The Peninsula
Local focus, Global vision





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Qatar, Pakistan agree to further strengthen trade ties

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Al Rumaihi on target as Qatar clinch Olympic quota for Tokyo Games





Thursday 7 November 2019 | 10 Rabia | 1441 www.thepeninsula.qa Volume 24 | Number 8068 | 2 Riyals



Amir's speech reflects Qatar's achievements: Cabinet

QNA
DOHA

The Prime Minister H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani, who chaired the Cabinet meeting, directed Their Excellencies the Ministers to implement the directives of His Highness the Amir in his speech and prepare the necessary plans and programmes.

The Cabinet yesterday hailed the speech of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani at the 48th ordinary session of the Shura Council on Tuesday.

The Cabinet also welcomed the important implications in the speech at the internal and external levels that reflected the extent of what has been achieved in various fields, and outlined the features of the next stage and the effort it requires for the homeland while adhering to the values and principles, in order to continue the development and building process under H H the Amir's sound directives in accordance with the Qatar National Vision 2030.

The Prime Minister and Interior Minister, H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani, chaired the Cabinet's regular meeting held at the Amiri Diwan. Following the meeting, Minister of Justice and Acting Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, H E Dr. Issa bin Saad Al Jafali Al Nuaimi gave the details about the topics on its agenda.

The Cabinet noted that H H the Amir's lofty speech included stances towards regional and international issues, and emphasised keenness to promote security, peace and stability in the region and the world.

The Cabinet also appreciated H H's speech that referred to the preparation of the Shura Council elections and the necessary draft laws.

Moreover, the Cabinet expressed pride in what H H the Amir said about the successes and achievements on the economic field and in the provision of services and decent standard of living, despite the unjust siege, stressing that all these have been achieved thanks to God and to H H's directives as well as the dedicated efforts of citizens and residents.

H E the Prime Minister directed Their Excellencies the Ministers to implement the directives of His Highness the Amir in his speech and prepare the necessary plans and programmes.

The Cabinet also approved a draft law on combating cover-up of non-Qatari business, economic and professional activities in violation of the law.

The preparation of the draft law came to replace the current Law No. 25 of 2004, and in the context of modernizing legislation, creating an investment environment based on transparency, and consolidating the practice of activities in accordance with the provisions of the laws in force in the State.

It also approved a draft law amending some provisions of Law No. 15 of 2014 on the organization of charitable works.

The Cabinet approved a draft decision of the Cabinet on the establishment and formation of the Standing Committee to supervise the management of central markets.

The draft provides for the establishment of the Standing Committee to supervise the management of central markets at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and specializes in several functions, including: proposing the necessary policies and programs for the development of central markets and raise their efficiency.

It also approved the Cabinet's draft decision to adopt the National Qualifications Framework, which is a mandatory reference tool for identifying, classifying and organizing national academic and professional qualifications according to the learning levels prepared according to specific criteria. It is designed to meet all aspects and levels of structured education in Qatar, including general, higher, vocational, technical and vocational education by providing a reference context for the design and development of a range of new and flexible qualifications that meet the needs of the State, the labor market and individuals, and ensure that those with the required skills in the field of employment. ➔P4

Prime Minister meets Finland's Minister



Prime Minister and Interior Minister H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani met yesterday with Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Finland, Ville Skinnari, and his accompanying delegation on the occasion of their visit to the country. They discussed bilateral relations and prospects for enhancing and developing them, as well as a number of regional and international issues of common concern.

61,000 receive seasonal influenza vaccination within a month

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The Ministry of Public Health announced that 61,000 people of different age groups have been vaccinated against seasonal influenza within a month since the beginning of national vaccination campaign on October 4.

The Ministry of Public Health called on all citizens and residents to take an initiative and receive the seasonal influenza vaccine, which is available free of charge in all primary health care centers, as well as in more than 50 hospitals, private health centers and private and semi-governmental clinics, especially with the approaching winter season and a significant drop in temperatures. Vaccination helps prevent complications from influenza, especially in high-risk populations.

The ministry stressed the importance of parents to vaccinate their children, where statistics of the Ministry indicate that children were the most vulnerable to complications of influenza during the past years.

People who are at high risk for complications of influenza are also advised to ensure access to seasonal influenza vaccine, including people with chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, heart and lung disease, kidney and cancer patients, the elderly (over 65 years of age), children between 6 months and 5 years old, pregnant women, and health workers. ➔P4

Qatar praised for labour reforms at ILO Governing Body meetings

QNA/GENEVA

The State of Qatar took part in the meetings of the 337th session of the Governing Body of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Geneva with a delegation from the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labor and Social Affairs headed by the Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, H E Yousef bin Mohammed Al Othman Fakhroo. The ILO Governing Body reviewed the legislation and procedures carried out by Qatar in the labor market.

Representatives of the governments of the participating countries, including the European Union, the USA, Switzerland, Canada and representatives of the trade unions, praised the achievements made by Qatar, stressing that Qatar is a model for the region in light of the significant development in labor laws. H E Yousef bin Mohammed Al Othman Fakhroo thanked the speakers and highlighted the legislation and the developments achieved by the State of Qatar in accordance with the strategic objectives of its National Vision 2030. ➔P3

Al Jazeera is one of the most popular channels on YouTube

Al Jazeera channel has received the 'YouTube Silver Shield' in recognition of the YouTube company for the most popular, fast and growing channels.





THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Al Jazeera channel has received the 'YouTube Silver Shield' in recognition of the YouTube company for the most popular, fast and growing channels.

According to the YouTube statistics, the Saudi public has been ranked first in the total number of viewers of the content of the Al Jazeera. Also, the content related to Egyptian news and investigative programs was the most attractive to subscribers in the third quarter of 2019.

An important fact revealed from the statistics is that the youth from the age of 25-34-years make the top category of the audience of Al Jazeera viewers on YouTube. The statistics also showed a big chance of attracting Arab women audience.

Commenting on this, Susan Wojcicki, YouTube's CEO said: "We know that you did not make this achievement for the prizes, but you did it because you have the motivation for creativity and to share content and because you found interested audience." Al Jazeera is expected to launch three new programs next week targeting Arab women and youth with a new view. The subscribers of Al Jazeera on YouTube have reached 4.5 million.

Hotel occupancy rises on falling room rates

SACHIN KUMAR
THE PENINSULA

Qatar's hospitality sector has posted strong performance in August with hotels witnessing significant rise in their occupancy rates, helped by reduction in room rates.

The occupancy rate in hotels across Qatar increased to 63 percent in during January-August period in 2019 compared to 58 percent in same period previous year, according to Planning and Statistics Authority data.

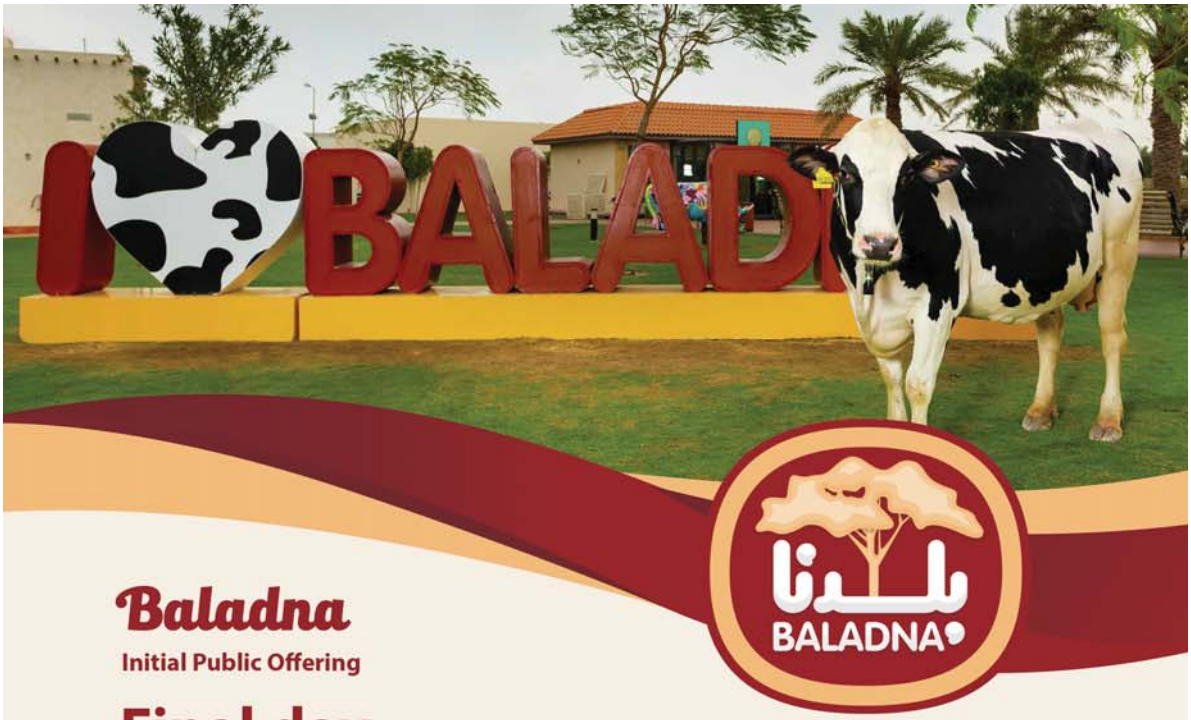
"The major reason behind improvement in occupancy ratio is reduction in room rates. Occupancy ratio is inversely related to room rates. Lower room rates increase occupancy while high room rates reduce occupancy in hotels," Marketing Manager of a hotel told *The Peninsula*.

The reduction in room rates was visible across all the categories of hotels. According to Planning and Statistics Authority data, the Average Daily Rate across all star categories on average declined 5 percent year-on-year till August 2019.

Rising number of tourists was another supporting factor which worked in favour of hotels. Qatar welcomed 1.35 million visitors during the first eight months of 2019, posting an annual increase of 11 percent.

