



Insure your visitors  
in 2 mins



Visit

qic.online

QIC

\*Regulated by QCB

# GULF TIMES



SATURDAY Vol. XXXXV No. 13182

November 2, 2024  
Rabia II 30, 1446 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

Published in  
QATAR  
since 1978

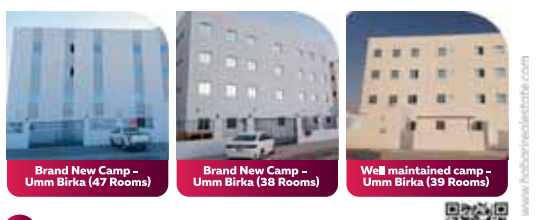


Introducing our new  
Unlimited+ plans

UNLIMITED+  
PLANS



HABARI  
REAL ESTATE  
**Ready To  
Occupy  
Camps**



Available@Umm Birka  
+974 3030 0880 | +974 3341 9475

Family  
Welcome  
الشتاء  
Winter  
600+ Products  
on Offer

ROBSON  
ROBLUX BY ROBSON  
PAINTS is the first high  
performance washable paints  
The first product that obtained  
Qatar Quality Mark

TAP to school with  
talabat  
up to  
60% off

Amwaj  
BOTTLED DRINKING WATER  
STAY COOL  
DRINK WATER  
Available in  
1500ml | 500ml | 330ml | 200ml  
CALL NOW!  
7794 9967 | 7061 5604  
+974 30454443



People inspect destruction at the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted the eastern village of Bazzaliyeh in the Hermel district of Lebanon's Bekaa valley, near the border with Syria, yesterday.

## Lebanon accuses Israel of rejecting ceasefire

AFP  
Beirut

Lebanon's prime minister accused Israel yesterday of rejecting a ceasefire after the Israeli military bombed south Beirut for the first time this week.

In Gaza, where Israel has been engaged in a major offensive in the north for nearly a month, a Hamas official said the Palestinian group had rejected a proposal for a short-term truce.

UN chiefs called the situation in northern Gaza "apocalyptic" and warned the entire popula-

tion there was at risk of death.

At least 10 strikes hit Beirut's southern suburbs before dawn after Israel issued evacuation warnings. AFP TV footage showed explosions and clouds of smoke.

"The raids left massive destruction in the targeted areas, as dozens of buildings were levelled," Lebanon's official National News Agency reported.

The news agency also reported strikes on Bint Jbeil, Tyre and Nabatieh in the south.

The Lebanon strikes came a day after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met US officials to discuss a possible deal to end the war against Hezbollah,

ahead of Tuesday's US presidential election.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati condemned the Israeli attacks.

He said the renewed bombing of Beirut's southern suburbs and strikes on other areas "confirm the Israeli enemy's rejection of all efforts being made to secure a ceasefire." Israeli warplanes again hit the eastern city of Baalbek, after strikes there killed six people on Thursday. At least 41 people have been killed in Israeli strikes on Baalbek region yesterday, the regional governor said.

Smoke rose from the remains of house in the city's Douris neighbourhood. **Page 6**

## Locations for constitutional referendum polling stations

QNA  
Doha

The General Referendum Committee announced yesterday the locations for the referendum polling stations for the 2024 constitutional amendment project, which will be conducted both on paper and electronically.

The General Referendum Committee specified the locations for non-electronic voting stations that will use paper as follows: "Committee 1: Location: Ali Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah Arena, at Al Sadd Sports Club; Committee 2: Location: Multi-purpose Hall, at Al Duhail Sports Club; Committee 3: Location: Aspire Sports Hall, at Aspire." It also specified "Committee 4: Location: Multi-purpose Hall, at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium (Al Rayyan); Committee 5: Location: Multi-purpose Hall, at Barzan Youth Centre; Committee 6: Location: Multi-purpose Hall, at Hamad Bin Khalifa Stadium (Al Ahli Club); Committee 7: Location: VIP Entrance, at Al Janoub Stadium." As for "Committee 8: Location: Multi-purpose Hall, at Al Khor Sports Club; Committee 9: Location: Multi-purpose Hall, at Al Shamal Sports Club; Committee 10: Location: Multi-purpose Hall, at Thani Bin Jassim Stadium (Al Gharafa Club)."

For electronic voting stations, the locations are as follows: "Committee 1: Location: Departures - Gate No 2, at Hamad International Airport; Committee 2: Location: Abu Samra Border Centre, at Abu Samra Crossing; Committee 3: Location: Villaggio Mall, at Villaggio Mall; Committee 4: Location: Doha Festival

### Referendum on Tuesday, Nov 5

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani issued this week Decree No 87 of 2024, inviting all citizens aged 18 and above to participate in a general referendum on the constitutional amendments to the Permanent Constitution of Qatar on Tuesday, 3rd Jumada Al-Awwal 1446, corresponding to November 5, 2024. The decree stipulated that the referendum would begin at 7am and end at 7pm, and the results would be announced within 24 hours of its conclusion.

City, at Doha Festival City." As for "Committee 5, its location will be at Landmark Mall, Committee 6 will be located at The Gate Mall, Committee 7 will be at Vendome Mall, and Committee 8 will be at West Walk Mall." "Committee 9 will be located at Lagoon Mall, Committee 10 at Al Hazm Mall, while Committee 11 will be located at the Cultural Village Katara (Galleries Lafayette), and Committee 12 at The Mall." "Committee 13: Location: Ezdan Al Wakra Mall, at Ezdan Al Wakra; Committee 14: Location: Mall of Qatar, at Mall of Qatar; Committee 15: Location: Barahat Msheireb, at Msheireb; Committee 16: Location: Qatar University - Male Campus, at Qatar University (Male); Committee 17: Location: Qatar University - Female Campus, at Qatar University (Female); Committee 18: Location: Multaqa Building, at Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development."

### Amir, UK premier discuss regional developments

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani discussed with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer the strategic bilateral relations. This came during a phone call received by the Amir yesterday from the UK prime minister. The call also dealt with discussing a number of regional and international developments of joint interest, especially the latest developments in the Gaza Strip, the occupied Palestinian territories and Lebanon, and diplomatic means to reduce escalation and cease fire. **(QNA)**

## Qatar condemns Israeli ban of UNRWA

Qatar participated in the extraordinary session of the Arab League at the level of permanent representatives, held at the headquarters of the League's General Secretariat in Cairo, to discuss the dangerous and illegitimate laws passed by the Israeli Knesset. These laws would lead to the prohibition of activities by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and to consider steps needed to rally international support to counter them. Representing Qatar at the meeting was its Deputy Permanent Representative to the Arab League Maryam Ahmed al-Shaibi. In her speech at the meeting, held on Thursday at Jordan's request, al-Shaibi strongly condemned the enactment of illegal laws that prohibit UNRWA activities in the occupied Palestinian territories.



Maryam Ahmed al-Shaibi

She noted that Qatar considers this act a dangerous precedent against the UN and multilateral work, as well as a continuation of the occupations genocidal war against the defenceless Palestinian people and part of systematic oppression targeting this UN agency and its vital humanitarian operations. She emphasised that the Palestinian people in Gaza, who have faced catastrophic humanitarian conditions due to brutal aggression that has

continued for over a year, will suffer further under these unjust laws. These laws will inevitably lead to severe humanitarian and political consequences by depriving millions of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria of essential UNRWA services and undermine the Palestinian refugee issue, denying them their legally guaranteed right of return. Al-Shaibi reaffirmed Qatar's full support for UNRWA, grounded in the State's steadfast and supportive stance towards the Palestinian people and their right to establish an independent state within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. She stressed that these laws would not deter Qatar from fulfilling its commitments to support UNRWA, with the latest contribution exceeding \$100mn. She added that these Israeli laws will not affect the pivotal role played

by Arab partners in addressing humanitarian crises and supporting Palestinian refugees. Al-Shaibi pointed out that Israel's ongoing disregard for international laws, agreements, and resolutions, its contempt for the activities and objectives of UN organisations, and its continued crimes of killing and forced displacement of Palestinians call for regional and international solidarity to end the barbaric, brutal war on the Palestinian people and to provide necessary assistance. She affirmed Qatar's solidarity with its Arab brothers in whatever measures they agree upon concerning these unjust actions and expressed the State's support for the outcomes of this emergency meeting in support of the Palestinian people and in loyalty to the Palestinian cause, which remains the foremost Arab cause and a matter of global human conscience. **(QNA) Page 6**

### Trump, Harris battle for key state Wisconsin

Donald Trump came under fire for violent rhetoric against a prominent Kamala Harris supporter yesterday as the candidates held duelling rallies in the battleground of Wisconsin four days before the climax of the most volatile US presidential campaign in modern history. More than 66mn Americans have already cast early ballots ahead of Tuesday's Election Day. Opinion polls show Trump and Harris running dead even, with victory depending on who wins a majority of the seven swing states, including Wisconsin. Both were campaigning in the state's largest city Milwaukee. Trump was holding a rally in the same venue where he celebrated the Republican Party nomination over the summer, delivering a triumphant acceptance speech just days after the 78-year-old had narrowly escaped an assassination attempt in Pennsylvania. **(AFP) Page 7**

## Qatar-based programme finalist in WISE Prize for Education

By Joseph Varghese  
Staff Reporter

A Qatar-based organisation has been shortlisted for the prestigious WISE Prize for Education, a global recognition for innovative education programmes or individuals.

Bonocle, an organisation headquartered in Qatar, is among the six finalists for the WISE Prize 2024-25 selected by World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) a global education initiative by Qatar Foundation.

Bonocle's core innovation is its gamified approach to braille education. Bonocle transforms braille education with a gamified platform, making learning accessible, engaging, and fun for blind students.

The platform stands out by making braille learning fun through inclusive games that can be enjoyed by everyone, not just the visually-impaired. It has a global outreach and is now available in the US, Canada, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

Bonocle highly focuses on inclusion. The platform is designed



Bonocle transforms braille education with a gamified platform.

not only for blind users but also engages their sighted parents,



Abdelrazek Aly

friends, and colleagues. This approach enhances educational ex-

periences and social integration, ensuring that blind individuals can learn and interact inclusively within their communities.

Bonocle's journey began when its founder Abdelrazek Aly met with an accident and broke his hand. Aly joined a special needs centre at his university during his recovery. It was there that he first interacted with the blind community, witnessing their challenges firsthand. This experience inspired Aly and his team to challenge existing solutions and ensure that people with disabilities are fully included in society, with

access to the same quality education and opportunities as everyone else.

Key features of Bonocle are that it provides a portable device ensuring braille is always at the user's fingertips. It has inclusive games incorporating tactile feedback, sounds, motion, and haptics. It is highly affordable, making quality education accessible to all. Furthermore it is an open and dynamic platform with a growing library of content and offers diverse use cases beyond basic literacy, including gaming and social interaction. **To Page 12**

## Vietnamese PM holds talks with IT, labour ministers



Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh met with HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohammed bin Ali al-Mannai. The meeting emphasised the importance of strengthening the partnership between the two countries in artificial intelligence and continuing co-operation in communications and information technology. Both sides expressed their commitment to enhancing co-operation across various sectors, particularly in technology and innovation. HE al-Mannai also met with Vietnam's Minister of Information and Communications Nguyen Manh Hung. The meeting focused on promoting co-operation in digital transformation and information technology, aiming to exchange expertise and explore opportunities for digital innovation. The meeting also discussed prospects for joint investment in promising technological projects, contributing to digital development in both countries. **(QNA)**



Prime Minister of Vietnam Pham Minh Chinh met with HE Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri during his visit to the country. The meeting focused on discussing bilateral co-operation in the labour sector between the two countries and exploring opportunities to strengthen this collaboration. **(QNA)**

## AlKhatir meets Canada's FM

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatir met with Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly on the sidelines of the Ministerial Conference on the Human Dimension of the Peace Formula in Ukraine, which is being held in Montreal. The meeting dealt with discussing bilateral co-operation and the means to enhance them, particularly reuniting Ukrainian families. The meeting also dealt with developments in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories, Lebanon, the means to enhance co-operation in the developmental field, in addition to a number of issues of joint interest. **(QNA)**



## Ministry participates in regional forum on food systems

The Ministry of Municipality has participated in the high-level regional forum on "Accelerating Food Systems Transformation in the Arab Region", which was held in Amman, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The ministry's delegation to the forum was headed by Assistant Undersecretary for Agriculture and Food Security Affairs, engineer Fahad Mohammed al-Qahtani. The forum highlighted the

opportunities available to enhance the transformation of Arab food systems through effective governance, means of implementation and regional co-operation. During the forum, several projects and strategies were presented on the transformation of food systems in the Arab region and experiences were exchanged. Dr Masoud Jarallah al-Marri, Director of the Food Security

Department at the Ministry of Municipality, spoke in the dialogue session on financing the transformation of food systems in the Arab region, and reviewed Qatar's strategy in financing and supporting the transformation to more sustainable food systems in the country, the principles that were relied upon and the proposals for developing financing systems in international organisations. **(QNA)**

## Environment minister calls for integrating global policies on climate, biodiversity

**QNA**  
Cali, Colombia

Qatar's Minister of Environment and Climate Change HE Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie participated in two high-level ministerial sessions held as part of the 16th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which is taking place in Cali, Colombia.

During his participation, HE Dr al-Subaie called for the need to integrate international policies and avoid conflicts regarding climate action and biodiversity. He noted that the lack of co-ordination and fragmentation of these policies would weaken their effectiveness and disperse efforts.

He emphasised the importance of addressing the challenges of capacity-building for developing countries and the transfer and localisation of necessary technologies to achieve and implement the agreements' objectives in alignment with their goals.

He said that Qatar is currently working on updating its biodiversity plan, expected to be completed by 2025, aligning its outcomes and goals with its international commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. These outcomes and goals also align with Qatar's Third National Development Plan, which concludes in 2030.

He also highlighted Qatar's efforts in establishing a biodiversity



database project in co-operation with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). This project aims to support the Biodiversity In-

formation Exchange Mechanism through an advanced electronic system operating at the national, regional, and international levels.

## Qatar-Vietnam relationship flourishing

Qatar and Vietnam issued a joint statement on Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh's visit to Doha. The following are excerpts from the text of the statement: Pham Minh Chinh, Prime Minister of Vietnam, paid the first official visit to Qatar in 5 years from Oct 30-Nov 1.

Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh paid a courtesy call on the Amir of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, held an official talks session with Qatar's Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and called on the Shura Council Speaker HE Hassan bin Abdulla al-Ghanem, and met with HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology; HE the Minister of Labour; HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs; Chairman of Qatar Investment Authority (QIA); and Chairman of Qatar Businessmen Association (QBA).

