The Peninsula
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Qatar treats thousands of patients from siege nations

FAZEENA SALEEM
THE PENINSULA

A total of 232,576 patients from siege countries were treated across Hamad Medical Corporation and Primary Health Care Corporation in the last 14 months.

DOHA: Qatar is continuing to provide treatment for patients hailing from the blockading countries and has treated a total of 232,576 medical cases across Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) in the last 14 months.

Among them 6,136 are from Bahrain, 203,705 from Egypt, 2,945 from the UAE, and 19,790 from Saudi Arabia. They have made 1.08 million visits to different facilities across HMC and PHCC from June 5, 2017 to August 4, 2018, according to data released yesterday.

"Humanity supersede anything. We will treat all patients, because they are humans and Qatar is a humane country. We will treat all patients despite their nationality, either form blockading or non blockading country. Politics will never interfere into medical treatment," Dr Yousef Al Maslamani, Medical Director of Hamad General Hospital (HGH) told *The Peninsula*.

"We have continued to treat patients from the blockading countries and we will continue treating them," he added.

As many as 138,414 have availed the services provided at HMC hospital network and they have made 451,183 visits to different facilities.

EXCLUSIVE

The Pediatric Emergency Centres of HMC have treated 30,640 cases during the said period. A total of 3, 757 patients from Bahrain, 121,127 from Egypt, 1,883 from the UAE, and 11,643 from Saudi Arabia were treated at HMC hospitals.

The PHCC's health centres have treated 101,802 patients from the blockading countries and they have made 503,885 visits in the last 14 months.

"All these are people residing in Qatar," said Dr Al Maslamani.

A total of 22,793 in-patients from the blockading countries were treated at HMC hospitals.

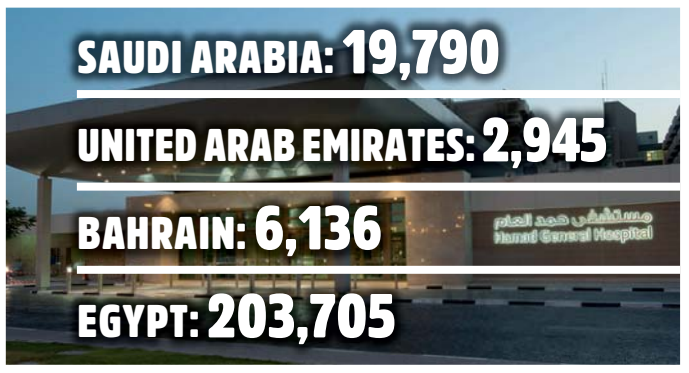
About 130 patients with kidney failure have sought services at HMC's dialysis units at different hospitals.

The HGH and National Centre for Cancer Care and Research has provided chemotherapy treatment for 184 patients from the blockading countries and 169 have undergone surgeries as part of cancer care at the HMC.

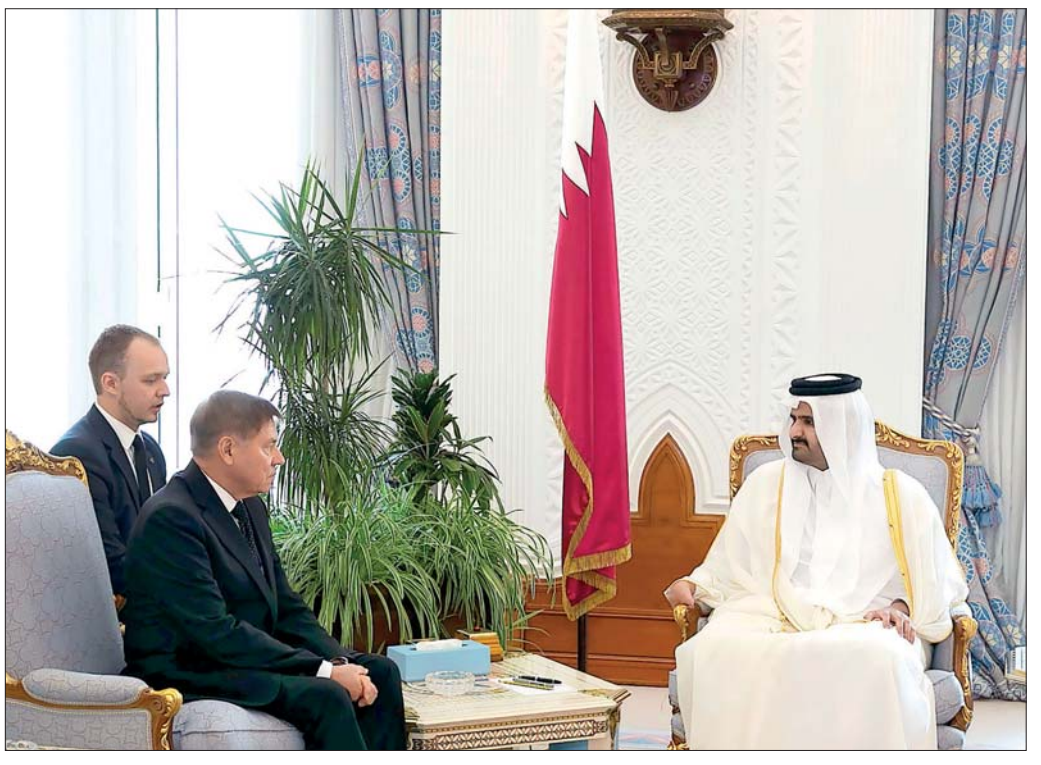
More than 2,000 women have undergone normal deliveries or caesarian section at HMC hospitals. Among them 58 are Bahraini, 1,727 are Egyptians, 36 are Emirati and 355 are from Saudi Arabia.

Approximately 960 patients from the four blockading countries have availed services for trauma. Around 300 adult patients and 28 children under the age of 14 years, from the blockading countries have undergone surgeries for cardiac problems. A total of 8,275 patients have undergone surgeries for different types of illnesses. Among them the highest number of 2,482 surgeries were performed at the HGH.

→SEE ALSO PAGE 5



Deputy Amir meets Russian Chief Justice



Deputy Amir H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani met at the Amiri Diwan yesterday with Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, Lebedev Vyacheslav Mikhailovich, and his accompanying delegation on the occasion of his visit to the country. The meeting reviewed ways of developing the bilateral cooperation, especially in the legal and judicial fields.

Silatech provides one million jobs in 16 countries

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Since its establishment, Silatech has been able to provide one million jobs for needy youth in more than 16 countries, in cooperation with its governmental and non-governmental partners.

This came during a presentation by Executive Director of Silatech Faisal Al Emadi, at the eighth session of the Global Donors Forum in London, entitled "Building Resilient Ecosystems Philanthropys Response to Inequality and Societal Tensions".

The forum saw a wide participation of representatives from governments, financial institutions and academics, charity counsellors, humanitarian and relief organisations and others, said a statement.

Al Emadi gave a brief overview of Silatech and its journey which was launched in 2008, saying the idea to establish Silatech was born out of a vision of HH Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, that supporting the future of youth supports all society.

→CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Over 200% rise in value of real estate deals

SACHIN KUMAR
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The real estate sector of Qatar has shown strong performance in July. The value of sold properties has jumped by about 224 percent in July this year compared previous month. Rising transactions in summer shows the robustness of Qatar's real estate sector.

The total value of sold properties reached around QR4.3bn in July, showing a whopping rise of around QR3bn compared to June. The value of sold properties stood at around QR1.33bn in June this year, according to the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics data.

Spike in deals in July assumes importance as summer is usually considered to be a relatively dull season for real estate market. Compared to other months, less number of deals take place as several residents are out of country on vacation.

Along with month-on-month increase, the rising trend was visible on year-on- year comparison also. When compared to same month (July) last year, the value of sold properties has risen by around 135 percent as the total transactions stood at QR1.8bn.

The real estate sector is expected to grow in the coming years, as the government has taken several measures in the past to boost construction and real estate sector.

In December last year, the Cabinet had approved the draft law on regulating non-Qatari ownership and use of real estate.

In terms of geography, most of the deals happened in Doha Municipality, which is a most happening area in the country. Total 429 deals were completed in July this year, out of which 123 deals happened in Doha Municipality.

This municipality saw several big deals showing that buyers are ready to pay higher price for properties in this area. Of the total QR4.3bn deals, highest transactions were witnessed in Doha Municipality, where a total of around QR1.9bn transactions took place.

Al Rayyan Municipality came second in attracting buyers as 88 deals involving transactions worth QR1.2bn took place during July.

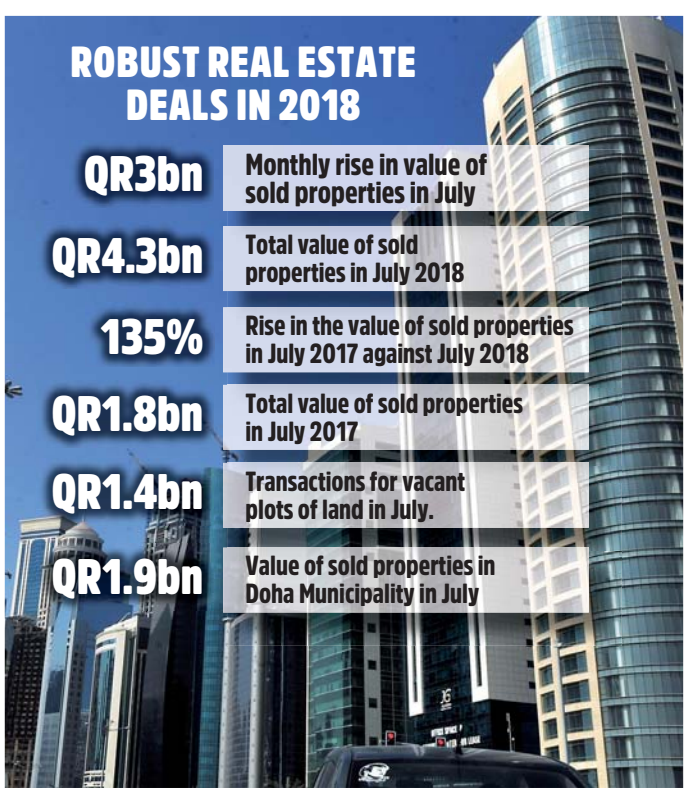
Majority of buyers were interested in villa complexes, apartment buildings and vacant plots of land in July.

In terms of value of deals, vacant plots of land were at the top, as transactions involving around QR1.4bn were for vacant plots. Total 174 villa complexes were sold in July which involved transactions worth QR613m

Qatar real estate market has performed well in the last week of August, showed the data by Ministry of Justice's real estate registration department.

The trading volume of registered real estates between August 26 to August 30 at the Ministry of Justice's real estate registration department stood at QR211.5m.

The department's weekly report said that the trading included vacant lands, residential units, multipurpose buildings, residential buildings and multipurpose empty lands.



Turkish Souq targets 5 million products in 2019

MOHAMMAD SHOEB
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Post (Q-Post) has revealed that its e-commerce platform — Turkish Souq — will achieve the target of offering fivemillion products by early next year, said a top official of the company.

Launched early this year, the online shopping facility by Q-Post, will see the massive jump in the product range within a very short span of time, which will be offering nearly 25 times more items compared to the current level of 200,000 products available to the customers.

The online shopping platform (turkishsouq.qa) provides easy access to Turkish products ranging from clothing, shoes, accessories, home furnishing, furniture and as well as vehicle parts and everything in-between, all at a flat delivery rate of QR50 by Q-Post.

"Turkish Souq is doing excellent. Given the sharp rise in trade volumes and overwhelming response, we are introducing large number of new products on the webstore. And we hope that by the first quarter of 2019 the range of products will reach over five million," Faleh bin Mohammed Al Naeimi, Chairman and Managing Director of Q-Post told *The Peninsula*.

Al Naeimi added: "We at Q-Post are expanding our operations rapidly, especially in the logistics sector, helping our clients and corporate to reach out to customers worldwide. We are also introducing new products and services as part of our expansion plan and transformation journey, which is to be completed by early next year."

He noted that over the last couple of years, Q-Post has already introduced several changes, which included a lot of new services such as logistics, home-delivery and e-commerce services.

He also noted that Q-Post is giving top priority to a lot of services, which is the main business of the organisation. It has achieved significant improvement in this regard.

"We are giving global priority to improve the quality of our services which has helped us earn international recognition.

→CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Backpacks, less activity trigger back pain in kids

FAZEENA SALEEM
THE PENINSULA



DOHA: The number of children visiting Orthopedic Clinics at the Hamad General Hospital (HGH) for muscle and joint pain has increased recently.

Most of them have developed complications due to wrong use of backpacks and less physical activity, said an expert yesterday.

At least 40 percent of children visit the clinics suffer back, neck, shoulder and muscle pain, said Dr Omar Alnori **(pictured)**, Associate Consultant, Orthopedic and Spine Surgery, HGH while speaking to media persons.

"Children visit us at the age of 13 or 14 years. It is more common than before. Some children we see in the clinic now have early arthritis in the lower back. But they are young and about 16 or 18 years old," he said.

"To reduce joint and muscle pains at the early age, children should be encouraged to do more sport activities and follow correct practices while using backpacks. In most cases we give advice to change their lifestyle," he added.

A safe backpack weight should be within 10 or 15 percent of the child's weight.

"If the child is about 30kg-35kg weight, the bag should not weigh more than 3kg to 4kr kg with books," said Dr Alnori.

An appropriate backpack should be light weight with multiple compartments. It should be packed with essential books and with heavier ones towards the trunk. Length of the backpack should be from the shoulder to the waist-line of a child.

"Straps should be wide and on both shoulders of the child to balance weight. Or it will cause lower back pain. Straps of the backpack should be tightened as well as waist and chest straps will give extra support for the child," said Dr Alnori.

He also said that trolley bags are safer for children compared to backpacks. However, Dr Alnori insisted that children should use trolley bags carefully, especially while getting into vehicles.

Qatar, UNIDO explore ways to boost relations



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met yesterday with the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), LI Yong, during the official visit to Austria. During the meeting, they discussed ways to promote the relations between the State of Qatar and UNIDO. They also discussed increasing technical cooperation between Qatar and UNIDO in the industrial development field.

Qatar supports dialogue of civilisations

DOHA: The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, H E Ahmed bin Hassan Al Hammadi, has underlined that the State of Qatar pays special attention to the issue of the Alliance of Civilizations, noting that the Qatar National Vision 2030 affirmed the patronage and support of dialogue of civilisations and coexistence among different religions and cultures.

Speaking during his meeting with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations delegation yesterday, he said that "Qatar's support for the dialogue of civilisations, culture of dialogue and conflict resolution is reflected in its successful initiatives to resolve disputes and mediation in several issues, including the Darfur issue, the case of the Bulgarian nurses during the period of Gaddafi in Libya, the transfer of Catholic hostages in Syria to Lebanon, the mediation between Eritrea and Djibouti and other diplomatic mediation efforts of the State of Qatar."

Dr Al Hammadi referred to the message of the Qatari Committee of the Alliance of Civilizations, which was established in 2010, to enhance the role of the State of Qatar in highlighting the contribution of Islamic civilization, as well as its role in promoting dialogue, resolving conflicts.

For his part, UN Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs Dr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Muraikhi met with the visiting UN Alliance of Civilizations delegation.

Deputy PM & FM sends message to Bulgarian counterpart

SOFIA: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani has sent a written message to the Deputy Prime Minister in Charge of the Judiciary Reform and Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Bulgaria, Ekaterina Zakharieva, pertaining to bilateral ties and means to support and develop them.

Qatar's Ambassador to Bulgaria, Rashid bin Ali Al Khater, handed the message during a meeting with Zakharieva.

Qatar, US team discuss Mideast Security Alliance

DOHA: A United States delegation led by General (Retd) Anthony Zinni visited Doha.

The delegation met with senior Qatari officials to discuss the Middle East Security Alliance, a proposed initiative that the US is developing with partners from the region, said a statement.

The American and Qatari delegations had a productive exchange of views and will continue discussions on this initiative. General Zinni is the former commander of the US Central Command.

Arab League foreign ministers discuss UNRWA crisis



Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H E Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi, at the meeting.

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The meeting of Arab League foreign ministers to discuss the lack of financial support threatening the United Nation Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) was held yesterday at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Arab League.

The meeting was prior to the meeting of the Council of the Arab League at its 150th session on the ministerial level, chaired by Sudan. The meeting was participates by Arab ministers of foreign affairs or their representatives with the presence of the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Ahmed Aboul Gheit.

The State of Qatar is participating in this meeting with a delegation headed by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H E Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi.

The meeting is held at the request of the Kingdom of Jordan to discuss the repercussions of the severe financial shortage faced by UNRWA in its various areas of operation.

UNRWA's serious fiscal deficit threatens not to provide its humanitarian and educational services to more than five million Palestinian refugees in its five areas of operation. The special session aims to emphasize the importance of providing the Agency with financial, moral and political support to ensure that it continues to discharge its responsibilities towards Palestinian refugees. In May, the State of Qatar signed an agreement with UNRWA, in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

Under the signed agreement, the State of Qatar will donate $50m to protect Palestinian refugees' access to basic education in 2018. The donation will be used immediately to sustain the Agency's educational services in all five UNRWA regions: Jordan, Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Syria, and Lebanon, during the period between June and October 2018.

The State of Qatar is one of the biggest donors to the Agency in 2018. Qatar's donation will also enable the continuation of the provision of UNRWA services in the region during this period of financial crisis and political turmoil.

Meanwhile, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H E Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi met here yesterday with the Commissioner General of the UNRWA, Pierre Krahenbuhl, on the sideline of the 150th session of the Arab League Ministerial Council.

They discussed the role of UNRWA in providing the needs of five million Palestinian refugees in addition to the Agency's financial shortfalls in light of the reduction of financial support provided by the US and ways to face it.

Turkish team reviews technological systems at MoI

THE PENINSULA

The delegation understood the services provided in the field of communications and the advanced technologies used.

DOHA: A delegation from the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey reviewed the advanced technological systems at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) during a visit to the Communications Department at the Ministry, within its current visit to Qatar.

The delegation listened to an explanation about the technical sections of the Communications Department and the services provided in the field of communications in various departments of the Ministry of Interior and the advanced technologies used.

The Turkish delegation made a presentation about its duties. Assistant Director of Communications Department at the Ministry Brig. Khalifa Sultan Al Harami said that the visit comes as a complement to the visit made earlier by a delegation of Ministry of Interior engineers to Turkey.

He added that these visits aim to exchange experiences between the Turkish and Qatari sides in the field of technology and achieve cooperation between the two parties in terms of research, information technology, and network security.

Vice-President of Business Development at Turkish Council Orhan Muratoglu expressed pleasure to visit the State of Qatar, adding that in light of the development of relations between the two countries, Turkish Council seeks to enhance cooperation in the field of communications.

He noted the development of communications technologies and systems at the Ministry of Interior. The Communications Department of the Ministry of the Interior of Qatar has several advanced technological systems, which provide good communication services in the Ministry and the security services in Qatar, he added.



Qatar, Syria discuss ties

The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, H E Dr Ahmed bin Hassan Al Hammadi, met with the Ambassador of Syrian Republic to the State of Qatar, Nizar Al Haraki. They discussed bilateral relations and means of supporting and developing them as well as issues of mutual concern.

Qatar reiterates interest in promoting rights of older persons

QNA

GENEVA: The State of Qatar has affirmed its interest in the rights of older persons based on fundamental principles, the most important of which are religious duty and cultural values that emphasize the reverence and protection of older persons as well as the promotion of their rights.

This was stated in Qatar's statement delivered by Second Secretary at Qatar's Permanent Delegation to the United Nations Office in Geneva Abdulla Khalifa Al Suwaidi before the 39th session of the Human Rights Council (Item 3) on clustered interactive dialogue with UN independent expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons and UN special rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation.

Al Suwaidi said social exclusion affects the quality of life, the cohesion and integration of older persons in society as a whole.

He said the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons have two aspects: one is a moral and value aspect that is to recognize the older persons' contributions, capacities and rights to live in dignity and independently, while the other is a material one that is to provide adequate resources that respond to the special needs of the older persons. Al Suwaidi said in line with this concept, Qatar's interest in the rights of older persons has been based on fundamental principles, the most important of which are religious duty and cultural values that emphasize the reverence and protection of the older persons as well as the promotion of their rights, adding: "Convinced that the family constitutes the natural environment for the life of any person, the State has devoted attention to building a strong and cohesive family which remains the pillar of the protection and promotion of the rights of all its members, in particular the older persons."

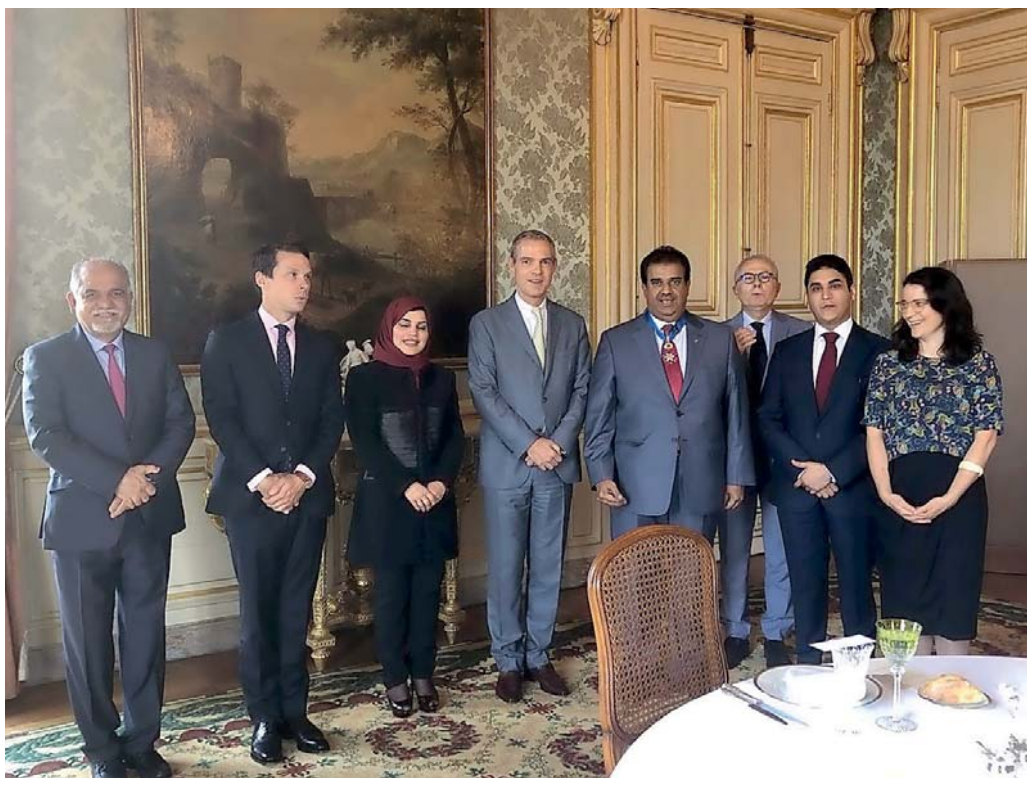
He said Qatar has passed legislations guaranteeing the elderly all rights such as social security, housing, work and legal protection. At the same time, it established specialized institutions, topped by the Centre for Elderly Empowerment & Care (Ehsan) of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work which provides the older persons with health, social and psychological services through a variety of services and programs, including residential care, day care, mobile home care and aftercare.