Visitor numbers have showed improvement over past months. Around 1.19 million visitors came to Qatar during the first seven months of 2019, reflecting a 10.7 percent increase, compared to the same period in 2018. Two-star and one-star hotels were the biggest beneficiaries in terms of attracting more guests. These hotels witnessed highest increase in occupancy as their rates jumped to 74 percent during January-August period this year, compared to 60 percent during same period in 2018.

Three-star hotels also saw significant rise in occupancy. The occupancy rate for such hotels increased to 75 percent during January-August this year compared to 67 percent in same period previous year. The occupancy in four-star hotels increased to 65 percent from 59 percent, while five-star hotels saw their occupancy rising to 59 percent from 56 percent in first eight months of this year, compared to same period in 2018. ➔P4



Baladna

Initial Public Offering

Final day
of subscription period

Baladna is a unique Qatari growth story with strong potential to continue its journey. This IPO gives Qatari nationals an opportunity to support the national development and share in the future success of Qatar's leading dairy and beverage producer.

Key IPO Facts

- The Baladna Q.P.S.C. IPO is offering 1,425,750,000 Shares at an Offer Price of QAR 1.01 per Share
- New, strategic investors already committed to 23% of shares
- Up to 52% of share capital available to eligible individual and corporate investors
- Existing owners to retain 25% ownership; no sale of existing shares
- Proceeds will be used to strengthen the company's balance sheet
- A fatwa has been issued declaring that subscription in the shares of the Company is sharia-compliant

Key investment highlights

- Baladna is a self-sufficient dairy company established to become the #1 Qatari dairy and beverage company
- Baladna has a strong operational performance and potential cash flow generation capacity with strong margins
- Baladna has state of the art production facility and infrastructure with fully deployed capital investments
- Baladna has strong support from major stakeholders
- Baladna is a premium branded and well recognized household name in Qatar with the dominant market share in dairy and beverage products
- This is a one of a kind opportunity to establish a local market leader in the fresh dairy market and contribute to Qatar's 2030 Vision and the National Food Security Program

How to Subscribe?

1. Check you are eligible to participate
2. Learn about Baladna at our website and via the prospectus
3. Check you have all of the required documents to allow you to subscribe
4. Submit a subscription form at participating Receiving Banks before 7th November 2019

Eligible Investors

The IPO is open to Qatari citizens and Qatari companies with a commercial registration certificate issued by MOCI.

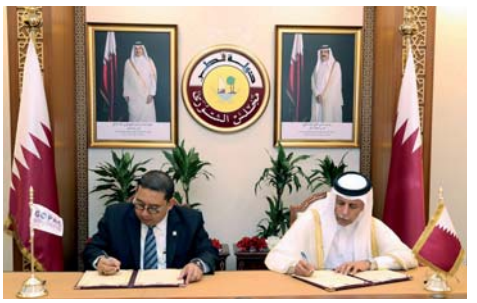
For more information about the IPO visit:

www.baladna.com baladnaco baladnaco

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Speaker of Shura Council meets Chairman of GOPAC





The Speaker of the Shura Council, H E Ahmed bin Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud, with the Chairman of Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption, Dr. Fadli Zon, in Doha, yesterday. RIGHT: H E the Speaker and Dr. Fadli Zon signing the MoU.

QNA
DOHA

The Speaker of the Shura Council, H E Ahmed bin Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud, met yesterday with the Chairman of Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC), Dr. Fadli Zon, and his accompanying delegation.

The meeting reviewed the functions of the organisation and its global role in fighting corruption. Following the meeting, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Qatar's hosting of the organization's seventh conference on December 8 and 9 was signed. The organisation includes parliamentarians from 106 countries and 55 national branches around the world. The MoU was signed for the Shura Council by H E the Speaker and for the organisation by Dr. Fadli Zon.

Doha's hosting of this important conference comes in recognition of the role of the State of Qatar in combating corruption and in support of the great efforts of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in the fight against corruption and the establishment of transparency and good governance.

OFFICIAL NEWS

Qatar strongly condemns stabbing incident in Jordan

DOHA: The State of Qatar has voiced its strong condemnation and denunciation of the stabbing incident which took place in the City of Jerash in northwest Jordan, and led to the injury of three Mexican tourists, a female Swiss tourist, a police officer and tour guides. In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated the firm position of Qatar on rejecting violence and terrorism, regardless of motives and reasons. The statement affirmed Qatar's full solidarity with the Government of Jordan and its support for any measure it takes to maintain security. The statement expressed Qatar's wishes of a speedy recovery to the injured. QNA

Prince of Monaco receives Qatari Ambassador

QNA
MONACO

HSH Prince Albert II of the Principality of Monaco received credentials of Sheikh Ali bin Jassim Al Thani as non-resident Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Qatar to the Principality of Monaco.

The Ambassador conveyed Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani's greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to Prince Albert and his wishes of more progress and prosperity to the government and people of Monaco.

For his side, HSH Prince Albert II entrusted the Ambassador to convey his greetings to H H the Amir, and his wishes of more prosperity and progress to the people of Qatar.

He also wished the Ambassador success in his new duties and in promoting and strengthening relations of friendship and cooperation between the State of Qatar and the Principality of Monaco.

298 applicants for Scientific Excellence Award 2020

QNA/DOHA



The total number of applicants for the Scientific Excellence Award 2020 in its 13th edition reached 298 for all 9 categories, covering all educational levels, public and private schools and teachers.

The CEO of the Award and Secretary-General of Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, Dr. Hamda Hassan Al Sulaiti, explained that the number of students applying for the student distinguished category for the primary stage reached 81, 37 students for the preparatory stage, 41 students for the category of high school graduates, and 12 students for outstanding scientific research, and the number of university graduates applying for the university student category reached 51, of which 28 graduates from Qatar University and 23 students from private and military universities. Al Sulaiti added that the evaluation and arbitration of the files will be during the period from November 10 to December 12 by the various arbitration committees, and winners will be announced during the month of January, while the ceremony will be held on March 3, 2020.

The Award is a pillar of the educational system in Qatar. It aims to honour the distinguished Qatari students, and it is also a pathway that fosters creativity and innovation among students and educational institutions.

The award works to deepen the concepts of excellence and creativity through the adoption of international standards, the implementation of specific programmes and integration of individual and institutional efforts to improve the outcomes of the educational process.

Justice Ministry launches 2nd level of programme to prepare legal trainers

QNA/DOHA

The Center for Legal and Judicial Studies at the Ministry of Justice launched 2nd level of the legal and judicial training program for a number of employees in various governmental institutes.

The programme aims to prepare legal trainers in various legal and judicial fields, and to develop their skills by providing them with advanced and modern skills and by introducing them to the basic concepts of training and objectives.

The programme will provide them with the knowledge to enable them to prepare, implement and evaluate the training program, enabling them to set training goals and design courses on scientific bases with high-level skills.

In order to develop the skills of participants, practical modules for the training sessions were designed including setting the training timeframe, the time spent on the training session, the objectives of the training session and the main activities involved, and how to conduct the training activities and put them in the training manual. On the other hand, the Center also organized a specialized course in the field of administrative investigation and investigation records, for a number of legal officers in government ministries and institutes. This course aimed at developing the skills of participants in the field of carrying out administrative investigation tasks, and to demonstrate the necessary requirements by identifying the administrative investigation methods, controls and formulation, the procedures and the management skills of the administrative investigation. It will develop the trainees' abilities and skills.

MME announces service achievements

QNA
DOHA

The Ministry of Municipality and Environment (MME) announced that it lifted about 11,329 tonnes of household waste, 6,164 tonnes of mixed waste with some trees, 3,445 damaged frames and 250 dead animals in three months.

The Ministry said in a report on what the services department accomplished during the third quarter of this year, that it withdrew 134,491,020 gallons of sewage, and implemented 2,774 requests for insect control, 120 requests for rodent control, 14489 insect control patrols in public places, and 1148 rodents control patrols.

The efforts of the gardens section of the services department in the Municipality of Umm Salal resulted in planting 35 trees of various types and cutting about 222,200 m 2 of the green areas in the gardens and streets of the municipality, in addition to responding to 121 requests for the service of pruning trees.In the third quarter of this year, 900 trees were fertilised in the parallel street with a quantity of (3600) kg of processed fertilizer, in addition, weeding works were carried out in the municipal sector with an area of (10.000 m2).

Qatar labour laws globally praised

FROM PAGE 1



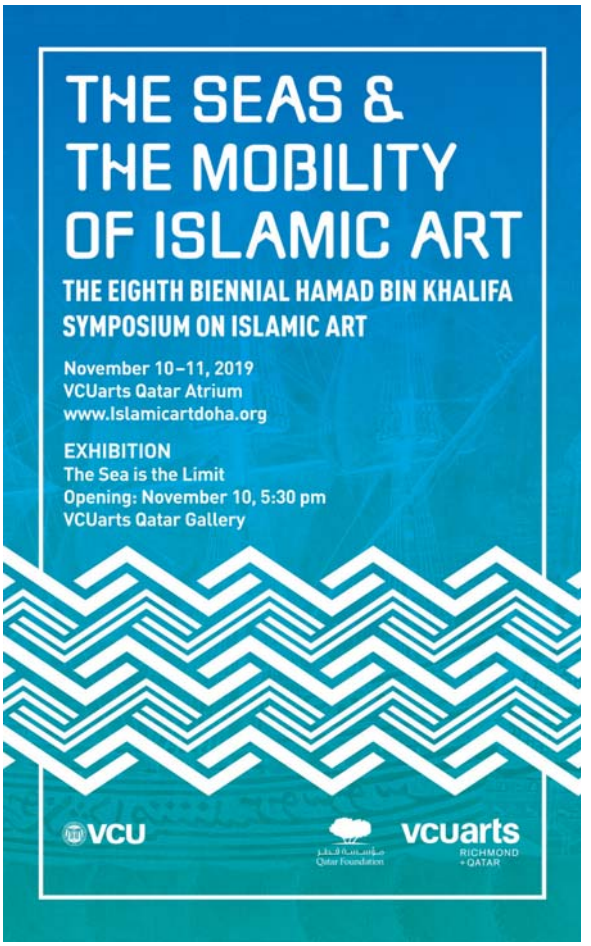
The Minister underlined the keenness of Qatar on creating a safe, investment-stimulating and balanced working environment for the benefit of the Qatari labour market and the three production parties, stressing that Qatar will continue cooperation and partnerships with friendly countries and international trade unions.