The two sides noted with satisfaction the achievements of their 30-year bilateral relationship that has been flourishing and expanding across multiple fields. The two sides pledged to promoting the exchange of delegations and contacts at all levels and through various channels, and strengthen people-to-people ties, to further advance the excellent co-operation between Vietnam and Qatar.

With a shared vision to further deepen the political trust and elevate Qatar-Vietnam relationships to a more profound and advanced level, the two sides agreed to work towards upgrading bilateral relations to a more involved, concrete and effective partnership.

The two sides consider negotiating bilateral agreements on the



Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh left Doha yesterday, after a working visit to the country. He and the accompanying delegation were seen off at Doha International Airport by HE the Minister of State Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Sayed, Qatar's ambassador to Vietnam Khalid Ali Abdullah Abel, and Vietnam's ambassador in Doha Nguyen Huy Hiep.

areas of, among others, visa exemption, labour, economic and trade to expand their market access. They emphasised the importance of economic, trade, and investment co-operation and recognised the significant potential for collaboration in other sectors such as energy, oil and gas, especially liquefied natural gas (LNG), agriculture, Halal industry, banking, etc.

The two sides agreed to strengthen trade and investment activities, with an aim to attract more investment from Qatari funds to strategic investment projects in Vietnam enhance business connections, and support investors from both sides. They pledged to enhance defence and security co-operation and maintain an environment of co-operation and peace in the two regions and the world.

The two sides recognised the importance of promoting education and training, tourism, and cultural

and sports exchange to strengthen people-to-people connections and deepen mutual understanding. Both sides agreed to increase scholarships for each other students. In addition, both sides agreed to explore co-operation opportunities in emerging sectors, such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, clean energy, solar energy, digital transformation, innovative governance, green and circular economy, among others.

During the visit, the two sides signed a number of bilateral agreements and MoUs to enhance co-operation in various fields. The two sides exchanged views on international and regional issues of mutual interest and underscored the importance of upholding international law and the UN Charter, advocating the resolution of disputes by diplomatic means to maintain peace, stability, and security and promote development at regional and global levels. **(QNA)**

## Qatar, Pakistan strengthen fraternal ties

Qatar and Pakistan issued a joint statement yesterday on the visit of Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif to Doha. The following is the text of the statement: His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, met with Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, at the Amiri Diwan in Doha, where His Highness the Amir welcomed the prime minister and his accompanying delegation.

His Highness stressed the importance of fraternal relations between the two countries and the two sides' aspiration to enhance economic partnership, increase trade exchange, and promote investments. For his part, the Pakistani prime minister expressed his gratitude for the warm reception and generous hospitality, expressing his keenness to strengthen bilateral relations and develop existing co-operation to broader horizons and various fields.

He expressed his country's appreciation for the continuous support provided by Qatar to Pakistan in various fields, and highlighted the investment opportunities in vital economic sectors in Pakistan.

The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries, with a particular emphasis on investment and trade, alongside discussions on co-operation in other fields.

The two sides discussed various key opportunities in a number of fields in Pakistan in the context of previous investment pledges. Key regional and international developments of mutual concern were also addressed.

On this occasion, HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jas-



Pakistan's Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif left Doha yesterday following a working visit to the country. He and the accompanying delegation were seen off at Doha International Airport by HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulafii, Qatar's ambassador to Pakistan Ali bin Mubarak al-Khatir and Pakistani ambassador to Qatar Dr Muhemmed Aejaz.

sim al-Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, held a meeting with Sharif, where the two sides discussed ways to enhance bilateral relations and explore various avenues for collaboration in the areas of economy, trade, investment and cultural exchange.

The Pakistani prime minister expressed his gratitude for Qatar's role in supporting economic development in Pakistan, praising the presence of a large Pakistani community in Qatar that acts as a bridge linking the two countries.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs stressed the importance of Pakistan as a strategic partner in the region, expressing the Qatari side's commitment to deepen economic ties between the two countries to serve the common interests of the two countries. The two sides discussed regional

and international issues, stressing the importance of peaceful solutions and co-operative efforts to address current challenges.

The Pakistani prime minister praised Qatar's diplomatic efforts and humanitarian initiatives to promote peace in the region, especially its role as a mediator regarding the Palestinian issue and its commitment to supporting efforts to establish security and stability in the region.

The two sides agreed on the importance of continuing to exchange high-level visits to enhance mutual understanding, deepen co-operation, and explore new horizons.

During the visit His Highness the Amir and the Pakistani prime minister visited the exhibition "Manzar: Art and Architecture in Pakistan from the 1940s to the Present" organised by Qatar Museums. **(QNA)**

## 'Hour and Hour' programme holds activities for visually impaired

The Hour and Hour programme has organised a number of activities and events in collaboration with Al Noor Centre for the Blind, reflecting commitment to social responsibility, a statement said. The activities over four days, included interactive workshops as part of the celebrations for the White Cane Safety Day and the World Sight Day. Various groups were formed. The innovation group encouraged university and school students

interested in creating assistive tools that enable visually impaired individuals to share their experiences more effectively. Through this group, the centre aimed to encourage creativity among young people and invite them to participate in developing innovative solutions that meet the needs of the visually impaired. This group provided a space for interaction between students and specialists, allowing them to exchange ideas and

expertise. The event also included innovative artistic activities, where members of the Rehabilitation and Vocational Training Section created an artwork symbolising the white cane, the essential tool upon which the visually impaired rely in their daily lives. Besides being a work of art, it symbolised identity and strength, reflecting the efforts of visually impaired individuals to overcome challenges and achieve their ambitions.

The workshops included sensory activities that enhance movement and orientation skills, giving participants the opportunity to develop their abilities in self-direction and control over their surroundings, to improve their independence. The event also featured awareness activities aimed at raising awareness about visual impairments and the importance of community support for individuals with disabilities, helping to remove the psychological



and social barriers they face. School students were invited to participate in the event, fostering a spirit of cooperation between different generations and helping to spread awareness about visual impairment issues. Tamani al-Yafei, CEO of Hour and Hour

programme, appreciated the role played by Al Noor Centre for the Blind and thanked its leadership, including executive director Meshal bin Abdullah al-Nuaimi and the Community Awareness Department's Implementation and Follow-Up Section head Munira al-Athbah.

Official

## Amir congratulates Algerian president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on his country's National Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of congratulations to Prime Minister Nadir Larbaoui.

## Amir sends cables of congratulations to governor-general of Antigua and Barbuda

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Governor-General of Antigua and Barbuda Rodney Williams on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. **(QNA)**



# First edition of Freej Art and Design Fest flagged off by culture minister

**QNA**  
Doha

**H**E the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani inaugurated the first edition of the Freej Art and Design Festival, organised by the Ministry of Culture at the permanent Darb Al Saai site in the Umm Salal area.

The event was attended by several ministers, ambassadors accredited to the state, along with a gathering of intellectuals, artists, and media representatives. The festival, which runs until Nov 6, aims to celebrate Qatar's contemporary art scene, foster connections, and create an interactive platform for artists to highlight diverse artistic expressions. It also seeks to enrich Qatar's cultural landscape, aiming to establish itself as a global platform celebrating artistic creativity, cultural exchange, and dialogue between artists and audiences.

The minister toured various festival sections, visiting artist studios and the Arabian Illuminations exhibit, which features Qatari and

Arab galleries. He also inaugurated a prominent exhibition showcasing works by the pioneering Qatari artist Youssef Ahmed.

The Arabian Illuminations exhibition brings together artists from diverse backgrounds, each with a unique visual identity, representing various artistic paths, including both late and contemporary artists continuing the journey.

Additionally, HE the minister attended the launch of a book titled 'Through the Eyes of Qatari Art', produced in a deluxe edition, at a special session on the main stage.

In a statement, Assistant Undersecretary for Cultural Affairs at the Ministry of Culture Dr Ghanem bin Mubarak Al Ali al-Maadid explained that the cultural season launched by the ministry, beginning with the Freej Art and Design Festival, is intended to establish an interactive platform for intellectuals, creatives, artists, poets, and the public, fostering productive cultural dialogue that supports the state's cultural development efforts.

He noted that the Freej Art and Design Festival attracts the general

public and those interested in art and cultural creativity by offering a diverse range of events, exhibitions, and workshops that directly contribute to enhancing and enriching the cultural scene in Qatar through building bridges between artists and audiences.

Dr Ghanem bin Mubarak al-Ali emphasised that the festival is an opportunity to showcase the talents of artists from Qatar and abroad, supporting young, talented creators through the exchange of artistic skills and experiences. Iraq's Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Antiquities Dr Ahmed al-Fakkak al-Badrani expressed that the Freej Art and Design Festival serves as a cultural platform benefiting all visitors, highlighting the festival's focus on training children and youth in various cultural activities that reflect diverse aspects of cultural life.

He noted that Qatar's cultural experience is pioneering in the Arab world, serving as a bridge between Qatar's past and its future, and praised the significant progress Qatar has achieved across political, cultural, artistic, and various other fields. The Iraqi min-

ister acknowledged the cultural collaboration between Qatar and Iraq, which he stated is longstanding, noting that many creative Iraqi artists reside in Qatar.

HE Chair of the Education, Culture, and Sports Committee in the Shura Council Khalid bin Ahmed al-Obaidan, emphasised that art is the highest form of human expression, accessible to all and closest to peoples hearts. He praised the Ministry of Culture's efforts in ensuring that all forms of visual art, including surrealism, classicism, and others, have a place, alongside its support for all types of art.

In a statement to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), he noted that the name Al Freej holds deep meaning and emotional significance for Qataris, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, when the narrow alleys reflected close human connections. He highlighted that artist Youssef Ahmed's exhibition genuinely captures this spirit, aiming to show that the path to global recognition and high art can only be achieved through deep-rooted localism, paired with the artists advanced imagination.

In a speech at the launch of the

book 'Through the Eyes of Qatari Art', Director of the Department of Culture and Arts at the Ministry of Culture Abdulrahman Abdullah al-Dulaimi, noted that the event celebrates the addition of a new title to the art library, immortalizing the journeys and experiences of pioneering visual artists, creating a lasting legacy for future generations.

Al-Dulaimi affirmed the ministry's commitment to fostering an environment conducive to creativity and innovation in culture and arts, explaining that art transcends creative activity. He added that the book was a unique artistic and creative innovation in the realm of publications and documentation, incorporating QR Code technology that allows readers to get closer to the artists by viewing videos of them discussing their art and experiences. The book showcases the experiences of pioneering artists, including Jassim Zaini, Hassan al-Mulla, Wafiq Sultan, Youssef Ahmed, Ali Hassan, Salman al-Malik, the late artist Youssef al-Sharif, the late Dr Wafa al-Hamad, and Mohammed al-Atiq.

In a statement to QNA, art-

ist Youssef Ahmed expressed that the Freej Art and Design Festival is a major project that artists have dreamed of for the past 50 years. He shared that his personal exhibition is part of the festival and is set in a house with traditional Qatari design, featuring open courtyards, a guest entrance, and another entrance for the family.

Ahmed noted that the narrow lanes and alleys captivate him visually, especially the play of light and shadow on the walls and streets, as light is visually stimulating for an artist.

The festival features 19 different bodies, with four art exhibitions, theatrical performances, a workshop, cultural seminars, and children's art workshops, as well as art studios. The event includes several sections such as Art House, Art and Inspiration, Theater Performances, Old Times Street, and Courtyard. The Freej Art and Design Festival serves as a platform celebrating art and creativity, bringing together over 100 local and international artists and designers, showcasing a wide array of artistic styles, enriching Qatar's art and cultural scene.



## QRDI Council concludes Singapore trip

**T**he Qatar Research, Development and Innovation (QRDI) Council has concluded a trip to Singapore, in collaboration with Enterprise Singapore as part of the Qatar Global Innovation Exchange Programme (QGIEP).

On the trip, the QRDI Council was accompanied by delegates from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Transport, Public Works Authority (Ashghal), Qatar Investment Authority, Mowasalat (Karwa), Mwani Qatar, Qatar Navigation (Milaha), Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail), Gulf Warehousing Company, Qatar Airways, Qatar Science and Technology Park, Hamad Bin Khalifa University and Qatar University.

The initiative connected Qatari transport and logistics stakeholders covering industry, government, and academia, with their

counterparts abroad, encouraging knowledge exchange and collaborative innovation.

Sheikh Abdulla al-Thani, manager of International Partnerships at QRDI Council, said: "We were thrilled to embark on this journey that connected stakeholders from the transport and logistics sectors with international innovators and government institutions. The QGIEP was designed to help businesses to grow through building R&D and innovation collaborations and to inspire collaborative solutions that drive sustainable industry growth in Qatar."

During the trip, participants engaged in a series of enriching visits and discussions aimed at strengthening collaboration in the transport and logistics sector. The itinerary featured notable organisations such as the NCS Hub, Toll City Logistics, and the Hyundai Motor Group Innovation

Centre, where attendees discovered the latest technologies and industry practices.

The participants also explored Changi Airport and the PSA Innovation Centre, gaining insights into advanced logistics and transport operations.

The trip concluded with a forum that brought together Singaporean companies to discuss potential collaborations in logistics technology, mobility, and maritime sectors.

The QGIEP plays a crucial role in supporting Qatar National Vision 2030 by creating a collaborative ecosystem among local stakeholders in industry, government, and academia. By connecting these stakeholders with international peers, QGIEP enhances knowledge exchange and innovation, which is vital for economic diversification and sustainable development.

## Msheireb Properties to attend World Urban Forum 12

**M**sheireb Properties has announced its participation in the World Urban Forum 12 (WUF12) in Cairo, Egypt, in November. This year's theme 'It All Starts at Home: Local Actions for Sustainable Cities and Communities' aligns closely with Msheireb Properties' mission and vision to change the way people think about urban living and improve overall quality of life inspired by Qatar's unique heritage.

Engineer Ali al-Kuwari, Msheireb Properties CEO, will deliver a keynote speech at the forum's Business and Foundations Assembly on November 4, presenting the company's vision for sustainable urban development and highlight-



Engineer Ali al-Kuwari, Msheireb Properties CEO.

ing Msheireb Downtown Doha as a pioneering model for future cities.

He will also participate in the Business and Foundations Roundtable on November 6 under the theme 'Unity in Action - Fostering Effective Partnerships for Our

Common Goals', where he will showcase Msheireb's experience in building strategic partnerships with public and private sectors and academic institutions that have contributed to achieving the vision of a sustainable city. "We are honoured to contribute to this global dialogue on sustainable urbanisation. At Msheireb Properties, we believe that the future of our cities lies in harmonising cutting-edge technology with cultural heritage."

