agreements and memorandums of understanding between Qatar and Italy, covering co-operation in areas such as investment, economy, alternative

energy, health, sports, culture, tourism, and food security.

He noted the existence of a joint Qatari-Italian business council, which seeks to enhance economic relations and explore opportunities for bilateral co-operation.

He pointed out that many Italian companies are investing in Qatar, some through joint projects with Qatari partners, while others are fully owned by Italian investors, noting that Italy is a primary destination for Qatari investments in various sectors, including real estate, hotels, and the development of residential areas.

He expressed his optimism that this visit would open new avenues for investment and establish new joint projects with the business community in Italy. He stressed that Qatari businessmen are looking to enhance their investments in light of the world-class infrastructure available, supported by legislative reforms and high-level banking institutions. (QNA)

Promising future for Qatar-Italy cultural relations

The cultural relations between Qatar and Italy have a long history supported by strong roots in the past, distinguished partnerships in the present and heading towards a promising future under the patronage of the leaders of the countries in various fields of culture, education, arts and heritage.

For many years, Italian culture has been strongly present in Doha through exhibitions, workshops, museums and festivals. The Qatari culture, in turn, along with its great heritage, has been deeply present in the Italian culture arena.

One of the most prominent milestones of Qatari-Italian culture co-operation was Qatar's participation in the jury of the 42nd Giffoni Film Festival (GFF) in 2012 held in Italy, with the participation of judges from more than 50 countries around the globe. This initiative came within the cultural partnership between the Doha Film Institute (DFI) and GFF, which aims to increase cultural exchange through cinema and attract film lovers to participate and interact.

In turn, the Cultural Village Foundation - Katara served as a way to introduce the Qatari public to various Italian arts, as the foundation screened the Italian film *Torneranno i prati* on the centenary of the beginning of World War I, which fell in 2014. The film depicts the Italian front's experience during World War I. The screening of this film was an important event at the time, as it was screened on the same night in Rome, as well as in 120 locations in 100 countries around the globe.

Souq Waqif Art Centre has also been a platform for cultural exchange between Qatar and Italy, considering that it hosted many joint exhibitions between the two countries.

In 2015, HE the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Qatar Museums Sheikhha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani received the "StellaRe" Prize from the Italian contemporary art foundation, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, during a ceremony held in Turin, Italy. This honour came in appreciation of Her Excellency's distinguished contributions to supporting culture and society.

In the same year, the Art Lounge exhibition was held at the Qatar Pavilion at Expo Milan 2015, and it included 15 paintings presented by nine artists, in addition to 45 photographs presented by ten photographers.

In April 2023, HE Sheikhha Al Mayassa participated in a discussion session under the title "Heritage for Tomorrow" within the international conference "Art for Tomorrow" which was hosted by the Italian cities of Florence and Solomeo. The conference focused on ways in which institutions can preserve valuable cultural assets while addressing pressing challenges, such as tourism and climate change.

Qatar, Italy Friendly Relations, Rooted Cultural Partnership

Qatari-Italian relations are linked by a group of cultural agreements and MoUs, including the cultural cooperation agreement between the two countries

- In 2014**: Katara screened the Italian film "Torneranno i prati" on the centenary of the beginning of WWI
- Qatar Museums** presents the exhibition "Your Ghosts Are Mine, Expanded Cinema, Amplified Voices" at ACP-Palazzo Franchetti
- In 2015**: Souq Waqif Art Center hosted the Italian-Qatari Exhibition of Authenticity of Horses
- 15** paintings presented by nine artists, in addition to 45 photographs presented by ten photographers were included in Art Lounge exhibition which was held at the Qatar Pavilion at Expo Milan 2015
- Qatar Museums** is currently displaying artwork that was lent to be showcased in the exhibition "Foreigners Everywhere," which is the main Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2024
- DFI** participated, through a number of films it supported, in the Venice International Film Festival, which was held in 2024.

HE Sheikhha Al Mayassa participated alongside leading international speakers on the arts in this conference, which explored the social and economic impact of the arts.

Cultural co-operation between Qatar and Italy continues over time, embodying a unique model of bilateral relations between countries. Qatari-Italian relations are linked by a group of cultural agreements and memorandums of understanding, including the cultural co-operation agreement between the two countries, based on their mutual aspiration to strengthen friendly relations.

From this standpoint, the activation of the cultural co-operation agreement between the two countries was embodied in a large number of cultural and art events, whether in Qatar or in Italy, in addition to a co-operation between Qatar Museums and the Municipality of Venice.

The dialogues of Art for Tomorrow, organised by Qatar Museums and the Democracy and Culture Foundation, represent an ongoing partnership between the two sides, bringing together thinkers, artists and innovators.

Activities to be organised by Qatar Museums and the Municipality of Venice include exhibitions and seminars exploring the historical links between Italian and Islamic art and architecture, and the participation of artists from both sides in international festivals and exhibitions.

This partnership builds on the strong relationship between Qatar Museums and the Municipality of Venice, which has been established through a series of successful collaborations over the past two years.

Qatar Museums is currently displaying artwork that was lent to be showcased in the exhibition "Foreigners Everywhere," which is the main exhibition of the 60th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale. This exhibition includes pieces from the Arab Museum of Modern Art's (Mathaf) collection of art. On view through Nov 24, the exhibition is one of several Qatar Museums initiatives coinciding with the Venice Biennale.

In this context, DFI participated, through a number of films it supported, in the 81st edition of the Venice International Film Festival, which was held from Aug 28 until Sept 7.

Within the common maritime heritage between the two countries, the Italian beaches were part of the voyages of Fateh Al-Khayr, which is organised by Katara.

The Italian publishing house, Almutawassit, also had a distinguished presence at the Doha International Book Fair (DIBF) in its 33rd edition, as the publishing house's publications included the fields of literature, thought and culture. Almutawassit was established late 2015 in Milan, Italy, as a project concerned with cultural exchange between the world's various civilisations and peoples. It began its journey by transferring knowledge, sciences and literature between the Arab world and Italy first, then extended to sharing literature between the Arab world and the rest of the world.

Italian culture is considered the collective heritage of self-knowledge about Italy, as Italy was the centre of the Roman Empire and a point of intersection of Mediterranean civilisations, and the cradle of many artistic movements. (QNA)

Amir's visit to enhance Qatar's strategic military ties with Italy

QNA
Rome

The Qatari Military Attaché to Italy Major General (Navy) Hilal Ali al-Mohannadi said that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani represents the culmination of a long-standing relationship and co-operation between the two countries, particularly in the military field.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), he said that the Amir's visit also serves as an opportunity to support and enhance strategic co-operation between Qatar and Italy in the military sector, as they share a historic collaboration in this area that began in the 1980s and has been significantly strengthened through the agreement signed between the ministries of defence in 2016.

He described the military relations between Qatar and Italy as part of a broader strategic partnership that both countries are working to enhance in the fields of security and defence.

Al-Mohannadi noted that the first military co-operation between the two countries began in the early 1980s, with the Qatari naval forces acquiring ships equipped with guns and ammunition manufactured in Italy, which subsequently led to significant developments in military collaboration between the two sides.

He added that the agreement signed between the ministries of defence of Qatar and Italy has opened the door wide for close and significant co-operation between the two countries in areas such as the acquisition of combat aircraft, helicopters, naval vessels, and advanced equipment like radar systems, in addition to training and joint exercises, particularly in training pilots and military



Major General (Navy) Hilal Ali al-Mohannadi

personnel in the naval forces, as well as academic military studies.

He pointed out that the military co-operation agreement has borne fruit, with the Qatari armed forces receiving all seven naval vessels manufactured in Italy, with only one remaining to be delivered. Additionally, 80% of the order for helicopters from Italy, amounting to 28, has been fulfilled.