Representing Qatari businessmen, Eng. Nasser Al Meer has participated in the meetings of board of directors of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland.

Qatari businessmen, Eng. Nasser Al Meer **(pictured)** said that the ILO meetings reviewed the Qatar's report as well as laws and procedures adopted by the government in terms of labour and expatriating labourers.

He noted that attendees paid tribute to Qatar's laws and legislatives issued in this regard; noting that they also praised cooperation established between Qatar and the international organization terming is as a model for countries of the region. He also said that businesspersons representing participating countries eluded efforts and the role played by Qatar Chamber in enhancing cooperation with Qatari government for developing laws related to labour market.

Al Meer pointed out that businessmen, Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs and ILO Office in Qatar agreed to hold seminars to raise awareness on laws related to labourers in cooperation with Qatar Chamber. It discussed the approval of the ILO draft work programme and results for the two years 2020 and 2021, as well as the employment and social protection programmes, social dialogue among the three working parties. The agenda also included the ILO development cooperation in support of the objectives of the sustainable development as well as the legal issues, international labour standards, annual evaluation reports and issues related to personnel affairs of the organisation.



Amir's speech reflects Qatar's achievements: Cabinet

FROM PAGE 1

The Cabinet then approved its draft decision to add the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating Terrorist Financing Unit to the units comprising the Ministry of Justice and to define its competencies.

The Cabinet moreover approved the following: A draft memorandum of understanding for cooperation in the field of charitable and humanitarian work between the Regulatory Authority for Charitable Activities (RACA) in the State of Qatar and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor in the State of Kuwait.

A draft agreement between the governments of the State of Qatar and Hungary for cooperation in the fields of youth and sports. A draft agreement on cultural cooperation between the governments of the State of Qatar and Hungary.

After that, the Cabinet reviewed the letter of H E the QCB Deputy Governor and Chairman of the National Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Committee on the proposal to criminalise the smuggling of migrants in accordance with the UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the views of the Ministry of the Interior in this regard, and took the appropriate decision thereon.

NHRC Chairman briefs UN delegation on method of work and its objectives

QNA
DOHA

The Chairman of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), Dr. Ali bin Smaikh Al Marri, met with a visiting delegation of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

During the meeting held yesterday at the NHRC's headquarters, they discussed cooperation on issues of common interest.

Al Marri briefed on the National Human Rights Committee, its objectives, competencies and methods of work in receiving complaints and ways to resolve them. He also discussed in detail the terms of reference of the monitoring committee of the Legal Department of the NHRC and its surprise visits to a number of State facilities, including penal and correctional institutions to inspect their compliance with human rights standards.



The Chairman of the National Human Rights Committee, Dr. Ali bin Smaikh Al Marri, during a discussion with the delegation of UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at its headquarters in Doha, yesterday.

61,000 receive influenza vaccination in a month

FROM PAGE 1

The Ministry pointed out that the high rates of immunisation coverage comes in light of the great efforts exerted by the Ministry and all relevant authorities, whether in the government or private sector to ensure the arrival of vaccinations for the entire population.

In addition, there is a high level of awareness among the population of the importance of vaccination and its effectiveness in the prevention of seasonal influenza and their knowledge gained during the past years of its levels of safety. Vaccination teams also carry out several vaccination campaigns for workers in many institutions, authorities, universities, educational institutions, private companies and hotels.

Al Attiyah meets US Defence official



The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs, H E Dr. Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah, met with the Director of the Defence Intelligence Agency, Lt. Gen. Robert Ashley, in the Joint Base AnacostiaBolling in Washington, DC, yesterday. The meeting discussed the bilateral relations in the intelligence and security field and ways of enhancing them. The meeting was attended by the Qatari military attache in Washington Brigadier General Nawaf bin Mubarak Al Thani.

MoTC announces list of winners of Entrepreneurship Zone Awards

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The Ministry of Transport and Communications (MoTC) has announced the list of winners of the Entrepreneurship Zone Awards held on the sidelines of the Qatar IT Conference & Exhibition (QITCOM 2019) that concluded on November 1.

The Entrepreneurial Zone Awards comprised of three distinct awards: the "Programming Camp" (Codecamp), the "Creative Ideas Camp" and the "Startup Hub" awards.

Five teams – Hey Qatar, BareMetal, Beyond Barriers, Cereal Killers and NAZARIYA – won the CodeCamp Award out of 47 teams that came up with smart solutions to challenges put forward by companies and institutions such as the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC), Ooredoo, Mada, Hamad Medical Corporation, Qatar Airways, and Hamad International Airport. Each team received a cash prize of QR25,000. The "Creative Ideas Camp" award went to Retail AR (1st place), Educarso (2nd place), Skip Cash (3rd place), Smart Shuttle (4th place), while Noor ranked fifth. The winners were awarded cash prizes of QR125,000, QR100,000, QR75,000, QR50,000 and QR25,000 respectively. About 50 companies out of about 200 innovative ideas, who initially applied, were selected to compete in the camp.

In addition to the cash prizes, technical and operational support will also be provided to the winners of the Creative Ideas Camp, as well as a free workspace to enable them to transform their digital ideas into reality. The results of the voting-based "Startup Hub" award were as follows: the first place went to "Carts" from Qatar with 964 votes, the second place to "Bleems" from Qatar with 410 votes, and the third place to "UpSales" from Sudan with 369 votes. Live Caller from Georgia was fourth with 351 votes and Wastezon from Rwanda came fifth with 297 votes.

Reem Al Mansoori, Assistant Undersecretary, Digital Society Development Sector, MoTC, said: "Entrepreneurship is a key component in building a vibrant ICT sector and building a knowledge-based economy. We are therefore keen to promote a culture of innovation, learning and entrepreneurship. This year, we have received very appreciable and high-quality participation from aspiring developers and entrepreneurs. Some winning companies and teams have had opportunities to receive incubation and finance as well as build strong relationships with potential partners. We congratulate all the winners and encourage them to continue to innovate and excel."

Duha Ali Al Buhendi, Digital Incubation Center Manager said: "This year, the Innovation Theater has attracted more people and achieved more results than the previous edition."

مؤسسة قطر
Qatar Foundation

INVITATION TO TENDER

S/N	Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee	Tender Bond	Bid Closing
1.	QF/2019/PD-SS/27816	Operations and Maintenance Support Contract for SIDRA Medicine on Call-off basis for 5 Years	QAR 2,000	QAR 2,000,000	15 December 2019 at 2PM

- The Tender Document can be obtained against cash payment of non-refundable tender fees along with Company Authorization letter, copy of valid Commercial Registration (CR) and QID copy of the nominated person collecting the Tender Document. A cash receipt voucher can be obtained from the "Finance Directorate, located at Qatar Foundation Headquarters Building, First Floor, Room No. 1.116 prior to the collection of the Tender Document.
- Complete copy of the company commercial registration with names of the individual partners should be submitted. For companies with corporate partners /owners, the commercial registration of the corporate partners reflecting its individual owners should be submitted together as part of the tender requirement.
- Authorization letter to collect tender document must be issued on company letterhead nominating the person collecting the tender document including two contact details (i.e. name and email address) of the assigned tender focal person.
- The Tender Document can be obtained from the Limited Tender Committee, located at Qatar Foundation, Office No.6, SB1, Ground Floor, QF Education City (Opposite to LAS Building)
- **Collection Schedule**: From Sunday, November 10, 2019 to Thursday, November 14, 2019, 9AM until 2PM.
- An offer must be valid for 120 days from bid closing date.
- An offer must be accompanied by a bank guarantee (tender bond) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for 120 days from the bid closing date.
- The successful Tenderer shall submit a performance bond equivalent to 5% of the Bid Value, valid for Ninety (90) days + Four Hundred (400) days of maintenance period after the Contract Completion Date as per the specimen provided in the tender document.
- Bids must be submitted to: LIMITED TENDER COMMITTEE, located at Qatar Foundation, Office No.6, Sholla Building- 01 (SB1), Ground Floor, QF Education City (Opposite to LAS Building), by the date and time stated above.

Qatar, DR Congo establish diplomatic ties

QNA/NEW YORK

A signing ceremony for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Qatar and Congo took place yesterday at the headquarters of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations in New York. The Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, H E Ambassador Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al Thani, signed on behalf of Qatar, while Permanent Representative of Congo to the United Nations, Ambassador Ignace Gata Mavita wa Lufuta, signed on behalf of his country.

The two sides underlined the keenness on strengthening and developing the friendly relations and cooperation in the political, economic, trade and cultural fields. The two sides stressed the importance of establishing bilateral relations in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter, and expressed their confidence that the establishment of diplomatic relations will contribute to the development of the bilateral cooperation and the consolidation of world peace.

International Junior Science Olympics 2019 launches its official website

QNA
DOHA

The 16th edition of the Higher Committee of the International Junior Science Olympics 2019 in Qatar has launched its official website ijso2019.edu.gov.qa under the slogan "Towards a Generation Enjoying the Skills of Tomorrow"

The website includes details of the Olympiad, that will be held in Qatar from December 3 to 11, 2019. Qatar being the first Arab country to host this important event, the website will also have links to the news of the Olympiad.

Qatar is organising this international tournament, which is considered one of the most important international scientific competitions for students, to spread the spirit of excellence in science and celebrate talented students and motivate them to develop their talents in the field of sciences.