"Our participation in WUF12 represents an opportunity to share our experiences and learn from urban innovators worldwide as we collectively work towards creating more sustainable, liveable cities," al-Kuwari said.

## GU-Q organises panel discussion on women shaping peace in Mena region

**G**eorgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) and the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security (GIWPS) in collaboration with the Office of the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) organised a panel discussion recently.

'Empowered Voices: Women Shaping Peace in the Mena Region' was a central feature of a larger, two-day convening in Doha, which saw emerging women leaders from across the Mena region.

The event also marked the launch of the Mena Women Peacebuilders Initiative, a new platform aimed at strengthening the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding across the region.

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Lollwah bint Rashid AlKhatir met with participants on the first day. In her opening remarks she described the initiative as a mission to harness the exceptional talents, perspectives, and resilience of Arab women.

She was honoured with the 2024 Trailblazer Award from GIWPS in recognition of her exemplary diplomatic and humanitarian leadership, and her unwavering commitment to promoting peace and empowering women in the Mena region.

GU-Q dean Safwan Masri



Panelists at the event.

emphasised that peace without justice risks becoming "a brittle calm, like glass stretched too thin, and likely to shatter at the faintest tremor."

Turning to Palestine, he warned of the dangers of this "negative peace," where silence had concealed long-standing injustices against women for generations.

Highlighting the vital role of women, ambassador Melanne Verwee, executive director of GIWPS, stated: "We cannot have peace without women's meaningful participation."

She drew attention to the historical underrepresentation of women in formal peace processes, adding that their involve-

ment broadens the conversation to include reconciliation, human rights, and economic opportunity.

Throughout the event, the panel gave voice to Mena women peacebuilders who shared personal reflections and insights on the challenges they face.

Dr Amal al-Malki, founding dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, championed the importance of "indigenous scholarship, not Eurocentric, not something that we imported."

She cautioned against "the colonial reduction and stereotype" that often frames Mena women through a singular, passive lens.

## Zanzibar president lauds QC

**Z**anzibar President Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi, on a visit to Qatar, lauded the outstanding achievements of Qatar Charity (QC) in the humanitarian and developmental fields around the world. During a visit to the QC headquarters, he also expressed pride in the projects being implemented in Tanzania and conveyed his desire to expand the horizons of future collaboration with the organisation.

The dignitary was welcomed by QC CEO Yusuf bin Ahmed al-Kuwari. They reviewed QC's humanitarian and developmental efforts worldwide, highlighting the key achievements made in this regard and the projects carried out in Tanzania since the establishment of its office there five years ago.

At the end of the visit, Dr Ali Mwinyi stated: "I am pleased with this visit. What I have seen is excellent and astonishing. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for what Qatar Charity's office in Dar Salaam is doing by implementing impactful development projects, and I look forward to opening broader avenues for joint cooperation with those in charge in various humanitarian and developmental fields."



QC has more than 33 offices around the world, including its office in Tanzania, which was opened in 2019.

Through this office, it has implemented development projects in the areas of water, health, and education, with a total cost of \$13mn.



# Innovation, critical thinking in focus at Science Camp

## QU Alumni Association hosts third Science Camp

The Bio-Education Chapter of the Qatar University (QU) Alumni Association organised the third edition of the Science Camp, bringing together a wide range of students and teachers from various schools, alongside a group of academics and experts.

The aim was to encourage innovation, develop critical thinking, and to strengthen problem-solving skills among students, preparing them to actively contribute to Qatar's future as a leading knowledge-based society.

In her welcome address, Dr Wardh Garab, president of the Bio-Education Chapter at QU Alumni, said: "These young minds are the cornerstone of an exceptional scientific and societal community based on knowledge. This camp marks a new journey toward a bright future, and we are confident that your efforts and creativity will be foundational in building our beloved nation."

Fatima Khamis, a graduate of QU, shared her own inspiring experience in education, saying: "My journey in education was rich with lessons and values that shaped my path. Growing

up, I watched scientific films that served as a window into a world of knowledge. Without realising it, I was absorbing the direction I wanted to pursue. These films formed my foundational passion for science. Later, I found that education was not merely a tool to transfer information but a journey to build an aware and capable generation ready to tackle challenges. I learned that true success lies in the ability to apply knowledge to solve problems and achieve goals."

Samira Ahmed al-Siddiqi, a specialist in detecting forgery and counterfeiting, delivered an awareness lecture. She emphasised the importance of her field and its impact on society, saying: "Forgery and counterfeiting science is one of the important disciplines not taught in universities but acquired through hands-on experience. Through my work in this field, I have come to realise the vital role of science in revealing the truth and protecting society from fraud and risks."

The camp featured a range of specialised science labs, providing students with hands-on experiences that deepened their understanding of scientific concepts and strengthened their analytical and critical skills. Maryam al-Ghadban, vice-president of the



Education Committee for the Bio-Education Chapter, spoke about the role of these labs.

"In the chemistry analysis lab, our students have the opportunity to interact with and examine chemical materials in a realistic scientific setting. Through these experiments, they explore the mechanisms of analysing and breaking down substances, comparing real and lab blood samples, and distinguishing between safe and harmful materials. This experience provides them with critical thinking foundations and empowers them to face life's challenges with greater awareness. This hands-on experiment is a key

step in deepening concepts of applied science and fostering a spirit of discovery among our students."

Mona al-Yahari, head of the Technology Education Committee and a chapter member, highlighted the camp's role in enhancing critical thinking. "The main objective of the Science Camp is to develop students' critical, analytical and creative thinking skills, guiding them to address scientific problems using evidence and experimentation. This year, we emphasised environmental and sustainable development issues as part of our lab activities to introduce students to values like zero hunger and promoting healthy



lives. Each lab reflects a sustainable development value, representing a step toward raising students' awareness of their responsibilities toward society and the environment. We believe that these scientific activities cultivate a love for learning and motivate students to continue innovating and pursuing scientific research."

Sara al-Noobi, a member of the Bio-Education Chapter and a teacher at Rawda Bint Mohammed Secondary School for Girls, said the Science Camp has presented a unique educational experience every time she joined.

"The camp is not just educational activities; it is an exceptional scientific journey that blends knowledge with hands-on experiences, showing us the passion and curiosity of students as they challenge themselves and uncover the secrets of science on their own.

"This year, I focused on the tissue analysis lab, where students learn how to analyse various tissues and recognise their components, including differentiating between synthetic and organic hair and identifying types of fibres. This experience grants students real insight into scientific applications, enabling them to truly understand the importance

of forensic science and accurate analysis, especially in simulating real-life scenarios like crime scene analysis."

In an effort to foster analytical skills and environmental awareness among youth, under the theme 'Crime Solving', the students engaged in a dynamic exploration of cases such as gift theft, laboratory security breaches, and marine pollution. They worked collaboratively to solve mysteries, unravelling clues that promoted teamwork and problem-solving.

The camp featured a range of activities, from theatrical performances and creative challenges, such as the 'Guardians of the Seas' initiative, to talent competitions addressing cyberbullying, with awards presented to standout teams. There were workshops on critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and sustainability awareness, empowering participants with the skills needed to drive positive and sustainable change as future scientific leaders.

In the closing ceremony, Dr Garab honoured the sponsors, especially Al Meera Consumer Goods Company and thanked the alumni association members and all institutional partners for their generous support.



## Senior Indian ministry officials visit cultural centre

Two senior officials from India's Ministry of External Affairs, Arun Kumar Chatterji, secretary CPV and OIA and Aseem Mahajan, joint secretary (Gulf), visited the Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) in Doha recently. Indian ambassador Vipul, embassy of India's first secretary Dr Vaibhav Tandale and ICC officials were present.

## Expat forum organises breast cancer awareness event



Indian expatriate forum Billawas Qatar, hosted a breast cancer awareness programme. The highlight was a presentation by Dr Pramitha Ponnappan (specialist-OBG, Abeer Medical Centre) on the importance of regular check-ups, self-examinations, and recognising early warning signs. Billawas Qatar members presented a dance performance. Indian embassy second secretary Bindu Nair lauded the organisation for its dedication to such an important cause and urged the attendees to spread the knowledge gained. The session was led by Billawas Qatar member Vasudha Sandeep and cultural secretary Pooja Jithin. Vice president Aparna Sharath welcomed the gathering and member Jyothi Raghunath proposed a vote of thanks. A number of community leaders were present.



Bindu Nair addressing the event.

## Zeal Toastmasters creates breast cancer awareness



Zeal Toastmasters Club hosted a speakathon themed 'Pink Power', celebrating the strength and resilience of cancer survivors and caregivers. Muna, Thasni, Kamakshi Gopi, Stephen, Padma, Elizabeth, Rafeek, Yatika, Shilpa, Seema, Mujib, Jayant, and Diana handled various roles.

## Icc Eves club in breast cancer awareness drive



The Icc Eves Toastmasters Club held its 336th meeting with the theme 'Ribbon of Hope' to promote breast cancer awareness. The session, led by Samreen Shah, featured an international speech module by Philip Cherian and Suryanarayanan. Ambili Vinod released the first newsletter of the year. A send-off was given to Mani Roy and Sharda.



## Student volunteers clean beach



Straightforward Insight, an organisation founded by Nikkil Dacruz and Prithwiraj Purkait, students of Grade 11 and 12 of DPS-Modern Indian School, teamed up with Deap Qatar for a cleanup at Zekreet Beach that saw more than 40 student volunteers remove over 100kg of trash from Qatar's coastline. The volunteers connected with Straightforward Insight through their Instagram page @straightforwardinsight

## GT designer wins GCC literary award



Doha resident Niyas T M has won the award for the best story in a GCC-wide literary competition conducted by Malayala Sahitya Vechhi/Malayali Writers Forum in the UAE.

A designer with *Gulf Times*, Niyas' *Sugandham Parathunna Ilanjippokkal* was the win-

ning entry. The award for the best poem went to Ramachandran Morazha (UAE) and for the best article to Reena Rajan (Kuwait). The jury comprised noted writers P K Parakkadavu, V H Nishad, and T K Unni.

The awards will be presented at a ceremony in Dubai during November.

## IEI Qatar chapter marks Engineers' Day



The Qatar chapter of the Institution of Engineers (India), established in 1991, celebrated 57th Engineer's Day with the theme, 'Driving Sustainability with Engineering Solutions Embracing the Latest AI-driven Technologies: A New Industrial Revolution' and paying tribute to M Visvesvaraya.

A number of dignitaries from various walks of life were present. Indian ambassador Vipul was the chief guest.

The guest of honours were Ghana ambassador Mohammed N Ismaila, Bangladesh ambassador Md Nazrul Islam, Indonesian embassy's minister counsellor/

head of economic affairs Iwan Mulyatno, Federation of Global Engineers president Ahamed J al-Jolo, QatarEnergy's Dukhan Facilities maintenance head Abdullah Basharhil, Kahramaa's Ahmad M A S al-Qubaisi, Oryx Universal College with Liverpool John Moores University's College of Engineering dean Dr Rafal al-Mufti, dean of business Dr Moheeb Abu Alqumboz, project expert Dr Saoud al-Janahi, strategy expert Dr Mohammed al-Hashmi, Qatar Airways project manager engineer Hamad al-Yafei, QatarEnergy's senior petroleum engineer Khalid al-Fakhroo, Qatar Indonesia Business Council president Farhan

al-Shaikh al-Sayed, Katara's IT operations head Abdulla Jabor al-Ajji, Global South Organisation UK president Ahmed Dewale Mohammed, Noble International School principal engineer Shibu Abdul Rasheed, IEB president Mohammed, and Indian Business and Professionals Council vice-president Hisham Abdul Rahim.

IEI Qatar chapter chairman Abdul Sathar welcomed the gathering. Secretary Abdulzameer presented the activity report and Treasurer Ashik K proposed a vote of thanks.

IEI women's wing conducted an interactive quiz programme on the theme of artificial intelligence.

## DPS-MIS triumphs in inter-school expo



DPS-Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS) School won first position in the senior category at an inter-school STEM Expo at Shantiniketan Indian School. In all, 10 Indian schools participated. The DPS-MIS team comprised Elston Peter Rodrigues (Grade 10E) and Ayush Nath Pandey (Grade 11A).

## QGECK selects new officials



The Government Engineering College, Kozhikode, Qatar alumni chapter (QGECK) announced its new officials. Varun Moorthy K (chairman), Usman C K (general secretary), Shakir Kottaparth (treasurer), Rejila Hashim, Dilba Midlaj, Deepesh, Rameeza Fahim, Ansar P P, Abhishek P, Nivya, Jemshid Gafoor, Aarsal and Muhammed Suhail (other officials).

## CLQ's Facebook page unveiled



The Facebook page for the inter-collegiate football tournament, Campus League Qatar (CLQ), was launched by Indian Sports Centre advisory chairman Dr Mohan Thomas. The launch event was attended by organising committee convener Shamsu Koduvalli, co-ordinator Faris Loop Media, president Ilyas Kenza, general secretary Irshad Chennamangalor, and committee members Nasif Moidu, Abbas Mukkam, Ameen Kodyathoor, Shameer Chennamangalor, Anand, Afzal Koduvalli and Nishad K. The organisers announced that the tournament, featuring 16 college teams, will take place on November 29 at Hamilton International School Doha.

## Expatriate group conducts international chess tournament



The Central Indian Association conducted an international chess tournament featuring expatriate players from Russia, Uzbekistan, Europe, Africa, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan in under-15 and open categories. Advait Saravanan won the under-15 and Patricio Rolly, the open category. Association president Jai Prakash Singh and vice president Syed Rafi congratulated the winners and thanked the committee members Visa, Mohinder Jalandhary, Reena Danao, Noor Afshan, Jogesh Dewan, Jaweed Bajwa, Sara Ali Khan, Basit Khan, Ravi Babu, Jyothi of Emote Edition, Irfan and Arun for their support.



# North Gaza 'apocalyptic', everyone at 'imminent risk' of death, warns UN

Reuters  
UN

The situation in the northern Gaza Strip is "apocalyptic" as Israel pursues a military offensive against Hamas fighters in the area, top UN officials warned yesterday.

"The entire Palestinian population in North Gaza is at imminent risk of dying from disease, famine and violence," they said in a statement signed by the heads of UN agencies, including the UN children's agency Unicef and the World Food Programme, and other aid groups.

Israel began a wide military push in northern Gaza earlier this month. The US has said it was watching to ensure that its ally's actions on the ground show it does not have a "policy of starvation" in the north.