Venezuelan President receives credentials of Ambassador of Qatar



The President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, has received the credentials of Rashid Mohsin Abdullah Fetais as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Qatar to Venezuela. The Ambassador conveyed the greetings of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to the President, wishing him the best of health and the government and people of Venezuela further progress and prosperity. For his part, the President entrusted the Qatari Ambassador with his greetings to H H the Amir and his wishes of further development and prosperity to the Qatari people. The President wished the Qatari Ambassador success in his new duties to push forward the friendship and cooperation relations between Qatar and Venezuela.

French President grants Qatar Ambassador National Order of Merit



The President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, granted Qatar's Ambassador to France, Khalid bin Rashid Al Mansouri, the National Order of Merit with the rank of Commander on the occasion of the ending of his tenure.

Training course on sign language for Traffic Department staff

THE PENINSULA





LEFT: Sheikh Thani bin Abdullah Al Thani, the Chairman of Qatar Society for Rehabilitation of Special Needs. RIGHT: Officers of Traffic Department are receiving lessons to communicate with hearing-impaired people.

DOHA: Qatar Society for Rehabilitation of Special Needs is organising a training course on sign language which is used to communicate with hearing-impaired people for a group of officers and non-commissioned officers of Traffic Department.

The course aims at educating sign language to the officers so they could communicate in a better way with hearing-impaired people in providing them services of Traffic Department, said a release.

A three-week training course will cover topics like communication skills to deal with people with impaired hearing, basic knowledge of sign language and advanced level of sign language through practical training. Many experts of sign language from reputed institutions have been invited to deliver lectures on said topics.

Sheikh Thani bin Abdullah Al Thani, Chairman of Qatar Society for Rehabilitation of Special Needs, said that the training course is being held under the cooperation between the Society and the Ministry of Interior and its various departments, including the General Directorate of Traffic.

Sheikh Thani bin Abdullah Al Thani said that it is part of the training plans of the Society which aims to rehabilitate persons with disabilities and provide ways to communicate with different sections of the society.

The move also aims at providing access for such segment to various services in all state facilities easily through easy and smooth communication between them and service providers of all levels like traffic officers and non-commissioned officers.

First Lt. Azan Abdullah Al Kathiri, Head of Training and Development Department of Traffic Awareness Department of the General Directorate of Traffic, said that the training course is aimed at educating traffic officers and introducing them sign language so that they can communicate with the people with hearing-impaired.



Qatar Post gets international accreditations for performance

THE PENINSULA

Qatar Post has been awarded three ISO certifications in the categories of Quality, Environment and Health and Safety Management by the UK's accreditation body BEREAU VERITAS.

DOHA: Qatar Post has been internationally recognised for its quality performance and awarded three ISO certifications in the categories of Quality, Environment and Health and Safety Management by the UK's accreditation body BEREAU VERITAS.

The international accreditations were granted for Qatar Post's integrated management system, which included three ISO certifications in Quality Management System ISO9001, Environmental Management System ISO14001 and Health and Safety Management System ISO OHSAS 18001 Assessment Series.

The certificates have been awarded following a comprehensive and extensive external audit that demonstrated the compliance of Qatar Post to these three systems with recognised standards globally in accordance to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Faleh bin Mohammed Al Naemi, Chairman and Managing Director of Qatar Post, hailed the ISO certification as a great achievement stating that Qatar Post has invested heavily over the past years to improve the quality of its operations and customer services.

"We are pleased with the outcome of the comprehensive audit and accreditation process applied to our administration systems to measure our capacity in providing basic postal services, financial services, e-commerce and e-government," he added.

The accreditation, which was announced on August 7 will be valid until 2021, covers various areas of postal operations including quality, health, safety, environment, sales, marketing, transformation, strategy / change management, human resources, finance, Security, IT, procurement, processing, delivery and ports.

In the final quarter of 2017, Qatar Post achieved 100% service completion for standard postal services according to reports from the UPU – GMS. As for the quality level of the same year, Qatar Post exceeded the target (80%) after reaching 95.8%, the second highest percentage for best International mail.



Qatar Post Chairman and Managing Director receiving international accreditations.



CEO of QMC and GCC official discuss ties

The Chief Executive Officer of Qatar Media Corporation, H E Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad Al Thani, met yesterday with the Director-General of the Joint Program Production Institution of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Ali Hassan Al Rayes. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations between the two sides and means of enhancing them.

Qatar and Russia explore legal and judicial relations

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Chief Executive Officer of Qatar International Court, Faisal bin Rashid Al Sahouti, yesterday received a Russian Judicial delegation headed by Professor Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Lebedev, the President of the Supreme Court in the Russian Federation.

During the meeting, they discussed means of enhancing the legal and judicial relations between Qatar International Court and the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation.

As part of their visit, CEO of Qatar International Court, Faisal bin Rashid Al Sahouti, gave a detailed explanation of the successful attempt by the State of Qatar to establish its specialised judiciary through the establishment of the Qatar International Court.

Qatar International Court is the first specialised court in the State to look into commercial and investment disputes that may arise from the transactions of international financial companies which operate through the Qatar Financial Centre.



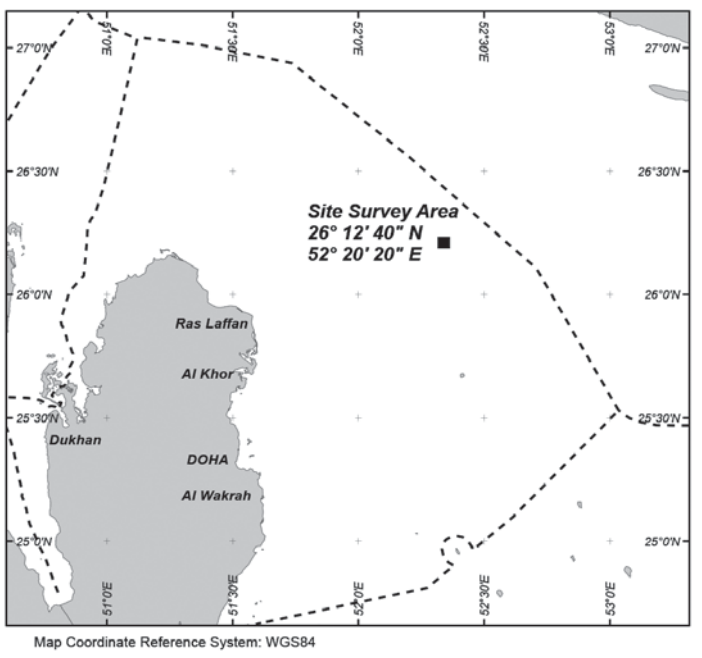
The Russian delegation during a visit to Qatar International Court and Dispute Resolution Centre.

Qatar Shell Service Company W.L.L

WARNING NOTIFICATION, TO FISHERMEN AND MARINERS SITE SURVEY OFFSHORE QATAR

(REVISED DATES)

In pursuant and under directives from the Department of Marine Regulations, Ministry of Transport and Communications, State of Qatar, this announcement is to inform that starting on the 10th of September 2018, Qatar Shell Service Company W.L.L. will commence a site survey measuring two by two kilometers on the following location for a duration of up to two weeks:



Map Coordinate Reference System: WGS84

Qatar Shell Service Company W.L.L. requests that all vessels keep well clear of the site. Fishermen are requested to remove their equipment and keep away from the area.

Vessels ignoring this announcement will be responsible for all liabilities arising out of their actions (including any damage to equipment and delay time).

Qatar Shell Service Company assumes no responsibility for damage or loss of equipment following this advertisement.

For more details contact
Tel: 44957777, Fax: 44957778

QRCS ready to support displaced people in northern Syria

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) is preparing an emergency response plan to support Syrian people in case of mass displacement in the northern parts of the country.

According to a report issued in August about the humanitarian impact of any military escalation, the United Nations estimates that around 900,000 civilians would be displaced over the coming six months, including 700,000 within Idlib alone, said a release.

Developed by QRCS's representative mission in Turkey, the plan involves a set of relief and medical interventions, guided by the overall relief plan adopted by UN agencies and other humanitarian providers in Syria.

Under the scheme, QRCS will secure makeshift shelter materials, pay for housing rentals in safe areas for three months, install more tents at existing shelter camps, and establish new camps in coordination with the UN Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster. A temporary reception centre will be created to serve up to 2,400 internally displaced people (IDPs) per day with shelter, protection, water and sanitation, food and nonfood aid, and medical care.

Also, an emergency catering hub will be opened to prepare and distribute daily meals and bread bundles at IDP congregation areas. In order to reduce the morbidity and mortality rates, QRCS will support the health facilities that offer emergency services and provide primary health care, particularly in maternal and child health, first aid, and referrals.

A field hospital will be operated to treat the patients at shelter centres, IDP congregations, and areas of military action. Moreover, three mobile medical clinics will be deployed to offer treatment and medication free of charge. To meet the increasing demand, ambulance vehicles and health facilities in target areas will be supplied with medical equipment and medicines. QRCS's mission in Turkey will be working closely with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as well as other NGOs such as the Turkish Red Crescent and the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency of Turkey (AFAD). Since November 2017, the military operations going on in southern Idlib and northern Hama countryside have caused a huge influx into neighbouring towns, making extra pressure on the already overpopulated and underserved region.

"Recent weeks have seen a further serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the north-west, with intense aerial bombardment and shelling reported in parts of Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia governorates," said John Ging, Director of Operations and Advocacy, OCHA.

EAA condemns attack near school in Afghanistan

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Education Above All (EAA) yesterday condemned the twin bomb attack in Afghanistan, near a girls' school, killing a small boy and injuring four others.

"Another attack on education, another innocent young life that has been lost to this horrific tragedy. Education Above All Foundation strongly condemns the latest double bombing that occurred outside Malika Omaira girls' school in Jalalabad," said Professor, Maleiha Malik, Executive Director of PEIC, a programme of Education Above All .

"The deliberate and continued targeting of students, teachers and educational institutions is an active attempt to destabilise Afghanistan, destroy its infrastructure, and weaken its ability to ever truly recover.

"In order to build a peaceful world, we must strengthen global governance and hold accountable all those who unleash violence against children and education," said Professor Malik. Education Above All advocate in the defence of education and education facilities, when they are most at risk.

Patients from siege countries treated at HMC & PHCC (June 5, 2017-August 4, 2018)

Overall patient visits of all HMC hospitals, PHCC, PEC, Dialysis Centers and Walk-in Centers

	Bahraini		Egyptian		Emirati		Saudi		Grand Total Visits	Grand Total Patients
	Total visits	Total patients	Total visits	Total patients	Total visits	Total patients	Total visits	Total Patients		
Outpatient	24,112	3,261	713,825	108,530	9,506	1,439	68,980	10,207	816,423	123,437
Emergency	5, 966	2,001	194,179	75,467	2,877	1,036	20,707	6,569	223,729	85,073
Inpatient	1,036	713	20,001	15,276	596	396	3,522	2,628	25,155	19,013
Daycase	1,025	161	13,326	4,432	174	74	2,162	386	16,687	5,053
Grand Total	32,139	6,136	941,331	203,705	13,153	2,945	95,371	19,790	1,081,994	232,576

All HMC Hospital visits (Includes HGH, Al Wakra, Heart Hospital, Rumailah, Al Khor, Cuban, Women's Hospital, Mental Health Hospital, NCCCR, CDC, ACC, QRI, WWRC, Home Healthcare Services)

	Bahraini		Egyptian		Emirati		Saudi		Grand Total Visits	Grand Total Patients
	Total visits	Total patients	Total visits	Total patients	Total visits	Total patients	Total visits	Total Patients		
Outpatient	8,452	1,425	258,221	48,525	3,800	700	23,020	4,391	293,493	55,041
Emergency	3,763	1,481	104,993	53,722	1,760	727	11,505	4,385	122,021	60,315
Inpatient	980	694	18,599	14,460	550	382	3,271	2,498	23,400	18,034
Daycase	854	157	10,257	4,420	161	74	997	373	12,269	5.024
Grand Total	14,049	3,757	392,070	121,127	6,271	1,883	38,793	11,647	451,183	138,414

All PHCC & Walk-in Center Visits	Bahraini		Egyptian		Emirati		Saudi		Grand Total Visits	Grand Total Patients
	Total visits	Total patients	Total visits	Total patients	Total visits	Total patients	Total visits	Total Patients		
Outpatient	15,186	2,900	438,168	88,641	5,527	1,232	45,004	9,029	503,885	101,802

All PEC visits	Bahraini		Egyptian		Emirati		Saudi		Grand Total Visits	Grand Total Patients
	Total visits	Total patients	Total visits	Total patients	Total visits	Total patients	Total visits	Total Patients		
Emergency	2,182	608	88,432	27,069	1,106	371	9,151	2,592	100,871	30,640

The Fire Station hosts public art talk with international artists

THE PENINSULA



The participants at the art talk at the Fire Station.

DOHA: As part of Qatar Museums' (QM) ongoing efforts to connect local and international artistic communities, the Fire Station hosted a public art talk with international artists Katharina Grosse and Andrea Zittel.

The duo delivered an informal presentation about their work and shared insights gathered from their respective artistic journeys.

Katharina Grosse is a contemporary German painter known for her brightly coloured acrylic paintings and installations. Made with an industrial air brush and mounds of pigmented dirt, her work attempts to create a bodily, psychedelic-like experience for the viewer, submerging them in a world of color and emotion. The works of Andrea Zittel encompass spaces, objects and modes of living in an ongoing investigation that explores the questions "How to live?" and "What gives life meaning?"

The talk was moderated by art expert and curator, Tom Eccles, who is also the Executive Director of the Center for Curatorial Studies and the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College. Eccles had previously hosted a number of QM-supported talks including one held last year with internationally renowned artist Ai Weiwei.

Khalifa Al Obaidly, Director at the Fire Station stated: "Qatar Museums is focused on turning Qatar into a vibrant centre for the arts, culture and education, and that includes exposing the local community to inspiring art works and thought-provoking conversations. We were pleased to host two artists of Katharina Grosse's and Andrea Zittel's caliber and are looking forward to another rich season of various art and culture activities in Qatar."

The Fire Station sits at the heart of Doha's thriving art community, acting as a platform where local talent can be introduced to their international peers and expand their artistic horizons. The Fire Station also provides a gallery space for exhibition and community interaction; while the public spaces host a café, restaurant, bookshop, art supply shop, a cinema and artist facilities.

Multiple sclerosis program at HGH caring for over 700 patients

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Emerging treatments are helping to prevent relapses and halt the progression of multiple sclerosis (MS) in most patients. However, the neurological condition remains one of the most misunderstood diseases, said an expert.

"MS is one of the most common disabling neurological conditions affecting young people, but it is also one of the most misunderstood. No two patients with MS experience the same symptoms or have the same journey. This makes understanding MS all the more difficult. It also highlights the significance of raising awareness of the condition and the importance of early diagnosis and treatment," said Professor Dirk Deleu, Director of HMC's MS Program.

The MS Program at Hamad General Hospital is currently caring for over 700 patients who have been diagnosed with the disease. Over the last four years, almost 45% of those diagnosed have been Qatari, with the majority of patients being women between the ages of 31 and 40. Professor Deleu says early diagnosis and treatment are critical to preventing relapses and may help delay or prevent irreversible damage.

"We are able to help many patients with MS effectively manage their symptoms and these patients are able to live full and active lives. However, early detection is the key to getting the disease under control. If symptoms are ignored or discounted and a person has several attacks, we may have lost the critical window for treatment," said Professor Deleu.

MS is a potentially disabling disease that affects the brain and spinal cord. The symptoms of MS can vary widely and depend on the amount of central nervous system tract damage and which tracts are affected.

Professor Deleu said the initial presenting symptoms often include blurred vision, numbness or loss of sensation, incontinence, weakness in the extremities, coordination problems, and double vision. The disease is more common in women than men and while it is not believed to be hereditary, family members have a slightly higher risk of developing the disease. Professor Deleu says MS is a very unpredictable disease that has both physical and emotional effects. He says researchers believe a combination of genetic and environmental factors contribute to the development of MS.

"The causes of MS are not well understood. There is no cure, but there are effective medications and therapies that modify the disease outcome. We are continuing to learn more about what causes MS and are zeroing in on ways to prevent it," said Professor Deleu.

Most patients with MS are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40, although it can occur in children as well as in older adults. Professor Deleu says MS can be difficult to diagnose because of the diversity of symptoms it causes and the multiple ways in which the symptoms present.

MS is rarely fatal, but it is a lifelong condition that requires careful monitoring and ongoing management. Professor Deleu explains that treatment plans are individualized and designed around the patient, depending on the type and stage of their disease.

Qatar promotes cultural exchanges with Russia at Moscow International Book Fair

QNA

DOHA: Qatar participated in the 31st edition of the Moscow International Book Fair and its participation was an opportunity to promote cultural exchanges and enhance cultural relations with the Russian Federation as well as celebrate the relevant ties through partnerships between the major Qatari and Russian cultural organisations.

The Qatari participation in the exhibition included a pavilion of the Ministry of Culture and Sports in cooperation with its partners: Qatar Museums, Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press, Rosa Publishing House and Lusail Publishing House. It was within the framework of the Qatar-Russia 2018 Year of Culture.

The Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Russian Federation, Fahad bin Mohammed Al Attiyah, said the State of Qatar is making great efforts to develop the publishing industry, and "we are pleased that the Qatari books are available in Russian language, which contributes to increasing cultural exchange between the two countries and achieving the main objective of the Qatar Russia 2018 Year of Culture".

The Qatari pavilion at the Moscow International Book Fair witnessed a public interaction with the events organized during its participation in the five-day exhibition, attracting visitors who confirmed that they contributed to their knowledge of aspects of the cultural landscape in Qatar.



Brookings discusses diversification issues

THE PENINSULA



The panellists discussing the challenges facing GCC countries to diversify economies.

DOHA: The Brookings Doha Center (BDC) hosted an event yesterday to discuss the challenges facing Qatar and other GCC countries to diversify their economies in an era of demand-driven energy markets. While these countries understand the importance of diversifying their economies and have taken steps towards diversification, the changes have been slow. The event discussed how GCC countries can kick start and accelerate their moribund economic transitions, as well as the economic and geopolitical consequences of abundant global oil supplies on the GCC.

Panellists included Hatem Al Shanfari, professor of economics and finance at Sultan Qabus University; Khalid Al Khater, researcher at the Institute for New Economic Thinking at the University of Cambridge; Nader Kabbani, director of research at the Brookings Doha Center; and Samantha Gross, fellow in the Cross-Brookings Initiative on Energy and Climate at the Brookings Institution.

The event was moderated by Tarik Yousef, director of the Brookings Doha Center and was attended by members of Doha's diplomatic, academic, and media communities Center and was held at the Intercontinental Hotel in Doha.

Tarik Yousef opened the discussion by saying that despite foreign policy differences, economic diversification is an important unified objective within the GCC. However, the recent Gulf rift has dealt economic diversification a significant political and economic block.

The event discussed how GCC countries can kick start and accelerate their moribund economic transitions, as well as the economic and geopolitical consequences of abundant global oil supplies on the GCC.

Yousef stated, "One of the achievements of the GCC was to bring about economic integration beyond oil and gas and to bring about economic diversification. The blockade has hurt this aim." Samantha Gross talked about the difficulties of economic diversification in the GCC, saying, "Economic diversification in the Middle East is a real challenge, because the oil and gas industry is so productive, and it throws off so much income that it becomes difficult for other industries to compete with that."

Khalid Al Khater discussed what the GCC countries have done to meet the goals of diversification, saying, "We must reform private and public sectors to create an incentive for human capital-building."

Al Khater focused on the various sectors that need to be addressed, including youth unemployment, public sector employment, migrant workers, labor market, and the pressure this puts on infrastructure and building human capital.

Hatem Al Shanfari discussed better management of water and renewable energy sources, saying that water is a scarce source and there are many opportunities in this.

He said, "There are many opportunities that can be created within the oil and gas industry. To help the country and the oil and gas sector, we need to better link up to the global supply chain."

Nader Kabbani discussed the issue of peak demand, saying, "We might soon see structural shifts in the energy sectors. Renewable energy sector is moving faster than natural gas. Big changes in how energy is stored will have huge impacts on the energy sector."

AAB supports HMC with second blood donation campaign

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Abdullah Abdulghani & Bros. Co. W.L.L. (AAB), the exclusive distributor of Toyota and Lexus in Qatar, carries on its commitment to promote the spirit of voluntary blood donation in support of Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) by conducting the second Blood Donation Campaign for this year.

A good turnout of volunteers marked the Campaign successful with a significant contribution to the Blood Bank as a result of a good number of volunteers and accepted donors coming from the various business units at the Industrial Area and the Al Abdulghani Tower, said a statement.

All volunteers underwent the mandatory screening conducted by the HMC Staff before reaching the actual number of accepted donors.

R K Murugan, Acting CEO, Rami Fani, Acting HR Director & Administration Manager and Muthusamy — Senior Manager, National Service welcomed the medical team from HMC on behalf of AAB.

AAB is dedicated in reaching out to the community and holding the Blood Donation Campaign annually manifests this commitment.



AAB management team with the representatives and medical team from HMC.



The participants at the Best Buddies awareness workshop.

Best Buddies Qatar and Ooredoo hold awareness workshop on disability

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: As part of the mutual partnership between Best Buddies Qatar and Ooredoo, an awareness workshop was held about how to help and support people with a disability.

The event, which was presented by Sahar Al Kahlout and Abdullah Al Mimi from Best Buddies which was held in Ooredoo Tower and was part of Best Buddies community awareness programme.

The workshop included a number of main points, most prominent of which was about intellectual and developmental disability definition and categories, causes of disability, examples of most common disabilities; characteristics and symptoms and finally, tips on how to help persons with disabilities.

The workshop aimed to raise the community awareness level about disability causes, the rights of persons with disability and to spread the culture of disability.

The workshop had a great attendance from Ooredoo staff, who were interacting actively during the workshop. Best Buddies has stated Ooredoo employee inquiries and questions during the workshop emphasized the community need for more awareness about disability and its causes in light of the many current misconceptions about it.

The executive director of Best Buddies Qatar, Laalei Abu-Alfain commented that the initiative is highly keen to approach all community categories "The initiative is seeking to spread the culture of disability in the community and to raise awareness of persons with disability, their needs, abilities and capabilities as active members in society. Moreover, raising awareness about how to deal with them through organising a number of awareness workshops, trainings and presentations which are based on a comprehensive training plan developed on the society needs analysis. Through this training plan, the initiative can achieve its mission and vision."

"The initiative is putting all efforts possible to introduce to society members the essential role for persons with disability. Hence, all potentials must be accommodated to include them fully in all different daily life aspects.