Qatar has been participating in this tournament for over three, where it participated in the 2016 tournament as an observer country, and then in 2017 in the Netherlands and 2018 in Botswana where bronze medals were win in both competitions. As the host country, Qatar will participate with four teams, each with six students, all of which are currently undergoing continuous training in preparation for competitions to win advanced positions.

Qatar students to take part in WRO2019

QNA/DOHA

A delegation of 12 students from Qatar schools will participate in the World Robot Olympiad (WRO2019) in the Hungarian capital Budapest, from November 8 to 10. The students are from three schools: Hamza Bin Abdul Muttalib Independent Preparatory School, Ali Bin Jassim Bin Mohammed Al Thani Independent Secondary Boys School and Khalid Bin Ahmed Independent Preparatory School for Boys.

Hotel occupancy rises on falling room rates

FROM PAGE 1

The hospitality sector also saw rise in the number of hotel rooms in the third quarter of this year. Qatar's hotel inventory stood at 27,288 keys at the end of September 2019, spread across a total of 132 establishments.

Muntazah Plaza Hotel in Al Mansoura, Swiss Belinn in Al Sadd and Al Messila Resort & Spa in Al Messila were unveiled, adding a total of 398 keys during the third quarter of this year.

Safeguarding Qatar's intangible cultural heritage highlighted

RAYNALD C RIVERA
THE PENINSULA

In 2008, Qatar ratified the 2003 Unesco Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and since then three elements of Qatar's ICH have been inscribed on the Unesco Representative List of the ICH of Humanity — the Majlis, a cultural and social space; Arabic coffee, a symbol of generosity and Falconry, a living human heritage.

Vital elements of Qatar's intangible cultural heritage need to be urgently preserved and safeguarded, and their continuity ensured amid the rapid development the country witnesses, a panel of national experts has stressed.

This was underlined during a panel discussion organised on Tuesday by Qatar Museums (QM) and University College London (UCL) at the National Museum of Qatar, which brought together leading Qatari experts including Hamad Al Muhannadi of Ministry of Culture and Sports, Dr. Mariam Ibrahim Al-Hammadi of Qatar University, and Dr. Abdulla Mohammed Al Sulaiti of Qatar Museums.

Moderated by Fernando Brugman of Unesco Regional Office, the panel on "Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Qatar: Current Scenarios, Challenges and Future Perspectives" was introduced by Prof. Federico Lenzerini of University of Siena, Italy, who said appropriate safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is also necessary for the State to preserve its own cultural inheritance and the value of multiculturalism and cultural diversity.

In 2008, Qatar ratified the 2003 Unesco Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and since then three elements of Qatar's ICH have been inscribed jointly with several other countries on the Unesco Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity namely the Majlis, a cultural and social space; Arabic coffee, a symbol of generosity and Falconry, a living human heritage.

Al-Hammadi said important elements of the country's intangible cultural heritage should be identified and safeguarded and their continuity within the community should be ensured.

"We should raise awareness on the meaning and importance of our intangible cultural heritage and their relationship with the community and how it is vital to identity," she said, adding safeguarding both tangible and intangible heritage is not only the responsibility of the state but also a social responsibility.

"Safeguarding and preserving cultural heritage is not only the responsibility of the state and non-governmental organisations but also of individuals. However, that effort needs campaigns to raise awareness of its importance. Furthermore, we need to have policies to safeguard them in a structured way," she stressed.

"We had some intangible patterns of pure Qatari heritage that have been forgotten because they are not anymore linked with Qatari society because they were practised back in the day for particular reasons such as for economic reasons and since they are not anymore practised they have ceased to exist," she added.

Al Sulaiti, on the other hand, stressed "education in the museum world must be of paramount importance" when it comes to preserving and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

He said replicas of artefacts related to intangible cultural heritage that are kept and displayed in museums must be created for students to experience and appreciate their importance.

He also suggested collaboration among entities to integrate the study of intangible cultural heritage in school curriculum.

Al Muhannadi said they have worked on the national inventory of intangible cultural heritage of Qatar he hoped there would be awareness of this national inventory through gatherings and meetings involving the community.



FROM LEFT: Prof. Federico Lenzerini of University of Siena, Italy; Dr. Abdulla Mohammed Al Sulaiti of Qatar Museums; Hamad Al Muhannadi from the Ministry of Culture and Sports; and Dr. Mariam Ibrahim Al-Hammadi of Qatar University during the panel discussion at National Museum of Qatar. PIC: ABDUL BASIT / THE PENINSULA

Al Hammadi meets Finland's Minister



The Minister of Education and Higher Education, H E Dr. Mohammed Abdul Wahed Al Hammadi, met yesterday with the Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Finland, Ville Skinnari, and his accompanying delegation on the occasion of their visit to the country. During the meeting, they discussed the most important issues of common interest and ways to support and develop them, especially those related to educational fields.

Parents urged to support children in their studies

THE PENINSULA / DOHA

Registration for Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys will open after first semester exams.

Fawzia Al Khater, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, has said that every student enrolled in Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys is outstanding and parents should support them in their education from all aspects.

Fawzia Al Khater was speaking in a meeting with the parents during her visit to Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys yesterday.

She said new student are able to successfully experience the unique scientific experience, and need to build confidence in themselves and win the trust of their parents by proving their abilities in all stages of study.

"I am proud of the large presence of parents, and this shows the excellence and interest of parents and their eagerness to meet with us, and listen to us for the benefit of their outstanding children," said Al Khater. She highlighted the need for parents to monitor their children on a regular basis, and deal with them with love, and help them in becoming a responsible person.

The meeting was attended by Mohammed Al Emadi, Director of Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys; Fahad Mousa Al Ali, Deputy Director of Administration; and Rani Mohammed Al Tom, Deputy Director for Academic Affairs.

The purpose of the meeting was to explain the policy and aspirations of the school, policy of student assessment, distribute test scores to parents of the second batch of students, The parents toured the school's laboratories to see the place where their children spend one third of their day.

Registration for Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys will open after the end of the first semester examination.

Qatari artist Faraj Daham brings inspirations from India to Qatar

RAYNALD C RIVERA
THE PENINSULA



Qatari artist Faraj Daham **(pictured)** opened his solo exhibition titled "See the Unseen" yesterday at the Fire Station Artist in Residence, following his month-long residency at "What about Art?" Foundation in Mumbai, India, as part of Qatar-India 2019 Year of Culture. Open until November 29, Daham's exhibition addresses the concept of historical concealment and exclusion through a qualitative approach between what is visible and what is real.

The dozens of Daham's mixed media artworks on show are made of local materials such as Chinese fishing nets from Kochi in India, handmade paper, henna pigment and branches of trees.

Through his choice of materials, the artist drives his concept such as in the use of Chinese fishing nets alongside handmade manuscripts to hide the intangibility of history.

"During my residency in Mumbai, and through a visit to Kochi, I had the chance to look at the sea coast from a horizontal perspective. Horizontal here meaning a chronological and enriching accumulation of human patterns of cultural geography. A pattern of races and religions, beliefs and ethnicities, identities and languages distinguish India from other continents. I conducted a field research through which I saw the visible and invisible presence of the traces of man and what remains in the path of the Silk Road. This renowned naming of the mysterious East trade uncovers human existence through distant times," he commented.

Daham's month long residency came as part of the Qatar-India Year of Culture which aimed to promote mutual understanding, recognition and appreciation between the two countries through various programmes and initiatives. During his stay, Daham was provided with an individual studio space, professional networking opportunities and an intellectually stimulating environment for dialogue on visual arts practices for artists and curators.

"The collaborative nature of residencies allows artists to be introduced to new perspectives, styles and ideas. This helps them expand their horizons. We are really pleased to have collaborated with "What about Art?" to create an opportunity for exchange for one of our most talented artists," said Aisha al-Attiya, Qatar Museums' Head of Years of Culture.

Daham's contemporary work is inspired by the transformation of the world around him and responds to the rapid changes experienced in Qatari society. His work has been displayed at Katara, Mathaf, QM Gallery Al Riwaq, and Al Markhiya Gallery, among others.



The "See the Unseen" exhibition by Qatari Artist Faraj Daham opened at the Fire Station, yesterday. PICS: BAHER AMIN / THE PENINSULA



Loyola International School rents new campus in Ezdan Oasis

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The Loyola International Schools in Qatar has announced signing of a new tenancy agreement with Ezdan Real Estate to boost its student capacity for nearly 1,000 student, enabling it to offer the current KG to Grade 6 as well as Grades 7 to 12.

This new addition is part of Loyola's programme to ensure that every child who needs to enrol in a school has an available place as close to home as possible and in suitable accommodation.

The Loyola International School's owner Sheikh Ahmed bin Hamad Al Thani, said, "Loyola International Schools have continued to grow in quality, reputation and standards over the last five years and we are very proud to expand our relationship with Ezdan Real Estate to offer world class infrastructure at the Oasis campus to students who seek higher education as well as to parents who prefer to have their homes closer to the schools." The Loyola International Schools is committed to being part of the Education goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030 by ensuring world-class campus facilities combined with next generation digital classrooms, extensive laboratories and ample sports amenities with the new agreement at Campus, in Ezdan Oasis.

This new addition is part of Loyola's programme to ensure that every child who needs to enrol in a school has an available place as close to home as possible and in suitable accommodation.

Also speaking at the event, Loyola International Schools Chairman of the Group, R Venkat Rao, has expressed his immense gratitude towards the parents for placing their trust and never-ending support towards the continued growth and success of Loyola schools.

"Loyola is committed to bringing a difference in the way education is offered at its institutions through differentiated learning, activity oriented education and that we will introduce new after school initiatives, in the areas of sports, integrated curriculum for students aspiring to join the IITs, AIEEE, NEET etc.. for higher grades," said Rao.

Ezdan Oasis is a mega real estate project in Al Wukair region spreading over one million meter square, it offers a set of different residential units with brand new furniture, in addition to Lulu Hypermarket, Cafes, restaurants, pharmacies and bakeries. It features vast areas of green lawns.