"Humanitarian aid cannot keep up with the scale of the needs due to the access constraints. Basic, life-saving goods are not available. Humanitarians are not safe to do their work and are blocked by Israeli forces and by insecurity from reaching people in need," they said.

They urged all parties fighting in Gaza to protect civilians and called on Israel to "cease its assault on Gaza and on the humanitarians trying to help." Israel's UN mission in New York declined comment on the statement. Israel's UN ambassador Danny Danon last month told the Security Council that the issue in Gaza was not a lack of aid, saying



Smoke rises following an Israeli bombardment in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, yesterday, amid the ongoing war between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas movement.

more than a million tons had been delivered during the past year. He accused Hamas of hijacking the assistance.

Hamas has repeatedly denied Israeli allegations that it was stealing aid and says Israel is to blame for shortages.

On Monday, the Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said around 100,000 people were ma-

rooned in Jabalia, Beit Lahia and Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza without medical or food supplies. Reuters could not verify the number independently.

USAID Administrator Samantha Power spoke with Israel's ambassador to the US yesterday as a deadline imposed by Washington looms for Israel to improve the situation or face potential re-

strictions on US military aid.

Power and Herzog "discussed the need to get more aid to the Palestinian people," said USAID spokesperson Benjamin Suarato, adding: "Administrator Power raised serious concern on the humanitarian conditions in northern Gaza." The US told Israel in a letter on Oct 13 that it must take steps within 30 days.

## UNRWA chief says troops damaged agency's West Bank office

Reuters  
Dubai

Israeli bulldozers damaged the office of UN aid agency UNRWA in the West Bank's Nur Shams camp on Thursday, the agency's chief said, with Israel disputing his account in the latest exchange between both sides.

Philippe Lazzarini, who heads the UN Palestinian refugee agency, said on social media platform X that the office was severely damaged and was no longer usable.

The Israeli military, however, issued a statement denying responsibility for any damage to the building.

"The claim that the UNRWA offices in Nur Shams were destroyed by IDF soldiers is false," the statement read, in reference to Israel Defence Forces.

"Fighters planted explosives in the proximity of the UNRWA offices that were then detonated in

an attempt to harm IDF soldiers. The explosives likely caused damage to the structure," the IDF statement said.

On Monday, Israel passed a law banning UNRWA from operating in the country, legislation that could impact its work in war-torn Gaza.

The lawmakers who drafted the law cited what they described as the involvement of some UNRWA staffers in last year's October first week storming of southern Israel and staffers having membership in Hamas and other fighter groups.

The UN, after an investigation, said in August that nine UNRWA staff were possibly involved in the October first week storming and fired them. UNRWA says the overwhelming majority of its staff adheres to its principles of neutrality.

Lazzarini called the vote to ban UNRWA a "dangerous precedent" that opposes the UN charter and violates Israel's obligation under international law.

## Algeria marks 70 years since start of independence war with France

AFP  
Algiers

Algeria marked the 70th anniversary of the launch of its war for independence from France with a military parade yesterday, as relations with their former colonial ruler sour again.

Military jets soared over the shimmering bay of Algiers, leaving contrails against the blue sky, as columns of troops marched past the city's largest mosque, drawing applause from thousands of spectators.

Algeria's bloody eight-year war for independence after more than a century of French rule began on November 1, 1954. Guerrillas from the National Liberation Front (FLN) mounted attacks on government buildings, leaving 10 people dead.

The ensuing war left half a million dead — according to French figures — or 1.5mn, according to the Algerians. Both sides agree the vast majority of blood spilt was Algerian.

It ended with the signing in March 1962 of the Evian Accords.

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune said the anniversary was an "opportunity to remind everyone that Algeria, which triumphed over colonialism, continues to achieve victories with confidence". The commemoration was attended by the leaders of several regional countries — Tunisia's Kais Saied, Mauritania's Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani and the chairman of the Libyan Presidential Council Mohamed al-Menfi. After laying a wreath at the Martyrs' Monument, President Tebboune joined the parade in an open-top vehicle beside chief of staff General Said Chen-griha, as a 70-gun salute echoed through the air.

In 2023, Algeria's military — one of the largest in Africa — saw its budget doubled to \$22bn. It received the same allocation for this year.

The military budget is expected to rise again in 2025 to \$25bn, with Russia remaining the main arms supplier.

## Portraits of slain leaders watch out on Hezbollah's battered Beirut bastion

AFP  
Beirut

Minutes from the heart of Beirut, the Lebanese capital's once vibrant southern suburbs lie largely deserted save for black-clad Hezbollah fighters standing guard amid the rubble.

Huge portraits of the movement's slain leader Hassan Nasrallah and other commanders killed in the blistering air campaign Israel launched in late September flutter in the wind alongside the movement's yellow flag — in some cases painted red to signal vengeance.

The smell of gunpowder still pervades the area after Israel pounded it with at least 10 air strikes before dawn yesterday.

Hezbollah fighters armed with machine guns have cordoned off much of the area.

Thick smoke envelops the Kafaat district from a fire that has yet to be extinguished after the morning's raids.

Nearby, a red fire truck lies on its side next to a pile of charred vehicles, hit by a strike before it could reach the building in flames.

Across the southern suburbs, dozens of buildings have been reduced to rubble and twisted metal.

Posters of Nasrallah are everywhere. "Divine victory is coming," the caption promises his followers.

The area where he was killed in a huge Israeli air strike in late September has been completely cordoned off by Hezbollah fighters. So too has the area where his heir apparent Hashem Safieddine was killed the following week.

Few residents remain in the devastated southern suburbs, once home to up to 800,000 people.

"When the Israeli army gives evacuation orders we flee the house, even in the middle of the night, and wait a few hours in the open



Firefighters extinguish the blaze at the site of overnight Israeli air strikes that targeted the neighbourhood of Kafaat in Beirut's southern suburbs, yesterday.

air before returning," a young woman said, requesting anonymity for security reasons.

She said she and her family have nowhere else to go. A mechanic, who also requested anonymity, told AFP he drives in daily from the mountains above Beirut, despite strikes on the highway on Wednesday and Thursday, to open his shop and check on his house.

"We come in the morning to open our shops and we leave in the afternoon before the strikes begin," he said.

Hezbollah fighters were everywhere, guarding the group's stronghold turned ghost town.

Pharmacies are still open and fruit and vegetable vendors have set up stalls for the suburbs' remaining residents.

But many shops remain shuttered. A few residents hastily packed a few be-

longings before driving off to safer areas.

A crane lifted furniture from the top floor of a building that had partially collapsed.

A man on a scooter took photographs of the devastation to show his family what has become of their street.

Repeated Israeli air strikes since September 23 have caused widespread destruction, even in districts spared in the last Israel-Hezbollah war in 2006.

Breaking the eerie silence, martial music resonated from a rubble-filled street, where Hezbollah was filming a propaganda video. The Lebanese army has maintained a few checkpoints at the main entrances to the southern suburbs but has abandoned others.

The buzz of Israeli surveillance drones is everywhere, not just in the southern suburbs.

### HEALTH

## More than 50,000 vaccinated against mpox in DR Congo, Rwanda

More than 50,000 people have so far been vaccinated against mpox in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, the World Health Organisation's chief said yesterday, AFP reported from Geneva. The outbreak is still not under control, the African Union's health watchdog warned a day earlier, appealing for resources to avoid a "more severe" pandemic than Covid-19. More than 1,100 people have died of mpox in Africa, where some 48,000 cases have been recorded since January, according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC).

## Botswana's new president sworn in after historic election upset

AFP  
Gaborone

Botswana's new president took office yesterday in a whirlwind transfer of power following elections that saw a historic defeat handed to the party that had governed the diamond-rich country for nearly 60 years.

Human rights lawyer Duma Boko, 54, was sworn in during a closed session at the office of the chief justice three days after elections which booted the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) out of office.

Boko later delivered an acceptance speech and press briefing that was broadcast live on state television and touched on some of his campaign pledges, such as more than doubling the minimum wage to 4,000 pula (\$300) and introducing universal health insurance.

The president said he wanted to secure investor confidence as well as ties with mining companies active in Botswana while exploring ways to diversify the diamond-dependent economy, a measure seen as critical to stabilising the country's finances.

A public inauguration ceremony would be held in due course,



Botswana's newly-elected President Duma Boko delivers his acceptance speech at the Mass Media Complex in Gaborone, yesterday.

he said. The presidency is "a responsibility one approaches and accepts with humility, with some

trepidation and feeling. I dare not fail. I dare not disappoint." Outgoing president Mokgweetsi Masisi conceded defeat earlier in the day after overnight results from Wednesday's general election showed that his party — in power since independence from Britain in 1966 — would not win enough seats in parliament to be able to form a government.

Boko, who has spent three decades in opposition politics fighting to dislodge the BDP, praised the peaceful handover as an example of democracy in action.

"What has happened today takes our democracy to a higher level," he told the independent

Mmegi newspaper. "It now means we have seen a successful, peaceful, orderly democratic transition from one regime to the next and this happened in full view of every citizen of this country with their full participation and endorsement." The BDP's defeat was a major blow for Masisi, 63, who was elected in 2018 and had been confident of securing a second term. "We got it wrong big time in the eyes of the people," Masisi conceded.

"We were really convinced of our message. But every indication, by any measure, is that there's no way that I can pretend that we're going to form a government."

# Vancouver port employer could shut out foremen, grain will not be hit



A float plane flies past containers and cranes at the Port of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Reuters  
Winnipeg

Port of Vancouver foremen will be locked out on Monday unless they scrap a proposed strike, employers at Canada's biggest port said yesterday, but grain handling would not be affected. Canada's west coast ports are major outlets for the country's resource exports, including potash, coal, forestry products, and beef. A 13-day strike last year disrupted more than C\$6bn in trade at Vancouver and Port Rupert.

The British Columbia Maritime Employers Association said the

proposed lockout of more than 700 foremen was preventative as the unit of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union representing them had already issued a 72-hour strike notice.

If the union withdraws the strike notice, Monday's lockout will not go ahead, the association said in a statement.

The two sides are in protracted talks over a labour deal and have been negotiating with the help of a federal mediator. The stoppage would also affect the port of Prince Rupert.

"In anticipation of escalating and unpredictable strike action, the BCMEA has made a decision to take defensive action in the

form of a coastwide lockout," it said in a statement.

"It will not affect longshoring operations on grain vessels or cruise operations."

The association said the lockout notice has been issued in order to "facilitate a safe and orderly wind down of operations" in anticipation of a strike. ILWU local 514 president Frank Morena said in a statement that it had only planned "limited job action" such as refusing overtime and accepting some technological changes, Canadian Press reported.

The impasse comes after a long-simmering dispute over pay and working conditions, including concerns over automation,

with each side accusing the other of bargaining in bad faith. The Port of Montreal, where workers are represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, saw the start on Thursday of a strike at two terminals operated by Termont, which handle 40% of the port's container traffic, but only 15% of its cargo.

Grain and other exports from the west coast were hit in August by a labour dispute at Canada's two major railways, which the federal government ended by imposing binding arbitration.

The government has resisted calls to interfere in collective bargaining in other disputes, other than offering mediation.

# Trump, Harris slug it out for Wisconsin amid blowback on violent rhetoric

AFP  
Milwaukee

Donald Trump came under fire for violent rhetoric against a prominent Kamala Harris supporter yesterday as the candidates held dueling rallies in the battleground of Wisconsin four days before the climax of the most volatile US presidential campaign in modern history.

More than 66mn Americans have already cast early ballots ahead of Tuesday's Election Day. Opinion polls show Trump and Harris running dead even, with victory depending on who wins a majority of the seven swing states, including Wisconsin. Both were campaigning in the state's largest city Milwaukee.

Trump was holding a rally in the same venue where he celebrated the Republican Party nomination over the summer, delivering a triumphant acceptance speech just days after the 78-year-old had narrowly escaped an assassination attempt in Pennsylvania.

He was also due to meet with Arab-Americans in Dearborn, Michigan, hoping to exploit anger in the community over US support for Israel's war in Gaza. Harris — who only entered the race in July after President Joe Biden dropped out amid fears over his health — was to be joined by star rapper Cardi B in the latest of a series of high-energy rallies.

Wisconsin is part of the Democrats' "blue wall" fortress in the Midwest, but the region could go either way — and with it the presidency. The other path to victory could lie through winning swing states in the US West, where Trump and Harris both campaigned on Thursday.

As the contest draws to a close, Trump has upped his provocative rhetoric in a bid to fire up the base he needs to turn out in massive numbers. On Thursday, at an event with Tucker Carlson — a leading right-wing influencer and conspiracy theorist who was fired by Fox News — Trump called Harris, 60, a "\*\*\*\*\*" and Biden a "\*\*\*\*\*".

He also claimed, without evidence, that polls are already being rigged in the biggest swing state Pennsylvania — reinforcing expectations that, as in 2020, he will again refuse to accept the results if he is defeated. But it was



Donald Trump takes the stage during a campaign rally at Albuquerque International Sunport in New Mexico.



Kamala Harris visits the US-Mexico border.

his comments about Liz Cheney, a formerly senior Republican leader who has become a supporter of Harris, that stirred most controversy. Citing her hawkish foreign policy views, Trump conjured the image of Cheney — daughter of former Republican vice president Dick Cheney — being shot multiple times. "She's a radical war hawk. Let's put her with a rifle standing there with nine barrels shooting at her, OK? Let's see how she feels about it. You know, when the guns are trained on her face," Trump said.

Cheney responded, saying: "This is how dictators destroy free nations. They threaten those who speak against them with death." A handful of businesses and offices in downtown Washington began to board up windows yesterday in anticipation of potential unrest over the election. The city witnessed violence four years ago when then-president Trump whipped up a crowd of supporters who stormed Congress in an attempt to halt certification of Biden's victory.

Trump has focused his campaign on stirring fears about immigrant violence and pessimism over the economy. Harris is running on warnings about an authoritarian Trump takeover, promising to help the middle class. Economists say the US economy is actually in robust shape, shrugging off the last Covid pandemic cobwebs, with low unemployment and strong growth. Figures released yesterday showing drastically lower job growth in October, however, dented the Democrats' messaging.

Only 12,000 new jobs were created, far below expectations. Economists said this was a blip, caused by knock-on effects from hurricanes and a strike at Boeing. Adding to tensions, US social media is awash with disinformation that authorities say has been stirred by Russian operatives and amplified by US right-wing influencers — including Trump ally Elon Musk, the world's richest man and owner of the X platform.

Much of Musk's effort has involved pushing lies about non-citizen immigrants voting.