This is to accomplish the Qatar National Vision 2030 which aims to empower persons with disability and to increase their participation in society and find new working fields through which obstacles can be removed to help them contribute to productivity and creativity, "Laalei Abu Alfain added. Manar Khalifa Almuraikhi, Director of PR and Corporate Communications, Ooredoo Qatar, said: "Ooredoo is keen to partner with various leading institutions in Qatar in order to support and to enhance the work of charities across the country.

We needed to host Best Buddies to ensure our staff knew more about the importance of including persons with disability and to help them to be active members in society. Ooredoo is an active employer of persons with disability and we encourage other companies in Qatar to speak to Best Buddies and host a workshop in your business."

Best Buddies Qatar has thanked all stakeholders in Ooredoo for the unlimited support they provide to Best Buddies Qatar and for the precious opportunity to communicate with staff through this workshop, which will be followed with various other workshops in the future.

Best Buddies has invited other entities in Qatar to communicate with Best Buddies Qatar for the best advantage for persons with disability.

Qatar Biobank hits 15,000-participant milestone

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Biobank, a member of Qatar Foundation (QF), recently marked a major milestone with the screening of its 15,000th participant, as part of its medical health research initiative to improve the health of the local population through personalized medicine.

Through providing biological samples and information, volunteer participants help Qatar Biobank enable medical researchers and healthcare professionals to form a clearer picture of the prevalent health-related issues in Qatar and the region.

Dr Asmaa Al Thani, Chairperson of the Qatar Genome Programme Committee and Board Vice Chairperson of Qatar Biobank, said, "We are delighted to celebrate the screening of our 15,000th participant — a milestone that represents the local population's eagerness to contribute to their improved health. Qatar Biobank is an important initiative that will play a pivotal role in contributing to a healthier local population for generations to come."

Researchers at the Qatar Genome Programme (QGP), another member of QF, are already using Qatar Biobank's samples to gain important insights into the health of the local population, including the prevalence of diabetes, obesity, and vitamin D deficiency.

Dr Nahla Maher Afifi, Education and Scientific Manager and Acting Director of Qatar Biobank, said, "Qatar Biobank serves as a large-scale biomedical research initiative that is based on population in the Arab world, thus ensuring far more accurate and effective targeted medical treatments. We encourage the people of Qatar who are eligible and have not yet been screened to participate in this vital initiative – the success of which is dependent on large-scale participation by the local population, particularly Qatari youth."

A regular visit to the Qatar Biobank includes standard medical tests such as blood pressure and lung function. However, the tests carried out also include new screenings that are not included in other large-scale biobanks, including advanced imaging techniques to measure whole-body composition and the health of carotid arteries, and a treadmill test to measure physical fitness.

Qatar Biobank welcomes Qataris over the age of 18 and adult expatriates who have lived in Qatar for at least 15 years to take part in this pioneering medical research endeavor.

All participants receive feedback in approximately two weeks after their initial visit, however, Qatar Biobank immediately notifies participants who are found to have serious or life-threatening conditions.



OshKosh B'gosh opens store

A new OshKosh B'gosh store was inaugurated on September 6 at Landmark Mall. The ribbon was cut by Walid Khoury, Landmark Mall Manager, in the presence of Ramesh Bulchandani, General Manager LTC – Qatar. The OshKosh brands are most-recognised brands of baby and children's apparel in the world.

MEC recalls Dodge Ram 2015 model

DOHA: The Ministry of Economy and Commerce, in collaboration with United Cars Almana, dealer of Jeep vehicles in Qatar, has announced the recall of Dodge Ram model of 2015 because the transmission is not compatible with the manufacturer specifications. The Ministry said the recall campaign comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers and ensure that car dealers follow up on vehicle defects and repairs. It said that it will coordinate with the dealer to follow up on the maintenance and repair works and will communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out

CIS to participate in Doha International Book Fair

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Highlighting its commitment to the furtherance of a vibrant literary Islamic culture in Qatar, Muhammad Bin Hamad Al Thani Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilisation (CMCC), part of Hamad Bin Khalifa University's (HBKU) College of Islamic Studies (CIS), is set to participate at the 29th edition of the Doha International Book Fair this year.

The centre's exhibit marks the University's 5th participation and underlines its positive stance towards providing access to unique scholarly publications, translated from Arabic to English, in line with its directive for the creation of a solid knowledge-based economy. The book fair, which will take place from November 29 to December 5 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC), is expected to attract hundreds of reputable publishing houses from nearly 30 countries.

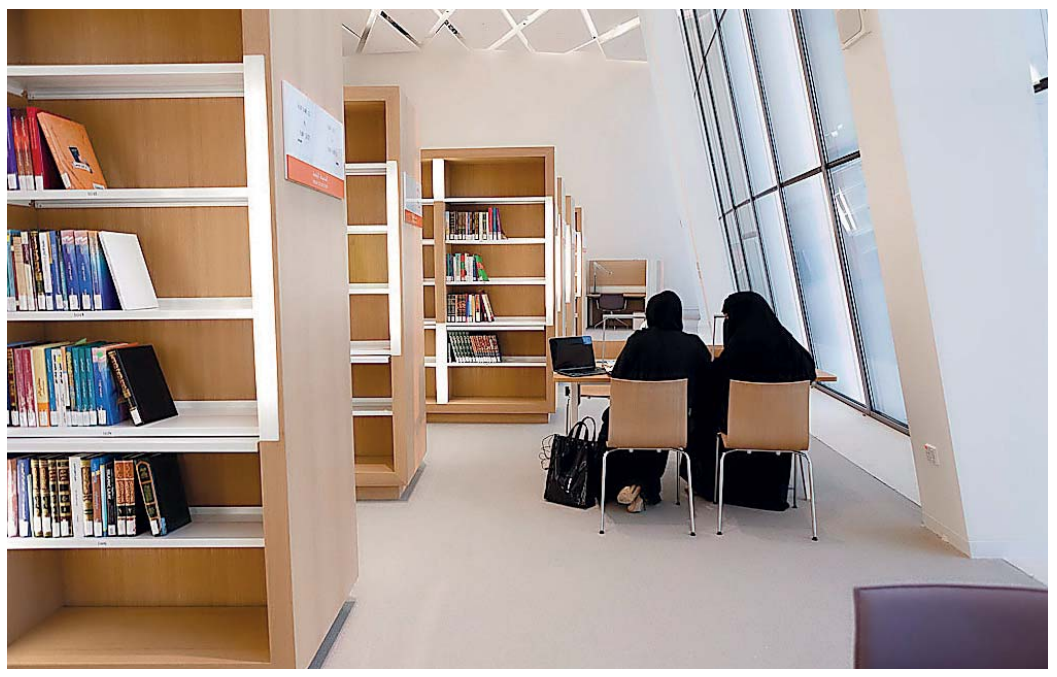
The centre's exhibit marks the University's 5th participation and underlines its positive stance towards providing access to unique scholarly publications, translated from Arabic to English, in line with its directive for the creation of a solid knowledge-based economy.

As HBKU's oldest college, CIS has already established a long-standing tradition of contributing to rich scholarly discourse within the community.

Director of CMCC, Dr Aisha Yousef Al Mannai, said, "Throughout their academic journey, students are bound to experience transformational development as they immerse themselves in the scholarly exploration of narrative. In their essence, books serve as a gateway for a world of thought and knowledge exchange, establishing them as crucial components of any researcher's toolkit.

"Together, we aim to conquer the unknown and promote the acquisition of knowledge through the spread of the written word. In the end, literature can eradicate barriers to correct understanding, culture, geography and even language. Particularly within Qatar's diverse community, this inclusive approach can serve to disseminate information to all members of the public."

Taking its commitment to the distribution of publications even further, HBKU is also home to a pioneering in-house publishing house — HBKU Press. As such, CIS' proactive exhibit fosters an interactive exchange between the college's research outputs and the wider community, who gain valuable insights into the academic feats in the realm of scientific discovery and innovation for Qatar.



Muhammad Bin Hamad Al Thani Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilization, part of HBKU's College of Islamic Studies, will make a wide selection of classical texts on various disciplines exclusively available to the local community at this year's upcoming book fair.

QC launches campaign to support school drop-outs

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Charity (QC) has launched a campaign to support school drop-outs and create educational opportunity for other children as it is one of their basic rights .

The campaign "Bring me Back to School" coincided with the start of the new school year, aiming to meet the school needs and expenses of the children, especially primary school students belonging to poor, needy and low-income families, said a release.

The campaign has targeted 3,000 students in the first stage. School fees and transportation, bag, stationery and book expenses will be covered for 1,500 students for a whole year.

"Bring me Back to School" campaign, which will continue until the end of the school year, focuses on raising funds to pay the tuition fees of the children from poor and low-income families. The education cost of 1,500 children for a whole academic year is intended as a first stage.

Qatar Charity has urged people in Qatar to support this campaign and make donations to pay for children's educational materials such as student books, uniforms, footwear, school fees and other school supplies.



Donors can contribute to the campaign by visiting in person the headquarters of Qatar Charity its branches and collection points located in commercial complexes across the country.

31 slaughtered animals found unfit for human consumption

DOHA: The Health Monitoring Unit at Al Rayyan Municipality destroyed 31 slaughtered animals after finding them unfit for human consumption last month.

The teams of the inspectors, accompanied by veterinary doctors, inspected a total of 5,100 animals at the abattoirs operating across Al Rayyan Municipality in August, said the Ministry of Municipality and Environment. The inspectors made 476 inspection visits to commercial outlets and carried 41 inspections required for the issuance of new commercial licenses. Two violations were caught according to some provisions of the Law No. 8 of 1990.



The inspectors from Al Rayyan Municipality inspecting an eatery in Al Rayyan area.

The inspectors made three reconciliations with the erring company. Al Rayyan Municipality collected a fine worth QR22,500.

New faculty and courses at NU-Q

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: As Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) celebrates its 10th anniversary and welcomes its largest class — it is also announcing two new faculty appointments and new programmes.

The University, which is now home to more than 300 students, is offering new courses in literature and writing, as well as executive education programming, the launch of a Media Innovation Lab (MIL), and plans to open the first digital university museum in Qatar — The Media Majlis at Northwestern University in Qatar.

"NU-Q has seen many successes in its 10 years in Doha," said Everette E Dennis, Dean and CEO. "We are looking forward to building on that success with our new academic programming and faculty — along with a growing student body."

The two new faculty members are Dr. Jairo Lugo-Ocando and Dr. James Hodapp, respectively professor and assistant professor in the school, both with extensive international experience and expertise in their respective fields—media studies and English and African literature.

Overseeing the executive and graduate education program will be Jario Lugo-Ocando, a distinguished scholar, global media expert, and institutional leader.

As the director of the programme he will be responsible for the conceptualisation, development, and execution of NU-Q's forthcoming executive education and graduate programmes in areas that include sport and health communication.

Prior to his appointment at NU-Q, Lugo-Ocando was an associate professor of journalism studies at the University of Leeds's School of Media and Communication and has served as director of the MA programme in Global Journalism at the University of Sheffield. Before entering academe, Lugo-Ocando was a journalist and editor-in-chief of Venezuela's Dairio La Verdad.



Dr Jairo Lugo-Ocando



Dr James Hodapp

Lugo-Ocando received his PhD from the University of Sussex and his MA from Lancaster University in media studies and international relations.

Also joining NU-Q this year is James Hodapp, who has been appointed assistant professor in the Liberal Arts Program. Hodapp, who will teach courses in literature and writing, joins NU-Q from the American University of Beirut (AUB) where he was an assistant professor of English.

Prior to AUB, he was an instructor and lecturer at the University of Maryland and has teaching experience at Harold Washington College and Wilbur Wright College, both in Chicago. He also has two edited books under review and several research articles in the works.

Hodapp earned his PhD in English from the University of Maryland, his MA in humanities from the University of Chicago, and his bachelor's degree in literature from the American University in Washington D.C.

"Professors Lugo-Ocando and Hodapp bring a level of considerable experience in teaching and leadership to NU-Q," said Dennis. "Professor Lugo-Ocando's extensive experience in administering journalism programs at top media schools across Britain will help NU-Q lay the foundations for a vibrant executive education program. Professor Hodapp's scholarship and teaching experience in both the US and the Middle East will enhance our writing and literature course offerings."

NU-Q's academic curriculum has continuously expanded since its founding in 2008 and with its new state-of-the-art facilities now provides its students with opportunities to engage in immersive and hands-on learning experiences.

Since moving to its new building, the school has developed programming to take advantage of the what is one of the largest media communication schools in the world, the new lab – MIL – offers students, faculty, and staff the space and technology to collaborate in the development of innovative ideas and solutions to challenges in the media world.

The Media Majlis at NU-Q, which will open later this year, will serve as a platform for active learning, research, and intellectual discovery.

Free Vehicle Recall

وزارة الاقتصاد والتجارة
Ministry of Economy and Commerce



Dodge RAM

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EAA's moving exhibition showcases barriers to education

THE PENINSULA

The exhibit marks the achievement of securing commitments to enrol 10 million out of school children in 50 countries around the world. The exhibition is taking place in the departure's terminal Concourse C, at Hamad International Airport until September 23.



EAA's moving exhibition at HIA attracts passengers.

DOHA: Education Above All (EAA) Foundation's (EAA) moving exhibition 'Reaching 10 Million Out of School Children' has landed at Hamad International Airport (HIA).

The exhibit marks the achievement of securing commitments to enrol 10 million-out-of-school children in 50 countries around the world. The exhibition is taking place in the departure's terminal Concourse C, at Hamad International Airport (HIA) until September 23.

The exhibit previously held at Qatar Academy and the W Hotel Doha, showcases the barriers to education that more than 63 million children around the world face, and highlights the work EAA and its partners are doing to overcome these barriers.

Leena Al Derham, Senior Education Specialist of Educate A Child (EAC) programme, said, "Bringing this exhibition to Hamad International Airport, a leading, global transportation hub, helps us to reach and engage with people from different walks of life simultaneously. Everyone has a role to play in the global education crisis, and we want the millions of passengers passing through the airport during this time, to help us raise awareness, learn about the different barriers to education the world's children are facing and become advocates for the protection of education during times of conflict and insecurity."

The latest instalment of the exhibition focuses on the support for refugee and displaced children. The world today is confronted with a refugee crisis, with 68.5 million people having been forcibly displaced from home. Since EAA was founded in 2012, it has committed to enrolling more than 1.9 million out of school children and refugee and internally displaced people (IDP) children in 18 countries, partnering with UNHCR, Unicef, UNRWA, Unesco, IRC, NRC, and Save the Children.

The exhibition allows visitors to experience the journey of refugee children, highlighting the significant challenges they face on route and when accessing quality primary education after being uprooted from their homes, families, friends and communities.

Al Derham said, "The work of EAC has shown that change is possible on a large scale. We will change the lives of 10 million children; we have already changed the lives of more than 6.8 million, including 1.3 million refugees and IDPs.... Even though this a huge achievement, the work is not finished. With more than 63 million children still out of school, there is a responsibility on all of us to ensure every child has access to quality primary education, we can all make a difference in our own way."

Abdulaziz Al Mass, Vice-President Commercial & Marketing at HIA, said, "We are proud to partner with EAA to host the 'Reaching 10 Million Out of School Children' travelling exhibition at the airport. With an average of 8,700 passengers per hour passing through HIA, the airport is a prime platform for engaging local and international communities and encouraging them to actively learn more about this program. We all hold a responsibility to raise awareness around the valuable work and outreach for young children struggling to access primary education."

Transmission patterns of HSV-1 changing in Asia

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Researchers at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q) found that transmission patterns of herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1) are changing in Asia in a striking way, and that this virus is emerging as a key sexually transmitted infection.

According to findings published in the high impact and prestigious Journal of Clinical Infectious Diseases, 20 percent of genital herpes cases and six percent of genital ulcer cases are now caused by HSV-1.

HSV-1 is one of the most widespread infections globally. It is normally transmitted orally leading to blisters and lesions around the mouth known as oral herpes. Recent data from the United States and Western Europe, however, showed that HSV-1 can also be transmitted sexually leading to genital herpes and genital ulcer disease.

However, the study, conducted by the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Group (IDEG) at WCM-Q, demonstrated that this is also the case in Asia. The study found that although HSV-1 remains mostly orally transmitted, the virus is increasingly being transmitted sexually.

The study, which provided a comprehensive characterization of HSV-1 infection patterns in Asian countries, also estimated that about 50 percent of children are infected with the virus, all of whom are infected orally, and that 75 percent of adults are infected with the virus, through both the oral and genital routes.



Professor Laith Abu-Raddad (second left) and his team during a discussion.

"It was striking for us to discover this shift in HSV-1 transmission patterns from oral to genital infection in Asia," said Manale Harfouche, joint first author of the study and senior research specialist at WCM-Q.

Laith Abu-Raddad, Principal investigator of the study and professor of healthcare policy and research at WCM-Q, concluded: "These findings demonstrate the criticality of accelerating HSV-1 vaccine development to control transmission and to prevent the medical and psychosocial disease burden that is emerging from this infection."

Turkish Souq targets 5 million products in 2019

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"We are among the top five in the world in terms of quality of services, such EMS or the regular mail services. We have also been certified with three ISO certifications for our integrated management system," said Al Naeimi.

Q-Post is also working on a lot of other projects which are currently in the pipeline, such as its self-service kiosks, which is to be rolled out within months across the country.

Asked about the survival of the classic postal services in this digital era, he said that such services will continue as everybody will receive parcels and letters but the volume of letters will be replaced by parcels (of goods) "which is growing incredibly".

"Thanks to the digital and e-commerce arena in which we live. All the postal companies have no choice but to reform and transform the way we do business as per the fast changing equation," said Al Naeimi.

On the possibility of introducing new technology such as drones for the door-to-door delivery of parcels, he said that Q-Post has carried out a successful pilot project in this regard a couple of years ago.

"We did a trial with 5kg and 10kg parcels, which worked successfully with 4G networks. Now we have 5G networks in Qatar so it will work more efficiently. We have already approved the concept and waiting for the needful legislation which will allow such services to be operational at full scale," said Al Naeimi.

Silatech provides one million jobs in 16 countries

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

He said that Silatech was working closely with its partners from governments, non-governmental organisations or multilateral and bilateral organisations in order to mobilise co-financing for the implementation of large-scale employment programmes.

Salitech has provided nearly one million jobs for needy youth in more than 16 countries.

He also presented the experience of Silatech in designing and developing innovative youth employment programmes in line with the goals of sustainable development, and providing innovative technological solutions to help young people who need support to establish their own businesses.

Al Emadi also noted that Silatech is working on developing a system to be launched in 2019. He expects this platform will achieve success and a wide impact that will enable it to spread globally. Silatech was formally launched at the Alliance of Civilisations Forum in January 2008 by H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

Silatech's mission is to connect Arab young people with employment and enterprise opportunities.

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5. Should be able to achieve monthly or annual targets
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7. Reviewing sales performance, devising and presenting ideas, strategies and promotional activities
8. Excellent communication and presentation skills (telephone, written and face to face)
9. Working experience in a marketing agency / media environment and understanding of and passion for media industry.
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IHG opens new Crowne Plaza in West Bay

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: IHG (InterContinental Hotels Group), one of the world's leading hotel companies, yesterday announced the opening of Crowne Plaza Doha West Bay, in partnership with Tanmiyat Real Estate.

The 317-room hotel adds to the increasing number of IHG hotels in Qatar and is in line with company's strategy to grow the Crowne Plaza brand across the region.

Strategically located in the prestigious West Bay region, Crowne Plaza Doha West Bay provides guests with an easy access to Qatar's financial, shopping and diplomatic districts as well as offers impressive views of the city's skyline.

The modern and stylish hotel is within 20km of Hamad International Airport and just 15 minutes away from one of Doha's main attractions such as Souk Wakif and the Museum of Islamic Art.



Crowne Plaza Doha West Bay is an ideal choice for business guests with six meeting rooms and conference facilities, including the Al Hala Ballroom with a capacity to accommodate up to 400 guests for a standing reception and 250 theatre style. Catering to guests travelling for leisure, the hotel also features an outdoor pool and a state-of-the-art gym for those who want to maintain their fitness routine while travelling. Guests can embark on a culinary journey with an array of premium dining options, including celebrity chef Sanjeev Kapoor's restaurant 'Signature', which serves contemporary Indian cuisine. There is also the option to enjoy food in the comfort of your own room with in-room dining.

At the end of a busy day, guests can unwind and rest easier with Crowne's Plaza's Sleep Advantage programme, which includes premium bedding, aromatherapy, and quiet zone floors to ensure a productive day ahead.

Pascal Gauvin, Managing Director, India, Middle East & Africa, IHG said: "We are delighted to announce the opening of Crowne Plaza Doha West Bay in partnership with the esteemed developer Tanmiyat Real Estate Investment Company Qatar."

"The latest addition to our portfolio underscores our expansion plans in MENA as well as strengthen our offering to domestic and international guests visiting Qatar. With a great location and best in class service and amenities, we are confident that Crowne Plaza Doha West Bay will see great success."

Dr. Braik Bin Samikh, Chairman of Tanmiyat Real Estate, said: "We are proud to partner with a strong global player such as IHG. Renowned as a business travel destination, Doha has also emerged in recent years as a developing leisure tourism destination and we are confident that Crowne Plaza Doha West Bay will be well received by international and domestic, business and leisure guests, alike."

Erdogan urges global community to avert Idlib assault

ANATOLIA

WASHINGTON: Turkey's President urged the international community to be aware of its responsibilities in Syria as an assault on Idlib looms.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan evaluated the latest developments in northwestern Idlib province and Turkey's position on the matter in an article he wrote for the US daily The Wall Street Journal.

"All members of the international community must understand their responsibilities as the assault on Idlib looms. The consequences of inaction are immense," Erdogan said in the article titled 'The World Must Stop Assad'.

Erdogan also said the Syrian people could not be left to the mercy of the Bashar Al Assad regime.

"A regime assault [in Idlib] would also create serious humanitarian and security risks for Turkey, the rest of Europe and beyond," he added.

He recalled the regime's criminal acts — arbitrary arrests, systematic torture, summary executions, barrel bombs, chemical and conventional weapons — which targeted the Syrian people for seven years.

"All members of the international community must understand their responsibilities as the assault on Idlib looms. The consequences of inaction are immense," Erdogan said in the article titled 'The World Must Stop Assad'.

"As a result of the Syrian civil war, which the United Nations Human Rights Council calls 'the worst man-made disaster since World War II', millions of innocent people have become refugees or have been internally displaced," he said.

He also recalled Turkey's role in protecting the Syrian people, as it hosts the largest number of refugees in the world, at 3.5 million.

Erdogan said despite being the target of terror groups Daesh and the PKK, Turkey did not lose its resolve to help Syrians.

"We have brought the Syrian opposition to the negotiating table in Geneva and launched the Astana process alongside Russia and Iran," he said, adding Turkey consequently managed "to broker ceasefires, create de-escalation zones and evacuate civilians from areas under regime attack".