Regarding training, he explained that since 2017, 660 personnel from the naval forces have trained in Italy, while 260 individuals have trained in helicopter operations, and 32 pilots have participated in advanced aircraft training programmes. Furthermore, 40 personnel have trained in air defence (radar systems), and 41 individuals have taken part in special forces training, along with the training of liaison officers from the ground forces and the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya).

He noted that since 2017, 154 courses have been organised in Italy, benefiting 952 individuals, which brings the total number of those who benefited from these courses in Italy to 1,333. Additionally, since 2021, eight joint exercises have been conducted, involving 316 individuals, along with over 400 mutual visits by military delegations between the two countries since 2017.

Al-Mohannadi noted that the Military Attache office in Italy was established in 2017, following the signing of an agreement for the

construction of naval vessels for Qatar with the Italian government in June 2016, in partnership with the Italian company Fincantieri, pointing out that the decision to appoint a Military Attache in Italy was to oversee two roles: defence attache and monitoring projects signed with the Italian government in the military field.

He explained that Italy is an important strategic partner in the military sector, as its military industry has seen significant development and possesses over 150 years of extensive experience in manufacturing military equipment, particularly naval equipment, and countries around the world benefit from these advanced Italian military industries.

He highlighted that there are numerous agreements linking Italy and Qatar in the military field, including agreements with the Qatar Armed Forces, the Amiri Guard, the Ministry of Interior, and the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), as well as co-operation in academic military studies, with 240 individuals currently studying in fields related to naval and aviation.

He affirmed that military co-operation with Italy will continue and expand further, especially as the signed agreement on military projects spans 30 years and is worth over €9bn.

He said that the distinguished bilateral relations between the two countries have significantly facilitated military co-operation, pointing out that Italy is a friendly and important country in the region, and interactions between the two sides are characterised by credibility and respect.

Al-Mohannadi noted that Italy has supported Qatar and stood by it in various issues and challenges, and in turn, Qatar supported Italy, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Gaza war, settler attacks ruin Palestinian olive harvest

AFP
Al-Zawayda

After a year of relentless war, Gaza's olive harvest is set to suffer, while in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian farmers fear to tend their groves due to settler attacks.

For generations, olive harvests have been central to Palestinian life and culture.

"We are happy that the olive season has started but we are afraid because we are in a state of war," said Rami Abu Asad, who owns a farm in Deir Al-Balah, central Gaza.

Workers picking the olives by hand stay alert, listening for drones or warplanes that could bomb without warning.

"But it is clearly evident (to Israeli forces) that we are workers and we do nothing else," he said, noting a sweeping Israeli military operation in Jabalia, less than 20 kilometres to the north.

Israel has been at war with Hamas in Gaza since the October first week attacks last year.

Israel's retaliatory onslaught in Gaza has killed 42,603 people, a majority of them civilians, according to data from the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory, which the UN considers reliable. The ongoing war has reduced vast areas of Gaza to rubble, with about 68% of the territory's agricultural areas damaged by the conflict and farmers unable to fertilise or irrigate their land, the UN says.



Israeli soldiers block the road in front of Palestinian farmers, preventing them from picking olives in their fields, in the village of Burqa, east of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, yesterday.

"The number of remaining olive trees is very small and the costs are very high," Asad added.

LOW PRODUCTION

Jamal Abou Shaouish, an agricultural engineer, expects this year's harvest in Gaza to net just 15,000 tonnes, sharply down from around 40,000 tonnes in the years before the war. Supply shortages

and destruction caused by the war will also impact the quality of olives, while pressing prices have soared due to the lack of fuel needed to run the machinery required for sorting and pressing the oil.

In the West Bank, the harvest has been marred by perennial fears of attacks by Israeli settlers, who regularly prevent Palestinians from accessing their olive groves or outright destroy their orchards.

For Khaled Abdallah, he has

made the tough decision not to harvest the olives this season on his land near the Beit El settlement.

"I didn't even consider going to these lands close to the colony, because the situation is very dangerous," he said, saying he will instead focus on harvesting olives from a separate property in the village of Jifna, north of Ramallah.

Like other Palestinians who own olive groves near the settlements, Abdallah co-ordinated



A Palestinian family picks olives from their trees in the village of Beit Awa, west of Hebron, in the occupied West Bank.

with Israeli advocacy organisations to obtain special permits for the crops. "But there are no longer any rights organisations capable of protecting us from settler attacks, and there is no longer any co-ordination," he lamented.

Olive groves have long been essential to the economy and culture of the West Bank, but have also been the site of bloody clashes between farmers and encroaching Israeli settlers for decades, with the disputes hinging on access to land.

WEST BANK VIOLENCE

In the past, settlers have assaulted Palestinians, set fire to or damaged their crops, stolen sheep and blocked them from getting to their land, water and grazing areas, according to the UN.

And since October first week last year, the violence has only intensified.

Attacks by settlers have increased "significantly" this year, said the Israeli human rights group Yesh Din.

According to the group's spokesperson Fadia Qawasm, farmers from the village of Madama, south of Nablus, were prevented from accessing their plots for three years. Settlers also damaged their vehicles.

"The owners were expelled from their land by settlers from Itamar," said Abdallah Ziada, the head of the Madama village council. "Every day there are clashes." "We cannot distinguish those who arrest us - if they are settlers or soldiers, because they are sometimes in civilian clothes and armed, and other times in military uniform," Ziada added.

Earlier this week, the Palestinian health ministry in Ramallah said Israeli forces shot dead a woman in Faqoua village near Jenin while she harvested olives.

The Israeli military said it had prepared for the harvest season even during the time of war.

"This is done out of a commitment to maintaining the security of the area and its residents, while at the same time allowing the local residents to harvest their crops," the military said in a statement to AFP.

"IDF (Israeli military) forces are securing the harvest in the co-ordinated areas." For many poor Palestinian families, the olive season provides a vital source of income.

Earlier this week, UN experts said Palestinian farmers in the occupied West Bank are facing "the most dangerous olive season ever".

Egypt gets malaria-free certification from WHO

AFP
Geneva

Egypt was certified as malaria-free yesterday, with the World Health Organisation calling the achievement "truly historic" and the culmination of nearly a century of work to stamp out the disease.

"Malaria is as old as Egyptian civilisation itself, but the disease that plagued pharaohs now belongs to its history and not its future," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement.

"This certification of Egypt as malaria-free is truly historic, and a testament to the commitment of the people and government of Egypt to rid themselves of this ancient scourge." Globally, 44 countries and one territory have now been certified as malaria-free.

Certification is granted by the WHO when a country has proven that the chain of indigenous malaria transmission by Anopheles mosquitoes has been interrupted nationwide for at least the previous three consecutive years.

A country must also demonstrate the ability to prevent the re-establishment of transmission.

Malaria kills more than 600,000 people every year, 95% of them in Africa, according to the WHO.

There were 249mn recorded malaria cases worldwide in 2022.

Spread by mosquitoes, malaria is mostly found in tropical countries. The infection is caused by a parasite.

"Receiving the malaria elimination certificate today is not the end of the journey but the beginning of a new phase," said Egypt's Health Minister Khaled Abdel Ghaffar.

"We must now work tirelessly and vigilantly to sustain our achievement through maintaining the highest standards for surveillance, diagnosis and treatment." The WHO said early efforts to reduce human-mosquito contact in Egypt began in the 1920s when it banned cultivation of rice and agricultural crops near homes.

By 1942, cases in Egypt had spiked to more than 3mn as a result of population displacement during World War II.

The Aswan Dam, built in the 1960s, created new malaria risks as standing water produced breeding grounds for mosquitoes. But by 2001, Egypt had malaria "firmly under control", the WHO said.

Nigeria accounts for more than a quarter of all malaria deaths annually, ahead of the DR Congo, Uganda and Mozambique.