The Loyola International School building in Ezdan Oasis.

QICDRC and HBKU's College of Law sign MoU

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Opening new avenues to mutual support and collaborative achievement, Qatar International Court and Dispute Resolution Centre (QICDRC) and Hamad Bin Khalifa University's (HBKU) College of Law signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The signatories thereby confirm their shared commitment to advance Qatar's legal environment, following the pillars of Qatar National Vision 2030.

QICDRC Chief Executive Officer, Faisal Al Sahouti, and Dean of HBKU College of Law, Dr Susan L. Karamanian, signed the three-year agreement in the presence of representatives from both organisations.

Notably, the newly established understanding foresees the launch of a 'QICDRC-HBKU College of Law Lecture Series', to be organised and hosted by both parties on topics related to international dispute resolution, substantive principles of commercial and business law, and QICDRC-specific legal applications. In addition to joint conferences, colloquia, and workshops, the MoU also offers Court judges and senior personnel the opportunity to deliver guest lectures at the HBKU College of Law as well as attend courses on an auditing basis.



Representatives from QICDRC and HBKU College of Law pose for a group photo.

Highlighting the benefits of the joint initiative, Faisal al-Sahouti, QICDRC CEO, said: "We are proud to sign a partnership with one of Qatar's foremost higher education institutes that shares our dedication to the law and its central role in society. As home-grown organisations, we follow a fundamental drive towards the development of a diversified, knowledge-based economy for our country's future, as we are entrusted with the mentorship of the next generation of legal professionals."

Commenting on the signing of the MoU, Dr. Susan L. Karamanian, Dean of HBKU College of Law, said: "The MoU builds upon the already strong relationship between HBKU's College of Law and the QICDRC. We are particularly excited about having QICDRC judges and officials as guest lecturers at the College of Law. Their knowledge, based on a lifetime of varied experiences, will undoubtedly expand the horizons of our students. Collaboration through conferences and workshops will also help to promote the rule of law in Qatar – a goal shared by both institutions."

Since its initial inception as the HBKU College of Law & Public Policy in 2014, the HBKU College of Law has taken an innovative approach to the J.D. legal education. Its unique curricular focus on international business, commerce and dispute resolution contributes to an advanced legal ecosystem in Qatar and beyond.

QICDRC consistently seeks new national partnerships to establish Qatar as a commercial hub and world leader in the application of the rule of law in the area of dispute resolution. The latest MoU agreement effectively marks the signatories' mutual core mandate to enhance national legal capabilities as prescribed by Qatar National Vision 2030.

Secret Notes Boutique launches Oriental Leather

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Secret Notes Boutique has launched the prestigious platform of the luxurious fragrances, which includes a select and limited number of the finest and rare international perfumes, the new fragrance 'Oriental Leather' from 'Memo Paris', at Porto Arabia – The Pearl.

Oriental Leather is a sophisticated leather chord, where the warm and inspirational fragrance celebrates the irresistible beauty and aroma of an invigorating and refreshing blend opened by the top of the composition with lavender, red pepper and coriander, followed by a heart of composition with an exciting blend of cinnamon, tea, geranium and anise. The base of the fragrance concludes with cloves, vanilla, benzoin, patchouli and leather, giving you an exceptional distinctive scent.

The new Memo fragrance Oriental Leather is born under a patchouli star, inspired by the sky of Oman. A vibrant and intense composition as a new olfactory constellation.



The launching event was attended by Ashraf Abu Issa, Chairman of Abu Issa Holding Group, Fawaz Idrissi, CEO of Abu Issa Holding Group, John Molloy, Founder of Memo Paris, and Rafia Bin Obaid, Regional Director of sales, and a number of luxurious perfume lovers at Secret Notes boutique Porto Arabia, The Pearl-Qatar.

Oriental Leather expresses notes that embody choice, dreams, feelings, captivating the charm of Oman's 'Wahiba Sands'. At nightfall, the Wahiba Sands of Oman cast a unique glow onto the sky above. The sun has swooned and the moon takes the form of a crescent in homage to the khanjar, the emblem of the sultanate. It shines just as bright as this small sword, slipped into the leather belt of men who wear the traditional costume.

The heavenly canopy lights up the path to Wadi Shab, a lush paradise, bursting forth like patchouli. A majestic Orient meets the eyes. Oriental Leather bears its secrets and whispers them to Orion, whose constellation hangs in the night like a charm on a belt.

Amber and leather notes reveal themselves in full daylight, amidst wafting scents of lavender, cinnamon and benzoin. vanilla, jawi, patchouli, and tea, taking you to a world full of vitality, passion.

Partial closure in one direction of Abdul Aziz bin Ahmed Street

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The Public Works Authority 'Ashghal' has announced a partial closure of Abdul Aziz bin Ahmed Street in one direction from Wadi Mushaireb Street towards Electricity Temporary Roundabout (formerly known as Naser bin Khaled Intersection).

In coordination with the General Directorate of Traffic, this change will be implemented from tomorrow for a period of 3 months, and aims to enable expansion and upgrading works on Electricity Intersection and installation of new traffic lights as part of the A-Ring Road Development Project.

During this time, road users of Abdul Aziz bin Ahmed Street wishing to head towards Electricity temporary roundabout will be required to use Al Diwan Street and Al Asmakh Street to reach their desired destinations, as shown in the attached map.



Six children's films to screen at 7th Ajyal Film Festival

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Doha Film Institute's (DFI) seventh Ajyal Film Festival has lined up six films from across the world to fire the imagination and rouse the minds of children and the young at heart.

The carefully curated selection truly celebrates how masterful directors skilfully utilise the marvel of cinema to inspire young minds.

A fixture in the annual Ajyal line-up, the Bariq section of whimsical family-friendly short films delight young and old while offering a unique cinematic experience to festival audiences, captivating budding imaginations and introducing the youngest members of the audience to tools for creative development for years to come.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Festival Director and Chief Executive Officer of DFI, said: "The heart of Ajyal is dedicated to nurturing our next generation of storytellers, leaders and dreamers through a collective experience of inspirational cinema from around the globe. When we dedicate a special selection of short films to our youngest film lovers each year, we feed their boundless fascination for the world they explore and learn about each day. We are delighted to witness many special first discoveries of the big screen along the magnificent journey through the wonders of cinema. It is never too early to plant the seeds of knowledge and stir up the imagination that will guide their development as insightful leaders of tomorrow."



A still from Kuap.

A fixture in the annual Ajyal line-up, the Bariq section of whimsical family-friendly short films delight young and old while offering a unique cinematic experience to festival audiences, captivating budding imaginations and introducing the youngest members of the audience to tools for creative development for years to come.

One of Ajyal's most unique events will be a Cine-Concert featuring the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra accompaniment of the 1995 animated adaptation of the timeless tale of Peter and the Wolf (USA) by George Daugherty and Jean Flynn. The heart-warming family film has received numerous awards for inspiring the appreciation of classical music to young audiences around the world.

The Bariq Short Film Programme features In Sloth (Germany/2018) by Julia Ocker, Kuap (Switzerland/2018) by Nils Hedinger, Miran Miošić's White Crow (Croatia/2018), Wings (France/2017) by Christoffer Andersen, and Cat Lake City (Germany/2019) by Antje Heyn.

Tickets for the 7th Ajyal Film Festival are now available for purchase from at the Ajyal Main Box Office located in Katara Building 10; at the Ajyal Box Office at VOX Cinemas Doha Festival City for screenings taking place at VOX Cinemas; and from the Novo Cinemas Box Office for screenings at the Novo Cinemas Pearl.

Ajyal Film Festival 2019 Official Partners include Katara Cultural Village – Cultural Partner; Qatar National Tourism Council – Principal Partner; Novo Cinemas, Ooredoo – Strategic Partner and the St. Regis Doha – Signature Sponsor.

QU hosts Science for Sustainable Development 2019 Conference

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Qatar University (QU) hosted the Science for Sustainable Development 2019 Conference (SSD2019) recently where scientific advancements in sustainable development were covered through four dedicated sessions: food security, waste management, water management and renewable energy.

The conference focused on addressing how these resources can be actively integrated in order to enable sustainable resource management.

The QU senior officials attended the conference include QU President Dr. Hassan Al Derham; QU Vice-President for Academic Affairs Dr. Omar Al Ansari; QU Vice-President for Research & Graduate Studies Professor Mariam Al Maadeed and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Professor Ibrahim AlKaabi.

Prof Ibrahim AlKaabi said that, "Sustainable development is considered a strategic way to achieving economic prosperity and environmental sustainability in local and international communities.



Qatar University senior officials attending the conference.

Prof AlKaabi said at the opening remarks that, "Sustainable development is considered a strategic way to achieving economic prosperity and environmental sustainability in local and international communities."

"From this point of view, this conference focuses on innovative ways to solve developmental challenges in the areas of food and water security, waste management and renewable energy."

He added that the conference reflects the QU vision to promote the culture of scientific research as an effective tool in addressing challenges.

In addition, the conference connects researchers and students with their counterparts locally and internationally and introduces new research trends that contribute to sustainable development.

"Our goal is to shed a spotlight on the efforts – both locally and internationally — towards achieving the vision of sustainable development, which is the vision of our nation Qatar, and the goal of the United Nations. In addition, sustainability is a priority of the QU strategy, which covers 2018-2022 and sets a clear path towards excellence in education, scientific research, institutional development and community participation," the professor said.

Director of QU's Center for Sustainable Development (CSD) Dr. Hareb Al Jabri also spoke at the event and gave a presentation on the CSD, its departments and achievements, stressing that sustainable development is one of the cornerstones of Qatar National Vision 2030.

In the Qatar National Vision 2030, sustainable development is one of the main pillars, focusing on aspects of finding a balance between preserving the environment, managing natural resources, and economic and social developments. Key factors which need to be addressed for integrated sustainable resource management are food security, water conservation, renewable energy and waste management.