Erdogan warned that the Assad regime was preparing to launch "a massive offensive against Idlib" where some 3 million people live and is one of the few safe havens for internally displaced Syrians.

"In an attempt to prevent the assault, my government contributed to the creation of a deconfliction zone and set up 12 observation posts to document and report ceasefire violations," he said.

Stating that the Syrian regime was trying to legitimize its possible attack on the pretext of counterterrorism, Erdogan said no country would appreciate the need to combat terrorism better than Turkey, as it has been the target of terrorist attacks since the beginning of the Syrian conflict. Erdogan said the US, which is focused on chemical attacks by the Assad regime, needed to "reject its arbitrary hierarchy of death".



President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan (left), with Iran's religious leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei after the trilateral summit between Turkey, Iran and Russia in Tehran.

IS militants slay 21 Syrian regime fighters in ambush

AFP

BEIRUT: Islamic State militants have killed 21 Syrian regime fighters in an ambush as the group faces separate assaults on its last desert strongholds, a war monitor said yesterday.

The attack late on Monday in Syria's southern province of Sweida came as US-backed forces advanced against the militants on the border with Iraq, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

It also comes with President Bashar Al Assad's forces poised to launch an attack on the northwestern province of Idlib, the last major region in Syria still controlled by rebels and militants.

The IS ambush in Sweida's volcanic plateau of Tulul Al Safa sparked fighting that killed eight militants, the Britain-based Observatory said.

State news agency SANA reported heavy clashes with IS in the area, which lies some 100km (60 miles) southeast of Damascus, adding that government aircraft and artillery "targeted hideouts and positions" held by the group.

Government forces have been fighting IS in Sweida since militants carried out a wave of attacks in the mainly Druze province on July 25, killing 250 people according to the Observatory. During their rampage, which targeted the provincial capital as well as rural areas, the militants also seized around 30 hostages, mostly women and their children. At least 27 are believed to still be held, according to Human Rights Watch, after IS said it had beheaded a 19-year-old man and announced an elderly woman had died.

Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said the hostages were believed to be held captive in the Tulul Al Safa area.

A source in Sweida said that families had had no word of their kidnapped relatives in weeks.

IS has lost nearly all of the great swathes of territory straddling Iraq and Syria which it seized in 2014, but retains a presence in the vast Badiya desert that lies between Damascus and the Iraqi border, and holds a pocket in the Euphrates Valley in the east.

In that eastern pocket, a US-backed Kurdish-Arab alliance has for months been closing in on the town of Hajin east of the Euphrates River near the Iraqi border, and on Monday launched an assault to retake it.

Iran calls on Iraq to hand over rebels

AFP

TEHRAN: Iran's armed forces chief of staff called yesterday for the authorities in Iraq and its Kurdish region to "expel" Iranian-Kurdish rebels on their territory, local media reported.

"These people are criminals. (The Iraqi authorities) must either hand over the rest of them or must expel them from their country," Major-General Mohammad Bagheri told the semi-official ISNA news agency.

Iran launched missile strikes against the headquarters of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region on Saturday, killing at least 15 members.

It said the strikes were a retaliation for repeated cross-border incursions by the "terrorist" group.

Bagheri said Kurdish leaders in Iraq had given assurances in the past that it would rein in the KDPI and other anti-Iran militants.

"But since last year, provoked by America, they broke this pledge," he told ISNA.

"If such hazardous incidents continue, the incident that happened to their commanders will happen again," he added in reference to Saturday's strikes.

The PDKI is Iran's oldest Kurdish separatist group. It was banned after the Islamic revolution of 1979 and appears to have resumed operations in 2016 after a long truce.



Palestinian women hold aid during a protest against a US decision to cut funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), outside an aid distribution centre, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Saad Hariri seeks justice for slain father at trial

AFP

LEIDSCHENDAM, NETHERLANDS: Lebanon's incoming prime minister called for "justice" as a UN-backed tribunal into the huge bombing that killed his father Rafiq Hariri in 2005 entered its last stage.

Saad Hariri was in court in The Netherlands as closing arguments began in the trial in absentia of four Hezbollah suspects over the attack.

Prosecutors said the suicide bomb, which also killed 21 other people and wounded 226, was a deliberate attempt to create "horror" and that billionaire former premier Rafiq Hariri was assassinated because he opposed Syrian control of Lebanon.

"There is no doubt that this day is difficult for me, as the son of Rafiq Hariri," Saad Hariri told reporters outside the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in Leidschendam, a suburb of The Hague.

"From the start, we demanded justice because we believe that justice and the truth protect Lebanon," added Hariri, recently designated for a third term as prime minister.

The tribunal is unique in international justice because it is trying the four suspects despite the fact that they are not present, as Hezbollah has refused to hand them over.

They have been on trial since 2014 accused of core roles in the Valentine's Day attack on Beirut's waterfront targeting Hariri, Lebanon's Sunni Muslim prime minister until his resignation in October 2004.

The alleged mastermind, Hezbollah commander Mustafa Badreddine, was indicted by the court but is now believed to have died while fighting with the Syrian regime in May 2016.

Palestinians renew ICC push against Israel

AFP

RAMALLAH: The Palestinians announced a fresh push against Israel at the International Criminal Court yesterday, a day after the United States said it was closing their Washington mission partly over the campaign.

Saeb Erekat, Secretary-General of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), said it had submitted a new complaint over an Israeli "war crime" against a Palestinian village in the occupied West Bank, expected to be demolished by the Israeli army in the coming days. The dossier "included a focus on the war crimes facing Khan Al Ahmar, specifically the crimes of forcible displacement, ethnic cleansing and the destruction of civilian property," Erekat said.

He added that the PLO had also asked the ICC's prosecutor to speed up a preliminary probe into other alleged Israeli war crimes. Khan Al Ahmar is in a key location near Jerusalem.

International powers say its demolition could enable Israeli settlement expansion that would eventually cut the West Bank in two, further threatening the prospects of an independent Palestinian state. It could be demolished in the coming days, following an Israeli high court ruling that it was built without the necessary permits.

The Palestinians submitted a similar complaint regarding the village in July.

The latest submission came a day after the US confirmed it would close the PLO's office in Washington, the highest Palestinian representation in the country, amid worsening relations between the two.

The White House cited the Palestinians' ICC campaign and what it said was their unwillingness to negotiate. Trump's administration has also cut more than $500m in aid to Palestinians.

Iraqi seeks release after long detention

AP

MINNEAPOLIS: An Iraqi man who is accused of hiding his past as a member of an elite Iraqi military force is asking a federal judge in Minnesota to release him after 16 months in immigration custody.

Attorneys for 34-year-old Farass Adnan Ali are challenging what they call his "unreasonable, prolonged" pre-deportation detention, which has included seven months of solitary confinement. But the Star Tribune reports that court documents show Ali's immigration case also intersects with an FBI counterterrorism investigation.

Ali, of Rochester, has been held since his arrest in May 2017, after he allegedly lied to the FBI about his social media activity, which included use of Facebook and an app called Viber.

An FBI agent wrote in court documents that Ali's Viber contacts included a Fallujah native who is allegedly linked to an insurgent cell behind attacks on Iraqi and coalition forces. Ali's Facebook account includes an image of Islamic State militants entering a Libyan city in 2015.

Ali hasn't been publicly charged. His attorneys say the government hasn't publicly invoked any national security statutes that would justify his prolonged detention. Ali came to the US in 2014 as a refugee from Turkey. He became a lawful permanent resident in July 2015.

A federal immigration judge has refused to release Ali on bond, finding that he failed to show that he didn't pose a danger. Ali's attorneys say that unless a US District Court judge intervenes, he could be held at least another year.

"This is somebody who's never committed a crime in America, he entered as a refugee, he's got a green card and the United States is holding him for no really good reason," said Ian Bratlie, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union in Minnesota.

The Peninsula
Local focus, Global vision

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EDITORIAL

Growing fast

Qatar is growing fastest in the region irrespective of the unjust siege imposed on it by some countries. It's reflected in every sphere of life when one looks at the various data coming out each month. Also, Qatar's existing relationships around the world have continued to flourish, while new markets and opportunities are constantly being identified.

Qatar's growth story is well-showcased in the development of various sectors and institutions. One such example is that of the Hamad Port. The Port has achieved yet another milestone in the pursuit to support the growth story of the country.

The Port has registered a stellar performance in the first half of the year. The Port has received 803 ships in the first six months of the current year and handled 644,824 Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) containers in January-June period, while handled 631,076 break-bulk cargo in the same period. It handled 132,325 bulk cargo; 341,793 heads of cattle and 32,084 units of vehicles in the first six months of this year.

The growth story is showing positive signs each passing month. It had received 936 ships during January to July period. The Port, which is one of the largest ports in the region, received 128 ships in August, taking the total count of ships called at the port to 1,064 so far this year.

Qatar's growth story is well-showcased in the development of various sectors and institutions. One such example is that of the Hamad Port. The Port has achieved yet another milestone in the pursuit to support the growth story of the country.

The Port witnessed increased traffic in various segments in August. The bulk cargo category saw the highest increase as it handled 31,392 tonnes bulk cargo in August compared to 8,005 tonnes such cargo in July, showing a whopping rise of 292 percent. The Port handled 63,858 tonnes of break bulk cargo in August compared to 61,280 tonnes of cargo in the previous month, reflecting a rise of four percent. The Port also handled 112,749 TEU containers last month. It also handled 10,946 heads of cattle and 4,929 vehicles in August.

Since it commenced its operations in December 2016, Hamad Port has modernised the way Qatar handles imports and exports and has helped in facilitating the growth and diversification of the country's economy. Within a short span, the port has reached a global port connectivity coverage with 40 ports in three continents. The port has seen tremendous growth in a short duration and is further cementing Qatar's position as a regional maritime hub.

Generally, ports in Qatar have played significant role in defeating the unjust siege imposed by blockading countries by ensuring smooth supply of goods for residents of Qatar. In 2017, the ports in Qatar handled 1.26 million tonnes of general cargo, 772,835 TEUs containers, 857,429 cattle heads and 578,654 tonnes of aggregates and 3,869 vessels.

All these developments show vigour and vitality of the economy of the country under the able and wise leadership.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



The European dream cannot be crushed between the destructive neoliberalism and the horrible far-right and the European elections will be more than just one more election.

Alexis Tsipras
Greek Prime Minister

9/11 is still hurting us



JOE SCARBOROUGH
THE WASHINGTON POST



US Vice-President Mike Pence and Karen Pence lay a wreath during a ceremony at the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial to mark the 17th anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks, in Arlington, Virginia.

Cataclysmic events often bring with them violent and abrupt endings to settled ages and long- established norms. Those absorbing the impact of these historical aftershocks rarely grasp the epochal changes in real time.

Who could have imagined during their commute home on the night of November 21, 1963, that an event in Dallas the next day would shake the postwar order guaranteed by America's victory in World War II? Even after Lee Harvey Oswald's shots rang out from the Texas School Book Depository, could anyone have foreseen the collapse of such an ordered age soon overtaken by the anarchy of Vietnam, the murders of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy, the race riots, Chicago, Kent State, Watergate, postindustrial rot and the cultural chaos set loose across the country by these events?

And could even the most insightful observer have foreseen — while staring at the billowing smoke set against New York's brilliant September sky — the avalanche of strategic blunders set in motion by Osama bin Laden's attack on the United States?

Of course not. But two wars, three presidents and 17 years later, the tragic lessons of that time are still lost on our leaders.

The question for voters this fall is whether their country will move beyond this troubled chapter in history or whether they will continue supporting a politician who has done more damage to the dream of America than any foreign adversary ever could.

On September 10, 2001, the United States dominated the world stage in a way no other country had since the height of the Roman and British empires. Nato's long twilight struggle against the Soviet Union ended with Russia in ruins. The Japanese economic miracle, predicted by some to turn America into little more than a granary for Japan, had flatlined. And a rising China was still struggling with a multitude of internal security concerns and was eclipsed on the world stage by the Pax Americana. The United States deployed a dazzling display of both soft- and hard-power assets across the globe.

On the eve of bin Laden's attacks, America's gross domestic product was nearly 10 times China's and 40 times Russia's. The US military machine was unparalleled, with the Pentagon spending more on national defense than the next 15 countries combined. And despite those staggering outlays, Washington was running a $125 billion surplus.

Seventeen years later, endless wars abroad and reckless policies at home have produced annual deficits approaching $1 trillion. President Donald Trump's Republican Party will create more debt in one year than was generated in the first 200 years of America's existence.

And while the United States has been mired in endless wars and bloody occupations over the past 17 years, China has used that same period to aggressively develop economic partnerships across Asia, Europe, Latin America and Africa. Perhaps that is one reason China will soon overtake the United States as the world's largest economy.

Any discussion of policy failures since 2001 must begin with George W Bush's decision to invade Iraq even though no evidence linked Saddam Hussein's regime to the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. Even a majority of Senate Democrats voted for a resolution supporting the Iraq invasion, and more than 70 percent of Americans agreed. But we were wrong.

That war cost nearly 5,000 American lives, $2 trillion and inestimable damage to America's credibility across the globe.

The excesses of Bush's military adventurism led to his successor, President Barack Obama, placing the United States in a defensive crouch for the better part of eight years.

The commander in chief defined his foreign policy approach this way: "Don't do stupid [stuff]." Even Democratic foreign policy experts would quietly complain that their president's strategic retreat from the world would come at great cost.

The ignoring of crossed red lines, the rise of the Islamic State and the deaths of 500,000Syrians proved Obama's Democratic critics right.

Sixteen years of strategic missteps have been followed by the maniacal moves of a man who has savaged America's vital alliances, provided comfort to hostile foreign powers, attacked our intelligence and military communities, and lent a sympathetic ear to neo-Nazis and white supremacists across the globe.

For those of us still believing that extremists hate America because of the freedoms we guarantee to all people, the gravest threat Trump poses to our national security is the damage done daily to America's image. As the New York Times' Roger Cohen wrote the month after Trump's election, "America is an idea. Strip freedom, human rights, democracy and the rule of law from what the United States represents to the world and America itself is gutted."

Osama bin Laden was killed by Seal Team 6 before he accomplished that goal. Other tyrants who tried to do the same were consigned to the ash heap of history. The question for voters this fall is whether their country will move beyond this troubled chapter in history or whether they will continue supporting a politician who has done more damage to the dream of America than any foreign adversary ever could.

The writer is a former Republican congressman from Florida, hosts the MSNBC show "Morning Joe."

China should reform its massive assistance measures for Africa

THE JAPAN NEWS

How should sustainable development be realised in Africa, a continent rich in natural resources and whose population is growing fast? What is called for is assistance that will not end up only pouring in a huge amount of money, but that can also help recipient countries enhance their ability to govern and nurture human resources.

The summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, attended by the leaders of 53 African countries, was held in Beijing. The forum started in 2000 as a ministerial-level meeting and has been held regularly.

Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged that China will extend financing totaling $60 billion (about 6.6 trillion yen) in the next three years. He spelled out a policy of continuing to advance the provision of financing, and investment by Chinese companies, for the development of key African infrastructure, including in energy and airports.

Xi's remarks that China takes such approaches as "no interference in African countries' internal affairs," and "no attachment of political strings to assistance," are problematic.

Unlike countries in Europe and North America, China's assistance to developing countries is characterized by its not demanding that the partner country democratize itself or improve its human rights situation. Even if such assistance is welcomed by a despotic administration, it will not lead to improvement in people's lives nor to the country's economic self-sustenance.

It has been pointed out that there have been many cases in Africa in which Chinese companies that have received an order for a project there dispatch workers from China, creating no jobs for local people.

Another cause for concern is a "debt trap," where a country receiving Chinese assistance falls into excessive debt and as a consequence is forced to cede the rights to use a port, for instance. If China uses that port for military purposes, it may have an adverse impact on regional security.

Wary voices have begun to be heard in African countries, worrying that the country will become deeply entangled in debt with Chinese-style assistance, which will give China more political clout. International criticism has also been growing.

During the summit, Xi presented a policy of China exempting some African countries from the debt they have incurred in the form of Chinese government loans. He also emphasized that China will cooperate with African countries to improve the environment and public health of its partner countries. Xi may have had to take the criticism into consideration.

Before China, Japan began holding from 1993 the summit-level Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). In the previous meeting held in 2016, Japan promised investment totaling $30 billion over the following three years.

Japan attaches importance to carrying out infrastructure development with its advanced technology and extending meticulously worked-out assistance to nurture experts. There are likely many elements of Japan's assistance that China should adopt in its own.

Japan, which is not as strong as China in terms of financial power, is avoiding excessive rivalry with China over winning orders, while also exploring ways to cooperate with that country. Japan is calling on China to participate in Japan-led projects, such as one to build major roads linking West African countries.

Argentina's IMF bailout rekindles painful memories of past crises



JEROME ROOS
AL JAZEERA

Almost two decades after a massive popular uprising triggered Argentina's record $100bn default of 2001-2002, the country finds itself back in a major economic crisis.

With the peso losing over half of its value this year, inflation running at over 30 percent and the central bank raising the interest rate to 60 percent, many ordinary Argentinians are already beginning to feel the pain.

In a televised address earlier this week, President Mauricio Macri declared an economic emergency and announced a dramatic new set of austerity measures in a desperate bid to convince the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to speed up the release of its previously agreed $50bn bailout loan - the largest in the IMF's history.

"What we have to face is a basic problem," Macri said, "which is that we cannot spend more than we have. This is not just another crisis. It has to be the last."

If Argentina's tumultuous economic history is anything to go by, however, this time is unlikely to be any different. In fact, Macri's keen embrace of the standard IMF recipe of far-reaching austerity only risks repeating the mistakes of the past - deepening the economic recession and leading to renewed social unrest, making further political turmoil all but inevitable.

Macri's keen embrace of the standard IMF recipe of far-reaching austerity only risks repeating the mistakes of the past - deepening the economic recession and leading to renewed social unrest, making further political turmoil all but inevitable.

A tumultuous economic history

To understand Argentina's susceptibility to recurring economic crises, we have to consider the peculiar nature of its integration into the capitalist world economy.

Ever since gaining independence a little over two centuries ago, Argentina has occupied a subordinate, semi-peripheral position that it has historically shared with other crisis-prone countries like Mexico and Greece.

As South America's second-largest economy and an important trading partner of the developed countries in the Global North, Argentina has always been acutely dependent on commodity exports, international loans and foreign direct investments to fuel domestic economic growth, leaving it particularly vulnerable to a change in international conditions.

This already became clear soon after the country won its independence from Spain in 1816. Attracted by its immense natural wealth and its relatively educated workforce, and hoping to reinvest their surplus capital in more profitable emerging markets abroad, British investors began to lend large sums of money to Argentina as early as the 1820s.

This investor euphoria soon ended in tears, however, as a market panic on the London Stock Exchange in 1825 caused international credit to dry up. Like many of its Latin American neighbours, Argentina responded by suspending payments on its external debt.

It was not until the 1870s and 1880s that capital began to flow back towards the semi-peripheral countries again. As before, Argentina was one of the main beneficiaries of this new speculative boom — and as before, its government was eventually forced to suspend payments in the inevitable bust that followed. The Argentine default of 1890 would set off a major international financial crisis that nearly brought down the mighty Barings Bank of London.

Several decades later, Argentina was once again hit hard by a decline in the terms of trade, this time due to the Great Depression that began in 1929. The next year, General Jose Felix Uriburu overthrew the democratically elected but economically discredited government of Hipolito Yrigoyen and seized power in a military coup — establishing a disconcerting pattern that was to be repeated several times over the twentieth century.

In short, from its very birth as an independent state, the vagaries of domestic politics in Argentina have always remained closely tied to the umbilical cord of global finance — a dependence it has never really managed to sever.

This dependence left the country particularly prone to currency and debt crises resulting from excessive lending and speculative over-investment, especially when these were followed by a rapid fall in global commodity prices, a decline in the value of the peso, a rise in international interest rates, and/or a sudden stop of foreign capital inflows.

If Argentina's recurring crises have historically coincided with downturns in the international credit and commodity cycle, it is equally clear that the management of these crises has in recent decades taken a decided turn for the worse.

Ever since the resumption of large-scale international lending in the late 1970s, Argentina's long-standing vulnerability to external economic shocks has combined with the structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank and especially the IMF to produce a particularly explosive mix of recessionary pressures, social dislocation and political instability.

The consequences of this shift to neoliberal crisis management have been wide-ranging. Most importantly, the unilateral payment suspensions that had characterised the crises of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries suddenly gave way to IMF bailouts and austerity programmes that shifted virtually the entire burden of adjustment for recurring crises onto the shoulders of workers, peasants and taxpayers in the debtor countries.

In this brave new world of international finance, alternatives to full repayment would simply not be tolerated — something that became particularly clear following Argentina's return to democracy after the fall of the military junta in 1983.

Upon assuming office, Argentina's newly elected President Raul Alfolsin accepted the binding nature of the previous government's odious debts, but briefly declared a six-month moratorium on interest payments to ease the pressure on the country's embattled population, declaring that "we are not going to pay our debt by making our people hungry".

The creditors immediately struck back, making any renegotiation of the debt conditional on a new agreement with the IMF, which in turn refused to sign off on any deal with the Argentine government unless it resumed its interest payments to the Wall Street banks.

In light of this tumultuous economic history, many people in Argentina are understandably sceptical of Macri's insistence that this crisis must necessarily be the country's last - or that a return to austerity will somehow help Argentina overcome its long-standing financial instability this time around.

For the multimillionaire president and his allies in business, the intervention of the IMF - while fraught with political risks - clearly presents a welcome opportunity to re-liberalise the national economy and dismantle some of the social protections that had been established under the previous Peronist governments of Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and her late husband Nestor Kirchner.

For many ordinary Argentinians, however, Macri's eager embrace of the standard IMF recipe is bound to rekindle painful memories of past crises, when the Argentine economy effectively disintegrated on the IMF's watch. The experience of these past crises presents three main lessons in this respect.

First, given Argentina's structural dependence on foreign credit and investment, recurring crises have long been all but inevitable. Second, the social and economic consequences of these crises have only been made worse by the austerity measures demanded by the IMF. And third, not a single president has been able to survive the resultant political turmoil.

Macri may still comfort himself in the knowledge that history never simply repeats itself. But with presidential elections coming up next year and anti-austerity protests picking up steam, he would certainly be well-advised to heed the dictum that it often rhymes.

The author is a Fellow in International Political Economy at the London School of Economics.



Public employees demonstrate outside the former Labor Ministry in Buenos Aires.

As Sweden swings right, Bannon's anti-EU crusade looks north





MARK BENDEICH &
CRISPIAN BALMER
REUTERS

Having found an ally in the south and an admirer in the east, Donald Trump's former political strategist Steve Bannon is now looking north for recruits in his crusade to undermine the European Union.

And he believes the timing is perfect after famously liberal Sweden voted in record numbers on Sunday for a far-right party that wants a referendum on leaving the 28-nation bloc.

Bannon, who helped put US President Trump in the White House, wants to pull off a similar anti-establishment revolution in the EU and get eurosceptics from all corners of the union voted into the European Parliament at elections next year.