Orlando Police Chief Eric Smith told a press conference that the alleged gunman, a 17-year-old boy, had been arrested, CNN reported. He is being interviewed by detectives, Chief Smith said. "He pretty much walked into downtown, walked into the street and did what he did," local US media Fox 13 Tampa Bay said, quoting the police chief. The Orlando police department had previously said in an X post that it was conducting a shooting investigation in Downtown Orlando. The department did not immediately respond to a Reuters' request for comment. — Reuters

## Two dead, 6 injured in Orlando shooting

Two people died and six were injured in a shooting in the downtown area of Orlando, Florida in the midst of Halloween festivities, several local US media reported yesterday, adding that a teenage suspect had been arrested. People in Halloween costumes stood in the incident area as emergency personnel attended to casualties laying in the street a video posted on Instagram, verified by Reuters, showed. The injured people were taken to hospital and are stable, local media said. The shooting happened late at night within Orlando's entertainment district where hundreds of people were celebrating Halloween.

## Diwali festivities in Brampton



Customers browse the sweets section of Indian Punjabi Bazaar grocery store on Diwali in Brampton, Ontario, Canada, yesterday.

## Georgia official warns of Russian interference in American polls

AFP  
Washington

The top election official in the southern US state of Georgia has warned that a video allegedly showing a Haitian immigrant voting multiple times is part of a targeted disinformation campaign likely originating from Russia.

The 2024 US presidential campaign has been inundated with at times highly sophisticated misinformation that has only deepened with the approach of Election Day on November 5.

"Earlier today, our office became aware of a video purporting to show a Haitian immigrant with multiple Georgia ID's claiming to have voted multiple times," Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger said in a statement published Thursday night.

"This is false, and is an example of targeted disinformation we've seen this election. It is likely foreign interference attempting to sow discord and chaos on the eve of the election."

Raffensperger, who rose to national prominence after the 2020 presidential vote by refusing Donald Trump's demands to change the state's election results, added he was asking Elon Musk, a staunch Trump supporter, and the leaders of other social media companies for their help in taking the clip down.

The 20-second clip can still be found on X. It features a man saying in a stilted, robotic delivery, "We are from Haiti. We came to America six months ago, and we already have American citizenship - we're voting Kamala Harris."

He then says he and his friends have voted in multiple counties and shows off an array of driver's licenses. "This is obviously fake and part of a disinformation effort," said Raffensperger. "Likely it is a production of Russian troll farms."

Mike Hassinger, a spokesman for the state government, told AFP it had made its determination based on information on the driver's licenses shown in the videos.

"We checked the voter registration lists. There was no match. The

identifications are fake, and there's no way the people in the video cast ballots in Georgia using those IDs," he said.

Darren Linvill, a misinformation expert at Clemson University, told AFP the effort bore the hallmarks of the Russian propaganda group Storm-1516, based on factors such as narrative focus, style and production, and how it was distributed.

"They were very careful in how they filmed it not to give anything away to OSINT investigators," said Linvill. "Importantly, they also use what are likely West African actors, frequently recruited from the St. Petersburg area." OSINT means open-source intelligence investigators. The same group has been implicated in other recent disinformation efforts documented by AFP.

These include a video purporting to show a man in Pennsylvania sifting through mail-in ballots and tearing up those cast for Donald Trump, and an unfounded claim of sexual assault against Democratic vice-presidential candidate Tim Walz.

## Summit to save nature enters final day with disagreement on funding

AFP  
Cali

The world's biggest nature conservation conference entered its final day in Colombia yesterday with negotiators at odds over how best to fund plans to "halt and reverse" species loss.

Amid murmurs that the talks may drag into an extra day, summit president Susana Muhamad said Friday's programmed closing session promised to be "heart-stopping" given the number of unresolved issues. "It's a very complex negotiation, with many interests, many parties...and that means everyone has to cede something," Muhamad, who is Colombia's environment minister, told reporters Thursday.

With some 23,000 registered delegates, the 16th Conference of Parties (COP16) to the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which opened in Cali on October 21, is the biggest meeting of its kind ever. The event is a follow-up to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework agreed upon in Canada two years ago, where it was decided that \$200bn per year must be

made available for biodiversity by 2030.

This must include \$20bn per year going from rich to poor nations to reach 23 UN targets to "halt and reverse" nature destruction by 2030, and by placing 30% of land and sea areas under protection. COP16 was tasked with assessing, and ramping up, progress towards the targets.

But negotiations on funding mechanisms have failed to progress, observers and delegates say, even as new research this week showed more than a quarter of assessed plants and animals are at risk of extinction. Developing countries have called for more money.

They also want a brand new fund under the umbrella of the UN biodiversity convention, where all parties - rich and poor - would have representation in decision-making. Rich countries insist they are on track to meet their funding targets, and many are opposed to yet another new fund.

European officials pointed Thursday to deadly flooding in Spain as a reminder of the harm that comes from humans' destruction of nature, and urged delegates at the deadlocked talks to "act".

European Commission envoy Florika Fink-Hooijer said the "catastrophe" in eastern and southern Spain this week, with at least 158 people dead and dozens still missing, highlights the link between biodiversity destruction and human-caused climate change.

Droughts and flooding worsened by global warming cause the loss of plant species, including trees which absorb planet-warming carbon, in a vicious cycle of human-wrought Earth destruction. "If we act on biodiversity, we at least can buffer some of the climate impacts," Fink-Hooijer, who is the European Commission director-general for environment, told reporters. "At this COP we really have a chance to act," she added.

Another point of contention among delegates is on how best to share the profits of digitally sequenced genetic data taken from animals and plants with the communities they come from. Such data, much of it from species found in poor countries, is notably used in medicines and cosmetics that make their developers billions.

COP15 had agreed on the creation of a "multilateral mechanism" for benefit-sharing of digital information, "including a global fund".



## SETBACK

## Indonesia court rejects Indigenous community appeal

Indonesia's Supreme Court has rejected an appeal by an Indigenous community that sought to cancel a permit for a palm oil concession on thousands of hectares of rainforest it claimed as ancestral land, legal documents showed yesterday. Upholding the appeal could have set an important precedent in a country that has pledged to both protect a \$30bn export industry, and improve governance amid allegations of deforestation and human rights violations. Indonesia is the world's largest palm oil exporter. The concession at the centre of the case brought by the Awyu people's Woro clan was granted to PT Indo Asiana Lestari on 88,960 acres of land.

## OFFICIAL

## China says Malaysia PM to visit next week

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim will visit China next week, Beijing said yesterday. The visit will take place from Monday-Thursday, Beijing's foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said at a regular press briefing. Anwar was elected in 2022 and has visited China twice since then, describing the country as "a great friend" as he sought to deepen ties with Malaysia's top trading partner. But the two also hold competing claims in the South China Sea. Anwar in September insisted that Malaysia will press on with oil and gas exploration in the disputed South China Sea, after a leaked document showed opposition from Beijing.

## APPEAL

## Vietnam urges China to free detained fishermen

The Vietnam government has protested against China's alleged detention of its fishermen and fishing vessels in the contested Paracel Islands in the busy South China Sea, a foreign ministry spokesperson said. Vietnam urged Chinese officials to "immediately release the fishermen and fishing vessels that were illegally detained", the spokesperson told a regular press conference, without saying how many fishermen had been held or when. In Beijing, a foreign ministry spokesperson yesterday urged the Vietnam government to beef up the "education and management" of its fishermen, to ensure that they keep out of waters claimed by China.

## DECISION

## Indonesia adds Google Pixel phones to iPhone 16 ban list

Indonesia has banned the sale of Google Pixel phones over the tech giant's failure to meet investment regulations, its industry ministry said, days after blocking sales of Apple's iPhone 16. Jakarta is seeking to boost investment from foreign tech companies with restrictive measures that require their phones to be 40% sourced from parts in Indonesia. "We declared that as long as those products don't meet the scheme we have required, they cannot be sold in Indonesia," an industry ministry spokesperson said. "For Google Pixel, they have not obtained the TKDN certificate," he added, using the acronym of the scheme that imposes the 40% rule.

# N Korea 'will stand by Russia until victory in Ukraine'

AFP  
Moscow

North Korea will stand by Russia until its victory in Ukraine, Pyongyang's foreign minister said in Moscow yesterday, as the US warned thousands of North Korean troops could be sent to combat in the Ukraine conflict in the coming days.

North Korea's Choe Son-hui is on a visit to Moscow as the West believes up to 10,000 North Korean troops are on the brink of entering the more than two-year conflict on Russia's side.

US intelligence has said some North Korean forces have made their way to Russia's Kursk border region, with Washington and Seoul urging Pyongyang to withdraw its troops.

"We will always stand firmly by our Russian comrades until victory day," Choe declared in Moscow after talks with her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov.

She said North Korea had no doubt in the "wise leadership" of President Vladimir Putin, who signed a mutual assistance pact with Pyongyang this summer and massively warmed ties with the reclusive state.

Choe praised Moscow's offensive in Ukraine as a "sacred struggle". She also vowed that North Korea will continue to develop its nuclear arsenal, with Pyongyang widely suspected of wanting nuclear tech-

nology from Russia in exchange for military support.

Neither country has denied the troop deployment reports, which Choe and Lavrov did not mention in their statements after their talks.

Lavrov did however laud "very close ties" between the two countries' "armies and special services".

"This will also make it possible to solve significant security tasks for our citizens and yours," he added, without giving details.

Lavrov said Russia was "deeply grateful" for North Korea's "principled stance" on Ukraine.

"I really appreciate today's opportunity to talk frankly in a comradely manner," Lavrov said, evoking Soviet-style language.

Russia has resuscitated its Soviet-era relations with North Korea since sending troops to Ukraine, glorifying the two countries' past standoff against the West.

Lavrov and Choe unveiled a plaque at Moscow's Yaroslavsky railway station in honour of North Korean leader Kim Il-sung travelling to Moscow in 1949 to seek Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin's backing to invade South Korea.

In a ceremony that included an orchestra, Lavrov said the unveiling of the plaque "underscores the respect and reverence with which we treat our common history and great predecessors".

He said Putin and North Korea's current leader Kim Jong-un now aim to "try to be worthy of the contribution to our friendship that was made by our predecessors".



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui attend a ceremony unveiling a memorial plaque dedicated to Kim Il-sung's visit to the USSR in 1949, at Moscow's Yaroslavsky railway station.

# Pyongyang says record test was new Hwasong-19 ICBM

Reuters  
Seoul

North Korea flexed its military muscle with the test of a huge new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) dubbed Hwasong-19, state media said yesterday, amid international uproar over its troops deployed to aid Russia in Ukraine.

The launch on Thursday flew higher than any previous North Korean missile, according to the North as well as militaries in South Korea and Japan that tracked its flight deep into space before it splashed down in the ocean between Japan and Russia.

State news agency KCNA lauded it as "the world's strongest strategic missile".

While questions remain over North Korea's ability to guide such a missile and protect a nuclear warhead as it re-enters the atmosphere, the Hwasong-19, like North Korea's other latest ICBMs, demonstrated the range to strike nearly anywhere in the US.

"The new-type ICBM proved before the world that the hegemonic position we have secured in the development and manufacture of nuclear delivery means of the same kind is absolutely irreversible," North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said while overseeing the launch, KCNA reported.

The launch, days before Tuesday's US presidential election, drew swift condemnation from Washington and its allies in South Korea, Japan and Europe, as well as the United Nations secretary-general.

"The missile continues to underwrite the growing credibility of North Korea's strategic deterrent capabilities," said Ankit Panda, a senior fellow at the US-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, adding that Kim appeared specifically interested in communicating that message to the US.

The South Korean and US air forces conducted first-ever joint live-fire attack drills yesterday with unmanned aerial vehicles, flying the Global Hawk and the Reaper drones, dropping GPS-guided munitions in simulated

strikes against enemy target, South Korea's air force said.

South Korea yesterday imposed new sanctions on 11 North Korean individuals and four entities over the ICBM test, naming officials for contributing to missile and nuclear development and channelling illegal foreign funds back to the country.

A spokesperson for South Korea's unification ministry, which handles relations with the North, said the launch could have been for several purposes, including demonstrating military technology, pressuring Washington and diverting attention from the issue of sending North Korean troops to Russia.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky blasted what he called his allies' "zero" response to Russia's deployment of North Korean troops for the war in Ukraine, which has also sparked worries that Moscow could provide sensitive military technology to Pyongyang in return.

The Hwasong-19 will deploy alongside the Hwasong-18, which was first launched last year and is also powered by solid fuel, KCNA said.

## Japan and EU announce new defence pact

Japan and the European Union announced a new security and defence partnership in Tokyo, which EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell hailed as a historic and "very timely" step. Borrell and his Japanese counterpart Takeshi Iwaya unveiled the pact to develop co-operation on joint military drills, the exchange of information related to the defence industry, and space security among other matters. "I am extremely pleased to be here with Minister Iwaya to announce the conclusion of this security and defence partnership between the European Union and Japan," Borrell said. He called it the "the first agreement of this nature" the EU has made with an Asia-Pacific country, describing it as "historical and very timely". "We live in a very dangerous world" and "given the situation in both of our regions, this political framework deepens our ability to tackle emerging threats together", Borrell said.



A man vandalises the Jatiya Party office in Dhaka.

## Bangladesh party decries protesters as offices torched

AFP  
Dhaka

A Bangladeshi party formerly close to the regime ousted said yesterday that some protesters were "splitting" the nation, a day after a mob torched its offices.

Jatiya Party chief Ghulam Muhammad Quader, a former commerce minister under toppled ex-leader Sheikh Hasina, said the offices were burned down in an arson attack by furious protesters late on Thursday.

"The country is now divided", Quader told reporters in Dhaka.

"They disregard everyone else, splitting the country into 'pure' and 'impure' factions... They determine who is culpable and who is not, leaving no room for justification. Once they tag someone as culpable, it's final."

Quader's Jatiya Party was criticised for taking part in elections in January boycotted by the main opposition, and in which Hasina won a fourth consecutive term.

Hasina's rule saw widespread human rights abuses, including the mass detention and extrajudicial killings of her political opponents.

She fled to India by helicopter on August 5 after months of protests against her 15-year autocratic rule.

Some of the top student protest leaders are now part of the cabinet of the interim government, which is led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus.

Dozens of Hasina's loyalists have since been detained.

"They decide everything - they can vandalise, set fire to our offices, and remain above the law," Quader said, without specifying names.