Palestinian support gathering in Istanbul



Pro-Palestinian demonstrators take part in a protest condemning the killing of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, in Istanbul, Turkiye, yesterday.

Sudanese army reports first defection of a senior RSF commander

Reuters
Dubai

Sudan's army said yesterday a commander from its foe the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) had defected with

some of his troops, in what would be the first such move by a senior figure since the sides started fighting more than 18 months ago.

There was no immediate comment from the RSF which has seized control of large parts of the country in a conflict with the

military that the UN says has caused one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Supporters of the army posted photos online purporting to show Abuagla Keikal - a former army officer who became the RSF's top commander in the southeastern state of El Gezira - after he had defected.

The army, which has recently reported gains against the RSF in parts of the capital, said Keikal had decided to make the move because of his former force's "destructive agenda". It did not go into further detail and there was no statement, in print or on video, from Keikal.

Eight-storey building collapses in Nairobi

AFP
Nairobi

A residential building collapsed in the Kenyan capital Nairobi yesterday, leaving several people feared trapped, county officials and emergency responders said.

Cases of buildings caving in are not uncommon in the country, often a result of shoddy construction and flouted regulations.

The eight-storey building in Kahawa West, a densely-populated neighbourhood north of the capital, had been condemned for demolition, Nairobi county officials said.

Several families were feared trapped under the rubble, the Kenya Red Cross said on X.

One woman who was standing outside the building when it collapsed was hurt, Nairobi governor Johnson Sakaja said, adding that casualties were "ex-



A Kenya Police officer gives instructions to bystanders to evacuate the area next to the rubble of a collapsed residential building at Kahawa West residential area in Nairobi, yesterday.

pected to be minimal". "She is currently undergoing treatment and is stable," he said, adding that residents of adjacent buildings will be evacuated.

The collapse sparked a swarm of onlookers to the scene sandwiched between high rise build-

ings and a church. Catherine Wanjiku, who had lived in the building since 2017, said she was lucky to have escaped with her life.

"I don't feel good because I moved out yesterday. I am shaky, I am stressed. I have

friends whose belongings have been destroyed in there," the 33-year-old said.

According to a Nairobi county document seen by AFP and dated October 16, the building had been constructed and occupied without the requisite approvals.

Tenants had been ordered to vacate the building in two weeks. The East African nation is undergoing a construction boom, but corruption has allowed contractors to cut corners or bypass regulations.

Five people were killed when a six-storey building collapsed in a town on the outskirts of Nairobi in September 2022.

In April 2016, 49 people were killed when a six-floor apartment building crumbled in the northeast of the capital after days of heavy rain caused floods and landslides. The building, constructed two years earlier, had been scheduled to be demolished after being declared structurally unsound.

PNC seeks Security Council session to impose Israel sanctions

QNA
Ramallah

The Palestinian National Council (PNC) called for an immediate session of the Security Council, imposing a ceasefire, and stopping the massacres committed by the Israeli entity against the Palestinian people.

It called on the countries of the world and the international community to adopt a position and impose sanctions on the Israeli entity, to force it to stop the crimes that have been ongoing for over a year against displaced children and women.

The PNC affirmed that the Beit Lahia massacre in the northern Gaza Strip was a natural result of the green light from the US administration, a partner with the occupation in the war of genocide and ethnic cleansing, for the occupation to commit daily crimes.

PNC Speaker Rawhi Fattouh

said that the Israeli occupation army cutting off communications is evidence that it was planning this brutal massacre to complete the ethnic cleansing war and eradicate and annihilate the remaining civilians in the north, this time in the Beit Lahia project in the northern governorate where the occupation army has committed a horrific massacre.

He pointed out that the new massacre comes in conjunction with the occupation's destruction of the health system in the northern Gaza Strip, where they bombed hospitals and shot medical crews, forcing them to evacuate and leave, which exposed hundreds of wounded to death.

Fattouh expressed his condemnation and denunciation of the international positions that watches the genocide and uprooting of the Palestinian people in northern Gaza and all parts of the Strip, with most victims being children and women.

HEALTH

WHO appeals to Rwanda to see off Marburg outbreak

The WHO chief yesterday urged Rwanda to keep up its fightback against Marburg, as the country battles an outbreak of one of the world's deadliest viruses, AFP reported from Geneva. There have been 62 confirmed cases and 15 deaths in the outbreak, which was first announced in late September. No new cases have been detected in the last six days and 44 people have recovered from infection. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the head of the World Health Organisation, visited Rwanda to see the outbreak response for himself and hailed the country's handling of the situation. "We're pleased to see that there have been no new cases in the past six days, and we hope that remains the case," he told a press conference in the capital Kigali. "But we are dealing with one of the world's most dangerous viruses, and continued vigilance is essential. "Enhanced surveillance, contact tracing and infection prevention and control measures must continue at scale until the outbreak is declared over."

PEOPLE

Prabowo takes office as Indonesia president

Former general Prabowo Subianto was yesterday sworn in as president of Indonesia, seeking a more prominent position on the global stage for the world's fourth most populous nation. The 73-year-old fiery nationalist took the oath at parliament to officially succeed outgoing leader Joko Widodo. "We will lead the Indonesian government... by prioritising the interests of all Indonesian people, including those who did not vote for us," he said, pledging to tackle corruption and protect democracy. Prabowo has committed himself to Indonesia's non-aligned foreign policy, but has signalled that he will be bolder on the world stage.

DECISION

Vietnam to start selection of new president: official

Vietnam's national assembly will start the process of choosing a president today, an official said, after a series of leadership changeovers. For decades in Vietnam, all changes were carefully orchestrated with an emphasis on stability. But a major anti-graft purge since 2021 swept up several high-level figures, including two presidents and three deputy prime ministers. Current President To Lam was named general secretary of the Communist Party - Vietnam's top leader - in August following the death of his predecessor, Nguyen Phu Trong. Trong held both positions at the same time between October 2018 and April 2021.

CRITICISM

N Korea calls new sanctions monitoring team 'unlawful'

North Korea's top diplomat yesterday criticised a new sanctions monitoring team led by the US as "unlawful and illegitimate", warning countries involved in the entity would face a "dear price". The 11-member team was named earlier this month after Russia in March vetoed the renewal of a panel of UN experts monitoring international sanctions on North Korea, imposed for its banned nuclear and weapons programmes. Since the Russian veto, South Korea and its allies have worked to apply different methods to monitor sanctions, leading to the formation of the new group - which includes the United States and Japan.

OFFBEAT

China survey to analyse 'fear of having children'

China's National Health Commission (NHC) is surveying 30,000 people to understand factors influencing their attitudes towards childbearing and the "fear surrounding having children", as authorities struggle to boost a flagging birthrate. The survey will include people from 150 counties in China and 1,500 different communities, the state-backed *Global Times* said, citing the China Population and Development Research Center, which falls under the NHC. Beijing is trying to encourage young couples to have children after China posted a second consecutive year of population decline in 2023.

Former Indian official indicted by US 'dismisses allegations'

Reuters
Pranpura, India

An Indian ex-official charged by the US with directing a murder-for-hire plot has dismissed the allegations, his family said, expressing shock that Vikash Yadav was wanted by the FBI.

Yadav, 39, described the claims as false media reports when he spoke to his cousin, Avinash Yadav, the relative said in their ancestral village about 100km (60 miles) from the capital New Delhi.

The US Department of Justice charged Yadav with leading an unsuccessful plot to murder Sikh separatist leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun last year. Yadav was an official of India's Research and Analysis Wing spy service, according to the indictment unsealed on Thursday.

India, which has said it was investigating the allegations, said Yadav was no longer a government employee, without saying whether he had been an intelligence officer.

"The family has no information" about him working for the spy agency, Yadav's cousin said in the village of Pranpura in Haryana state. "He never mentioned anything about it," despite the two speaking to each other regularly.