He has already signed up Italy's most prominent eurosceptic leader, Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, to the cause and his project has been praised by another fierce EU critic, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

Bannon is now turning to the EU's northern member states, where his latest admirer is Dutch nationalist Geert Wilders.

"Sometimes you need a catalyst," Wilders told Reuters at the annual Ambrosetti Forum conference on the shores of Italy's Lake Como, where he called for the abolition of EU.

"Any initiative from that comes from (Bannon) is of course to be applauded," he said on Saturday.

Wilders, who leads his country's second-largest party, said he planned to meet Bannon for dinner in the Netherlands soon to discuss the idea of a united eurosceptic front.

Bannon calls his project The Movement, a political startup with 15 staff and an enormous ambition: to persuade the continent's eurosceptic leaders to mount a coordinated campaign in elections for the European Parliament in May.

He wants the populists to topple what he sees as the EU's liberal establishment and force Brussels to hand back powers to nation states - an outcome EU supporters say would sound the death knell for Europe's political and monetary unions.

But Bannon says this is not the ultimate aim. "I don't think this drive is for the destruction of the European Union," he told Reuters in Rome on Saturday. Instead, Bannon's Movement aims to stack the EU parliament in Strasbourg with parties that can agree on four things: more sovereign rights for EU states, stronger borders, less migration and the eradication from Europe of what it calls radical Islam.

"It is a club, a loose affiliation," Bannon said, stressing that racist and anti-Semitic parties were not welcome. "We have spoken to these populist nationalist parties around Europe and one of the things they say to us is that they never get the chance to talk together. They feel alone."

The Movement aims to serve as a campaign centre, conducting polling and data analysis, offering strategic advice and deploying social media campaigns to mobilise the anti-EU vote for European elections with historically low turnouts. Bannon said he would invest a "couple of million dollars" in the project and planned to relocate to Europe soon.

However, uniting eurosceptic parties in a US-style campaign could be mission impossible: Salvini and Orban want to weaken the EU but not leave it, Wilders wants to destroy it and France's far-right leader Marine Le Pen wants to reform the EU before putting French membership to a referendum.

Previous attempts to unite the far-right have produced little. After elections in 2014, Le Pen and Wilders forged a far-right parliamentary group, but it's the smallest with just 35 out of 751 seats. Salvini belongs to it but Orban doesn't.

Bannon may get a warm welcome from Wilders in Amsterdam but faces a cooler reception in Sweden, despite a big swing toward the far-right Sweden Democrats in Sunday's election.

"We aren't following Steve Bannon's political work. He as a person he is of no interest to us," a party representative told Dagens Nyheter newspaper in July. Sweden Democrats did not respond on Monday to emailed questions about Bannon's project.

Bannon, though, is undeterred, saying in an email to Reuters on Monday that the Swedish party's feat of winning 17.6 percent of the vote had set "an example for populists everywhere".

Bannon, who helped put US President Trump in the White House, wants to pull off a similar anti-establishment revolution in the EU and get eurosceptics from all corners of the union voted into the European Parliament at elections next year.

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Ethiopia and Eritrea reopen land border after 20 years

REUTERS

Soldiers and civilians waving Ethiopian and Eritrean flags lined the road as Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki opened the frontier in a ceremony broadcast live on Ethiopian state TV.

ADDIS ABABA: The leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea reopened crossing points on their shared border for the first time in 20 years yesterday, cementing a stunning reconciliation and giving Addis Ababa a direct route to its former foe's Red Sea ports.

Thousands of people from both countries watched one ceremony in Zalambessa, an Ethiopian border town that was reduced to rubble soon after hostilities between the neighbours broke out in 1998.

Soldiers and civilians waving Ethiopian and Eritrean flags lined the road as Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki opened the frontier in a ceremony broadcast live on Ethiopian state TV.

"This is the happiest day of my life," Ruta Haddis, an Eritrean from the town of Senafe just across the frontier, told reporters. "I never thought this would take place in my lifetime." The war over their border and other issues killed an estimated 80,000 people before fighting ended in 2000 in a contested peace deal.

Tensions burned on over the position of the frontier - until Abiy offered to end the military standoff this year as part of a package of reforms that have reshaped the political landscape in the Horn of Africa and beyond.

The two leaders also opened another frontier crossing at Bure, Eritrea's Information Minister Yemane Meskel said in a tweet. The Debay Sima — Bure crossing leads to the port of Assab in Eritrea's east, while its Massawa port is directly north of the Serha — Zalambessa connection.

Ethiopia, a rising economic power with 100 million people, had been almost entirely dependent on tiny neighbour Djibouti for access to the Red Sea access since 1998.

Pictures posted online by Abiy's chief of staff showed the leaders talking and walking side by side in Bure — Abiy in camouflaged military fatigues and Isaias wearing sandals and a safari suit.

The Bure region saw some of the fiercest fighting during the 1998-2000 war. The Eritrean and Ethiopian leaders have moved swiftly to end two decades of hostility since signing a breakthrough agreement in Asmara on July 9 to restore ties. Eritrea reopened its embassy in Ethiopia in July, and Ethiopia reciprocated last week and the two countries have resumed flights. The two leaders also celebrated Ethiopian New Year together at the border with their troops yesterday, Abiy's Chief of Staff, Fitsum Arega, said.

Ethiopia follows a calendar similar to the ancient Julian calendar — which started disappearing from the West in the 16th century — meaning the country entered its year 2011 yesterday.



Eritrea's President, Isaias Afwerki, and Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, arriving for an inauguration ceremony marking the reopening of the Eritrean Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Congo's Bemba warns of 'chaos' if vote unfair

AP

BRUSSELS: A top Congo opposition figure who is barred from December's presidential election is warning that "chaos" will follow if the vote is not transparent and fair.

Former Congolese Vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba spoke to reporters yesterday, days before his sentencing at the International Criminal Court after being convicted of interfering with witnesses.

Congo's electoral commission rejected him as a candidate in the December 23 election, calling the witness interference synonymous with corruption. Congolese law prevents people convicted of corruption from running for the presidency.

Bemba accused both the commission and the Constitutional Court, which last week upheld the commission's decision, of being under "full control" of the government of President Joseph Kabila, who after two years of deadly unrest amid the long-delayed election has said he will step aside.

"They just screwed me, they used the court to screw me, they made a big confusion," said Bemba, whose father was close to former longtime leader Mobutu Sese Seko and who finished second to Kabila in the 2006 election.

Bemba also said he expects Congo's opposition to rally behind a joint candidate to challenge Kabila's preferred one but did not say who it should be: "I don't know, frankly." He has said it would have been him.

Bemba did not directly answer the question of whether he is out of the race for good. He warned that the December election "will not be fair and credible if we don't do something to re-establish the credibility of the process," and he said that "today is another kind of struggle, that we need to restore democracy." Whoever wins the December 23 vote takes over a vast country with trillions of dollars' worth of mineral wealth but with dozens of armed groups battling for a part of it.

The United States was among those praising Kabila for his decision to step aside.

Over 100 dead after two migrant boats sink off Libya this month

AFP

PARIS: More than 100 migrants, including at least 20 children, died when two boats sank off the coast of Libya early this month, according to Doctors without Borders (MSF), citing survivors.

The witnesses told MSF that two inflatable boats had left the Libyan coast on September 1, each with 160 people on board, the medical charity said in a statement. The migrants were from Sudan, Mali, Niger, Cameroon, Ghana, Libya, Algeria and Egypt, MSF said.

According to a survivor, the motor broke down on one boat while the other continued until it "began to deflate... there were 165 adults and 20 children on board".

As the boat began to sink, "few passengers had life jackets or knew how to swim, only those who held onto the hull of the boat managed to survive," said the witness to the tragedy. There were only 55 survivors, the source added.



A portrait of Kofi Annan is displayed at the entrance of Accra International Conference Centre in Accra, yesterday.

Mourners pay last respects to Kofi Annan in Ghana

AFP

ACCRA: A steady stream of mourners yesterday paid their respects to the former UN secretary general Kofi Annan, as his body lay in state in the capital of his native Ghana.

The diplomat's body was flown back from his home in Switzerland on Monday ahead of a state funeral and private burial in Accra tomorrow.

Nobel peace laureate Annan, who was the world body's first leader from sub-Saharan Africa, died aged 80 on August 18 after a short illness.

His coffin, draped in Ghana's red, green and gold flag, was guarded by senior military officers in ceremonial uniform at the Accra International Conference Centre.

A choir sang hymns and traditional dances were performed as the public got their chance to say farewell to one of the country's most famous sons.

Fritz Kitcher, who spent his career working for the United Nations in Geneva in human rights, said he saw Annan rise through the ranks.

Now retired and back living in Ghana, he said Annan taught him "the benefit of humility, the benefit of honesty, the benefit of decisiveness, and diplomacy from the grassroots".

His role at the UN's first black African leader was "an honour for Ghana", he said.

"It was marvellous in our eyes, it was one of these things that we can only dream... he lifted Africa and showed that we are also able to do great things," Kitcher said.

Most of those who queued to pay their respects wore black and red mourning clothes and passed under large posters of Annan to the sound of pulsating drums.

Cleaner Akwo Kwame Johnson, from neighbouring Ivory Coast said he wanted to pay his last respects to "our great father".

Whenever he saw Annan in the news, Johnson said he felt like he was watching a family member. "He was a president to all the world," he added.

Explosion at Nigerian fuel depot leaves nine dead

AFP

LAFIA, NIGERIA: Nine people were killed and dozens more injured, some of them critically, in an explosion and fire at a gas filling station in central Nigeria, the state governor said yesterday.

The accident happened on Monday in Lafia, the capital of Nasarawa state, 190km (120 miles) by road east of Abuja.

"At the moment, we have recorded nine deaths as against the large figures being speculated in the media," Nasarawa governor Tanko Almakura said.

Of the injured the worst affected had been taken to Abuja for treatment for severe burns, he added.

Conflicting tolls of dead and injured are not unusual in Nigeria and getting corroboration of figures is often problematic.

President Muhammadu Buhari's office had earlier said "several" people were killed, without specifying numbers, while a senior road safety official said three died.

"Two people were killed on the spot while one person later died in the hospital," said the member with the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC).

Thirty-two people were taken to hospital "with many of them in critical condition with severe burns", he said on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

An AFP photographer at the scene said many vehicles and some nearby houses were gutted in the inferno.

Firefighters alerted to the initial leak have said they were unable to prevent the blast, which witnesses said was the first of its kind in the city.

Households in Nigeria and wider West Africa rely on bottled gas for cooking but accidents caused by improper storage, refilling or lax safety procedures are commonplace.

Officials say the location of gas filling stations in residential areas is responsible for most accidents.

In one incident in 2015, nine people were killed in a blast in the southeastern town of Nnewi as they filled cooking gas cylinders on Christmas Eve.

Ibrahim Balarabe-Abdullallahi, the speaker of Nasarawa House of Assembly, said: "The station should be on the outskirts of the city.

"We are going to come with a law to stop this kind of business in the heart of the city," he told reporters.



Smoke and fire are seen during a gas explosion in Lafia, Nigeria, yesterday.

Zimbabwe oppn party to declare Chamisa president

AFP

HARARE: Zimbabwe's main opposition party will this week hold a mock inauguration to name its leader Nelson Chamisa as the country's president, highlighting its claims the July 30 election was rigged.

Chamisa, who heads the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), narrowly lost to Emmerson Mnangagwa in Zimbabwe's first election since the ousting of long-time ruler Robert Mugabe last year.

Chamisa's legal bid to have the result overturned due to alleged electoral fraud and irregularities was rejected by the constitutional court.

"He will be recognised as the legitimate president of Zimbabwe by his party and the people of Zimbabwe following resolutions of the national council," MDC spokesman Nkululeko Sibanda told AFP.

Sibanda said Chamisa had been denied victory by "cheating and chicanery" and that the ceremony would be held on Saturday, when the party celebrates its 19th anniversary.

"Resolutions will be passed to recognise his victory and state it publicly," he said.

Mnangagwa, of the ruling ZANU-PF party, won the election with 50.8 percent of the vote — just enough to meet the 50 percent threshold needed to avoid a run-off against Chamisa, who scored 44.3 percent. Mnangagwa had pledged free and fair elections to restore relations with the west.

Modi's personal culpability in Rafale scam: Shourie, Sinha

IANS

NEW DELHI: Alleging Narendra Modi's "personal culpability" in the Rafale jet purchases, former BJP Ministers Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie yesterday accused the Prime Minister of "compromising national security" by unilaterally finalising the deal, shunning every rule of military procurement.

Addressing the media, both Sinha and Shourie said the government had "spun a web of lies to protect Modi's culpability in the largest defence scam" the country had ever seen.

The two dismissed all the explanations given by the Modi government and the ruling BJP in justifying the deal as "blatant lies" and said Modi "usurped the authority" and unilaterally cancelled the original deal for the sake of his "crony capitalists".

"In so far what has transpired, it directly reflects Modi's personal culpability, there is no escaping that fact. Every explanation they put out ensnares the government in the web of lies they have spun. This means they have a lot to hide," said Shourie.

They said that Modi kept the Indian Air Force (IAF), the Defence Ministry and the External Affairs Ministry in the dark about the new deal before making a sudden announcement in April 2015.

"National security has been compromised by Modi and every rule of procurement flouted to unilaterally reduce the number of planes from 126 to 36 and remove Make in India under Transfer of Technology by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) despite the fact that IAF, Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) and MoD had come to a reasoned conclusion that 126 aircraft were required for the long term needs and security of the country," said Shourie.

The two former BJP Ministers dismissed all the explanations given by the Modi government and the ruling BJP in justifying the deal as "blatant lies" and said Modi "usurped the authority" and unilaterally cancelled the original deal for the sake of his "crony capitalists".

Citing procedural requirement of DAC's approval being a condition precedent for finalising a new deal, they pointed to the fact that the approval for Modi's deal was given by DAC on May 13, 2015, more than a month after Modi had already announced the new deal.

Shourie along with Sinha and lawyer activist Prashant Bhushan also claimed that the choice of a private party as offset partner rejecting HAL was a "result of Modi's personal decision".

In the wake of the government recently rejecting a proposal by Russia to make Adani Group a partner for a joint venture to manufacture the modern AK-series assault rifles, both Shourie and Bhushan said "MoD's total abdication of duty while granting approvals for offset contracts in the Rafale deal was exceptional".

"The question is how the price of Rs670 crore per aircraft went up to Rs1,670 crore. The government has been hiding behind confidentiality clause.

"If it is confidential, then how come (former defence minister) Manohar Parrikar and then (Minister of State for Defence) Subhash Bhamre had quoted the price of the jets," asked Shourie.

Parrikar in 2015 told Doordarshan that the UPA-negotiated price for 126 Rafale combat aircraft would have been Rs715 crore apiece while a year later Bhamre told the Lok Sabha that the NDA-negotiated price would be approximately Rs670 crore.

"Each new invention shows that all these arguments are an afterthought to justify the scam through which the price per aircraft has been increased from Rs670 crore to Rs1,660 crore approximately," said Sinha.



Flood throws life out of gear in Allahabad

Indian villagers cross a waterlogged road by boat in a flooded area near the River Ganges at Badara Sanuti village, near Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh, yesterday.

52 dead in Telangana bus accident

IANS

HYDERABAD: In a ghastly tragedy, as many as 52 people were killed and more than 20 others injured when a state-run overcrowded bus fell into a gorge in Telangana's Jagtial district yesterday.

The bus belonging to the Telangana State Road Transport Corp (TSRTC) fell off Kondagattu Ghat Road while returning from Anjaneya Swamy temple atop Kondagattu Hills, about 190km from Hyderabad.

The bus, carrying more than 70 passengers, met with the accident when the driver reportedly lost control at a speed breaker.

Finance Minister Etela Rajender told reports at Jagtial that 52 people were killed in the disaster. He said 47 bodies were brought to Jagtial Hospital while five people succumbed at a hospital in Karimnagar.

The dead include driver B Srinivas. Officials said the victims include 26 women and 10 children. The toll could go up as the condition of some of the injured was stated to be critical.

The injured were shifted to a government hospital in Jagtial. A few critically injured were taken to hospitals in Karimnagar and Hyderabad.

Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao expressed shock over the accident. He announced Rs5 lakh ex-gratia each for the families of the dead.

Aadhaar can't be hacked, vested interests spreading lies: UIDAI

IANS

NEW DELHI: The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) yesterday dismissed reports of hacking of Aadhaar enrolment software as "completely incorrect and irresponsible" and said some vested interests were deliberately trying to create confusion among people.

The denial came after an investigation by HuffPost India revealed that the Aadhaar database, which contains the biometrics and personal information of over one billion Indians, "had been compromised by a software patch which disables critical security features of the software used to enrol new Aadhaar users".

According to the report, any unauthorized person from anywhere in the world can generate Aadhaar ID using the patch which is freely available for Rs2,500.

The UIDAI said the claims about Aadhaar being vulnerable to tampering lacked substance and were totally baseless.

"Certain vested interests are deliberately trying to create confusion in the minds of people which is completely unwarranted," a statement issued by the organisation said.

It added that the UIDAI matches all the biometric (10 fingerprints and both iris) of a resident enrolling for Aadhaar with the biometrics of all Aadhaar holders before issuing the unique ID.

"UIDAI has taken all necessary safeguard measures spanning from providing standardized software that encrypts entire data even before saving to any disk, protecting data using tamper proofing, identifying every one of the operators in every enrolment, identifying every one of thousands of machines using a unique machine registration process, which ensures every encrypted packet is tracked," the statement said.

It said all measures to ensure end-to-end security of resident data were taken including full encryption of resident data at the time of capture, tamper resistance, physical security, access control, network security, stringent audit mechanism, 24x7 security and fraud management system monitoring.

Earlier, a report by the HuffPost said a software patch available for as little as Rs 2,500 lets a user bypass critical security features such as biometric authentication of enrolment operators to generate unauthorised Aadhaar numbers. It said the patch also disables the GPS security feature of the software allowing anyone from any location to enrol users.

UIDAI clarified that no operator can make or update Aadhaar unless resident himself gives his biometric.

India, US armies to train together in Uttarakhand mountain warfare

IANS

NEW Delhi:Some 700 Indian and US soldiers will hone their counter-terrorism skills in mountainous terrain in the foothills of Himalayas in Uttarakhand from next week, furthering interoperability between the armies of the two countries.

The two-week joint military training "Yudh Abhyas 2018" will be conducted in Chaubattia from September 16 to 29. This will be the 14th edition of the joint military exercise hosted alternately by both countries.

"The joint exercise will simulate a scenario where both nations will work together in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism environment in mountainous terrain under United Nation charter," an army spokesperson said here.

"The exercise will witness participation of about 350 personnel of the US Army and similar strength of the Indian Army." The military drill curriculum is progressively planned where the participants are initially made to get familiar with each other's organisational structure, weapons, equipment, confidence training and tactical drills.

Subsequently, the training advances to joint tactical exercises wherein the battle drills of both the armies are coherently unleashed.

The training will culminate with a final validation exercise in which troops of both countries will jointly carry out an operation against terrorists in a fictitious but realistic setting.

Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2018 will witness a Division Headquarter based Command Post Exercise, an Infantry Battalion carrying out field training exercise and discussions on issues of mutual interest by experts of both countries."



Samsung Opera House comes up in Bengaluru

Samsung's staff and visitors interact at Samsung's world's largest mobile experience centre "Samsung Opera House" begins business in Bengaluru, yesterday.

Congress, TDP and CPI form alliance in Telangana

IANS

HYDERABAD: In a major development, opposition Congress, TDP and CPI yesterday joined hands to form a grand alliance to take on the ruling TRS in Telangana in the ensuing Assembly elections.

The leaders of these parties announced after first round of talks that they are forming the alliance. This is the first time in Telugu Desam Party's 35-year-old history that it is joining hands with the Congress in a state.

State Congress chief Uttam Kumar Reddy said they would try to bring together all opposition parties to defeat Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS). The alliance will also seek support of all people's organisations, employees, unemployed and women's groups.

The leaders of Congress, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Communist Party of India (CPI) met at a star hotel in the city. This was their first meeting to form an alliance.

Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao last week dissolved the Assembly to go for early elections. The polls are likely in November.

The opposition parties have termed TRS chief's action as undemocratic.

Uttam Kumar Reddy, TDP's Telangana unit president L. Ramna and CPI's state secretary Chada Venkat Reddy and other leaders of the three parties held the talks.

Later, they joined leaders of other opposition parties to meet Governor ESL Narasimhan and demand President's rule in the state.

They said that free and fair elections were not possible in Telangana with Chandrashekhar Rao as the caretaker Chief Minister.

The state Congress chief later told reporters that the opposition parties have expressed their concern over KCR abusing power for the benefit of TRS. They said KCR had openly claimed that he had discussed with Central Election Commission to hold the elections in November.

"This is against the principles of democracy and against the Constitution. Holding of elections and formation of government is the duty of Election Commission and not the ruling party's," he said.

Governance in Kerala at a standstill: Congress

IANS

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: With Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan away in the United State for treatment and none given the charge of the post, the governance has come to a standstill in Kerala, said the opposition Congress yesterday.

The convention in Kerala is that the Cabinet meets every Wednesday.

Speaking to the media here, Ramesh Chennithala, the Leader of Opposition in Kerala Assembly, said the state is passing through a difficult time as there has been no Cabinet meeting ever since Vijayan left for the US on September 2.

"This is happening because Vijayan has not given charge to any other Cabinet Minister. This is similar to what happened in Tamil Nadu when then Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa was in hospital," said Chennithala.

He said Kerala never had to face such a situation before.

Wife of Nawaz Sharif dies in London

REUTERS

ISLAMABAD: The cancer-stricken wife of Pakistan's jailed former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif died in London yesterday while her husband and daughter were in prison, officials said.

Kulsoom Nawaz Sharif, 68, died after months in a coma. She was diagnosed with lymphoma last year, barely a month after Nawaz Sharif was removed from office by the Pakistan Supreme Court, which ordered him to face trial in an anti-corruption court.

"The wife of Mian Nawaz Sharif is no more among us. May God rest her in peace," Shehbaz Sharif, the former prime minister's brother, said on Twitter.

New Prime Minister Imran Khan issued a statement offering condolences, and said the government "as per law" would provide assistance to the family.

"She was a courageous woman of great dignity and confronted her disease with fortitude," Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Twitter after the death of Kulsoom Nawaz Sharif.

"She was a courageous woman of great dignity and confronted her disease with fortitude," Khan said on Twitter.

It was not immediately clear whether Nawaz Sharif or his daughter, Maryam, might be released from prison to attend funeral services.

Nawaz Sharif was in London with Kulsoom earlier this year when the anti-corruption court handed him a 10-year jail term and sentenced his presumed political heir, Maryam, to seven years in prison over the purchase of luxury flats in London in the 1990s.

The father and daughter left her bedside to return to Pakistan to rally their followers ahead of July 25 elections, which their party lost to the former cricket star Imran Khan's party. Both were arrested on arrival and have been imprisoned since.