Attempting to integrate all the aforementioned sectors, under the vision of a circular economy, can only be achieved via adopting a policy that actively involves all relevant stakeholders, increases awareness, and establishes effective and reliable communication and coordination links among all players involved.

Ooredoo marks most successful QITCOM in history

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Ooredoo, the region's leading enabler of digital business innovation, announced that it saw its most successful QITCOM ever, with historic partnerships, solution launches, hosting senior delegations, and exchanging knowledge at the conference and workshop sessions.

In line with QITCOM's theme "Safe Smart Cities," Ooredoo, the Strategic Sponsor, led a consortium that won the Ministry of Transport and Communications' TASMU Central Platform, the digital foundation for the TASMU Smart Qatar Program enabling Qatar as a smart country.

Ooredoo signed a four-year extension to provide Qatar Airways' on-board Wi-Fi, and with MADA, the Assistive Technology Centre Qatar, to enhance the lives of persons with disabilities.

Supporting digital transformation, Ooredoo signed partnerships with Microsoft on the Azure Express Route for organisations to access the European public cloud; with Cisco BroadSoft on the Qatar Cloud PABX, Qatar's first cloud-based calling service; and showcased the concept of Ooredoo Exchange, an innovative Blockchain-based platform for organisations to accept digital wallets, loyalty points and reward programs from any platform to make digital payments.

Oordoo also announced the launch of Ooredoo Life Marketplace at QITCOM 2019. The new solution provides Application Program Interfaces (APIs) for new and innovative business services and solutions. Ooredoo's other new solution launches included Cloud Backup, Web Application Firewall, and consumer products.

Yousuf Abdulla Al Kubaisi, Ooredoo Qatar Chief Operations Officer, said: "Ooredoo's most successful QITCOM ever underlines Qatar's bold steps in becoming a smart country. Our partnerships with multinational technology companies and local leaders on innovative technologies support nationwide digital transformation, enable organisational competitiveness, and enhance people's digital lives."

Crowning Ooredoo's QITCOM achievements, the organisers awarded Ooredoo with the Best Booth at QITCOM (95-300 square metres). Thousands of visitors experienced Ooredoo's debut of the fully automated Smart Home, and Internet of Things and cybersecurity innovations in Connected Sports, Healthcare, Transport, Logistics, Environment, and Digital Experiences.

Showing the popularity of Ooredoo's presence, the company welcomed delegations from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

Ooredoo thought leaderships took centre stage at QITCOM's conference programme. Nazeeb Poolakkal presented on "Cybersecurity Challenges in the IoT-Enabled City," and Onut Toana held a workshop on how organisations can optimise the Ooredoo Azure Stack Public Cloud.

MoCI recalls Mercedes-Benz V Class 2018 model

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in cooperation with Nasser Bin Khaled Automobiles, dealer of Mercedes-Benz in Qatar, announced the recall of Mercedes-Benz V Class, model of 2018, due to a crack in the right sliding door of the centre carriage.

The recall campaign comes within the framework of the Ministry's continuous efforts to protect consumers and ensure that car dealers follow up on vehicle defects and repairs.

MME holds workshop on draft health regulations

THE PENINSULA/DOHA

Al Wakra Municipality, represented by the Department of Municipal Control, has launched workshops on the new health regulations project based on the standard specifications.

The workshop was held under the supervision of Nasser Saeed Hamad Al Marri, Director of the Department of Municipal Supervision, in the presence of the Head of the Department of Health Control and the inspectors of the Department, said the Ministry of Municipality and Environment (MME) in a statement.

The workshops aimed at introducing the draft of new health requirements that refer to the highest international food safety management systems.

The first workshop was held last Sunday for female inspectors and on Tuesday for the male inspectors .

A brief explanation was given about the draft new requirements and introducing international organizations that issue food safety management standards, including ISO, CODXE, CEN, as well as introducing the GSO and QS. The workshop covered introduction of initial programs of food safety management systems such as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Good Storage Practices (GWD), Good Trading Practices (GTP), Good Distribution Practices (GDP), Good Living Practices (GHP), Hygiene and Personal Hygiene Practices, Periodic Maintenance of Equipment and Equipment, Pest Resistance, and Training Programs.

Stars of Science welcomes newborn to the family

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

In a series of many firsts, Stars of Science welcomed a new face into their midst as season 11 finalist Nuha Abu Yousef delivered a baby boy while participating in Qatar Foundation's premier innovation TV programme. The Jordanian doctor's accomplishment shatters stereotypes and demonstrates that women can pursue both a career in science and raise a family.

Nuha said she invests just as much effort to her innovation journey as she does with her young family, something she believes is possible for all Arab women. "I'm proud to represent female innovators and working mothers who continue to do amazing things every day," Nuha said. "To all Arab women watching this show, my advice is that if I can do it, you can do it. Don't be afraid to dream, because Arab women have so much to offer in science and business."

The new mother-of-two added that she is grateful for all the support she received from both her fellow contestants on the show, and Qatar Foundation (QF).



Stars of Science season 11 finalist Nuha Abu Yousef (right) with her newborn baby.

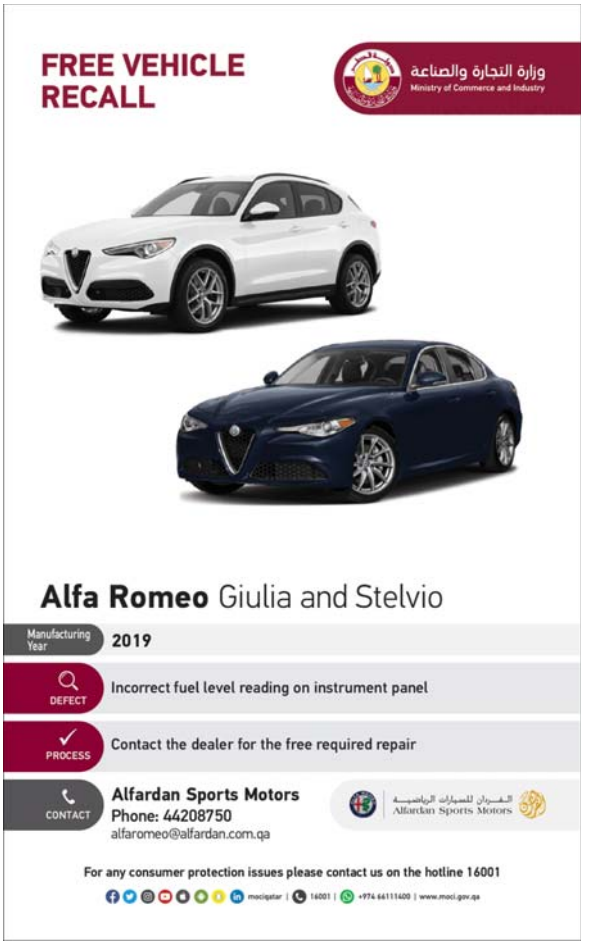
She said that giving birth at Sidra Medicine – a member of QF – and a top-tier women and children's hospital, allowed her and her new-born to receive the best possible care.

"Designed to promote healing and provide outstanding services and research, Sidra Medicine acts as a beacon of learning and is a part of QF's commitment to contribute to the advancement of innovative healthcare," said Dr Michel Makhlouf, Act. Chair of Women's Services, Sidra Medicine.

"We are pleased that Nuha chose Sidra Medicine to have her baby and we are honored to have played such a vital role in Stars of Science history."

Stars of Science is just one of the many QF initiatives that empowers and encourages Arab women to take on careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields and solve challenges in their communities. The organization also values and safeguards the health and well-being of women throughout the region with the establishment of institutions like Sidra Medicine.

The three finalists – Abdulrahman Saleh Khamis, Nuha Abu Yousef, and Youssef El Azouzi – have worked tirelessly for the past few months to perfect their inventions. Tune in for the Grand Final and support your favourite innovator and invention.



The Peninsula
Local focus, Global vision
ESTABLISHED IN 1996

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EDITORIAL

Destination Qatar

Qatar's tourism sector is witnessing boom helped by proactive measures taken by the government. Recent figures have once again confirmed that efforts taken by the government are yielding results.

The latest statistics showed that the State of Qatar welcomed 1.19 million visitors during the first seven months of 2019, representing a 10.7 percent increase, compared to the same period in 2018.

The increase in number of travellers in the country shows that Qatar has emerged as a favourite destination for global tourist. Qatar has identified tourism as one of five priority sectors for achieving economic diversification and several steps were taken to increase tourist inflow in the country.

Among the most important developments was the Emiri decree to establish Qatar National Tourism Council (QNTC). The council took significant efforts in diversifying visitor source markets and promoting Qatar as an attractive tourism destination.

The tourism sector has recently undergone rapid development after the opening of QNTC representative offices in the major exporting markets of the United States, Britain, France, Italy, Turkey, Russia, India, China and Southeast Asia. This coincides with the announcement of the World Tourism Organization that the State of Qatar has become the most open country in the Middle East and the 8th most open in the world.

The increase in number of travellers in the country shows that Qatar has emerged as a favourite destination for global tourist. Qatar has identified tourism as one of five priority sectors for achieving economic diversification and several steps were taken to increase tourist inflow in the country.

The cooperation between the National Tourism Council and the World Tourism Organization has been developed to include support for several global initiatives, while the Council has worked to develop and regulate the way the tourism sector operates with a focus on developing the skills and competencies of workers in the sector, in addition to developing the form and content of tourism events and festivals.

The Council is actively seeking to attract the right investors to implement projects related to the tourism sector.

The Council has also worked to strengthen the State of Qatar's position as a global business destination and to collaborate with Qatar Tourism Authority QTA's partners to attract more conferences and exhibitions, as well as supporting companies organizing local exhibitions and events and give them the opportunity to lead the sector.

The QNTC also launched an e-notification system in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior for those wishing to travel to Qatar during the summer season, including relatives, resident friends, former residents of the country, and families to enjoy the summer season in Qatar.