"For us he is still working for the CRPF," the federal Central Reserve Police Force, which he joined in 2009, said Avinash Yadav, 28. "He told us he is deputy commandant" and was trained as a paratrooper.

The cousin said he did not know where Yadav was but that he lives

with his wife and a daughter who was born last year.

Indian officials have not commented on Yadav's whereabouts. The Washington Post, citing American officials, reported on Thursday that Yadav was still in India and that the US was expected to seek his extradition. His mother, Sudesh Yadav, 65, said she was still in shock. "What can I say? I do not know whether the US government is telling the truth or not?" "He has been working for the country," she said.

The US accuses Yadav of directing another Indian citizen, Nikhil Gupta, who it alleges paid a hitman paid \$15,000, to kill Pannun.

But in Pranpura, Yadav's cousin pointed to the family's modest, single-storey house, saying, "Where will so much money come from? Can you see any Audis and Mercedes lined up outside this house?"

Most of the village's nearly 500 families have traditionally sent young men to join the security forces, locals said.

Yadav's father, who died in 2007, was an officer with India's border force till he died in 2007, and his brother works with the police in Haryana, said Avinash Yadav.

Another cousin, Amit Yadav, 41, said Vikash Yadav had been a quiet boy interested in books and athletics and was a national-level marksman.

"Only the government of India and Vikash know what has happened," he said, adding that Indian officials should inform them. If the government "abandons" a paramilitary officer, Amit Yadav said, "then who will work for them?"



Police use water cannons to disperse supporters of Rabi Lamichhane, Nepal's former deputy premier, protesting after his arrest on fraud and organised crime charges, in Pokhara yesterday.

Nepal protesters, police clash over politician's fraud charges

AFP
Kathmandu

Nepali police fired tear gas yesterday at thousands of protesters loyal to a former deputy premier once seen as a rising political star, as he appeared in court on charges his supporters say are politically motivated.

Rabi Lamichhane faces charges of fraud and organised crime related to the alleged embezzlement of funds from a financial co-operative prior to his entry into politics, a case that has garnered national attention.

Lamichhane rejects the charges, which his angry supporters say were trumped up.

Lamichhane is well known for his career as a television host in the Himalayan republic, making his name as an anti-corruption activist through aggressive interviews with

public officials. He shot to political power in November 2022 with his Rastriya Swatantra Party tapping into widespread discontent at Nepal's elderly political leadership, becoming the deputy premier and interior minister.

But he was sacked in January 2023, after Nepal's top court barred him from office for failing to regain citizenship after giving up his US passport.

He was arrested in the capital Kathmandu on Friday, and transferred to the city of Pokhara, where he was remanded in custody for a further six days, "for further investigation," Kaski district court information officer Suraj Adhikari said.

Police said thousands of people took part in the protests yesterday, with baton-wielding officers blocking off areas around the district court and spraying crowds with water cannon and tear gas.

Protesters chanted slogans against Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, claiming the charges against Lamichhane were politically motivated.

The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported that a parliamentary committee had accused Lamichhane of embezzling millions of rupees from multiple co-operatives while running the Gorkha Media Network, before his entry into politics.

"We have been supporting the investigation but this is a political vendetta to finish a new party that is working for the betterment of people," RSP party member Toshima Karki said.

"They think they can finish our party by attacking an individual, this is wrong," she added.

"We are doing a peaceful protest and we are committed to fight against this injustice."

UK plans to further appeal N Ireland amnesty ruling

The British government plans to further appeal a Belfast court ruling that legislation introduced by the previous government was incompatible with human-rights protections secured in a post-Brexit agreement for Northern Ireland. Belfast's High Court ruled in February that the offering by the UK of conditional amnesties to ex-soldiers and militants involved in Northern Ireland's decades of violence was in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights.

After Keir Starmer became prime minister in July, his new government said it would scrap the amnesty scheme that was opposed by all major parties in the region and reverse the policy of prohibiting victims and families from bringing civil claims. However, it continued the previous government's appeal against the high court's decision that parts of the immunity provisions were incompatible with the Windsor Framework agreement governing post-Brexit trade in Northern Ireland.

Fans mourn singer's death



Fans react as they pay tribute to former One Direction singer Liam Payne, who was found dead after he fell from a third-floor hotel room balcony in Buenos Aires, in Hyde Park, London, Britain, yesterday.

Bomb hoax threats to India airlines spark chaos

AFP
New Delhi

More than 90 fake bomb threats have been made against flights operated by multiple Indian airlines this week, Indian media reported yesterday, sparking fear among passengers and global delays.

All flights landed safely, but the spate of threats has resulted in planes being diverted to Canada and Germany, and fighter jets scrambled to escort aircraft in the skies above Britain and Singapore.

India's government and civil aviation authorities have warned that "very strict action" will be taken.

New Delhi's civil aviation authorities have not said how many threats have been received in the past week, but the Times of India and broadcaster News18

reported more than 70 hoaxes targeting both domestic and international flights since October 13.

At least 30 hoax threats were made on Saturday alone, and at least 20 more threats were made to different airlines yesterday.

India's IndiGo airline confirmed threats were made against six of its flights yesterday.

Two were on domestic routes, and four were international -- linking Indian cities to Saudia Arabia's Jeddah and Dammam, as well as two separate flights to Istanbul in Turkey.

"The safety and security of our passengers and crew is our highest priority," IndiGo said in a statement.

"We are working closely with the relevant authorities and taking all necessary precautions."

The global impact of delays and diversions has been heavy on airline schedules and costs.

King Charles expresses 'great joy' at being back in Australia

Reuters
Sydney

Hundreds of well-wishers greeted Britain's King Charles and Queen Camilla in Sydney yesterday as the royal couple attended church, with the king saying it was a "great joy" to return to Australia in his first visit to an overseas realm as sovereign.

Charles' 16th official visit to Australia, where he attended school for six months as a teenager in 1966, is also his first ma-

yor foreign trip since being diagnosed with cancer.

"What a great joy it is to come to Australia for the first time as sovereign and to renew a love of this country and its people which I have cherished for so long," he said in a speech at the New South Wales parliament.

New South Wales state lawmaker Kellie Sloane, whose electorate covers some of Sydney's most famous beaches, wrote on social media platform X after chatting with the king that he "sends his best to the 'amazing' surf clubs at Bondi Beach"

The royal couple were earlier greeted at St Thomas' Anglican Church by the archbishop of Sydney, Kanishka Raffel, and children from the church's Sunday school who waved Australian flags.

Camilla was given a flower bouquet by the minister's wife, Ellie Mantle, who asked if they had recovered from jet lag after the long flight to Australia on Friday. "Sort of," Camilla replied.

Outside, the church the royal couple shook hands and chatted with a large crowd of cheering fans. It was the public's first

opportunity to meet Charles and Camilla since they arrived in Australia's biggest city on Friday night, and several hundred well-wishers outnumbered a dozen protesters.

Travelling across Sydney Harbour, Charles visited the New South Wales parliament, marking the 200th anniversary of Australia's oldest legislature.

The king presented the lawmakers with an hour glass to time their speeches, and highlighted the fundamental role of strong parliaments to democracies that serve today's diverse societies.

"Democracy has, I believe, an extraordinary capacity for innovation, compromise and adaptability as well as stability," he said.

The royal couple will travel to Canberra today to meet Prime Minister Anthony Albanese at the national parliament and visit the Australian War Memorial.

Albanese met the couple on Friday at Admiralty House, the historic government harbourside residence where they are staying, for what he said was an informal drink and chat.

The king will attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government

Meeting in Samoa after the six-day Australia tour.

Charles had made a significant personal donation to create a skills programme to tackle climate change and boost higher education in small island states, including the Pacific Islands, the Association of Commonwealth Universities said yesterday.