Kulsoom Sharif was briefly a member of parliament after she won her husband's former seat in a by-election after the Supreme Court disqualified him.

Three-time-premier Nawaz Sharif, who was removed from office in each of his elected terms, has maintained that his most recent ouster in July 2017 and subsequent conviction were part of a plot against him by the powerful military and the judiciary.

The army has repeatedly denied any interference in politics, while the courts insist justice is carried out impartially.

Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa expressed "grief and heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family", said the official military spokesman.

Up until her husband's ouster last year, Kulsoom Sharif had never been a politician, but she memorably led protests after the 1999 military coup that ended a previous Sharif administration.

With her husband jailed by General Pervez Musharraf, she broke through a police barricade set up around her home in Lahore in July 2000 in an attempt to prevent her from leading a public rally.

She managed to get away in a car, which was chased by the police for several miles. When police finally surrounded the car, she locked herself in for several hours in a standoff until police finally towed the vehicle away.

The Musharraf regime eventually allowed Nawaz and Kulsoom Sharif to leave the country, and they spent years in exile until returning in 2007 to contest new elections after Musharraf stepped down in the face of mass protests.

Arrest warrants for former Pakistani PM Abbasi issued

INTERNEWS

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court issued bailable warrants for the arrest of former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi for not attending proceedings of a petition against PML-N's jailed supremo Nawaz Sharif that sought action against him under treason charges for allegedly trying to defame state institutions in an interview.

A three-judge bench, headed by Justice Syed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi, ordered the court's office to ensure serving of notices to Nawaz Sharif through the superintendent of Adiala Jail and to journalist Cyril Almeida through the SSP Operations, Islamabad.

As the bench resumed hearing, no one appeared on behalf of the three respondents, annoying the judges.

Justice Naqvi observed that Abbasi should have attended the court as he was present during the previous hearing on June 29 and was supposed to appear in all subsequent proceedings.

The petitioner's counsel, Azhar Siddique, told the bench that Abbasi was reportedly in the city to run his campaign for a by-poll.

The bench issued bailable arrest warrants for Abbasi subject to furnishing bonds of Rs1 million. It issued fresh notices to Sharif and Almeida asking them to appear before the court on Sept 24.

Amina Malik, of the Civil Society Network, had filed the petition pleading that Sharif, on May 11, had said that "those who attacked a hotel in Mumbai actually belonged to Pakistan".

32 dead in attack on Afghan protesters

REUTERS

KABUL: A suicide bomber in Afghanistan killed at least 32 people at a gathering yesterday on the highway between the eastern city of Jalalabad and the main border crossing into neighbouring Pakistan, officials said.

The blast, less than a week after a suicide attack killed more than 20 people in the capital, Kabul, came as violence has flared across the nation, with heavy fighting in northern provinces.

Officials have warned violence is likely to intensify ahead of parliamentary elections next month and a presidential election in April.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for yesterday's attack, although the Taliban issued a statement denying involvement.

At least 32 bodies were taken to hospitals but the final total was unclear and could rise, said Inamullah Miakhel, a spokesman for the provincial health department.

Sohrab Qaderi, a member of the Nangarhar provincial council, said at least 56 bodies were taken to hospital, with 43 more wounded.

The violence has dampened hopes of peace talks to end Afghanistan's 17-year conflict but two Taliban officials on Tuesday said the movement was preparing for another meeting with US officials following one in July.

Nangarhar, one of the main strongholds of Islamic State militant fighters since early 2015, has been one of the most volatile regions this year, with a string of suicide bombings and attacks on its capital, Jalalabad.

Officials and elders said yesterday's attack targeted a gathering to protest against a police commander, adding that hundreds of people were present when the blast happened.

The blast dispersed the crowd, but more people gathered after the explosion to continue the protest.

Qaderi said rescue efforts were being hampered by reports of another suicide bomber in the area, making police and emergency services cautious about approaching the scene.

The explosion followed a series of smaller blasts yesterday that targeted schools in Jalalabad and surrounding districts, killing at least one person and wounding three.

In the northern province of Sar-e Pul, hundreds of armed men assembled to boost the city's defences as security forces fought to push the Taliban back from the city centre, said Zabihullah Amani, the provincial governor's spokesman.

There were no reports of US strikes in Sar-e Pul yesterday but there were three strikes on Monday.



Fruits of labour

Pakistani vendors gather around of canary melon piles at a fruit market in Peshawar, yesterday.

Pakistan PM to supervise dams project

INTERNEWS

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday hinted at supervising the Diamer Bhasha and Mohmand dams project, given the urgency.

"Met Chairman Wapda today and emphasised urgency of building the Diamer Bhasha and Mohmand dams. I may supervise dams project myself, given the urgency. Forty finve MAF is total water flow of Pakistan, of which 80 per cent is in three months and only 20 per cent in rest of nine months," he said in tweets.

The Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) Chairman, Lieutenant Generalo (retd) Muzammil Hussain, called on the prime minister and briefed him about the water situation in the country and future development of water and hydropower sectors.

The Prime Minister also tweeted Pakistan has only 185 dams and only two large ones. In contrast, India has 5,000 dams and China has 84,000 dams, including 4,000 large ones. "We need to avert the looming water crisis confronting Pakistan," he tweeted.

The Prime Minister said Pakistan is sitting on hundreds of billions of rupees in what he called 'dead capital' in the form of state land and rest houses and official residences built on that land. According to figures cited by Prime Minister Imran Khan, 34,459 kanals of the state-owned land is located in rural areas while 17,035 kanals is in urban areas.

"I have just got figures of 90 per cent of state-owned land in KP, Punjab and federal areas and rest houses/official residences built on this land.

Sri Lankan women selling kidneys to repay loans: UN

AFP

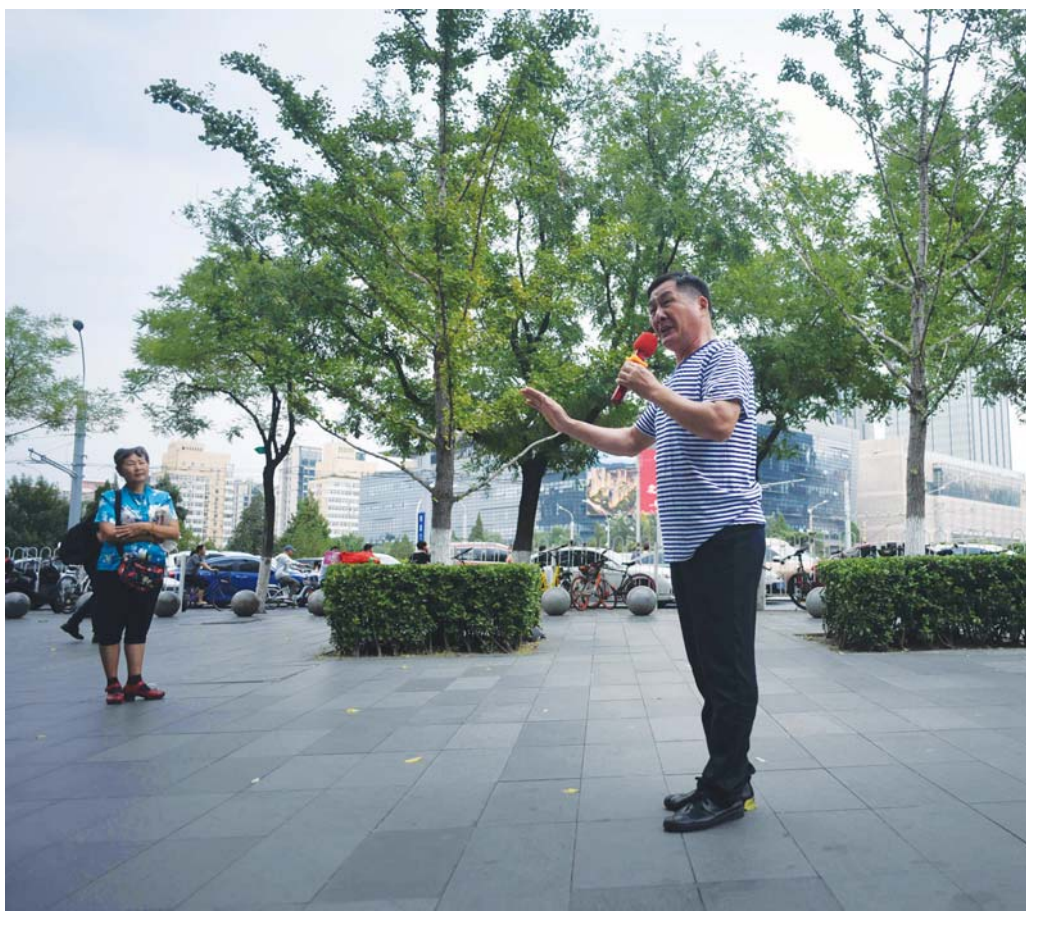
COLOMBO: Sri Lankan war widows and women in former conflict zones are being forced to sell their kidneys to pay loan sharks, a UN expert said yesterday, urging government intervention.

Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, the UN's independent expert on effects of debt on human rights, said that debt collectors were also demanding sexual favours.

"Women are at times exposed to psychological and physical violence by these collectors...," he said in a statement after a visit to the island nation.

"I have also learned of cases of borrowers who have tried to sell their kidneys for money to repay loans," he said without elaborating.

Sri Lanka is home to tens of thousands of war widows nine years after the 37-year civil conflict ended, many of them forced to use small "microfinance" loans to survive.



Open-air opera in Beijing

A man performs a traditional Chinese opera outside a mall in Beijing, yesterday.

Bangla court refuses bail for photographer

AFP

DHAKA: A Bangladesh court refused bail for award-winning photographer and rights activist Shahidul Alam, whose month-long detention has triggered an international outcry, his lawyer said yesterday.

Alam was arrested on August 5 for making "false" and "provocative" statements on Al Jazeera and on Facebook Live during massive student protests in the capital Dhaka.

Rights groups, UN rights experts, Nobel laureates and hundreds of academics have called for the immediate release of the 63-year-old, who says he has been beaten in custody.

After the country's high court last week refused to consider the request, Alam's lawyers moved to Dhaka's Metropolitan sessions judge on Tuesday, making another petition for his release on bail.

"But the court rejected the bail application," his lawyer Sara Hossain said, adding that the court did not explain the reason for the rejection.

Prosecutor Abdullah Abu said that they opposed Alam's bail after he incited people during last month's protests by making seditious comments against the government and the state.

"He has said the present government must be overthrown," Abu said, quoting from the preliminary charges police filed against Alam.

Alam's arrest capped a turbulent month in Bangladesh as students poured onto the streets for nine straight days after two teenagers were killed by a speeding bus.

Alam had told Al Jazeera that the protests were the result of pent-up anger at corruption and an "unelected government... clinging on by brute force" that had looted banks and gagged the media.

He is being investigated for allegedly violating Bangladesh's internet laws, enacted in 2006 and sharpened in 2013, which critics say are used to stifle dissent and harass journalists.

Kim asks Trump for another meeting in 'very warm' letter

REUTERS

SEOUL/WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump received a "very warm, very positive" letter from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un asking for a second meeting and the White House is looking at scheduling one, White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said on Monday.

The two countries have been discussing North Korea's nuclear programmes since their leaders met in Singapore in June, although that summit's outcome was criticised for being short on concrete details about how and whether Kim is willing to give up weapons that threaten the United States.

The likely timing of a second Trump-Kim meeting was unclear.

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in is scheduled to have his third summit with Kim next week in Pyongyang, and his government had pushed for a three-way summit involving Trump, with the aim of agreeing a joint declaration to end the 1950-53 Korean War.

The conflict ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty, leaving the US-led United Nations forces including South Korea technically still at war with North Korea.

While South Korea had hoped an accord formally ending the conflict could have been unveiled on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly later this month, Moon's security chief Chung Eui-yong said last week that the necessary conditions for a three-way meeting were missing.

Trump's National Security Adviser John Bolton has also said he did not believe Kim would attend such a gathering.

Hopes of progress were revived however after Trump told reporters on Friday that a personal letter from Kim was on the way.

"It was a very warm, very positive letter," Sanders said at Monday's briefing.

"The primary purpose of the letter was to request and look to schedule another meeting with the president which we are open to and are already in the process of coordinating that," she said.

Sanders told reporters the letter exhibited "a continued commitment to focus on denuclearisation of the peninsula." She said a military parade in Pyongyang on Sunday was "a sign of good faith" because it did not feature any long-range missiles.

In South Korea, officials nurtured hope that next week's inter-Korean summit could provide renewed momentum to nuclear negotiations, after last month's setback when Trump cancelled a visit to Pyongyang by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo due to a lack of progress.

South Korea's President Moon is expected to present some proposal to Kim suggesting phased steps toward denuclearisation and US security guarantees including an official end to the Korean War. Moon could then discuss the idea when he meets Trump during the UN General Assembly meeting in New York later this month, South Korean officials said.

Trump asked Moon to act as "chief negotiator" between Washington and Pyongyang during their phone call last week, Moon's spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom told reporters.

"In order for us to move toward the next level of dismantling North Korea's existing nuclear weapons, the leaders of North Korea and the United States once again must have big ideas and take bold decisions," Moon told a cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

"North Korea should abolish its nuclear programmes, and the United States foster such conditions with corresponding action." The nuclear envoys of South Korea and the United States also held a meeting on Tuesday as part of efforts to jumpstart stalled nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington.



South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha talks to US special representative for North Korea Steve Biegun at the Foreign Ministry in Seoul, yesterday.

Moon calls for 'bold decisions' ahead of summit

AP

SEOUL: South Korea's President yetserday urged both North Korea and the United States to "make bold decisions" to break a deepening diplomatic impasse over the North's nuclear ambitions, saying he'll continue to act as mediator.

President Moon Jae-in's comments come days before he's to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for the third time this year to discuss how to achieve denuclearisation and peace on the Korean Peninsula. Moon said the summit must lead to another "big step" toward denuclearisation.

The talks come at a crucial moment in the overall diplomacy, which is currently stuck amid recriminations between Washington and Pyongyang on how to follow through on vows made at a summit in June between Kim and President Donald Trump to rid the North of its nuclear weapons.

During a Cabinet meeting Tuesday, Moon said Kim and Trump must think broadly and "make bold decisions" to move the diplomacy forward and get North Korea to dismantle its nuclear arsenal.

"North Korea must carry out its nuclear dismantling and the United States must take a corresponding step," Moon said. "Under such a process, the two countries must pull back their deep-rooted mutual distrust caused by their 70 years of hostile relations."

North Korea has dismantled its nuclear and rocket engine testing sites, but US officials have demanded more serious steps. Kim has reportedly said that his efforts must be reciprocated by corresponding US measures such as a joint declaration to end the 1950-53 Korean War.

Moon said South Korea has no choice but to mediate between the two countries to promote dialogue, saying both Trump and Kim have asked him to play such a role. He wants "genuine talks" between Washington and Pyongyang to resume soon.

During a visit to Seoul yesterday, Steve Biegun, the new US special envoy on North Korea, stressed the need to maintain nuclear diplomacy.

"We have some hard work to do. But we also have tremendous opportunity created by President Trump, by President Moon and by Chairman Kim. We need to do everything we can to make the most of this moment of opportunity," Biegun said at the start of his meeting with South Korean nuclear envoy Lee Do-hoon

Thai-based film company to retell saga of cave boys

AFP

BANGKOK: A Thai-based film company has joined the scramble to retell the dramatic story of the 12 young footballers and their coach who were freed from a flooded cave, one of the producers said yesterday.

Since the 'Wild Boars' team were extracted from Tham Luang cave in northern Thailand two months ago, there has been a frenzy of media interest in the feel-good tale that captivated the world for weeks.

Documentary makers and Hollywood producers have tussled to get films off the ground, with journalists also spinning book deals from the real-life rescue mission.

A Bangkok production company called De Warrenne Pictures are the latest to agree financing to make their version called "The Cave" with shooting planned for November.

"The project is already set," producer Katrina Grose told AFP, of a movie that will be directed by Tom Waller —a Bangkok-based filmmaker of mixed Thai-Irish descent.

The operation to save the boys, who wandered into the cave after a football training session and became stuck as floodwaters surged in, involved expert cave divers from across the world.

They were found after 11 days huddled on a muddy ledge without food or fresh water, floodwaters lapping ominously below them.

An ex-Thai Navy SEAL died in the run-up to the daring extraction of the group, who were heavily sedated as they were carried, pulled and dragged free from deep inside the cave.

Duterte vents anger at fierce critic on TV talk show

AP

MANILA: The Philippine President vented his anger toward his fiercest political critic on a state TV talk show yesterday, prompting opposition calls for him to focus instead on worsening inflation, rice shortages and an approaching powerful typhoon.

President Rodrigo Duterte attempted to explain the legal offensive he has launched against opposition Senagtor Antonio Trillanes IV. He linked Trillanes' political group to an alleged plot to oust him, and said he has ordered the release of intelligence provided by a foreign government about the alleged plan.

Duterte's decision to withdraw a 2011 amnesty granted to Trillanes, a former navy officer who joined past mutinies, has forced the senator to seek refuge in the Senate, where he has been marooned for a week and gained wide media coverage.

The 47-year-old senator has brought his fight against Duterte's actions, including an order for his arrest, to the Supreme Court, which rejected the senator's plea to block the presidential order and ruled that two lower courts should handle the case.

Concerns have been raised that Duterte's moves may undermine judicial independence and that the political impasse may ignite restiveness among troops in a country with a recent history of military uprisings.

Military chief of staff General Carlito Galvez Jr. warned troops over the weekend "not to meddle or take part in partisan politics."

Military officials and even Trillanes say that the military remains united, but Duterte repeated that he was ready to step down anytime and would not allow infighting among state forces.

"If the armed forces think that I am not competent, that I am not qualified to be sitting here as president... it's up to you," Duterte said. "You want another president? Fine."

Opposition politicians said Duterte's TV appearance, which lasted more than an hour, should have focused on growing public concern over inflation, which hit a nine-year high last month, rice shortages and poverty.

A powerful typhoon churning over the Pacific is forecast to lash the country's agricultural north later this week.

Disaster-response agencies have begun forming contingency plans.

"President Duterte should snap out of his fantasy with destabilization plots, roll up his sleeves and start working," opposition Senator Risa Hontiveros said, adding that people "need a reliable leader, not just a tough talker.

The people yearn for democracy, not tyranny." Replying to questions about other national issues, Duterte announced changes in a government food agency and bared a plan to resolve a delay in the entry of a telecommunications company to improve Internet connections. Economic managers were working to tame inflation, he said.

In his parting words, Duterte defended his deadly crackdown on illegal drugs, touched on his fight against corruption and then rambled back to alleged threats by his opponents to force him from power.

"You start it now and don't delay," the tough-talking president said. "That's their plan. If they can't do it through explosions, then assassinate. I'll be happy to die in your hands, at least it's not death from illness."



Knowledge seekers

Visitors read books at a library in Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday.

Hokkaido power station to take weeks to restart

REUTERS

TOKYO: The biggest coal power station on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, hit by a devastating earthquake last week, will take weeks longer than thought to restart, a government minister said yesterday.

Clean-up operations continued after the magnitude 6.7 quake on Thursday, which left 44 people dead, knocked out power and damaged the only oil refinery on an island the size of Austria with a population of about 5.3 million.

Power shortages are hampering efforts to clear debris and restart factories and the government is calling on residents and businesses to reduce their consumption by about 20 percent.

Fully restarting Hokkaido Electric Power's main power plant, the Tomato-Atsuma coal power station, will take more than a month, industry minister Hiroshige Seko told reporters. Previously he said it would take at least a week to restart.

Supplies will be tight until Friday, when the 200-megawatt Kyogoku No.2 pumped hydro-electric power unit is expected to come back online, Seko said.

Rolling blackouts may have to be imposed from Thursday if supplies are not enough to meet projected demand, he added.

The power outage on Hokkaido was the worst to hit Japan since the aftermath of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami and has exposed flaws in Japan's electricity grid.

Supplies have been restored to almost all of Hokkaido's 2.95 million power customers, Seko said.

EU to debate possible action against Hungary

REUTERS

STRASBOURG: The European Union parliament will decide whether Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban should be punished for undercutting democracy, an unprecedented vote highlighting how the bloc is struggling with a populist and nationalist tide.

It is a unclear however whether the 750-strong legislature can muster the two-thirds majority needed to pass the motion finding that Hungary has persistently breached the EU core values under Orban.

An immigration hard-liner, Orban has put pressure on courts, media and non-government groups since coming to power in 2010. Though the EU has often protested, it has largely failed to stop what his critics decry as his growing authoritarian drive.

"Pro-migration representatives hold majority in the European Parliament. They are now preparing revenge against Hungary because the Hungarians decided they will not become an immigration country," Orban said before arriving in Strasbourg.

Orban's refusal to accept some of the Mediterannean arrivals overwhelming coastal states like Italy has upset many of his EU peers, including Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, who said in Strasbourg:

"Do you really believe that any country...can survive on its own, without help, without the solidarity and cooperation of other countries?," he told the lawmakers. "There can be no future for Europe like that."

If the so-called Article 7 procedure passes, it would set in motion a process that could lead to sanctions such as a suspension of Hungary's voting rights in the EU.

But the case put forward by liberals, EU enthusiasts and many others in the bloc is much broader. Even Orban's fellow migration hard-liner, Austria's Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, surprised by announcing plans to vote against Budapest.

"We believe that there can be no compromises on the rule of law and democracy," Kurz told ORF television.

If the so-called Article 7 procedure passes, it would set in motion a process that could lead to sanctions such as a suspension of Hungary's voting rights in the EU.

Kurz's party is in the same conservative bloc in the European Parliament as Orban's. They form the biggest faction in the European Parliament, the European People's Party (EPP), where lawmakers with German Chancellor Angela Merkel also sit.

The EPP membership has muted EU reaction to Orban's policies over the years and the big question mark is how the group's 217 members will act when the vote is held today.

It will also be a test for Merkel ally and EPP head Manfred Weber, who announced his bid to become the new head of the bloc's executive European Commission next year. Taking a stance on Orban comes as his first big challenge.

Italy's anti-imigration Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, whose League party has six lawmakers in the European body, said separately: "We will vote in defence of Orban."

These political divisions show how difficult it is for the EU to discipline those members that flout its central tenets and take a eurosceptic course.

Poland's ruling Law and Justice party, which stands accused of dismantling an independent judiciary at home, will also defend Orban with the 73 votes of its eurosceptic group.

Eventually, it would be up to the other 27 EU states to decide on what to do with Hungary should the parliament's first-ever such vote pass. They would need unanimity to sanction Orban, making any tough punishment highly unlikely.



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban delivers a speech during a debate at the European Parliament, in Strasbourg, eastern France, yesterday.

Hungarian Prime Minister defends migration policies

AFP

STRASBOURG: Prime Minister Viktor Orban vowed Hungary would resist any attempt to "blackmail" it into softening its anti-migrant stance yesterday on the eve of an EU parliament vote to censure his populist government.