# Taiwan cleans up after typhoon leaves two dead

AFP  
Yilan, Taiwan

Workers cleared fallen trees and shop owners swept up debris in Taiwan yesterday after one of the biggest typhoons to hit the island in decades claimed at least two lives.

Typhoon Kong-rey was packing wind speeds of 184km an hour when it slammed into eastern Taiwan on Thursday, uprooting trees, triggering floods and landslides, and knocking out power as it swept over the island.

A 48-year-old motorcyclist was killed by a falling power pole in the

capital Taipei on Thursday, taking the storm's death toll to two, with 580 injured, the National Fire Agency said.

A search was also underway for four people who went hunting in the mountains of central Taiwan on Wednesday and have not been heard from since that evening.

Two Czech hikers who were trapped in the Taroko Gorge in Hualien county during the typhoon were rescued yesterday.

Kong-rey weakened to a severe tropical storm as it moved across the Taiwan Strait towards China yesterday, the Central Weather Administration said.

In Taiwan, life was returning to

normal, with offices, restaurants and schools reopening.

But around 78,500 households were still without power and 191 domestic and international flights were cancelled.

Dozens of ferry services and some train lines remained suspended.

"The typhoon was so strong on Thursday," Pan Li-chu said at her restaurant in Taipei, where the awning had been bent by the wind.

Kong-rey dumped more than a metre of water in some of the hardest-hit areas along the east coast, the Central Weather Administration said.

Torrential rain in Toucheng

town, in Yilan county, sent mud and rocks flowing into a building in Wu Hsuan-kai's backyard.

Wu said he was watching television on Thursday morning when he heard a strange "rumbling sound".

"When I opened the door, I saw a mudslide coming down slowly. I picked up my car key and rushed out," Wu, 55, said.

In Taitung county, where the storm made landfall, a fire department official said there had been some landslides and flooding, but no reports of "severe damage".

"It's mostly trees falling down and crushing into electricity poles that caused a power outage," said the official.

Further north in Hualien county, some residents living in the mountains were assessing the damage to houses hit by landslides.

"There are mud, small rocks, big rocks and driftwood - I don't know where they came from," a resident in Zhuoxi village told local news channel TVBS.

"I can't go inside (my home). In some houses the mudslides are more than waist-high, it's a little better in my home which is below the knees."

Nearly 90 schools in the county were damaged and two townships flooded, with thousands of homes without power and water, the local fire department said.

Across the island, workers were up before dawn clearing trees, branches and other debris from roads.

"We started cleaning from 5am till now and have only cleaned one road section. It took us about two-and-a-half hours," Lee Chia-hsin, a member of the New Taipei City cleaning crew, said.

In the southern city of Kaohsiung, Australian firefighters visiting for a charity event put on high-visibility vests to help clear debris.

"Happy and proud that we could come out and assist your crews and give back to the Taiwanese people," one of the firefighters told local media.



**DECISION**

**RMT union suspends London Underground strike**

Britain's RMT union said it had suspended the strike action it had planned on the London Underground for yesterday and extending into next week after talks with management resulted in a "significantly improved offer". Train drivers' union Aslef, has, however, yet to call off plans for a strike by tube drivers on Thursday next week followed by another on November 12. Transport for London urged the union to take a cue from its fellow union and call off the action. An RMT spokesperson said discussions will take place next week regarding the pay offer by London Underground.

**REALTY**

**UK house prices edge up in October: Nationwide**

British house prices rose by a marginal 0.1% in October, slowing sharply from a 0.6% monthly increase in September but the market remained resilient and was likely to gain momentum as borrowing costs fall, mortgage lender Nationwide said yesterday. Economists had forecast prices would rise by 0.3% on a monthly basis. Compared with October last year prices were 2.4% higher, a weaker annual increase than September's 3.2% rise and below the median forecast for a 2.8% gain in the poll. Robert Gardner, Nationwide's chief economist, said the housing market remained resilient and activity was likely to strengthen as interest rates fall.

**OFFBEAT**

**'Brat' named word of the year by Collins dictionary**

Brat, the word redefined by singer Charli XCX and adopted by supporters of US presidential candidate Kamala Harris, was yesterday named the Collins Word of the Year 2024. "Brat" was the name of the UK singer's hit sixth album, and the word has now come to represent a "confident, independent, and hedonistic attitude", said Collins, rather than simply a term for a badly-behaved child. "Inspired by the Charli XCX album, 'brat' has become one of the most talked about words of 2024," said the UK-based dictionary. "More than a hugely successful album, 'brat' is a cultural phenomenon that has resonated with people globally," it added.

**FALLOUT**

**GB News fined over former PM Sunak broadcast**

Britain's communication regulator Ofcom has fined right-leaning GB News channel £100,000 (\$129,910) for breaking due impartiality rules relating to a programme featuring former prime minister Rishi Sunak, it said. Ofcom said the broadcast in February did not include an "appropriately wide range of significant viewpoints" and gave Sunak a "mostly uncontested platform" in the period leading up to the general election in July. The watchdog noted that GB News was challenging its original breach decision in this case by judicial review, which it was defending. Ofcom said it would not enforce this sanction until those proceedings were concluded.

# India 'mulls measures to boost foreign investment'

Reuters  
New Delhi

The Indian government is considering expanded measures to allow greater flexibility for strategic foreign investors to buy stakes in local companies after offshore investment slumped to a five-year low, three sources with knowledge of the matter said.

Policy makers are looking at the option of foreign investments through a mix of equity and debt, which aren't permitted currently, the sources said, noting that a final decision is still pending.

Opening the door to such offshore investments would mark a further liberalisation of the nation's capital market and foreign capital flows, which are subject to numerous restrictions as the Indian currency is not fully convertible.

The plan to allow use of instruments that are a mix of equity and debt, often termed as "mezzanine instruments" in market parlance, are part of a government plan to shore up foreign direct investment into India, the sources said, declining to be identified as they are not allowed to speak to the media.

Government discussions around the proposal have not been previously reported.

Currently, India's foreign exchange laws do not recognise mezzanine instruments in corporate

financing, which are common globally, particularly in large transactions involving mergers and acquisition. Authorities see FDIs as a more stable source of capital though they have remained weak in recent years despite a fast growing economy.

Gross FDI, which includes reinvested earnings and equity inflows, fell to \$71bn in 2023-24, the lowest since 2018-19, from \$71.4bn in 2022-23 and \$84.8bn in 2021-22, according to data from the Reserve Bank of India.

The proposal to further expand foreign investment options could lead to an additional \$20n-30bn in overseas inflows into the economy, according to internal estimates, said one of the three sources. The government estimates didn't provide a timeline for the potential investment boost, the source said.

The proposal is currently in discussion stage with the federal finance ministry which is in favour of the change, said one of the sources. The finance ministry did not immediately respond to an e-mail seeking comment.

India attracted 2.1% of global FDI in 2023 after peaking at 6.5% in 2020, according to ratings agency India Ratings and Research.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman last week said India needs \$100bn FDI each year to meet its investment needs, up from \$70-80bn at present.



The Taj Mahal is shrouded in smog after Diwali festivities in Agra yesterday.

# New Delhi pollution tops global charts as firecracker ban flouted

Reuters  
New Delhi

New Delhi topped global pollution charts yesterday, partly due to revellers defying a ban on firecrackers to celebrate Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.

India's national capital battles pollution each winter as cold air traps dust, emissions, and smoke from farm fires in the neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana, with firecrackers exacerbating the problem after Diwali.

Delhi recorded a "very poor" air quality index (AQI) level of 339 in the 24 hours up to yesterday evening, the Central Pollution Control Board said - marginally lower than the 358 the day after Diwali in 2023 - and Swiss firm IQAir rated it the world's most polluted city in its live rankings. CPCB considers an AQI of 0-50 to be "good",

and of 401-500 to be "severe", affecting healthy people and a danger to those with existing diseases. Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said, however, that pollution in the capital had not spiked the way it had been expected to after Diwali.

"I want to congratulate the people of Delhi that they behaved like responsible citizens and, by controlling crackers, helped to control pollution," Rai told news agency ANI.

Local government officials have banned firecrackers during Diwali and the winter over the last few years, in line with Supreme Court directives, but have had difficulty enforcing the measure despite the threat of jail.

Some Hindu groups say the ban interferes with observance of the festival, a position the Delhi government has previously countered by saying the ban aims to save lives.

Delhi's air quality is likely to remain in the

"upper end" of the "very poor" category for the remainder of the week, the Earth Sciences ministry said. Yesterday's smog also coincided with stubble burning in north India, where farmers burn waste left after harvesting paddy to quickly clear fields for wheat planting - a practice that aggravates pollution at the beginning of winter each year.

Although the contribution of farm fires to pollution in Delhi was less than 2% on Monday, it rose to almost 28% by Thursday, government data revealed, and experts said it may further increase in the coming days.

"The peak season (of stubble burning) is yet to come, the first two weeks of November are the peak, we need to control it then," said Gufran Beig, Chair Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) and founder of SAFAR, the federal government's air quality monitoring agency.

**King Charles, Camilla pay private visit to India wellness centre**

King Charles and his wife Queen Camilla have made a brief stopover in India following their recent trip to Australia and Samoa, Buckingham Palace confirmed, staying at a holistic health centre they have visited before.

Charles, 75, and Camilla made the private visit on their way back from his recent tour of Australia, where he is head of state, and a brief trip to Samoa for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, his first major foreign trip since being diagnosed with cancer.

Indian media reported that the royal couple had arrived in Bengaluru on October 27 and had since been at the Soukya International Holistic Health Centre, where they had enjoyed yoga and meditation sessions. "Their majesties had a short private stopover in India to help break the long journey back from Samoa," a Buckingham Palace spokesperson said.

**Cake International show**



Cake artist Emma Jayne puts the final touches to her Queen Elizabeth I creation during the Cake International show at the NEC in Birmingham, central England, yesterday. The cake decorating, sugar art and baking event is showcasing the talent of cake artists from around the world.

# William heads to S Africa for green prize ceremony

Reuters  
London

Prince William jets to South Africa next week for the start of a four day trip which will take in the annual awards ceremony for the British heir-to-the throne's multi-million dollar environmental prize.

William travels to Cape Town on Monday for a series of events to promote his Earthshot Prize, while he will also attend the United for Wildlife Global Summit and have a meeting with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa during his stay.

"His royal highness is looking forward to spending time with people from South Africa and across the wider continent, as well as celebrating the incredible climate solutions that will be spotlighted," Kensington Pal-

ace said in a statement. The trip will be the Prince of Wales's first to South Africa since 2010, and he will be making the visit alone as his wife Kate is still managing a return to work after finishing a course of preventative chemotherapy for cancer.

William, who like his father King Charles has become a keen environmental campaigner, set up the Earthshot Prize in 2020, inspired by his last visit to Africa six years ago. A nod to former US president John F Kennedy's "moonshot" project which led to the 1969 lunar landing, its goal is to find innovations to combat climate and other green issues, and awards five winners \$1.3m each to drive their projects. The ceremony itself will be held on November 6, hosted by US actor Billy Porter and South African TV presenter Bonang Matheba.

# UK treads fine line on slavery legacy, while ruling out reparations

AFP  
London

Commonwealth countries want talks on slavery reparations but the United Kingdom - engaged in soul-searching over its former empire for several years now - is not open to financial compensation, officials and analysts say.

"I think segments of British society might be ready to talk about reparation but you have other sectors, the majority really, that strongly oppose it," Sascha Auerbach, director of the Institute for the Study of Slavery at Not-

tingham University, said. Meeting last week at a summit in Samoa, the Commonwealth's 56 members said the "time has come" for talks about the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, in a landmark declaration that raised the prospect of future reparations.

African, Caribbean and Pacific nations want Britain - and other colonial powers - to apologise for slavery and other ills of colonisation, and to start talks about compensation.

Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer, a former human rights lawyer, has rejected both requests, arguing that he wants to "look forward" rather than have "very long

endless discussions about reparations" involving the past.

"I think he is concerned that the country is not ready to have this conversation," said Alan Lester, a historian at the University of Sussex, noting that any talk of restorative justice a few months after far-right riots rocked England is seen as politically risky. The issue is divisive. Figures in centre-left Labour - which came to power in July - have long been open to the debate, but the Conservatives reject it outright.

Robert Jenrick, one of the candidates to be the new Tory leader, has said that criticising the British Empire is anti-patriotic. He wrote recently that "the ter-

ritories colonised by our empire were not advanced democracies".

"Many had been cruel, slave-trading powers. Some had never been independent. The British empire broke the long chain of violent tyranny as we came to introduce - gradually and imperfectly - Christian values," he added.

While Britain has expressed remorse for slavery in broad terms, London has balked at the idea of paying financial reparations, which would likely come with a hefty price tag.

A 2023 report co-authored by a United Nations judge, Patrick Robinson, concluded that the UK likely owed more than £18tn (or

21tn euros) for its involvement in slavery in 14 countries.

This figure took into account the unpaid wages of slaves, trauma caused, and damages owed to their descendants. So far, the Commonwealth countries have not put forward any figures of their own.

"It's very unlikely that countries would ask for that figure," Lester, the historian, said.

Auerbach suspects that money is not the countries' "main goal". "What they want is recognition and accountability," he said.

Opponents in Britain point out that a public apology could open the doors to legal action against the country. Auerbach notes that the

Netherlands' government and king apologised last year for slavery and has not yet been sued.

For its part, the British royal family has so far stopped short of apologising.

King Charles III did, however, on a visit to Kenya last year, express his "greatest sorrow and deepest regret" over the "abhorrent and unjustifiable acts of violence committed against Kenyans" during colonial rule.

"It's a delicate subject. I would say that the monarchy has navigated this debate very skilfully," professor Pauline Maclaran at Royal Holloway, University of London, said.



**CHAIRMAN**

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

**Deputy Managing Editor**

K T Chacko

**Production Editor**

Amjad Khan

- 📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- ✉ editor@gulf-times.com
- ☎ 44350478 (News),
- ☎ 44466404 (Sport),
- ☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)
- ☎ 44350474
- 📘 facebook.com/gulftimes
- 🐦 twitter.com/gulftimes\_Qatar
- 📷 instagram.com/gulftimes
- 📺 youtube.com/GulftimesVideos



# US elections: Electoral College... A bridge to the White House

Americans are on the verge of writing a new chapter in US history by choosing the nation's 47th president. Voters will head to the polls on Nov 5 to elect the occupant of the White House. The main contenders are the Republican Donald Trump, who served one term from 2017 to 2021, and Democrat Kamala Harris, the current vice-president under Joe Biden.

However, the race to the White House isn't limited to these two candidates, as there are other nominees outside the two main parties. Nonetheless, it's unlikely any of these outside candidates will win; the presidency is almost always a competition between the Republican and Democratic parties.