Mid-career professionals and civil servants will benefit from the fellowships, in a programme that aims to retain talent in small island states and bolster resilience to the impacts of climate change such as rising sea levels.



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Alarming boom in space junk

Space exploration is at an all-time high, resulting in a rapid increase in the number of rockets and satellite launches, augmenting research into the secrets of the universe but also contributing to an alarming boom in space junk. Over the past 15 years, the number of rockets launched per year has nearly tripled, and the number of satellites orbiting the planet has increased tenfold, according to Statista. The amount of space debris (old satellites and spent rocket stages) falling back to Earth has doubled over the past 10 years. A few hundred tonnes of old space junk now vaporises in the atmosphere every year.

The International Telecommunications Union claims that the applications for satellite spectrum have already crossed 1mm. While all of these launches may not be successful, experts are now saying that the number of spacecraft circling Earth may reach around 100,000. According to Space.com, the majority of these launches are attributed to mega constellation projects like SpaceX's Starlink.

Most modern rockets use fossil fuels which release soot as a byproduct, which could potentially absorb all the heat and eventually lead to an increase in temperature in Earth's upper atmosphere. This, combined with the increasing levels of aluminium oxides because of the atmospheric burning of satellites may upset the planet's thermal balance. Both aluminium oxides and soot are known to damage ozone, the naturally occurring gas that keeps Earth safe from ultraviolet radiation.

About 40% of disused satellites burning up in Earth's atmosphere these days belong to SpaceX's Starlink megaconstellation, according to Andrew Bacon, the chief technology officer and co-founder of UK-based in-orbit manufacturing firm Space Forge. That amounts to "a minimum of 500kg of incinerated satellite trash a day", added Bacon, who presented those numbers at the workshop on Protecting Earth and Outer Space from the Disposal of Spacecraft and Debris held at the University of Southampton in the UK last month.

Aluminium oxides and soot are known to damage ozone, the naturally occurring gas that keeps Earth safe from ultraviolet radiation

Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer at Harvard and Smithsonian and a leading space debris expert, agreed that Starlink satellites "are dominating" among the clutter incinerated in Earth's atmosphere. "There is now a Starlink reentry almost every day," McDowell told Space.com. "Sometimes multiple."

According to a recent study published in the *Geophysical Research Letters*, concentrations of aluminium oxides in the mesosphere and stratosphere, the lowermost layers in the troposphere may increase by 650% in the coming decades, potentially causing ozone depletion. Another study, published last year by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration concluded that the increase in soot-producing rocket launches will have a similar effect on the ozone layer.

Researchers also hinted that the metallic ash, which is currently forming in the stratosphere because of satellite reentries might interfere with Earth's magnetic field and weaken it over time, allowing more cosmic radiation to reach the planet's surface.

Currently, the space industry contributes only about 0.1% to the overall damage to the ozone layer caused by humankind. That seems negligible, but researchers caution that, because satellites burn up at altitudes between 60 to 80km, the air pollution their incineration produces will remain in the air for decades, maybe centuries. The same goes for the soot and gases from rocket exhaust.

While research on atmospheric effects of rocket flights and satellite air pollution is still in its early stage, in a statement to Space.com, Munkwan Kim, an associate professor of astronautics at the University of Southampton said that "if we don't take any action now or in the next five years, it might be too late."



Is China facing a deflationary trap?

By Patrick Bolton and Haizhou Huang
Beijing/London

About two years ago, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, China's economy hit a roadblock. As all sectors underwent deleveraging, economic growth slowed, household savings rates increased, and businesses scaled back their investments and accumulated savings. Many now wonder whether consumers and companies are stuck in a self-reinforcing cycle of declining spending and falling prices, which would have the pernicious effect of increasing the real value of debt.

For a long time, the government did not move forcefully to counter these trends. On the contrary, as falling property prices and stalling land sales, together with slower growth, squeezed local governments' budgets, the central government maintained a prudent fiscal stance. Now, China is teetering on the edge of a deflationary trap: the consumer price index has been hovering near zero for 16 months, and the producer price index has been in negative territory for 24 months.

Japan remained ensnared in such a trap for three decades. Economic growth, inflation, and interest rates stagnated around zero, resulting in a long-term relative decline in GDP per capita, from a peak of 150% of the level in the US in 1995 to just 41% of the US level in 2023. With China potentially on a similar trajectory – in 2021-23, its GDP fell from 76% of the US level to 67%, and today, its GDP per capita is only 15% of the US level – how to avoid Japan's fate has become an urgent question.

Answering it requires, first, changing the way we think

about money. The conventional macroeconomic wisdom is that central banks and governments manage price and liquidity pressures through interest rates and fiscal policy. But if we recognise that money is, ultimately, a country's equity capital, money issuance can – and should – be thought of in similar terms to equity issuance. And as equity issuers, central banks can play an important role in stabilising financial markets, recapitalising banks, and avoiding a liquidity trap.

Just as a company might issue equity to recapitalise or fund productive capital expenditures, a central bank can issue money to retire debt and boost financing of investment, thereby reducing leverage across the economy and countering deflationary forces. (Conversely, when an economy is overheating, and inflation is rising, policymakers can shrink the monetary base, much as corporations repurchase stock to increase share value.)

Moreover, if banks are lending less because they have accumulated too many non-performing loans (NPLs), the central bank can recapitalise them through debt-equity swaps, with banks exchanging their liabilities (debt) for money (equity) from the central bank. At the same time, central banks can support an asset-relief programme involving the removal of NPLs from banks' balance sheets.

This way of thinking about money should inform China's effort to fight deflation. Fortunately, the government's newly announced stimulus package suggests that this may well be happening. Some of its features are conventional. For example, the People's Bank of China (PBoC) has lowered its key policy rate – the seven-day reverse repo rate – 20 basis points, from 1.7% to 1.5%. This

will drive the medium-term lending-facility rate down by about 30 basis points. The loan-market quotation rate and the deposit rate will probably also be lowered, most likely by 20-25 basis points.

Moreover, the PBoC is encouraging commercial banks to lower their mortgage interest rates to align more closely with the rate for newly issued loans – an average reduction of about 0.5 percentage points. The stimulus also includes a 0.5-percentage-point reduction in financial institutions' mandatory reserve ratio, which frees up about CN¥1 trillion (\$140bn) in long-term liquidity.

But China's stimulus programme also includes two new PBoC tools, designed to support the capital market. The first is a swap facility – initially valued at CN¥500bn, though it will probably be expanded – to make it easier for securities firms, fund companies, and insurers to finance stock purchases.

The second is the provision of up to CN¥300bn (to start) in cheap loans to commercial banks, to be used to help other entities increase their share purchases and buybacks. With these policies, the PBoC is effectively issuing equity to stabilise prices and asset values, thereby reducing economy-wide leverage.

Capital markets responded positively to the stimulus announcement, with China's A-share market index rising by more than 20% in less than a week. But more must be done to restore long-term investor confidence. While the list of necessary policies is long, three priorities stand out.

First, China's fiscal authorities should increase spending, in order to support economic growth, which is vital to address property-sector and local-government debts. Their current stance, which has had the central government's

budget deficit running only slightly above 3% of GDP for the last four years, is too prudent.

Second, the government should do more to support the private sector, which has contributed 60% of GDP, 70% of innovations, and 80% of employment to the Chinese economy roughly over the past five years. Specifically, it should fast-track its draft private-economy promotion law, aimed at fostering private-sector development, and actively promote investment with financial support, tax incentives, and expanded market access.

Finally, policymakers should support job creation for recent college graduates, migrant workers, and other groups exposed to rising unemployment. By using equity issuance productively to mobilise an idle workforce with high human capital, China could increase both economic activity and consumption.