Orban denounced as insulting to Hungary's honour a report presented to the Strasbourg assembly that accuses his government of posing a "systemic threat" to the democratic values on which the European Union was founded.

"Whatever your decision will be, Hungary will not accede to this blackmail," an angry Orban told the lawmakers, whom he alleged had already made up their minds to activate article seven of the EU treaty and seek measures to restrict his government's voting rights.

"Hungary will protect its borders, stop illegal migration and defend its rights," Orban said, accusing EU elites of wanting to punish Budapest for its anti-migrant stance.

Budapest argues that its anti-migrant measures and defence of sovereign rights are in tune with the mood of European voters — who will elect a new parliament in Strasbourg next May.

But Judith Sargentini, who is spearheading the vote on whether to take action against Hungary, told fellow MEPs that the time had come for them to make an "important choice" after eight years under Orban.

"Will you let it happen that a government... violates the values on which this union was built without consequences?" the Green MEP from the Netherlands asked.

"Or will you ensure that the values of this union are more than just words written on a piece of a paper?"

Her report voices concerns about the Hungarian judiciary's independence, corruption, freedom of expression, academic freedom, religious freedom, and the rights of minorities and refugees.

Activists slam UK for failing to tackle modern slavery

REUTERS

LONDON: Britain is failing to protect thousands of children from being trafficked and enslaved, activists said yesterday, criticising the government for lacking a clear strategy to stop girls being abused and gangs using young people as drug mules.

The government's approach to tackling child trafficking is fragmented and young victims lack specialist care at a time when a record number of child slaves are being uncovered, said the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG), a group of charities.

In Britain, 2,118 children suspected to have been trafficked — mostly trapped in exploitation, domestic servitude or forced labour - were referred to the government last year, up 66 percent on 2016 and the highest annual number on record.

About a third were British, many used as drug runners, while hundreds were trafficked from countries such as Vietnam, Sudan, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Iraq, according to government figures.

"Having no clear plan in place to prevent child trafficking in the UK ... should shame this government," said Anti-Slavery International's chief executive Jasmine O'Connor, adding that simply targeting the traffickers would not solve the problem.

"We need to create support networks that can make children and their families resilient to being coerced, are able to spot the worrying signs quickly, and can provide specialised support for children who have already been trafficked," she added.

A Home Office (interior ministry) spokesman said that the government already had a clear plan to prevent human trafficking, especially that of children.

"This has been a key component of our world-leading approach to tackling modern slavery since 2014, when the Modern Slavery Strategy was published," he said.

Britain last week announced a $2.6m scheme to help authorities protect vulnerable children from traffickers and gangs who rape them and force them to move drugs from cities to rural areas.

Yet, the government mostly focuses on helping children who have been exploited, rather than prevention, while frontline professionals such as doctors, teachers and social workers lack the training to spot vulnerable children, according to the ATMG.

Unlike adult victims, trafficked children have no guarantee of specialist support once identified, and many go into the care of local authorities where they may end up in fresh danger, said Catherine Baker, policy officer at charity ECPAT UK.

"In the care of children's services, they too often go missing or are retrafficked. This marks a complete failure to prevent these most vulnerable of victims from further harm."

Hailed as a global leader in the anti-slavery drive, Britain last month said it would review its landmark 2015 law amid criticism that it is not being used fully to jail traffickers, help victims, or drive companies to spot and stop forced labour.

Britain is home to at least 136,000 modern-day slaves, says the Australian human rights group Walk Free Foundation - a figure about 10 times higher than a 2013 government estimate.

Help sought as 56 tortoises stolen in Corsica

AFP

AJACCIO: A turtle conservation park on the French island of Corsica is asking the public for help after 56 rare Hermann's tortoises, considered a nearly threatened species, were stolen from the site.

The A Cupulatta park in Vero, about 30km northeast of Ajaccio, issued its appeal on Facebook after discovering the missing adult tortoises, recognisable by their distinctive black-and-yellow shells.

"These tortoises cannot be legally sold so can only be destined for trafficking," the park wrote.

It also warned that wild turtle populations could be at risk if the Hermann's were stolen by anti-zoo activists who might be planning to release the tortoises.

"They could contaminate wild populations with fatal germs, since they've been kept in captivity for a long time and have been exposed to animals and people which wild turtles aren't used to seeing," the park said. "Share this message: the turtles may still be in Corsica".

Police have opened an inquiry, according to the local prosecutor Eric Bouillard.

A Cupulatta bills itself as the only site in Europe dedicated to the breeding and protection of turtles from around the world, housing 170 species and more than 3,000 animals.

The land-based Hermann's turtles are found around the Mediterranean but have been threatened in recent years by loss of habitat.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature, a Swiss-based NGO, classifies the turtle as "near threatened" on its Red List of species at risk.

Rejecting Brexit plan is not a confidence vote on May: Lawmaker



REUTERS

LONDON: Lawmakers from British Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservative Party can vote against her Brexit plans without it being a vote of confidence in her government, the head of an influential group of pro-Brexit lawmakers said.

Brexiteers have said as many as 80 of May's 315 lawmakers could vote against her so-called Chequers plan, leaving the fate of the government and the Brexit deal in the hands of the opposition Labour Party.

If she loses that vote, Britain could leave the EU without a deal, an outcome some believe would spark a crisis of confidence that could cost her the premiership.

Jacob Rees-Mogg **(pictured)**, chair of the European Research Group, a faction within May's Conservatives, plans to vote against the Chequers deal but said that does not mean May has to go.

"The vote on the legislation will not be a vote of confidence," Rees-Mogg, tipped by some as a possible successor to May, told a pro-Brexit event in parliament.

"We can vote down the bad Chequers proposals on Monday and support the government in a vote of confidence on Tuesday. They are separate things and trying to align them I think is a mistake. So we can carry on supporting the prime minister but we can oppose this policy until it is changed or collapses."



Pledge to pay all burqa fines in Denmark

French-Algerian businessman, Rachid Nekkaz is asked by police officers to step down from the main entrance of the Danish Parliament, during his attempt to fulfill his promise to pay people fined for violating the ban of wearing niqab in public areas, in Copenhagen, Denmark, yesterday. So far nobody has been fined.

Russia displays its military might

REUTERS

MOSCOW: Russia began its biggest war games since the fall of the Soviet Union yesterday close to its border with China, mobilising 300,000 troops in a show of force that will include joint exercises with the Chinese army.

China and Russia have staged joint drills before but not on such a large scale, and the Vostok-2018 (East-2018) exercise signals closer military ties as well as sending an unspoken reminder to Beijing that Moscow is able and ready to defend its sparsely populated far east.

Vostok-2018 is taking place at a time of heightened tension between the West and Russia, and Nato has said it will monitor the exercise closely, as will the United States which has a strong military presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Russia's Ministry of Defence broadcast images yesterday of columns of tanks, armoured vehicles and warships on the move, and combat helicopters and fighter aircraft taking off.

Taking part in the drills are, more than 1,000 military aircraft, two Russian naval fleets, up to 36,000 tanks and armoured vehicles and all Russian airborne units.

In one clip, marines from Russia's Northern Fleet and a motorised Arctic brigade were shown disembarking from a large landing ship on a barren shore opposite Alaska.

This activity was part of the first stage of the exercise, which runs until September 17, the ministry said in a statement. It involved deploying additional forces to Russia's far east and a naval build-up involving its Northern and Pacific fleets.

The main aim was to check the military's readiness to move troops large distances, to test how closely infantry and naval forces cooperated, and to perfect command and control procedures. Later stages will involve rehearsals of both defensive and offensive scenarios.

Russia also staged a major naval exercise in the eastern Mediterranean this month and its jets resumed bombing the Syrian region of Idlib, the last major enclave of rebels fighting its ally President Bashar Al Assad.

The location of the main training range for Vostok-2018 5,000 km east of Moscow means it is likely to be watched closely by Japan, North and South Korea as well as by China and Mongolia, both of whose armies will take part in the manoeuvres later this week.

Analysts said Moscow had to invite the Chinese and Mongolian militaries given the proximity of the war games to their borders and because the scale meant the neighbouring countries would probably have seen them as a threat had they been excluded.

The exercise — which will involve more than 1,000 military aircraft, two Russian naval fleets, up to 36,000 tanks and armoured vehicles and all Russian airborne units — began as President Vladimir Putin held talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Russian port city of Vladivostok.

Relations between Moscow and Beijing have long been marked by mutual wariness with Russian nationalists warning of encroaching Chinese influence in the country's mineral-rich far east.

But Russia pivoted east towards China after the West sanctioned Moscow over its annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region in 2014 and trade links between the two, who share a land border over 4,200 km long, have blossomed since.

Russia broadcast footage of some of 24 helicopters and six jets belonging to the Chinese air force landing at Russian air bases for the exercise. Beijing has said 3,200 members of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) will join in.

Some experts see the war games as a message to Washington, with which both Moscow and Beijing have strained ties.

"With its Vostok 2018 exercise Russia sends a message that it regards the US as a potential enemy and China as a potential ally," wrote Dmitri Trenin, a former Russian army colonel and director of the Carnegie Moscow Center think tank.

"China, by sending a PLA element to train with the Russians, is signalling that US pressure is pushing it towards much closer military cooperation with Moscow."

Putin, who is armed forces commander-in-chief, is expected to observe the exercises this week alongside Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, who is overseeing them.

Shoigu has said they are the biggest since a Soviet military exercise, Zapad-81 (West-81) in 1981.

Turkey arrests Austrian reporter on terror charges

REUTERS

VIENNA: Turkish authorities have arrested an Austrian journalist and activist on suspicion of a terrorism-related offence, the leftwing website where he works said.

Re:volt, which describes itself as a "radical left-wing" online magazine, said Max Zirngast had been arrested at his apartment in Ankara yesterday morning.

"We condemn this arrest in the strongest terms of course and call for his immediate release," Re:volt said by email, confirming a statement on the arrest from rights group Reporters Without Borders.

"Our writer, who has lived in Turkey for many years, is a passionate leftist activist and author who campaigns for freedom and democracy," the German-language publication added.

Turkish officials were not immediately available for comment on the matter.

German zoo sends its last orangutan to Louisiana

AP

NEW ORLEANS: A German zoo is sending its last orangutan to Louisiana, and he's already learning some English.

Jambi is a 22-year-old Sumatran orangutan, a critically endangered species of the red-haired Asian great apes.

He'll travel 8,050 km from Hannover Adventure Zoo to the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans, where he will join three females: Reese, Feliz, and Feliz's daughter, Menari.

But first, Jambi must spend about a month out of view at the Dallas Zoo, which is approved by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as quarantine location for imported primates.

Although Hannover gave Jambi a farewell party in August 31, he's moving to Dallas this week, accompanied by a German keeper and one from Audubon, Joel M. Hamilton, vice president and general curator at the Audubon Zoo, said.

French MPs push for ban on plastic bottles in schools

REUTERS

PARIS: Lawmakers in France's ruling party are pushing for a ban on plastic water bottles in school canteens from 2020 as consumers and governments become increasingly aware of the damaging impact of plastic that ends up in landfills or in the ocean.

The measure is part of a draft field-to-fork bill that also includes a ban on plastic straws and hot-drink stirrers. Legislators begin a second reading of the bill in the National Assembly today.

As companies and households pay more attention to their green credentials, the EU has also put forward a ban on single-use plastic products which have environmentally friendly alternatives.

Lawmakers in the centre-right-dominated Senate had stripped the school bottle ban out of the bill at its first reading, but ruling party lawmakers in the lower house reinserted it.



People wave pro-independence Catalan flags 'Esteladas' during a pro-independence demonstration, in Barcelona, yesterday.

Fresh call for Catalan independence

AFP

BARCELONA: Around one million Catalans rallied in Barcelona yesterday, banging drums and blowing whistles in a show of support for independence nearly a year after a failed attempt to break away from Spain.

Wearing coral-red T-shirts and waving the red, yellow and blue Catalan separatist flag, a sea of protesters gathered for the rally on Catalonia's "national day" which commemorates Barcelona's fall to troops loyal to Spain's King Philip V in 1714.

The annual "Diada" holiday has since 2012 been used to stage a massive rally calling for secession for the wealthy north-eastern region with its own distinct language.

But this year's event had particular significance as a test of strength after a referendum last October 1, and the Catalan parliament's unilateral declaration of independence on October 27, all came to naught.

Demonstrators climbed on each others shoulders to form human towers, a Catalan tradition, while others carried yellow and black signs that read "Free Catalan political prisoners now", a reference to Catalan separatist leaders in jail awaiting trial over last year's independence bid.

"I am outraged...the political prisoners have to be released now!, said Santi Noe, 54, who came to the rally from his farm in El Maresme near Barcelona on his green tractor, one of dozens of tractors at the event.

City police said on Twitter that around one million people took part, a similar amount to last year's protest.

Organisers said they had sold over 200,000 coral-red T-shirts — the colour used in the ties used to secure the ballot boxes during last year's contested referendum.

Catalan President Quim Torra said that the rally marks the start of a "mass mobilisation". Further protests are planned for an anniversary of last year's banned referendum, which was marred by police violence, and on the anniversary of the failed declaration of independence.

Report: Spy chief backtracks over Chemnitz video doubts

REUTERS

BERLIN: The head of Germany's domestic spy agency, facing calls to quit for questioning whether a video showing far-right gangs hounding migrants in the city of Chemnitz was genuine, now accepts the footage was real, two papers reported yesterday.

Germany's most violent far-right protests in decades, which took place in the eastern city over the fatal stabbing of a German man blamed on two migrants, have reignited a heated debate about Chancellor Angela Merkel's 2015 decision to open the country's borders to more than a million refugees.

Hans-Georg Maassen, who heads the BfV intelligence agency, prompted anger from lawmakers of mainstream parties last week for telling *Bild* he was not sure if the footage, shot in Chemnitz two weeks ago and circulated online, was genuine.

The Sueddeutsche Zeitung and the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung said Maassen had written to Interior Minister Horst Seehofer saying that the video had not been falsified and that his comments had been misunderstood.

Maassen said he had meant to express doubt about whether the video genuinely showed people being chased, the papers wrote.

Lawmakers including the leader of the Social Democrats (SPD), who share power with Merkel's conservatives, called on Maassen to resign if he failed to explain his comments, and it is not yet clear to what extent the new explanation will ease the pressure on him.

Maassen had appeared to contradict Merkel's view of the events in Chemnitz. She last week rebuked a conservative ally, head of the state of Saxony where Chemnitz is located, for playing down the violence. Police also arrested people in the city for giving the Nazi salute, an action that is illegal in Germany.

Merkel and her spokesman have repeated several times that far-right violence is unacceptable in Germany.



FROM LEFT: Head of German Federal Police Dieter Romann; Chief Commissioner of Germany's Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) Federal Crime Office Holger Muench; Head of the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) Hans-Georg Maassen, and President of the German Federal Intelligence Agency (BND) Bruno Kahl during a reception of safety authority, in Berlin, yesterday.

Putin's ally challenges oppn leader for a 'duel'

AFP

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin's close ally and chief of the National Guard yesterday challenged Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny to a "duel" and threatened to turn him into "steak".



Wearing his uniform, Viktor Zolotov **(pictured)** spouted threats and insults on a video message to Navalny, who last month alleged corruption in the National Guard and is currently in jail for violating anti-protest legislation.

"You, Mr Navalny, have never faced payback," Zolotov said, after rubbishing Navalny's corruption expose as slander. "Nobody has given you a quality kick. In a way you feel it in your liver."

"I simply call you to a duel, to the ring, to the tatami, to wherever. And I promise to make a juicy beefsteak out of you in just a few minutes," he said in the video posted on the National Guard's official website.

Navalny in late August published a video he addressed to the rank and file employees of the National Guard, the agency tasked with dispersing Russian protests.

Agency leadership, he tells the soldiers, "literally takes food out of your mouth for profit".

The expose alleges that the agency purchases poor quality food for its soldiers for over-inflated prices.

Navalny is not set to finish his 30-day jail term until late this month. His team however reacted to Zolotov's message with a mixture of horror and ridicule.

The video has "open, very serious threats," said Navalny's former head of campaign staff Leonid Volkov on Twitter, adding that Zolotov "must have forgotten" that Navalny is locked up and can't reply.

"They can't even hire good PR people with their stolen billions," wrote Lyubov Sobol, who works for Navalny's anti-corruption centre. "Six minutes of threats and not a single word to refute facts and evidence in the investigation."

Previously Navalny had alleged Zolotov himself -- a former head of Putin's security detail who was appointed to the current newly-created post in 2016 — was "very rich" and that his family owned several luxury properties.

Zolotov in his video said that he was "not a poor man" but went on to accuse Navalny of being a "rotten" American agent.





United Nations Representatives observe a moment of silence in honour of 9/11 victims during a UN Security Council meeting at the United Nations Headquarters, in New York, yesterday. RIGHT: A US flag that flew over the World Trade Center is presented during ceremonies marking the 17th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, at the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum, in New York.

US marks 17th anniversary of 9/11 attacks

AP

NEW YORK: Americans looked back on 9/11 yesterday with solemn ceremonies, volunteer service and a presidential tribute to "the moment when America fought back" on one of the hijacked planes used as weapons in the deadliest terror attack on US soil.

Thousands of 9/11 victims' relatives, survivors, rescuers and others who gathered on a misty yesterday morning at the memorial plaza where the World Trade Center's twin towers once stood.

President Donald Trump and Vice-President Mike Pence headed to the two other places where hijacked planes crashed on September 11, 2001: a Pennsylvania field and the Pentagon.

Seventeen years after losing her husband, Margie Miller went to the New York City ceremony from her home in suburban Baldwin.

Thousands of 9/11 victims' relatives, survivors, rescuers and others gathered on a misty morning yesterday at the memorial plaza where the World Trade Center's twin towers once stood.

"To me, he is here. This is my holy place," she said before the hours-long reading of the names of the nearly 3,000 dead, including her husband, Joel Miller.

The president and First Lady Melania joined an observance at the September 11 memorial in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where one of the jetliners fell to the ground after 40 passengers and crew members realized hijackers had taken control and tried to storm the cockpit.

Calling it "the moment when America fought back," Trump said the fallen "took control of their destiny and changed the course of history."

They "joined the immortal ranks of American heroes," said Trump.

Pence recalled the heroism of service members and civilians who repeatedly went back into the Pentagon to rescue survivors.

The terrorists "hoped to break our spirit, and they failed," he said.

The 9/11 commemorations are by now familiar rituals, centered on reading the names of the dead. But each year at ground zero, victims' relatives infuse the ceremony with personal messages of remembrance, inspiration and concern.

For Nicholas Haros Jr., that concern is officials who make comparisons to 9/11 or invoke it for political purposes.

"Stop. Stop," pleaded Haros, who lost his 76-year-old mother, Frances. "Please stop using the bones and ashes of our loved ones as props in your political theater. Their lives, sacrifices and deaths are worth so much more. Let's not trivialize them."

This year's anniversary comes as a heated midterm election cycle kicks into high gear. But there have long been some efforts to separate the solemn anniversary from politics. The group 9/11 Day, which promotes volunteering on an anniversary service in 2009, routinely asks candidates not to campaign or run political ads for the day. Organizers of the ground zero ceremony allow politicians to attend, but they've been barred since 2011 from reading names or delivering remarks.

If not political speeches, some victims' relatives made appeals to patriotism and support for the military and first responders as they read names. Mary Ann Marino said her family is humbled by the actions of first responders like her husband, firefighter Kenneth Marino, but "our hearts still ache for what should have been."

Other relatives laid bare the toll their losses had taken on their families. Thomas Langer said his brother, Timmy, "drank himself to death" over the grief of losing his wife, Vanessa, and their unborn child on September 11.

"I witnessed my brother endure the pain that no one human being was ever meant to bear," Thomas Langer said, adding that he had struggled with despair himself.

September 11 still shapes American policy, politics and everyday experiences in places from airports to office buildings, even if it's less of a constant presence in the public consciousness after 17 years.

Memorials to 9/11 continue to grow at Shanksville, where the Tower of Voices will eventually include a wind chime for each of the 40 people killed there, and ground zero, where work is to begin soon on a pathway honoring rescue and recovery workers.

Meanwhile, a subway station destroyed on 9/11 finally reopened on Saturday. In June, doors opened at the 80-story 3 World Trade Center, one of several rebuilt office towers that have been constructed or planned at the site.

FBI agent sued over death of Houston hostage

AP

HOUSTON: The family of a kidnapped man who was fatally shot during a rescue mission in Houston is suing the FBI agent who killed him.

The federal lawsuit filed by Ulises Valladares' family alleges illegal search and seizure, and wrongful death, *The Houston Chronicle* reported . It seeks punitive damages as a result of Valladares' death.

The family aims to prevent other hostages from being killed and to provide a future for Valladares' 12-year-old son, said Randall Kallinen, one of the family's attorneys.

The US Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General is reviewing the shooting, said Christina Garza, an FBI spokeswoman.

Law enforcement raided a Houston residence Jan. 25, about a day after Valladares, 47, was taken for ransom by men claiming to be part of a Mexican cartel. Investigators have since found that the claims were made to scare Valladares' brother into giving the men money.

An FBI agent, who has not been named, was attempting to enter the unlit home when someone grabbed his rifle, Houston police said . The agent couldn't see who it was and fired twice, fearing that the weapon would be used against him, police said. One bullet hit Valladares, who died later at a hospital.

The family is also suing Valladares' alleged kidnappers for false imprisonment, assault and battery, and wrongful death.

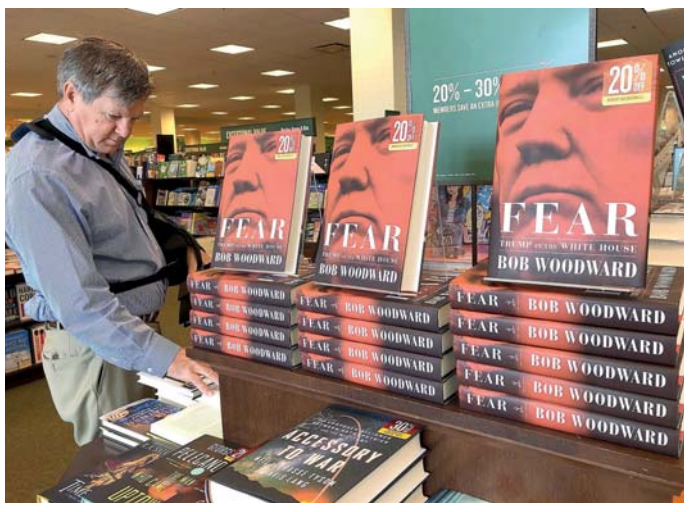
Trump dismisses Bob Woodward's book as a 'joke'

AFP

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump dismissed journalist Bob Woodward's bombshell book as a "joke", a day before readers get their first full look at his detailed account of a White House in disarray.

"Fear: Trump in the White House" hits US bookstores yesteday after a weeklong buildup, with published excerpts, leaks and interviews that portray Trump as dangerously erratic and uninformed.