With all these measures taken in the past, the number of tourists heading to Qatar will only increase further.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



We advocate for mutual respect and equal treatment, and are opposed to the law of the jungle and acts of intimidation.

Xi Jinping
Chinese President

In a world of crisis, Tunisia's democracy marches on



ISHAAN THAROOR
THE WASHINGTON POST



A file picture of teachers demonstrating in the Tunisian capital of Tunis to demand bonuses and improvements in working conditions.

Want smart analysis of the most important news in your inbox every weekday, along with other global reads, interesting ideas and opinions? Sign up for the Today's WorldView newsletter .

The expert view is that we're living in an age of democratic retreat . Strongmen in de facto single-party states have consolidated or expanded their rule, while nationalist populists and would-be autocrats in democracies are systematically undermining or corrupting their countries' liberal institutions. In some places in the Arab world, where democracy has long struggled to take root, peaceful protests are still being met with murderous state brutality and repression.

Then there's Tunisia. At this point, you probably know the cliche. The small North African nation remains the one "success" story of the 2011 Arab Spring, the sole nation to throw off its long-ruling dictator in that epochal wave of upheaval and preserve the democratic transition that followed. It just held three elections in the space of a month; the last episode of that process took place a few weeks ago, when Kais Saied – a retired-law-professor-turned-independent-anti-establishment-politician – won a presidential runoff election in a landslide.

Not unlike elections on the other side of the Mediterranean, Tunisia's parliamentary results were fragmented, delivering no clear mandate to any single party. The faction to come out with the most seats — 52 out of 217 — was Ennahda.

Saied's victory delivered a clear message of voter dissatisfaction. "In a region ruled by monarchs, autocrats and family dynasties, Tunisia once again showcased its unique position in the Arab world," wrote my colleague Sudarsan Raghavan last month. "Millions headed to the polls to choose between two political outsiders in the runoff of its second-ever presidential elections. In doing so, they showed contempt for the nation's political establishment for not solving the high unemployment rate, rising prices and lack of opportunities that helped spark the revolution."

Saied alone can't start addressing the anxieties that catapulted him into power. He formally became the country's head of state last week, but Tunisia is still waiting for the formation of its next government. That may take some time. Not unlike elections on the other side of the Mediterranean, Tunisia's parliamentary results were fragmented, delivering no clear mandate to any single party. The faction to come out with the most seats – 52 out of 217 – was Ennahda, a moderate Islamist party. But it is still preparing for formal negotiations that will likely prove tricky.

Zied Ladhari, Ennahda's secretary general, is confident about his party's ability to follow through. "This is a challenge for us, but it's something we can handle," he said in a recent interview. Ladhari, who also served as Tunisia's minister for development in the country's previous government, was in Washington for meetings. His name has come up as a possible prime minister.

Ladhari's party, though, has ruled out partnering with two of its nearest competitors – a secularist faction whose leader is implicated in a corruption scandal and another party linked to the old guard of the country's lapsed dictatorship. It will attempt to cobble together a motley coalition of other secularists, leftists and Islamists. Since 2011, Tunisia has endured rounds of political crises, assassinations, mass protests and the worrying departure of hundreds of its citizens to join the ranks of the Islamic State.

Despite real ideological divisions between Ennahda – which, like its Egyptian ideological cousin, the Muslim Brotherhood, had been suppressed for decades – and secularist forces, the country has fitfully lurched onward through consensus and unity governments, culminating in the adoption of a new democratic constitution in 2014.

"Tunisians kept returning to the ballot box – or taking to the streets to express their dissent," noted Post opinions editor Christian Caryl. "And so they've managed to keep their remarkable democratic experiment grinding along. They passed laws protecting minority rights; civil society groups have continued to press vocally for reforms. (And the fact that Tunisian democracy continues to exist at all remains the most eloquent possible rebuke to the Islamist militants.)"

"The country has succeeded in consolidating democracy and making it irreversible," said Ladhari, adding that "the kind of partnership emerging between different political families" in Tunisia is "something we are not really familiar with in other countries" in the neighborhood and is a mark of Tunisia's maturing democracy. He stressed that Tunisia would never try to export its system elsewhere. But he suggested that his nation did "offer a model of both political and economic inclusion" at a time when pro-democracy protests are flaring once more in the Arab world.

"Tunisia very clearly demonstrates that democracy is possible in this part of the world, something completely compatible with the Islamic values," he said.

Analysts point to certain unique factors that make Tunisia different from other nations swept up in the 2011 Arab Spring, including its relatively small size. But Tunisia was "never deemed to be exceptional prior to 2011," observed H.A. Hellyer, a senior associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute think tank in London.

"On the contrary, the bigotries of low expectations were applied to Tunisians just as much as they were to any other community in the wider Arab world," Hellyer wrote in an op-ed for the National newspaper. "If any exceptional qualities are to be ascribed to Tunisia, there are perhaps just two; firstly, the country has autonomy over its own political process, rather than extensive foreign interference. Secondly, because political power is so diffuse in the country, no one could hope to play a zero-sum game and win. So in that regard, Tunisians are again winners, proving the generalizers and essentialists about Arabs and Muslims wrong."

But rather than celebrating this achievement, Tunisia's politicians are feeling the heat. The country faces a glut of structural problems, a slumping economy, rising food prices, a lack of jobs and a populace clamoring for greater social services. Saied swept to power on a wave of anger over corruption and social inequity. The sense of woe is so rife, noted Raghavan, that some Tunisians have found themselves feeling nostalgic for the relative stability of the days of dictatorship.

The Internet gets less free – for the ninth year in a row

THE WASHINGTON POST

The internet in its early days seemed destined to enhance freedom. Authoritarian governments might bar citizens from the web or decrease what citizens could do on the web, but they would not use the web as a tool to clamp down. Needless to say, things have changed.

For the ninth year in a row, Freedom House's annual "Freedom on the Net" report charts a decrease in internet freedom around the world. Authoritarian regimes and democratic ones both are marshaling sophisticated technology to turn the web against the people with aggressive media manipulation campaigns and mass surveillance.

More than 3.8 billion people have access to the internet today, and more than 70% live in countries where individuals have been arrested for posting about political, social or religious issues. Sixty-five percent live in countries where individuals have been attacked or killed for their online activities – individuals like the two Thai anti-government activists whose bodies were found stuffed with concrete in the Mekong Riverlast December.

Freedom House found that unscrupulous politicians launder disinformation into the mainstream through local actors such as pop culture personalities and business magnates, many of whom are paid for their efforts to amplify conspiracy theories, misleading memes and more.

Consultants in the Philippines charge 30 million pesos, or $580,000, for three-month influence efforts conducted in closed groups as well as on hyperpartisan "alternative news" channels. Brazil's presidential election featured operatives who scraped phone numbers from Facebook to add voters to WhatsApp groups filled with propaganda based on their personal identifiers. In India, 1.3 million youths in the National Cadet Corps were instructed to download a special app from Prime Minister Narendra Modi marketed as a source for official news and stuffed with deceptive and divisive material.

The report also focuses on "machine-driven monitoring of the public," realized to its fullest dystopian extent in China. The Muslim Uighur minority there is systematically tracked by law enforcement equipped with a biometric database of almost the entire population. But even in the United States, agencies have become more aggressive with warrantless searches of electronic devices at the border and social media sweeps of immigrants and immigration activists. There's also a booming market for high-tech surveillance capabilities among less advanced countries, particularly in Africa and the Middle East.

A 2020 trade show in Dubai will feature the best of the worst from global firms, such as a product from the Chinese company Semptian that can audit the online activity of 5m people for $1.5 m to $2.5m, a bargain for any dictator. The internet, we have learned, does not inevitably bring freedom. Society's blindness to anything but the good of the web may have left well-meaning governments behind in regulating to enshrine privacy or ensure transparency in elections. It's not too late to aim for a better Year 10.

Symposium on Islamic Art to open at VCUarts Qatar

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Panel discussions will take place on subjects such as Islamic Art in 11th-14th century Chinese port cities, Muslim-centred design, and architecture in the 20th and 21st centuries, Ibn Battuta's maritime adventures, pilgrimage and transfer of craftsmanship from South Asia to the Hijaz, Islamic connections between India and China during the Song and Yuan Periods Islam and identity in new master-planned cities.





The Symposium co-chairs will be VCUarts Qatar Art History professors Dr. Radha Dalal (left), Dr. Jochen Sokoly (centre), and Dr. Sean Roberts.

One-of-the world's most prestigious events on the Islamic art and architecture calendar, the 8th Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art, will take place at Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) in Education City on November 10 and 11.

The Symposium takes place every two years and this year's theme is, "The Seas and the Mobility of Islamic Art."

It will include eminent scholars such as Avinoam Shalem, the Riggio Professor of the arts of Islam at the Columbia University; Prita Meier, Associate Professor of African Art History at New York University; Esra Akcan, Associate Professor in the Department of Architecture at Cornell University; Jessica Hallett, the Curator of the Early Modern Middle East at Calouste Gulbenkian Museum; and George Lane, Senior Teaching Fellow, from SOAS University of London.

Panel discussions will take place on subjects such as Islamic Art in 11th-14th century Chinese port cities, Muslim-centred design, and architecture in the 20th and 21st centuries, Ibn Battuta's maritime adventures, pilgrimage and transfer of craftsmanship from South Asia to the Hijaz, Islamic connections between India and China during the Song and Yuan Periods Islam and identity in new master-planned cities: Malaysia, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia, and Islamic art and material culture in East Asia.

The Symposium co-chairs will be VCUarts Qatar Art History professors Dr. Radha Dalal, Dr. Jochen Sokoly, and Dr. Sean Roberts. The Art History programme at VCUarts Qatar is the only undergraduate degree programme of its kind in the Gulf region.

The Symposium will include an exhibition at the University's Gallery, titled, "The Sea is the Limit". The exhibition will bring together works by international artists who are addressing the issues of refugees, borders, migration and national identity. The opening reception will take place on November 10 at 5:30pm and the exhibition will run until December 7, 2019.