With its latest stimulus plan, China's government is on the right track. But to escape deflation, it must go further. – Project Syndicate

● Patrick Bolton, professor of finance at Imperial College London, is senior adviser to the Lazard Climate Center and a co-author (with Haizhou Huang) of *Money Capital: New Monetary Principles for a More Prosperous Society* (Princeton University Press, 2024).

● Haizhou Huang, special-term professor of finance at the Tsinghua University PBC School of Finance and the Shanghai Advanced Institute of Finance, is an external member of the Monetary Policy Committee of the People's Bank of China and a co-author (with Patrick Bolton) of *Money Capital: New Monetary Principles for a More Prosperous Society* (Princeton University Press, 2024).



People walk past the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, in Beijing. The PBoC recently lowered its key policy rate – the seven-day reverse repo rate – 20 basis points, from 1.7% to 1.5%.

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Moldovans flock to vote in key tests on EU future

AFP/Reuters
Chisinau

Moldovans voted yesterday in a presidential election and a referendum on joining the European Union, some troubled by fears of Russian meddling amid the war in neighbouring Ukraine.

The elections are a test of the former Soviet republic's pro-European turn under incumbent President Maia Sandu, who is seeking a second term.

Police made hundreds of arrests after discovering a massive vote-buying scheme.

This week, they warned that up to a quarter of the ballots cast in the country of 2.6mn could be tainted by Russian cash.

Sandu, who beat a Moscow-backed incumbent in 2020, cut ties with Moscow and applied for Moldova to join the EU following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

She has repeatedly sounded the alarm about Russian efforts to interfere in the vote.

Washington issued a fresh warning this week about suspected Russian interference, while the EU passed new sanctions on several Moldovans.

"I have come to cast my vote for prosperity, peace and well-being in our country," said Olga Cernega, a 60-year-old economist in the capital Chisinau.

Another voter, Ghenadie, who declined to give his last name, said he was worried by what he saw as the country's "Western" drift and thought the government was "making the situation worse" economically.

An hour from there in the town of Varnita, a polling booth was set up specifically for inhabitants of the breakaway pro-Russian region of Transnistria.

Nicolai, 33, an IT specialist, who declined to give his full name for fear of repercussions in Transnistria, said he had voted "yes" in the referendum and for Sandu as president.

"I want a life in a free and safe European country," he said.

Outside a polling station, Tamara, 78, said she voted "no" and against Sandu because she was "completely fed up" and wanted the country to improve living standards, not join the EU.

Vyacheslav, 60, and his wife Tamara, 63, said: "We voted for our children, for Europe and for our future."

Sandu, 52, a former World Bank economist and Moldova's first woman president, is the clear favourite in the race.

However, with only 35.8% of voter support, according to the latest survey ahead of the election, she is predicted to fall short of the majority needed to avoid a second-round ballot on November 3.

"This election will determine our fate for many years," Sandu said when she came out to vote.

The "will of the Moldovan people" should be heard, "not that of others, not dirty money," she added.

Her 10 competitors include Alexandr Stoianoglo, a 57-year-old former prosecutor backed by the pro-Russian Socialists, who was polling at 9%.

Renato Usatii, a 45-year-old former mayor of Moldova's second largest city Balti, was predicted to win 6.4%.

Voter turnout about two hours before polls closed stood at almost 49% for the presidential election: seven percentage points higher than in 2020; and more than 42% for the referendum asking whether to modify the constitution to include joining the EU as an objective.

A turnout of more than 33% was needed for the referendum result to be valid.

Of those surveyed before the polls, 55.1% said they would vote "yes", while 34.5% said they were set on "no".

The 27-member bloc began membership talks with Chisinau this June.



A child casts the ballot of a relative during the presidential election and referendum on joining the European Union at a specially designated polling station for the people living in Moldova's Transnistria region. - AFP

Sandu's critics say she has not done enough to fight inflation in one of Europe's poorest countries or to reform the judiciary.

In his campaign, Stoianoglo - who was fired as prosecutor by Sandu - has called for the "restoration of justice" and vowed to wage a "balanced foreign policy".

He abstained from voting in the referendum.

Usatii has argued that he is "the only one who is not controlled either by the East or the West".

Fears of Russian interference are looming large.

Police said this month that millions of dollars from Russia to corrupt voters were

funnelled into the country by people affiliated to Ilan Shor, a fugitive businessman and former politician.

The "unprecedented" scheme could taint up to 300,000 ballots, according to police.

Convicted in absentia last year for fraud, Shor regularly brands Moldova a "police state" and the West's "obedient puppet".

In addition to the suspected vote buying, hundreds of young people were found to have been trained in Russia and the Balkans to create "mass disorder" in Moldova, such as using tactics to provoke law enforcement, according to police.

Russia denies interfering and accuses Sandu's government of "Russophobia".



Protesters light a giant European Union flag during a pro-Europe rally in Tbilisi ahead of the parliamentary elections, which are seen as a crucial test for the country's democracy and its bid for EU membership. - AFP

Georgian president delivers pro-EU message at rally as election looms

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili addressed a crowd of thousands at rally in the capital yesterday, delivering a strong pro-EU message just days before a fiercely-contested parliamentary election.

The crowds gathered in Tbilisi's central square represented "a free Georgia", she said.

"Here today is the society, the people, the Georgians who are going to Europe," said Zourabichvili, who has urged people to vote against the incumbent Georgian Dream party.

The October 26 election is widely viewed as a test of whether Georgia returns to Russia's orbit or maintains its pro-Western orientation.

The EU last year granted candidate status to Georgia, a first stage towards eventual membership.

However, relations have worsened sharply since Georgian Dream passed a "foreign agent" law in May that critics say is evidence it is pivoting towards Russia.

Draped in EU and Georgian flags, Georgians converged on Freedom Square yesterday to support the four main pro-Western opposition groups running next weekend.

Zourabichvili, who has largely ceremonial powers, was elected in 2018 with Georgian Dream's support but has since become one of its strongest critics.

She has been attempting to broker pacts among opposition groups to oust Georgian Dream, which domestic critics and the West accuse of derailing Tbilisi's prospects of joining the European Union.

As Zourabichvili spoke, unknown people shone lasers at her face from a nearby rooftop in an apparent attempt to distract her.

Activists said the election was an opportunity to seize a European future for themselves and their children.

"We want to live in Europe," said Liza Davitadze, 25, from the opposition Coalition for Change.

Brussels has said Georgia's accession process is "practically frozen" amid concerns of democratic backsliding, while Washington, a major aid donor, paused tens of millions of dollars in assistance this year citing similar concerns.

Many demonstrators said they saw the election as existential for the country.

"We are here because we are ready for changes," said Bachuki Tshitelidze, from Tbilisi.

Opinion polls show Georgian Dream remains the country's most popular party, though it has lost ground since 2020, when it won almost 50% of the vote and a narrow parliamentary majority.

- Reuters

Dock walkway collapse kills seven in US state of Georgia

A dock walkway collapse killed seven people in the southern US state of Georgia on Saturday, authorities said, as crowds gathered for a festival on an island.

At least 20 people were tossed into the waters off Sapelo Island and an unknown number were injured, Georgia's Department of Natural Resources said in a statement, reporting the seven deaths.

The collapse happened as the island hosted a festival celebrating its tiny Gullah-Geechee community, descendants of African people once enslaved on southern US plantations.

Isolated on islands scattered

along the southeastern US coast, their ancestors relied on the land and sea.

They created their own culture, fed by their African heritage, and even developed their own Creole language.

Georgia Department of Natural Resources said the incident was under investigation and did not offer possible causes of the collapse.

Georgia Governor Brian Kemp said he was "heartbroken" by the tragedy.

"We ask that all Georgians join us in praying for those lost, for those still in harm's way, and for their families," he added on social media platform X. - AFP

Protest in Canary Islands against mass tourism

AFP
Madrid

Thousands of flag-waving demonstrators hit the streets across Spain's Canary Islands yesterday to demand restrictions to the mass tourism they say is overwhelming their Atlantic archipelago.