Looking at US presidential election history and the voting system, it's clear that winning the popular vote doesn't guarantee victory. Presidential elections are determined by the Electoral College, which distributes votes across states. Winning the presidency requires 270 out of 538 electoral votes. A striking example of this system occurred in 2016 when Hillary Clinton won nearly 3mn more votes than Republican candidate Donald Trump, gaining 65,863,516 votes (48.18%) compared to Trump's 62,824,984 votes (46.09%). However, this wasn't enough for Clinton to reach the White House due to Trump's greater success in the Electoral College.

Each US state is allocated a specific number of electoral votes based on its population, where each congressional district is awarded one vote, and each state receives two additional votes.

All US states and Washington, DC (officially the District of Columbia), except Maine and Nebraska, follow a winner-takes-all policy. For instance, if a candidate wins California with 50.1% of the vote, they receive all of California's 54 electoral votes.

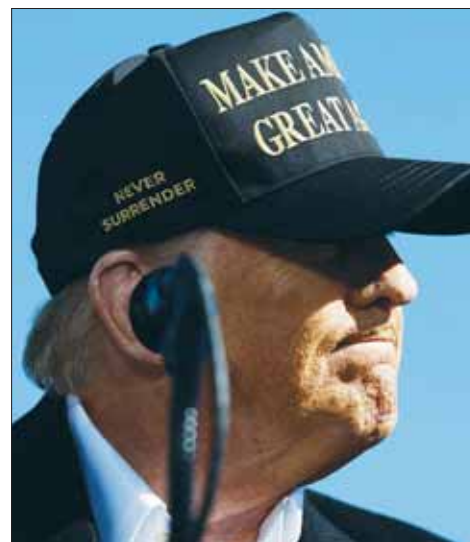
In Maine and Nebraska, the winning candidate in each congressional district receives one electoral vote, while the remaining two votes are awarded to the statewide winner.

This system also explains George W Bush's victory over Al Gore in the 2000 presidential election, despite Gore winning more votes nationally.

Electoral College members cast their votes about a month after the election, with Congress certifying these votes in early January, finalising the president's victory and their inauguration.

On Nov 5, millions of Americans will have already cast their votes, either by mail-in absentee ballot, in-person early voting in their area, or by returning their ballot to a secure drop box. The US election process includes early voting and absentee voting, offering flexibility for voters to cast their ballots early, helping them avoid potential barriers on Election Day.

All US states, except for Mississippi, New Hampshire, and Alabama, allow voters to cast their ballots in person before Election Day, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Some states offer a form of early voting known as substitute absentee voting, where voters can obtain an absentee ballot and submit it in person before Election Day. Fourteen states require a justification for



Donald Trump holds a campaign rally at Albuquerque International Sunport on Thursday in New Mexico.



Kamala Harris speaks during a campaign rally at Craig Ranch Amphitheater on Thursday in North Las Vegas.

voting by mail, such as illness or conflicting work schedules.

Eight states conduct elections entirely by mail, where all registered voters receive a mail-in ballot regardless of their intention to use it. Federal law requires states to send absentee ballots to military and overseas voters.

The US electoral system follows a specific process: the president is elected every four years, while House of Representatives members (the lower chamber of Congress) are elected every two years, and Senate members (the upper chamber) every six years, with a third of the seats up for election every two years.

The US election unfolds in four key stages. It begins with the primaries held in all states to select presidential nominees from each party or independents. In this phase, each party's candidates compete for as many primary wins as possible, which allows the winner to secure a majority of the party delegates at the summer national convention, where the party's presidential nominee is officially chosen.

The second phase is the national conventions, a staple in the election process. Party members from across the states gather at these conventions, joined by state delegates displaying banners supporting their chosen candidate.

Once the delegates choose their candidate, each party knows who will represent them in the presidential race. The nominee takes all of the states delegate votes won by majority, then announces their vice-presidential candidate to continue campaigning together.

The third phase is the campaign period. Candidates begin by seeking the votes of those who supported losing candidates in the primaries. This phase is brief, marked by high spending and televised debates between candidates.

In the final weeks of the campaign, candidates focus on swing states due to their significant

impact. US states are traditionally divided into blue (Democratic-leaning) and red (Republican-leaning). Candidates expend little effort in loyal states, reserving resources for swing states.

There are seven of these battleground states: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Michigan, Nevada, Wisconsin, Arizona and Georgia.

The fourth and final phase is Election Day. Eligible American voters head to the polls, but the president and vice president are not directly elected by the people. Instead, they are elected by the states Electoral College members, who equal the combined number of the states senators and House representatives.

Each winning candidate in a state secures the remaining Electoral College votes that would have gone to other candidates. The election isn't over as soon as a candidate wins the majority of votes; Electoral College members then cast their votes for the president and vice president, sending the results to the President of the Senate.

Finally, on Jan 20 of the following year, the President of the Senate reads the election results to the full Congress. The new president is inaugurated at the White House in a procession, taking the oath of office before Congress, as mandated by the Twentieth Amendment to the US Constitution, ratified in 1933.

If no candidate secures a majority of Electoral College votes (270), the House of Representatives decides the president, with each member casting one vote. If the vice-presidential election also lacks a majority, the Senate decides the winner, with each senator casting one vote.

This presidential election holds unique possibilities: if Kamala Harris wins, she will be the first female president of the United States. If Donald Trump wins, he will become the second president to serve two non-consecutive terms. (QNA)

## Democracy's data paradox

This historic election year, during which voting will have taken place in countries that account for half of the world's population, has underscored a grim reality: truth is under attack. Whether it is former US president Donald Trump spreading lies about the federal response to Hurricane Helene, far-right politicians in Hungary claiming their opponents intend to start World War III, or the proliferation of artificial intelligence-generated deepfakes, a torrent of misinformation is making it difficult for voters to distinguish fact from fiction, eroding the very foundation of democratic governance.

At the heart of this crisis lies a paradox: data, the lifeblood of modern democracies, can become their undoing when exploited by bad actors to spread misinformation and undermine democratic institutions. Though this threat is especially acute in the lead-up to major elections, addressing it requires a steadfast commitment to truth that extends beyond election campaigns.

Data play a crucial role in fostering public trust in political institutions. At its core, the social contract between democratic governments and their citizens relies on a shared understanding of who those citizens are. Tools like censuses and maps are central to this process, reflecting the extent to which governments recognise the people they are meant to serve.

South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy is a prime example. After decades of systemic exclusion and oppression, building a democratic society required reliable information. In this regard, the 1996 census – the first conducted under a democratic government – marked a pivotal shift: a genuine effort was made to count the entire population. Previous censuses, designed by the apartheid regime, had focused on white citizens while significantly undercounting the Black majority and other racial groups.

### Data, the lifeblood of modern democracies, can become their undoing when exploited by bad actors to spread misinformation and undermine democratic institutions

With immigration at the top of voters' minds, who qualifies as a citizen and how to treat non-citizens are highly salient questions. Notably, studies show that voters across Europe consistently overestimate the size of immigrant populations and that this misperception fuels demand for divisive policies. While immigration is often a contentious issue, these debates might be less destabilising if voters had a clearer, data-driven understanding of their countries' demographics.

For democracy to thrive, governments must also be accountable to their citizens.

Here, too, data play a critical role. Reliable information enables policymakers to make sound decisions and empowers voters to hold political leaders to account.

Providing this information is the vital – yet thankless – job of national statistics agencies. Despite a remarkable return of \$32 for every dollar invested in public-sector data, governments prefer initiatives with more immediate popular appeal over investing in data infrastructure.

But this is a false choice. When used effectively, data can boost tax revenue and stimulate private investment, expanding government budgets and enabling policymakers to improve public services. In Nicaragua, for example, a World Bank-funded study revealed that large-scale sewage projects disproportionately benefited wealthier households. This shifted spending priorities toward latrines and education programs, which benefited poorer communities at a lower cost.

Accountability, too, depends on a continuous exchange of information between governments and citizens. For democracies to function, governments must invest in transparency, both to understand voters' expectations and to keep the public informed of their own actions.

As the past year has shown, there is no easy way to stop politicians and bad actors from spreading falsehoods during election campaigns. But the impact of these lies can be mitigated.

Credible, accessible data are essential to democratic governance as elections and legislatures. At a time when democracy itself is on the ballot in many countries, robust data hold the key to maintaining the integrity of our information ecosystems, enabling governments to confront pressing challenges, and ensuring that democratic institutions can withstand emerging authoritarian threats. – Project Syndicate

## Musk's millions: World's richest man helps Trump

AFP  
Washington

In an extraordinary twist that has upended an already unpredictable election, the world's richest man has become Donald Trump's most influential supporter in his bid to return to the White House.

Here are five ways Elon Musk is wielding his outsized influence to help Trump win the election against Kamala Harris:

### Financial powerhouse

Musk established the America political action committee, or Super PAC, in July with the primary goal of supporting Trump's campaign and the "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) movement.

The Super PAC, which pools campaign contributions for election-related causes, has received about \$75mn from Musk over the last three months alone and likely more since.

Musk's net worth is estimated at \$264bn, according to Forbes.

America PAC has quickly become one of the largest pro-Trump organisations, focusing on Republican voter turnout in seven crucial swing states.

The organisation has launched controversial initiatives, including cash incentives for voters who refer others to sign a petition supporting the First and Second Amendments to the US Constitution, which protect free speech and the right to bear arms.

It has also launched a daily \$1mn lottery prize for random petition signatories in swing states.

These unusual schemes have sparked legal debates. While some experts argue they violate US electoral law prohibiting payment for voter registration, others maintain their legality.

Philadelphia's chief prosecutor this week filed a lawsuit challenging the prize offer as an "illegal lottery scheme." Although a judge ordered Musk to appear in court, his lawyers filed a "motion of removal," moving the case to federal jurisdiction pending a decision.

### Hit the trail

Unlike most billionaire backers who remain in the shadows, Musk has emerged as Trump's most prominent celebrity endorser, making frequent campaign appearances.

His first joint appearance with Trump occurred on October 5 in Butler, Pennsylvania – the site of a July assassination attempt on the



Tesla CEO Elon Musk (right) joins former US president and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump during a campaign rally at site of his first assassination attempt in Butler, Pennsylvania, on October 5.

former president.

During the rally, Musk delivered an impassioned speech warning that "this will be the last election" if Trump does not win, claiming Democrats would take control of the country.

At New York's Madison Square Garden, Musk declared to thousands, "I'm not just MAGA, I'm dark Gothic MAGA." Musk has also conducted solo town hall events, including a marathon question-and-answer session in Pennsylvania that drew big crowds.

He has also planned virtual town halls, including on November 5, Election Day.

### Government cuts

Trump has promised to appoint the billionaire as head of a new "department of government efficiency", or DOGE – sharing its name with the Musk-linked cryptocurrency.

This appointment would raise significant conflict of interest concerns, given SpaceX's essential role in Nasa missions and Tesla's dependence on government regulators, particularly for self-driving technology.

And SpaceX's Starlink plays a critical role in providing communication support in war zones and disaster areas across the globe.

According to the New York Times, SpaceX and Tesla have secured at least \$15bn in government contracts over the last decade.

At the New York event, Musk proposed

cutting annual government spending by 2tn dollars, suggesting dramatic changes to public services, including reductions in government pensions and retiree healthcare.

Former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers criticised this approach, saying governments are not run like companies.

"Respectfully, I think it is idiotic," he said on Fox News.

### X at your service?

Since acquiring Twitter and rebranding it as X two years ago, Musk has transformed the platform.

Recent studies indicate increased visibility for right-wing content, while Democratic and left-wing posts have seen reduced engagement.

A Washington Post analysis revealed that Republican accounts are posting more frequently and gaining more followers under Musk's ownership.

White House officials have expressed concern about their diminished reach during potential crises, with their average post views dropping from 200,000 to 100,000.

While this could be attributed to user exodus following Musk's takeover, algorithm adjustments may also play a role.

A Wall Street Journal investigation found that even accounts following only nonpolitical subjects received predominantly conservative and election-related content, contradicting X's assurances to advertisers about nonpolitical content exposure.

### Misinformation megaphone

Musk has used his account of more than 200mn followers to promote Trump's platform, particularly regarding immigration and transgender issues.

He has also spread debunked conspiracy theories about rigged voting machines – arguments the Trump campaign will leverage if defeated.

A New York Times analysis of Musk's X posts over five days last month found nearly one-third of his 171 posts contained false information or lacked context.

He has amplified conspiracy theories, including assertions that Democrats are "importing" migrants for voting purposes and false stories about immigrants from Haiti.

According to the Center for Countering Digital Hate, Musk's false or misleading election claims on X accumulated nearly 1.2bn views in just a few months.

**To Advertise**

✉ gtadv@gulf-times.com

**Display**

☎ 44466621  
☎ 44418811

**Classified**

☎ 44466609 ☎ 44418811  
☎ gtcad@gulf-times.com

**Subscription**

✉ circulation@gulf-times.com

ORDER

**Dutch to extradite abducted baby's mother soon**

A mother who whisked away her premature baby from a Paris hospital to the Netherlands will be handed over to French authorities next week, an Amsterdam court said. A court spokeswoman said a request for an accelerated procedure in the case had been accepted regarding the mother so "she should be handed over next week". Named only as Santiago, the baby required constant medical care after being born eight weeks premature. He was abducted on September 21 by his parents, aged 23 and 25, from a hospital neonatal unit in a Paris suburb, Aulnay-sous-Bois. Dutch police found the parents and child following a huge three-day international search.

CRIME

**Andy Warhol artworks stolen in the Netherlands**

Two works by artist Andy Warhol were stolen during yesterday from a gallery in the south of the Netherlands, while two other screenprints were abandoned nearby. The thieves used heavy explosives to break into the MPV Gallery in Oisterwijk in North Brabant province and took off with two screenprints showing former queens Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom and Margrethe II of Denmark, Dutch media NOS reported. "The entrance of the gallery was blown out and there was glass all around the building," NOS said. Not much is known yet about the theft "but it is strange that explosives were used," well-known Dutch art detective Arthur Brand said.

LAW AND ORDER

**Two arrested at Russian space site in Kazakhstan**

A French man and a German man have been arrested for unauthorised entry to the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan that Russia uses for space launches, Russian state media reported yesterday. RIA news agency quoted a Kazakh prosecutor as saying the pair were detained for one day and then removed from the complex. It said the 21-year-old Frenchman and 26-year-old German were tourists who undertook an "unauthorised walk" around the facility because they wanted to see a Russian Energiya rocket. In July, two Dutch citizens and a Belgian were arrested while trying to enter Baikonur.