On the eve of its release, the president took to Twitter with a preemptive round of attacks, denouncing as fiction Woodward's reconstruction of scenes in which frustrated aides scramble to contain the mercurial president's reckless impulses.



The newly released book "Fear" by Bob Woodward is displayed at a Barnes and Noble bookstore, in Corte Madera, California, yesterday.

"The Woodward book is a Joke — just another assault against me, in a barrage of assaults, using now disproven unnamed and anonymous sources," Trump said in the first of a series of tweets.

"Many have already come forward to say the quotes by them, like the book, are fiction. Dems can't stand losing. I'll write the real book!"

Woodward is a famed chronicler of presidents, best known for his revelations in the Watergate scandal that proved the undoing of Richard Nixon in 1974.

Trump is quoted in "Fear" brutally insulting members of his own cabinet, referring to Attorney General Jeff Sessions as "mentally retarded" and former chief of staff Reince Priebus as a "little rat."

US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, in turn, is quoted as saying the president has the mental capacity of a "fifth or sixth grader," while Chief of Staff John Kelly is insulting Trump.

Mattis, Kelly and other senior aides have denied making the remarks.

"I don't talk the way I am quoted. If I did I would not have been elected President. These quotes were made up," Trump said last week, calling the book a "scam."

The book's picture was reinforced last week with the publication of a *New York Times* op-ed written by an anonymous senior Trump administration official who portrayed fellow aides struggling to limit the potentially disastrous consequences of some of the president's rash decisions.

Infuriated by the unsigned missive, Trump on Friday urged Sessions to launch an investigation to uncover the author's identity, citing "national security" concerns.

The Times argued that such a probe would be a "blatant abuse of government power."

But on Monday, the White House reasserted its interest in studying whether any laws were broken by the explosive op-ed's author.

Brazil's leftwing makes gains in poll

BLOOMBERG

BRASILIA: Brazil's leftwing candidates made the most significant gains in the race for the presidency, while far-right lawmaker Jair Bolsonaro continues to lead the field, according to the latest opinion poll.

The Datafolha poll showed the former Ceara state Governor Ciro Gomes rising from 10% in August to 13%, as Fernando Haddad, who is set to replace former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva as the Workers' Party candidate, saw his numbers rise from 4% to 9%. Environmentalist Marina Silva's vote intentions slumped from 16% to 11%.

In the first major poll since he was stabbed by a fanatic at a campaign rally on Thursday, Bolsonaro only inched ahead, confounding the expectations of analysts who expected the attack to translate into a significant boost. The former paratrooper moved to 24% from 22%, within the poll's two percentage-point margin of error. Though he looks increasingly likely to make the second round, Bolsonaro would still struggle against any other candidate in a run-off. The poll also showed his rejection ratings increasing from 39% to 43%.

Meanwhile, market-favourite Gerald Alckmin failed to make significant gains, rising just one point to 10%, despite dominating the political advertising on TV and radio over the past 10 days.

Datafolha's survey of 2,804 Brazilians, carried out on September 10, follows the Superior Electoral Court's decision to bar Lula's candidacy, due to his conviction for corruption and money-laundering.

With only about four weeks left before the first-round vote, the outlook for Brazil's presidential race is still uncertain. Bolsonaro is expected to remain off the campaign trail for another week at the very least as he recovers from the stabbing.

Despite his hospitalization, the far-right candidate is continuing to campaign on social media, where his followers far outnumber those of his competitors. In the days following the attack, many of his supporters have held rallies in his support on the streets of Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and the capital, Brasilia.

Lula Da Silva bows out of presidential race

AP

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's Workers' Party yesterday replaced former President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva as its candidate for the October 7 presidential vote.

After a meeting of Workers' Party officials in the southern city Curitiba, where da Silva is jailed, two tweeted that former Sao Paulo Mayor Fernando Haddad was the new candidate. His vice presidential running mate will be Manuela D'Avila, a member of the Brazil Communist Party.

"Fernando Haddad and Manuela D'Avila are ready to fight for democracy. Are you?" tweeted Paulo Teixeira, a Congressman and vice president of the Workers' Party.

Yesterday's move was an acknowledgement that the party could not get da Silva on the ballot despite numerous attempts in courts.

The party tried to leverage the decision of a UN-appointed human rights committee that said da Silva should be allowed to run. And in recent months, several international figures, such as former US presidential candidate Bernie Sanders have said the case against da Silva was questionable and that he should be allowed on the ballot.

'Russia main suspect in US staff illnesses'

REUTERS

WASHINGTON: Russia is the main suspect in US agencies' investigation of mysterious illnesses in American personnel in Cuba and China, NBC News reported yesterday.

Evidence from communications intercepts has pointed to Moscow's involvement during the investigation involving the FBI, CIA and other agencies, NBC reported, citing three unidentified US officials and two other people briefed on the probe.

The evidence, however, is not conclusive enough for the United States to assign blame publicly to Moscow, according to the NBC report.

FBI and CIA officials did not immediately return a request for comment on the report.

US officials said in July that they are still investigating health problems at the US embassy in Cuba, and do not know who or what was behind the mysterious illnesses, which began in 2016 and have affected 26 Americans.

The NBC reported that: The United States believes sophisticated electromagnetic weapons may have been used on government workers, possibly in conjunction with other technologies.

Symptoms have included hearing loss, tinnitus, vertigo, headaches and fatigue, a pattern consistent with "mild traumatic brain injury," State Department officials have said.

The State Department said in June it brought a group of diplomats home from Guangzhou, China, over concern they were suffering from a mysterious malady resembling brain injury.

Cuban officials, who are conducting their own investigation, have denied any involvement or knowledge of what was behind it.

The United States believes sophisticated electromagnetic weapons may have been used on government workers, possibly in conjunction with other technologies, NBC reported.

The US military has been trying to reverse-engineer the weapon or weapons used to harm the diplomats, including by testing various devices on animals, NBC said, citing Trump administration officials, congressional aides and others.

Part of the work is being done at the directed energy research program at Kirtland Air Force Base in New Mexico, where the military has giant lasers and laboratories to test high-power electromagnetic weapons, including microwaves, NBC said.



Workers board up a home while preparing for the arrival of Hurricane Florence, in Wrightsville Beach, yesterday.

Florence continues path to east coast

ANATOLIA

WASHINGTON: Hurricane Florence continued its path towards the US yesterday with the potential to cause catastrophic damage to the coasts along the mid-Atlantic and southeastern regions according to officials.

More than one million people have been issued evacuation orders along the coastal areas of Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, as the storm is not expected to weaken until it makes landfall tomorrow in the Carolinas.

Mayor Muriel Bowser declared a state of emergency in Washington DC as the city prepared for the storm. Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina and North Carolina have all declared states of emergencies.

"We want residents to prepare accordingly. Get to the grocery store. Make sure you have your medications. Make sure you have flashlights and batteries," Bowser said.

Forecasts expect the Florence to hit the Carolinas late tomorrow and stall, with rainfall expected to reach 20 inches or more in some areas.

Florence is currently at a Category 4 level, the second highest classification on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale, with winds currently at 209 km per hour.

If it remains at Category 4, Florence would be one the strongest hurricanes to make landfall in the continental US this far north.

The National Hurricane Center (NHC) said that the storm is expected to regain strength today and "is expected to be an extremely dangerous major hurricane through landfall".

Winds are expected to pick up and peak at around 241 kph, just shy of Category 5 status.

"This is a dangerous storm, this storm will and has the potential to cause loss of life," said Jeff Byard, the associate administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Florence is one of three storms currently in the Atlantic.

Gang members arrested in credit card fraud scheme

AP

SACRAMENTO: More than 30 purported street gang members have been charged with stealing more than $1m in what authorities said was an unusually sophisticated credit card fraud scheme.

Members and associates of the BullyBoys and the CoCo Boys street gangs based in the suburbs east of San Francisco defrauded hundreds of victims by breaking into dozens of medical and dental offices to steal credit card terminals and patient records, said state Attorney General Xavier Becerra and police chiefs from Northern California cities.

The 32 alleged gang members used the stolen terminals to process credit card returns, downloading them to debit cards, according to the 240-count indictment.

"It is easier today and it is more rewarding today to engage in identity theft and financial fraud than it is to go out there on the street and commit physical, violent crime," Becerra said. "It pays more at lower risk," though he alleged the gangs used the money to fund other illegal activities that are not included in the indictment.

The indictment handed down last month by a special Sacramento County-based statewide grand jury includes counts of conspiracy to commit grand theft; hacking, computer access and fraud, grand theft, burglary, and identity theft.

Three teens shot at in Chicago

AP

CHICAGO: A shooting near a high school on Chicago's South Side has left three teenagers seriously injured.

Chicago police Chief of Patrol Fred Waller said two people are in custody and a gun and casings have been recovered in the shooting around 4pm yesterday outside Chatham Academy High School in Burnside. Charges are pending, adding that someone got out of a car and shot at the male victims, aged 16, 17 and 18.

Principal Tony Qadir Lyons said the three were students at Chatham Academy. He says two of them ran back to the school and the third was found in an alley.

The 16-year-old old was shot in the shoulder, the 17-year-old was struck in the leg and the 18-year-old was wounded in the right arm and left armpit.



Remebering 1973 Chilean military coup

Images of late Chile's president Salvador Allende are seen inside of the session room at Congress marking the 45th anniversary of the 1973 Chilean military coup, in Valparaiso, Chile, yesterday.

Colombia seeks aid to cope with migrants surge

AFP

BOGOTA: Colombia lacks the capacity to face by itself a deluge of Venezuelan migrants fleeing their crisis-afflicted country, Bogota's top diplomat said yesterday.

Foreign Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo called instead for an international response.

More than 1.6 million Venezuelans have left their homeland since 2015 — most of them for Colombia — when economic troubles worsened, according to the United Nations.

Venezuelans suffer from shortages of essential goods including medicines and food, and the International Monetary Fund has predicted inflation in the South American country will reach one million percent this year.

Colombia "cannot deal with this situation alone," Trujillo said.

"We have made important efforts lately and they are going to continue but the extent of the crisis is such that we do not have sufficient capacity to respond" to the migrant flow without support, Trujillo told Caracol Radio.

Among the measures which Colombia's government seeks are: creation of a multilateral emergency fund and naming of a high-level United Nations official to coordinate the actions of Latin American countries.

"It's a problem that affects us particularly but it's a crisis that concerns the whole region, in view of the extent of this influx," the minister added.

Colombia, which shares 2,200 km of border with Venezuela, has taken in more than one million people from its neighbor and given most of them temporary resident status.

International court 'undeterred' after US sanctions threat

AFP

THE HAGUE: The International Criminal Court yesterday said its work would continue "undeterred" after Washington threatened to prosecute its judges if Americans are charged with war crimes committed in Afghanistan.

France and Germany also weighed in to support the Hague-based court after White House National Security Advisor John Bolton said the ICC was "already dead to us".

"The ICC, as a court of law, will continue to do its work undeterred, in accordance with those principles and the overarching idea of the rule of law," the tribunal said in a statement.

In a further show of support, the Hague-based court's overseeing body said it received "strong cooperation and backing" from its 123 member states as well as from other states, international organisations and civil society.

Key states spoke up to defend the ICC, set up in 2002 with jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute the world's worst crimes including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

"France, with its European partners, supports the ICC, both in its financial support and with its cooperation," the French foreign ministry said

"The court must be able to act and exercise its prerogatives unhindered, in an independent and impartial manner."

Germany's foreign ministry said on Twitter that "we are committed to the work of the ICC — in particular when it comes under fire".

Bolton, US President Donald Trump's hardline national security aide, on Monday threatened to arrest and sanction court officials should they move to charge any American who served in Afghanistan with war crimes.

He called the ICC "unaccountable" and "outright dangerous" to the United States, Israel and other allies, and said any probe of US service members would be "an utterly unfounded, unjustifiable investigation".

He also cited a recent move by Palestinian leaders to have Israeli officials prosecuted at the ICC for human rights violations.

"If the court comes after us, Israel or other US allies, we will not sit quietly," Bolton said.

The US was prepared to slap financial sanctions and criminal charges on officials of the court if they proceed against any Americans, he added.

"We will not cooperate with the ICC. We will provide no assistance to the ICC and we certainly will not join the ICC. We will let the ICC die on its own. After all, for all intents and purposes, the ICC is already dead to us."

But in response, the ICC declared itself an "independent and impartial judicial institution".

It also stressed that it would only investigate and prosecute crimes "when the States concerned fail to do so at all or genuinely."

In a separate statement, the court's overseeing body, the Assembly of States Parties (ASP) also pointed out that the ICC "recognises the primary jurisdiction of States to investigate and prosecute atrocity crimes".

But its president O-Gon Kwon added that the ASP "remains committed to uphold and defend the principles and values enshrined in the Rome Statute, including in particular the judicial independence of the court".

He said the court was "crucial for ensuring accountability for the gravest crimes under international law".

The court can investigate prosecute serious crimes but does not have the capacity to arrest suspects and depends on member states for their cooperation.

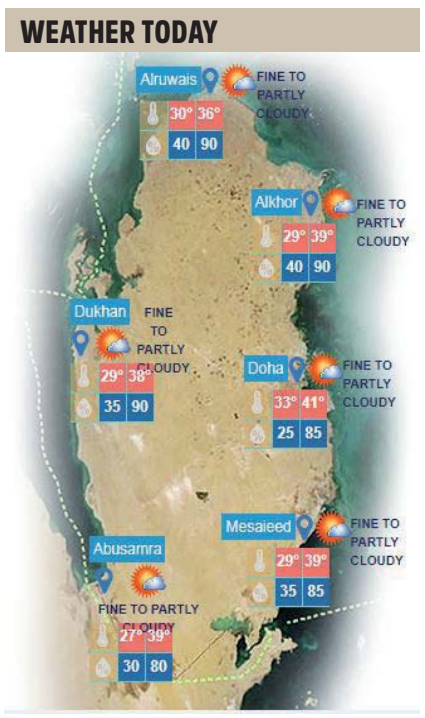
Most of its cases have involved crimes in Africa, a point Bolton seized on when he said that "despite ongoing ICC investigations, atrocities continue to occur in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Libya, Syria, and many other nations".

PRAYER TIMINGS



FAJR	04. 01 AM		
SHOROOK	05. 18 AM		
ZUHR	11. 30 AM	MAGHRIB	05. 44 PM
ASR	02. 59 PM	ISHA	07. 14 PM

WEATHER TODAY



32°C Minimum | **41°C** Maximum

Misty to foggy at places by early morning, becomes hot and relatively humid daytime with some clouds at times, humid by night.

HIGH TIDE 06:30 - 18:45 LOW TIDE 00:45 - 12:15

Courtesy: Qatar Meteorology Department



September 12, 1953

▲ John F. Kennedy, U.S. Senator and future President, married Jacqueline Lee Bouvier, then a photographer for the Washington Times-Herald

1848: Switzerland became a federal republic under a new constitution

1953: Nikita Khrushchev became First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

1958: The world's first integrated circuit, or microchip, was demonstrated in the United States

2002: Archaeologists discovered around 100 skeletons in Lithuania, believed to be Napoleonic soldiers killed on the retreat from Moscow

Picture: Getty Images © GRAPHIC NEWS

AZF-THR pact to create sports medicine centre

AMNA PERVAIZ RAO
THE PENINSULA



Mohammed Khalifa Al Suwaidi (right), CEO of AFZ, and Dr Steven Singleton, Chief Medical Officer at THR, exchange documents during the signing ceremony in the presence of Dr. Abdulaziz Al Kuwari (back right), CEO of Aspetar, and Thomas Donohue, President and CEO of US Chamber of Commerce. PIC: QASSIM RAHMATULLAH / THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF) has signed an MoU with Texas Health Resources (THR) to create a joint centre of excellence focused on research, training, performance and sports medicine in the United States.

The new partnership aims to create a sports medicine centre of excellence in North Texas. The MoU was signed at Aspetar's headquarters by Dr. Abdulaziz Al Kuwari, CEO of Aspetar, and Dr. Steven Singleton, Chief Medical Officer at THR.

During the event, Mohammed Khalifa Al Suwaidi, CEO of AZF and Director General of Aspetar, told *The Peninsula*: "We are proud to say that now we are in a position to exchange our expertise on this level. We have signed the agreement today and it will be our target to complete the process before 2026. Mainly we will focus on three areas which include, research, educational and clinical."

"The timing of the agreement couldn't be better with Qatar being a host of the FIFA World Cup in 2022 and North Texas being a site for matches when the US hosts the World Cup in 2026. For us, this collaboration furthers our progress towards achieving AZF vision to become the Reference in Sports Excellence Worldwide by 2020," Al Suwaidi said in a statement.

Talking to *The Peninsula*, Thomas Donohue, President and CEO of US Chamber of Commerce, said: "What brought this collaboration between AZF and THR together is a group of visionaries in Qatar who were aware that the world soccer events will be held here. They had a rich background in sports, medicine, surgeries and rehabilitation and put all that together to build such an example. They knew what they needed then brought a facility from the US that is rich with great doctors and surgeons, and this partnership is what is going to make this work."

During the event, Dr Steven said: "We're committed to advancing our sports medicine programme in North Texas and are excited about what the future holds for athletes in the area. An organisation like Aspire has a strong track record of sports-medicine research, education and advanced orthopedic treatments within an internationally-recognised programme"

Building off the performance, treatment, rehab and research initiatives Aspetar, a member organisation of Aspire Zone Foundation, has undertaken to be a global leader in sports medicine and exercise science in advance of the Qatar hosted 2022 FIFA World Cup, the proposed affiliation will be designed to achieve similar global and regional recognition in advance of the North America hosted 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Delegation from US included also Khush Chosky, SVP and Head of Middle East Program at US Chamber of Commerce, Chris Roberti, Chief of Staff and Senior Vice-President at US Chamber of Commerce, Steve Lutes, Director Middle East Program at US Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Steven Singleton, Chief Medical Medical Office, Texas Health Dallas — USA, Thomas Donohue Jr, Founder and CEO of Adelphi Capital and Gareth Moore, VP of Adelphi Capital.

Most EU countries miss air quality targets

AFP

BRUSSELS: Most EU countries fail to meet the bloc's air quality standards and more than 1,000 Europeans die prematurely each day, ten times more than in road accidents, a watchdog said yesterday.

The European Court of Auditors (ECA), the European Union body which scrutinises how the bloc spends its budget, said pollution's toll on health in Bulgaria and other eastern European countries was even worse than in Asian giants China and India.

It said the failures in the 28-nation bloc were all the more glaring as some EU guidelines were weaker than those suggested by the World Health Organisation.

"Air pollution is the biggest environmental risk to health in the European Union," said Janusz Wojciechowski, the member of the Luxembourg-based ECA responsible for the report.

- "Considerable impacts" - "In recent decades, EU policies have contributed to emission reductions, but air quality has not improved at the same rate and there are still considerable impacts on public health," he added.

The report blamed most of the 400,000 premature annual deaths in the bloc on high levels of particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide and ground level ozone.

It presented a chart showing that Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia and Hungary suffer higher numbers of "lost years of healthy life from ambient air pollution" than China and India, which have drawn most of the global attention.

The damage to health in Romania was slightly better than China's but worse than India's, the chart showed. Lithuania and Poland were not far behind.

The study cited WHO figures for 2012 where Bulgaria had nearly 2.5 lost years of healthy life for every 100 inhabitants and Hungary around 1.8, compared with 1.7 lost years for China and about 1.6 for India.

The ECA, which looks for wasteful spending, said direct EU funding can boost air quality, but added that funded projects "were not always sufficiently well targeted." It also warned that air pollution may be worse than estimated because it may not have been monitored in the right places.

The ECA said member states "continue to breach air quality limits frequently" despite legal action from the European Commission, the EU executive arm.

Back pain linked to risky behaviours in teenagers: Study

IANS

SYDNEY: Does your adolescent son or daughter suffer from back pain often? Beware, he or she may be more likely to have bad behaviours and report problems like anxiety and depression.

Although often dismissed as trivial and fleeting, adolescent back pain is responsible for substantial health care use, school absence, and interference with day-to-day activities in some children.

The findings showed that the rising frequency of pain increasing the proportion of participants reporting smoking, drinking, and missing school rose.

For example, 14-15 year olds that experienced pain more than once a week were 2-3 times more likely to have drunk alcohol or smoked in the past month than those who rarely or never had pain.

Similarly, students that experienced pain more than once a week were around twice as likely to have missed school in the previous term.

The trend with anxiety and depression was less clear, although there was a marked difference between the children who reported no pain, and those who reported frequent pain, the researchers said.

"Findings like this provide an argument that we should be including pain in the broader conversation about adolescent health," said lead author Steven Kamper from the University of Sydney in Australia.

"Unfortunately our understanding of the causes and impacts of pain in this age group is quite limited, the area is badly in need of more research," Kamper added.

The team used data collected from approximately 6,500 teenagers. Adolescent back pain may play a role in characterising poor overall health throughout life.



Nature's farmers

A bird picks seeds from a withered sunflower yesterday in Ertingen, southern Germany.

'The Nun' rakes up $53.8m at North American box office

AFP

LOS ANGELES: Horror movie "The Nun," a spinoff from "The Conjuring" series, dominated the North American box office in its opening weekend, raking in $53.8m and becoming the latest box office win for Warner Bros.

The movie, about a young novice about to take her final vows and a priest sent by the Vatican to probe the death of a young nun in Romania, unseated another Warner hit — "Crazy Rich Asians" — which had taken the No. 1 spot at the box office for three weeks in a row, box office tracker Exhibitor Relations said.

"We knew heading into the weekend that anticipation for 'The Nun' was extremely high across multiple demos, but these results surpassed all our expectations," Jeff Goldstein, head of domestic distribution for Warner Bros., told Variety.

Vigilante action film "Peppermint," starring Jennifer Garner as a mother seeking revenge against the drug cartel she blames for killing her husband and daughter, grabbed the number two spot with $13.4m in ticket sales.

"Crazy Rich Asians," with its nearly all-Asian cast led by Henry Golding and Constance Wu, came in third with $13.1m.

Another Warner film, "The Meg," came in fourth with $6.1m in ticket sales.

Japanese humanoid mini-robot to work as tour guide

IANS

TOKYO: A Japanese humanoid mini-robot called Robohon will work as a tour guide in Kyoto through a new service offered by city taxis to cope with the growing number of foreigners visiting the country. The service, which will be available from September 22 to March 31, 2019, will allow travellers to buy a tour in which the robot will be their guide and acquaint them with local history among other things, said the robot's creator Sharp in a statement yesterday.

The package is a joint initiative by Sharp, taxi operator MK and JTB travel agency. It will offer Japanese, Chinese and English language services, Efe news reported. In addition to listening to the robot while in the taxi, customers can get out of the vehicle with Robohon, which is 19.5 cm tall and weighs 390 grams.

Between January and July, Japan received 18,730,900 foreign tourists, 13.9 per cent more inter-annually during the same period in 2017, according to figures of the Japan National Tourism Organization.

Kyoto was last year's fourth favourite destination for travellers after Tokyo, Osaka and Chiba.