Rallying under the slogan "The Canary Islands have a limit", demonstrators began marching at midday in tourist hotspots across all of the archipelago's seven main islands.

Protesters gathered outside a convention centre in Maspalomas on the island of Gran Canaria, the only water park on the island of Fuerteventura, and the nightlife district in Playa de las Americas on Tenerife's southwestern tip.

Waving white, blue and yellow flags of the Canary Islands, chanting and whistling protesters slow-marched by tourists sitting in outdoor terraces in Playa de las Americas before they rallied on the beach.

"This beach is ours," they chanted as tourists sitting on sunbeds under parasol shades watched.

The demonstration followed large protests held in April in town squares across the archipelago against a model of mass tourism critics say favours investors at the expense of the environment, and that prices local residents out of housing and forces them into precarious jobs.

"The tourist sector is bringing poverty, un-

employment and misery to the Canary Islands," Eugenio Reyes Naranjo, the spokesman for the Ben Magec-Ecologists in Action environmental group which has played a leading role in protests, told AFP at the rally in Gran Canaria.

Holding placards reading "The Canaries are not for sale" and "Enough is enough", demonstrators called for limits on tourist numbers, a crackdown on holiday apartments and curbs on what they describe as uncontrolled development.

Around 10,000 people took part in the protests across the archipelago, with the largest rally drawing some 6,500 people in Tenerife, local official said.

The islands, which lie off the northwestern coast of Africa, are known for their volcanic landscapes and year-round sunshine that make them a popular destination for northern European sunseekers.

Last year a record 16.2mn people visited the Canary Islands, a 10.9% increase over 2022 and more than seven times its population of some 2.2mn, a level demonstrators argue is unsustainable for the archipelago's limited resources.

The islands are on track to smash this record this year.

The biggest markets for the islands are Britain and Germany, although they are also a popular destination for people from mainland Spain.

Some four out of 10 residents work in tourism, which accounts for 36% of the islands' gross domestic product, official figures show.

However, many locals complain they do not share in the wealth generated by the tourism sector which they say goes mainly to large firms from outside of the archipelago.

"The wealth generated in the archipelago goes all over Europe, the people of Gran Canaria get nothing in return. It's foreign companies that come here, and we don't see the money anywhere," Adrian Souza, a 32-year-old protester at the rally in Maspalomas, told AFP.

One in three people living in the Canaries are at risk of poverty and 65% struggle to make ends meet, according to the latest figures from the European Anti-Poverty Network that were presented on Tuesday in the Canary's regional parliament.

Some tourists cheered the demonstrators as they went by.

"The coastline is being damaged by so much construction. I totally agree with them," said Rosalia Magalilo, a 55-year-old tourist from Switzerland who said she had been coming to Gran Canaria for 30 years.

Anti-tourism protests have multiplied in recent months across Spain, the world's second-most visited country after France, prompting authorities to try to reconcile the interests of locals and a lucrative sector that accounts for 12.8% of Spain's economy.

Barcelona city hall has said it will ban all holiday apartments by 2028 while the southern city of Seville plans to cut off the water supply to properties let out to tourists without a licence.

Harris turns 60, but prefers to talk about Trump's age

AFP/Reuters
Washington

Kamala Harris turned 60 yesterday in the final stretch of a knife-edge election battle with 78-year-old Donald Trump, as she urged a black congregation in Georgia to embrace compassionate values while others "spread hate, sow fear and cause chaos".

Harris, speaking at a Baptist megachurch near Atlanta, did not mention Trump by name but the crowd - after spontaneously serenading her with "Happy Birthday" - nodded knowingly to her allusions to her Republican rival.

Georgia is one of the key states that are expected to decide the November 5 election.

Both candidates were planning events later in another of those states, Pennsylvania, which both sides see as a must-win.

With just over two weeks before Election Day, the Democratic vice-president and the Republican billionaire are in a fierce race.

Harris, addressing the enthusiastic black churchgoers - normally a strongly Democratic demographic - delivered a temperate speech, telling the tale of the Good Samaritan but also using it to exhort the crowd to vote and "shine the light in moments of darkness".

Indeed, Trump is using increasingly angry and dark language in the campaign.

He has likened undocumented migrants to animals, threatened revenge against his perceived enemies, praised autocrats like Vladimir Putin of Russia and described America as a ruined nation only he can fix.

"Where we go from here is up to



Harris speaks during a church service at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Stonecrest, Georgia. - AFP

Right: Trump mans the drive-through line during his visit to a McDonald's restaurant in Feasterville-Trevose, Pennsylvania. - AFP

us as Americans and as people of faith," Harris said. "What kind of country do we want to live in - a country of chaos, fear and hate, or a country of freedom, compassion and justice?"

In other events, Harris has increasingly raised questions about Trump's fitness to be president.

"Now he's ducking debates and cancelling interviews because of exhaustion," Harris told a rally on Saturday in Atlanta, mocking his rambling, off-script speeches.

The former president himself has surprised attendees at his rallies with sometimes bizarre references, including a ribald allusion on Saturday to the anatomy of a famous golfer.

However, Trump's age and spontaneous remarks have not appeared to be a deal-breaker for voters, as polls show a close battle ahead.

Trump also told Breitbart News



Right: Trump mans the drive-through line during his visit to a McDonald's restaurant in Feasterville-Trevose, Pennsylvania. - AFP

he would work at a McDonald's restaurant in Pennsylvania "just for fun" to mock Harris.

Trump adviser Jason Miller said Trump would be working in the french fries area of the restaurant.

Harris says she worked at a McDonald's when she was young but Trump says he does not believe her.

Harris had also sought to goad Trump with a report on October 12 that described her "excellent health", but the ex-president's campaign insisted he, too, is "in perfect and excellent health to be Commander-in-Chief".

The Republican running for a second go in the White House countered Harris's accusations with a marathon speech in Pennsylvania on Saturday, a day after saying that she "doesn't have the energy of a rabbit".

Both candidates are spending their final campaign days in pivotal

states, but so are their surrogates.

Tesla and SpaceX boss Elon Musk has personally hit the campaign trail in Pennsylvania, holding a series of events in the must-win state.

Speaking in the southeastern city of Harrisburg, he announced that he would start to randomly distribute cash awards - \$1mn each day until the November 5 vote - to a registered voter in the state who signed his organisation's petition.

Harris deployed surrogates in the form of pop stars Lizzo and Usher to make her case to voters.

Lizzo drew cheers when telling a Detroit rally that America was more than ready for its first woman president.

One of Atlanta's major stars, Usher, told voters there that "I'm counting on you" to get Harris's "campaign across the finish line" in Georgia.

Cuba's electrical grid collapses again amid restoration efforts

Cuba's electrical grid collapsed again yesterday, the country's energy and mines ministry said, in the latest setback to the government's efforts to restore power to the island.

Cuba said earlier that it was making headway

restoring service after multiple false starts, though millions of people remained without electricity days after the grid's initial collapse.

The government had said that electricity service will be restored by tonight.

Energy and Mining Minister Vicente de la O Levy had told reporters that service would be restored for most Cubans today, adding that "the last customer may receive service by Tuesday".

- AFP/Reuters



Some of the participants at the session.

QCS discusses reality of breast cancer in region

The Qatar Cancer Society (QCS), in collaboration with the National Non-Communicable Diseases Alliance in the Eastern Mediterranean, hosted a discussion session on *Enhancing Access to Early Detection and Treatment of Breast Cancer in the Region* as part of the 71st Session of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Committee Meeting.

QCS chairman HE Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabor al-Thani and Tunisia Health Minister Dr Mustapha al-Fejani attended the event.

WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional

Office (EMRO) director Dr Hanan Balkhy and EM-NCD Alliance chairperson Dr Ibtihal Fadhil were also present.