DISCLOSURE

**Athens blast 'caused by home-made bomb'**

A deadly explosion in an Athens apartment on Thursday was caused by a home-made bomb and authorities suspect it could be linked to local guerrilla groups, police and Greek officials said yesterday. Two guns, bullets, mobile phones and digital evidence have been confiscated from the site of the blast, which killed one man and seriously injured a woman, police said in a statement. The man killed has not yet been identified. Police believe the evidence may link the case to anti-establishment guerrilla groups and suspect the blast occurred while the bomb was being made, a police official said.

# Bloody gangland shootout puts France at 'tipping point'

AFP  
Paris

France's struggle with drug-related violence is at a "tipping point" after a bloody shootout gravely wounded one teenager and left four more hurt, Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau said yesterday. Police were called out around 10.45pm (2145GMT) yesterday night in response to gunshots outside a restaurant in a working-class neighbourhood of western city Poitiers, a security source said.

France faced a choice between "full mobilisation or the 'Mexicanisation' of the country", he added, saying the "skirmish between rival bands involved several hundred people" - although a police source later said that between 50 and 60 actually engaged in fighting.

Officers used tear gas to break up the fight, restoring order around 45 minutes after arriving on the scene, the source added.

The prefecture in the Vienne department where Poitiers is located said police reinforcements were deployed to the city's Couronneries neighbourhood yesterday evening.

There were lingering "tensions between different groups" following the skirmish, it added.

Gangland violence long associated with Mediterranean port city Marseille has expanded into other French cities in recent years.

In Marseille alone, 17 people have been killed in so-called "narchomicides" (drug-related killings) this year - down from a bloody toll of 49 in the whole of 2023.

Victims can include gang members, some of them minors guarding dealing spots or employed as hit-men, but also innocent bystanders.

In northwestern city Rennes, a five-year-old child was struck in the head by two bullets on October 27 during a car chase hours after a drug-related shooting.

The boy's life was still in danger, Retailleau said yesterday, adding that "the investigation is moving forward" and that reinforcements would also be sent to Rennes.



Debris block a street after flooding devastated the town of Paiporta, in the region of Valencia, eastern Spain.

# Spain flood death toll hits 205, some areas still cut off

Reuters  
Alfajar, Spain

Spanish rescuers opened a temporary morgue in a convention centre and battled to reach areas still cut off yesterday as the death toll from catastrophic floods rose to 205 people in Europe's worst weather disaster in five decades.

In Valencia, the eastern region that bore the brunt of the devastation, about 500 soldiers were deployed to hunt for people who are still missing and help survivors of the storm, which triggered a fresh weather alert in Huelva in southwestern Spain.

Officials said the death toll is likely to keep

rising. It is already Spain's worst flood-related disaster in modern history and the deadliest to hit Europe since the 1970s.

In Alfajar, a suburb outside the city of Valencia, Spain's third-largest, drone footage showed the tangled wreckage of dozens of vehicles strewn across rail tracks.

"It's all destroyed, shops, supermarkets, schools, cars," said local resident Patricia Villar. Close by, a boat that had been carried by the floodwaters lay on a muddy street corner.

Emergency services working to clear cars piled up at the entrance of a flooded underpass in the suburb feared finding more trapped bodies. "We're trying to remove vehicles bit by bit to see if there are victims," one rescue worker told state television. "We don't know?"

With about 75,000 homes still without electricity, firefighters were siphoning petrol from cars that had been abandoned in the floods to power generators to get domestic supplies back on. "We're going from car to car looking for any petrol we can find," said one firefighter who had travelled to Valencia from the southern region of Andalusia to assist rescue efforts, carrying a plastic tube and empty bottles to collect the petrol from the cars' tanks.

A year of rain fell in just eight hours on Tuesday night, destroying roads, railway tracks and bridges as rivers burst their banks.

The flooding also submerged thousands of hectares of farmland in the region, which produces nearly two-thirds of citrus fruit in Spain - the world's top exporter of oranges.

# 11 dead in roof collapse at Serbia train station

At least 11 people were killed and three hospitalised yesterday when a roof collapsed at the entrance to a railway station in the Serbian city of Novi Sad, the interior minister said.

Emergency services used two large diggers into the evening to help free two women who had been trapped under the rubble. They were in critical condition, said Vesna Turkulov, the head of the Vojvodina medical centre where the women were taken.

"It is an extremely difficult rescue operation that will last for several more hours. We have around 80 rescuers from several towns working and heavy machinery," Interior Minister Ivica Dacic said in a televised statement.

In a visit to the site later, he told Pink TV that the death toll may rise.

N1 news channel said train departures had been halted from the station, which lies about 70km northwest of the capital, Belgrade.



Rescue workers remove debris after a roof collapsed at the entrance to a railway station in Novi Sad, Serbia, yesterday.

# Pakistan blast kills seven, 23 injured

Reuters/AFP  
Quetta, Pakistan

At least seven people including five school students were killed and 23 injured in a blast in southwestern Pakistan yesterday, a police official said.

"The target was a police van which was going to pickup a polio (vaccination) team," senior superintendent of police Rehmatullah said. One police officer was also among the dead, while 23 other people and officers were injured.

The explosion came from an improvised device attached to a motorcycle parked near a school for girls in the town of Mastung, he said.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. Prime Minister Shehbaz

Sharif condemned the attack in a statement.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi earlier put the death toll at three children and one police officer. "Targeting children is an act of brutality," he said in a statement.

Pakistan is grappling with a surge in militant attacks in its northwest and a growing separatist insurgency in the south.

On Tuesday, a policeman was killed in an attack on a health office that manages door-to-door polio vaccination campaigns.

The attacks have coincided with Pakistan's third nationwide polio campaign, which was launched on Monday amid a significant rise in cases of the viral disease. Although cases dropped in 2023 to six, from 20 in 2022, the prime minister's office says there are currently 41 active cases in Pakistan.

# Moldova faces decisive vote under shadow of Russian interference

AFP  
Chisinau

Moldova's pro-Brussels leader Maia Sandu is in a tough fight in tomorrow's presidential election with a challenger who wants closer ties with Moscow only two weeks after she won an EU membership referendum by a razor-thin margin.

With Georgia reeling from a disputed election which returned its Moscow-friendly ruling party to power, all eyes are now on Moldova, which borders war-torn Ukraine.

Russia has been accused of in-

terfering in the elections of both former Soviet states, allegations rejected by Moscow.

Sandu said her camp "won justly in an unjust struggle" in the EU referendum on October 20 amid claims that pro-Russian opposition engaged in disinformation and vote-buying.

But the 52-year-old former World Bank economist admitted she was in a "difficult fight" in the second round of the presidential vote, after taking nearly 42.5% of the vote in the first round.

Her rival, Alexandr Stoianoglo, a former prosecutor backed by the pro-Russian Socialists, picked up a higher-than-expected 25.95%.

But tomorrow's vote is likely to be a lot closer.

Several pro-Russian candidates who ran in the first round have thrown their weight behind Stoianoglo, saying Moldova risked being dragged into war and becoming a second Ukraine.

During his campaign, Stoianoglo - who was fired as prosecutor by Sandu - vowed to wage a "balanced foreign policy" that would include both the EU and Russia.

The 57-year-old boycotted the referendum he denounced as a "parody", with the socialists now contesting the results.

With Washington warning that Moscow "will again attempt to

prevent Moldovans from exercising their sovereign right to choose their own leaders", the government has been raising the alarm over "electoral fraud".

Sandu took to social media to call on Moldovans not to give in to the "thieves who give you money for votes and trample on your dignity, steal your freedom" and who will "destroy Moldova for decades to come".

She also appealed to the judiciary to step up the fight against corruption, accusing "criminal groups" of trying to bribe up to 300,000 voters.

"If you are offered money to vote against a candidate, refuse, other-

wise you risk a fine," loudspeakers warned shoppers in a supermarket in the capital Chisinau, local media reported.

Fears of Russian meddling have long been looming large.

Fugitive oligarch and former politician Ilan Shor is suspected of having funnelled almost \$40mn from Russia into Moldova since September in a bid to corrupt voters.

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

Experts say the economic woes of Moldova - already one of Europe's poorest countries - have

deepened amid high inflation, with European aid often providing the only lifeline.

But four years after Sandu became Moldova's first woman president, the former Soviet republic appears deeply divided.

Moldova's large diaspora as well as people living in the capital are mostly in favour of the pro-EU course.

On the other hand, some remote villages and the inhabitants of the breakaway region of Transnistria as well as Gagauzia have been traditionally close to Russia.

"Both the East and the West want to drag us to their side," Maria said on the streets of Chisinau.



Qatar Museums Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani attended the opening of the exhibition.



# Benchellal: Monumental 'sculpting past tomorrow' opens at National Museum

Year of Cultures presents Benchellal: Monumental "sculpting past tomorrow", the first solo museum exhibition dedicated to the work of Moroccan-Dutch designer Mohamed Benchellal.

Presented at the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ), the exhibition features a new collection of couture dresses designed and crafted during the designer's Artist Residency at Liwan Design Studios and Labs and inspired by the landscape of Qatar.

The exhibition highlights Benchellal's craftsmanship and innovative designs, as well as his dedication to sustainability and slow fashion.

On view until January 18, 2025 at Gallery 13 at NMoQ, the exhibition presents Benchellal's exquisite couture as monumental works of art, thoughtfully juxtaposed against the architectural marvels of Qatar that inspired them.

Best known for exceptional draping and use of sustainable materials, Benchellal's garments



reflect the harmony between craftsmanship and environmental responsibility.

Curator Al Shaima Ayoub said: "Over the past decade, Arab fashion design has thrived in the region with institutions like Fashion

Trust Arabia and the Arab Fashion Council uplifting and supporting talent in the region and its diaspora. Benchellal's work represents an important milestone and a valuable addition to the history of our exhibitions, adding to the legacy

of fashion in the Arab world."

Benchellal's journey with Qatar began in 2021 when he won the Fashion Trust Arabia (FTA) Award, subsequently embarking on his transformative Artist Residency at Liwan. The collection



presented at NMoQ embodies his distinctive fusion of futuristic Middle Eastern aesthetics and traditional couture.

Reflecting on the significance of the exhibition, Benchellal said: "This exhibition marks a major milestone in my career. It was just two years ago that I received the

FTA award presented by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser at the museum, and it is an honour to return with my first-ever museum presentation. The exhibition is my tribute to the region—a celebration and ode to its forward-looking vision, its culture, and its place in the world of fashion."

# Qatar's underwater wonders: A call for conservation amidst stunning biodiversity

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

New underwater photographs by veteran diver Khalid Zaki showcase the vibrant and diverse marine life teeming beneath Qatar's waters, sparking renewed calls for conservation efforts.

Zaki, a master instructor and Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) ambassador, told *Gulf Times* that these pictures are not just beautiful but a testament to Qatar's rich biodiversity. This, he pointed out, highlights the need for increased awareness and robust conservation strategies to protect it.

"Local communities and groups can effect significant change by raising awareness, especially during fishing season. Boat owners should be responsible enough and adopt sustainable fishing practices to prevent negative environmental impacts," he said.

Zaki stressed that educational campaigns in schools and universities, among other institutions, can play a vital role in fostering positive change, particularly in protecting endangered species in Qatari and Gulf waters, and deterring illegal activities. These efforts, he added, complement the ongoing work of government agencies dedicated to environmental protection.

"I hope my photographs inspire people to appreciate the beauty of Qatar's underwater world and encourage them to support efforts to protect it for future generations," said Zaki, whose work serves as a powerful visual appeal for conservation.

Zaki's stunning images paint a vivid picture of a hidden world: vibrant coral reefs packed with colourful fish, sea turtles navigating the currents, and an array of other species, according to Qatar residents who have seen his work.

However, Zaki said threats to Qatar's marine life such as plastic pollution and the effects of climate change – rising sea temperatures and ocean acidification – are already impacting coral reefs and the many species that depend on them.

He said protecting these habitats is crucial not only for the intrinsic value of the marine life itself but also for the economic benefits derived from tourism and fisheries.

Zaki underscored the importance of a collective commitment to responsible environmental stewardship such as efforts to regularly monitor marine life, combat pollution, and promote sustainable fishing practices. This, he pointed out, helps boost the growing public awareness, which



Veteran diver Khalid Zaki underlines the importance of a collective commitment to responsible environmental stewardship.



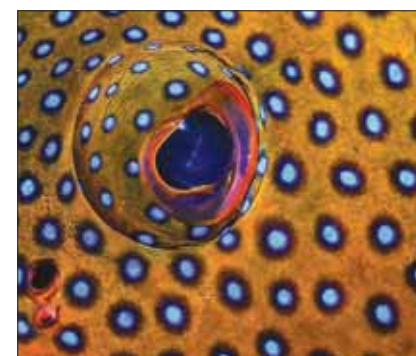
is critical to safeguarding the nation's precious underwater heritage.

Zaki said this is not just the responsibility of the government or environmental organisations, pointing out that every individual has a role to play.

"Boosting public awareness is critical, and my hope is that these photographs will contribute to that effort. We must work together to safeguard this precious underwater heritage for generations to come," he added.



A diver collects plastic bottles from Qatar's waters.



# Qatar-based programme finalist in WISE Prize for Education

From Page 1

Since its inception Bonocle has achieved several partnerships and collaborations with NGOs and major distributors. It has been recognised for the K design Award and Aly was listed in Forbes 30 Under 30. It has enhanced braille literacy through innovative educational tools. It also hosted the first inclusive gaming tournament during the FIFA World Cup 2022.

According to the team of Bonocle, it aims to become a global leader in accessible education within five years and keep the platform open and dynamic, allowing continuous contributions and innovations from the blind community and partners. It also aims to expand the library of content and diverse use cases and integrate seamlessly into diverse educational environments. Ultimately, the programme hopes to empower the blind community to develop their own solutions and contribute to the platform.

This year the WISE Prize will work with the chosen finalists over the span of one year to develop solutions that address education challenges in the field of: Improving the teaching of Arabic language; accelerating foundational literacies and addressing challenges in AI.

Bonocle addresses the WISE Prize challenges: Artificial Intelligence in Education; teaching of Arabic Language and foundational literacies. The solution directly addresses these challenges by leveraging technology to enhance braille literacy, focusing on foundational skills through gamification and innovative educational tools.

This year's WISE Prize for Education competition received a total of 427 applications and the winner will be awarded the \$1mn at the WISE12 Summit in 2025, where the winner will be announced live.