The discussion session brought together government health officials from various countries in the region, along with WHO officials, technical experts, researchers, healthcare practitioners, civil society organisation representatives, women's health advocates and patient rights activists, among others.

This session was part of ongoing efforts to raise awareness about breast cancer, providing an ideal opportunity to unify ef-

orts among key stakeholders from different sectors to stimulate initiatives aimed at improving access to early detection and treatment in the Middle East.

The session covered several topics, including the "Reality of Breast Cancer in the Region".

Recent statistics were presented, showing that breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region.

With over 131,000 reported cases in 2022, making it the leading cause of cancer-related deaths among women, breast



Dignitaries at the event.

cancer accounts for approximately 53,000 deaths annually, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The session also addressed the barriers to early detection and treatment.

The session covered the key challenges women face in accessing early detection and treatment services, such as lack of awareness, social stigma, and inadequate health resources.

"The aim of hosting this event was to prioritise early detection of breast cancer," HE Sheikh Dr Khalid stated. "We believe in integrating early detection into national

health policies and cancer control plans in the region. We also aim to share best practices, build recommendations, and exchange successful experiences in this field."

The session concluded with a set of recommendations aimed at alleviating the burden of breast cancer in the region and achieving equitable access to early detection and timely treatment.

The recommendations included increasing awareness, improving guidance, enhancing policies, and improving awareness efforts.

Katara Festival for Arabic Novel organises cultural events and symposiums

Curators of the 10th Katara Festival for Arabic Novel held events and symposiums that included one titled *Of Theatre and Novel: From Text to Performance*, moderated by the novelist Jamal Fayez.

During their engagement in the discussions, theatre critic Dr Hassan Rashid and theatre director Taleb al-Dos affirmed that theatre and novel are the most prominent arts that have had impactful results in the society and helped formulate an epochal cultural awareness through time.

Another symposium on *The Role of Social Responsibility in Community Development*, in which media personalities Moza al-Ishaq and Najat Ali Muhammad spoke about their experiences in voluntary work for the service of the nation, was moderated by Mohamed al-Shahwani, head of Katara's Cultural Literature Department.

Katara also organised an event on the theme of reading of the book - *The Dallah: An icon of Qatari hospitality*, by author Abdulaziz al-Buhashim al-Sayed, who opened the session by shining a spotlight on the significance of coffee pots and their types as symbols of Arab hospitality and generosity, which are deeply rooted values among the people of the region.

He highlighted the tools utilised in coffee-making and the importance of documenting Qatari heritage in all its details, including coffee, its utensils, and the gatherings associated with it, to ensure this intangible heritage is preserved as a reference for future generations.

There was an interactive storytelling event titled *The Album of Memories*, presented by student Hamad Khalifa al-Kuwari, where he narrated a story through a brief journey across crucial epochal times through which forebears has passed in the past.

On Friday a lecture titled *The Efforts of Mauritanian Scholars in Acquiring Manuscripts* was held, delivered by president of Mauritania's Arab Manuscript House, Abdullah Muhammad Bilal.

The lecture was moderated by poet and researcher Mohamed al-Manaai.

There was also a lecture on *Fantasy in Arabic literature*, which was presented by Egyptian novelist Ibrahim Farghali, with an introduction by Dr Moulay Youssef al-Idrisi, which discussed the origins of fantasy in Greece and its transition to the Arab world.

- QNA



Ambassador Ordorica with Maria T Costatini al-Bader at the event. - Supplied picture



Al-Bader's pieces highlight the enduring connection to heritage amidst cultural assimilation.



The exhibition presents a diverse roster of artists. - Supplied picture

Latin American and Caribbean voices resonate at 'Latitudes and Heartbeats' exhibition

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The stunning works of Latin American and Caribbean artists residing in Qatar take centre stage at the recently unveiled "Latitudes and Heartbeats" exhibition at the embassy of Mexico in Doha.

Open to the public by appointment until November 14, this exhibition offers a compelling dialogue between heritage and adaptation, the embassy said, exploring themes of identity, memory, and belonging in a new cultural context.

"Through these artistic expressions, we create bridges of dialogue and empathy," Mexican ambassador Guillermo Ordorica said, highlighting the exhibition's significance in fostering cross-cultural understanding. "Initiatives like these help deepen the bonds between our peoples, enrich the vibrant artistic landscape of Qatar and nurture mutual respect and appreciation."

The show's opening on Thursday (October 17) was attended by ambassadors from Latin America and the Caribbean, members of the diplomatic corps, and the local art community.

"Latitudes and Heartbeats" features a variety of mediums, from digital photography and painting to mixed media and sculpture.

The works explore the emotional echoes of distance and the fusion of Latin American heritage with the Arab world.

The exhibition presents a diverse roster of artists, including Alejandro Reyes, Clemencia Rodriguez Tovar, and several others from Mexico; Fernando Jaramillo from Chile; Maria T Costatini al-Bader from Qatar; and Aryam Ladera Ramos from Venezuela.

Adding to the cultural exchange, special guest works include pieces by Syrian artist Hala Aljaafari, Qatari artist Abdul Rahman al-Mutawah, and a historical Qatari dallah ensemble from a private collection.

For al-Bader, a Uruguayan-born artist who has called Qatar home for over three decades, the exhibition is a personal reflection on the enduring connection to heritage amidst cultural assimilation.

"I came to this country 36 years ago and embraced completely the culture," she said. "What I wanted to show in my work is the retrospective that remains alive; it means that even though we are a modern country ... I believe that we are still very well connected to the traditions."

Al-Bader uses porcelain painting, a technique demanding patience and precision, to depict this connection.

"For a woman, for instance, when we have our weddings, we still dress as a Qatari...when we go to the sea we still use the dhows, and when we go to the desert with falcons, we still use the same techniques," she said, noting that losing touch with one's heritage diminishes a sense of belonging.



'Latitudes and Heartbeats' features a variety of mediums, from digital photography and painting to mixed media and sculpture. Left: Maria Sapien's painting on display. PICTURES: Joey Aguilar



The workshops provide skills and techniques to help coaches work effectively with individuals with disabilities

QF, Seashore Group launch workshops for coaches

Qatar Foundation (QF) and Seashore Group have teamed up to offer a series of training workshops for coaches as part of the Ability Friendly Programme.

Focused on improving coaching techniques in swimming and football, the initiative promotes inclusive sports activities for individuals with disabilities.

Executive director of Special Schools & SEN Services at the QF, Mark David Hughes, said: "Our primary goal is to build capacity within Qatar and the GCC by increasing the knowledge and expertise of our coaches."

He stressed the role that coaches play in not only enhancing athletes' skills but also boosting their confidence and overall performance through tailored training programmes.

Raising awareness is key to helping coaches provide the right support

"These workshops will provide essential skills in communication, safety, and adaptive coaching techniques to help coaches work effectively with individuals with disabilities," Hughes added.

He emphasised the importance of coaches being prepared to address the emotional challenges athletes may face due to their disabilities.

Hughes also stressed the need for specialised coaching knowledge for working with athletes with different disabilities, such as wheelchair users, visually impaired athletes, amputees, and individuals with autism.

Vice-chairman of the Seashore Group's board of directors, Saqer Saeed al-Mohannadi, underscored the company's commitment to corporate social responsibility and community well-being through its support of the Ability Friendly Programme.



Saqer Saeed al-Mohannadi

"This investment strengthens our role in promoting inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility across Qatar," the official said. "Our involvement equips trainers with the essential skills to work effectively with individuals of all abilities, ensuring transformative experiences for participants."



"This initiative aligns perfectly with the company's goals of community engagement and empowerment, as it provides life-changing opportunities for individuals with disabilities, helping them build confidence and skills through sports and coaching programmes," al-Mohannadi added. - QNA