Al Wakrah beach clean-up drive held

THE PENINSULA
DOHA



Volunteers during the initiative to clean-up Al Wakrah beach.

As part of the celebration of Qatar Sustainability Week 2019, Ginger Camel in partnership with Back 2 Business, Quantum Global Solutions, The Swedish Association of Qatar and Kempinski Marsa Malaz-The Pearl, recently took a trip to Al Wakrah Beach to clean the area.

This initiative aimed to inspire others to take care of our natural resources, as well as to educate the younger generations not to do the same mistakes as before.

It was greatly participated by volunteers from different companies like Ali Bin Ali, Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Ministry of Public Health, Marhaba Qatar Guide, Marzooq S. Al Shamlan Holdings, Doha Environmental Actions Project, Ministry of Municipality and Environment , and the wonderful private citizens, who spared their weekend for nature.

It was good participation to end Qatar Sustainability Week 2019 with so much fun under the sun. But also the efforts must continue in keeping our home clean and green, even after the celebration of sustainability week.

45 Indian companies to take part in 'Hospitality Qatar 2019' expo

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Around 45 prominent Indian companies engaged in the food & hospitality sectors will be participating in the 4th edition of 'Hospitality Qatar 2019' exhibition organised by IFP Qatar from November 12 to 14 at Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC).

The Indian pavilion is coordinated by the Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI) in partnership with the Embassy of India, Doha.

TPCI is an apex trade and investment body recognized and supported by the Department of Commerce, Government of India, which work towards facilitating the growth of Indian industry with global investment & trade opportunities. The Council provides strategies for expanding business internationally, by organizing specialized business events. The Indian pavilion will be inaugurated by Ambassador of India, P Kumaran.

The TPCI delegation will be exhibiting their Food & Beverage (F&B) products during the Exhibition in the following categories – rice, pulses, confectionery, grocery, dehydrated vegetables, Indian ethnic products, packaging machines & materials and linen for the hospitality Industry.

In the 2018 edition, the Indian pavilion comprised 20 companies. The increase in participation from India at Hospitality Qatar 2019 reflects the growing interest of business communities of both the countries to promote trade and commerce in this sector.

India-Qatar bilateral trade has been growing steadily especially in the F&B sector. Indian exports of F&B to Qatar were US$364.76m in 2018 and were US$ 134.4m form April to August 2019.

The top ten food and beverages products exported from India to Qatar include rice, vegetables, poultry and meat, dry fruits, mango pulp, milk products, snacks, seafood, fruits and pickles. The volume and value of Indian export of these items is likely to increase in the years to come.



World Bank urges Lebanon to form new govt quickly

AFP/BEIRUT

"Without quick steps to address the crisis, about half of Lebanon's population could fall into poverty and unemployment could rise sharply. With every passing day, the situation is becoming more acute," warned World Bank official.



Lebanese students waving national flags and chanting slogans as they gather in an anti-government demonstration in the southern city of Sidon, yesterday.

The World Bank urged protest-hit Lebanon yesterday to form a new government quickly, warning of the threat of an economic downturn that would deepen poverty and worsen unemployment.

The warning came as anti-government demonstrators pushed on with rallies and hundreds of school children boycotted classes. Lebanon's unprecedented protest movement has rallied since October 17 against a political class deemed incompetent and corrupt, despite the government's resignation last week.

The outgoing cabinet continues to function in a caretaker capacity but political leaders are haggling over the make-up of the next government, in a delay donors say the debt-saddled country can ill afford.

The World Bank warned that a "rapid government formation that meets the expectations of all Lebanese people is the most urgent step".

Representatives of the Washington-based institution had met with embattled President Michel Aoun, who has pledged a raft of reforms to combat corruption following the protests.

In its statement, the World Bank also warned "we expect the recession to be even more significant" than previously, having forecast a contraction of 0.2 percent before the ongoing political turmoil.

Without quick steps to address the crisis, about half of Lebanon's population could fall into poverty and unemployment could "rise sharply", the lender said. "With every passing day, the situation is becoming more acute," warned World Bank regional director Saroj Kumar Jha.

Even before the protests started last month, growth in Lebanon had stalled in the wake of repeated political deadlocks in recent years, compounded by the war in Syria.

Public debt stood at more than $86bn, or higher than 150 percent of Gross Domestic Product, according to the finance ministry. Moody's ratings agency on Tuesday downgraded Lebanon's sovereign debt, saying the sweeping anti-government protests had hit investor confidence and threatened macroeconomic stability.

A long list of grievances have spurred exasperated Lebanese to protest, but government corruption and dire living conditions are among the key concerns. Lebanon is ranked 138th out of 175 countries in Transparency International's 2018 corruption perceptions index, with key sectarian leaders accused of running demi-fiefdoms.

After meeting the World Bank yesterday, Aoun said investigations looking into corruption cases involving current and former officials will not spare a single suspect. He said 17 such cases have already been referred for investigation. "The next government will include competent ministers, who are not suspected of corruption," Aoun said on Twitter, seemingly endorsing the demands of protesters.

But his pledge came as hundreds of students led anti-government demonstrations across the country, refusing to return to class before the demands of the protest movement are met.

In Beirut, dozens gathered in front of the education ministry, brandishing Lebanese flags and once again chanting slogans demanding the removal of the political class. "What will I do with a school leaver's certificate if I don't have a country," one pupil told Lebanese television.

In the largest student-led protest, crowds streamed into a central square in the southern city of Sidon, demanding better public education and more job opportunities for school leavers, the state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported.

In a school in the resort town of Jounieh, just north of the capital, pupils mobilised against school governors. Protests also took place in the southern cities of Tyre and Nabatieh, the eastern city of Zahleh and the northern city of Byblos, according to NNA and other Lebanese media reports. In other ways, protests were easing off. No key roads were blocked on Wednesday morning, banks were open again and classes resumed at many schools after a two-week gap.

Demonstrators did however gather around key state institutions for a second day in a row, in what appeared to be a new tactic.

Tourists among 8 wounded in Jordan knife attack

AFP/AMMAN



A plane carrying a tourist, who was injured in a stabbing, is seen at King Hussein Medical Center in Amman, Jordan, yesterday.

Eight people, including four tourists, were wounded in a knife attack yesterday at the famed archeological site of Jerash in northern Jordan, a security spokesman said. Four tourists — three Mexicans and a Swiss woman — were wounded, along with a Jordanian tour guide and a security officer who tried to stop the assailant, public security directorate spokesman Amer Sartawi said.

The attack took place around noon (1000 GMT) at the Roman ruins of Jerash, a popular attraction 50km from the capital Amman. The health ministry confirmed that eight people had been wounded, with Sartawi saying earlier that they had "been transported to hospital for treatment".

He said the assailant had been arrested but did not specify his nationality, noting that the motive was as yet unknown. Jordanian tour guide Zouheir Zreiqat was at the scene and said that the attack happened "just before midday when around 100 foreign tourists" were at the site.

"A bearded man in his twenties wearing black and brandishing a knife started to stab tourists," according to Zreiqat. He said others started to shout for help and he, along with three other tour guides and three tourists, managed to stop the assailant.

"We chased him until we could grab him and get him on the ground," Zreiqat said. "We took the knife from him. He stayed silent, without saying a word until the police arrived and arrested him."

It was not the first time tourist sites have been targeted by attacks in Jordan.

In December 2016, in Karak, home to one of the region's biggest Crusader castles, 10 people were killed in an attack that also left 30 wounded.

Seven police officers, two Jordanian civilians and a Canadian tourist were killed in the attack. The attack was claimed by the Islamic State group (IS) and sparked concern over its impact on tourism, a mainstay of the Jordanian economy. Ten people were convicted of carrying out the attack, with two sentenced to death.

Several violent incidents struck the country the same year, including a suicide attack in June claimed by IS that killed seven Jordanian border guards near the frontier with Syria. Amman has played a significant role in the United States-led coalition fight against IS in Syria and Iraq, both neighbouring Jordan.

Lacking in natural resources, the country of nearly 10 million depends on tourism and the kingdom has been working to pull the key sector out of a crisis caused by regional unrest in recent years. Jordan's economy as a whole was hit hard by the combined impact of the international financial crisis, the Arab Spring uprisings that convulsed the Middle East in 2011 and the conflict in Syria.

Magnitude 5.4 quake strikes Iran province

AP/TEHRAN

A magnitude 5.4 earthquake struck Iran's southern province of Hormozgan on Wednesday, according to the country's seismological center.

The center's website said the 5.4 magnitude quake struck at 11:10 a.m. local time, some 125 kilometers (77 miles) west of the port city of Bandar Abbas. It said the temblor struck at a depth of 10km. The US Geological Survey put the quake's magnitude at 5.3.

A magnitude 5 earthquake can cause considerable damage, but the semi-official *Isna* news agency said that no casualties and damages had so far been reported after the quake. Iran is located on major seismic faults and experiences one earthquake per day on average. In 2003, a magnitude 6.6 earthquake flattened the historic city of Bam, killing 26,000 people.

Two Jordanians detained by Israel return home after handover deal

REUTERS/AMMAN



Hiba Al Labadi (left), and Abdelrahman Miri, Jordanian nationals who were held by Israel for several months, upon their release at the King Hussein Bridge (also known as Allenby Bridge) crossing between Israel and Jordan, yesterday.

Two Jordanians, whose detention without charge by Israel led Jordan to recall its ambassador, returned home yesterday in a handover deal that defused a diplomatic crisis, officials said.

Hiba Labadi, 24, was arrested in August after crossing into the occupied West Bank to attend a family wedding. She subsequently went on a hunger strike and was hospitalised after her health deteriorated.

Separately, Abdul Rahman Miri, 29, was arrested in September after he also entered the West Bank to visit relatives

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said on Monday the two would return to Jordan "before the end of the week" without saying how their release had been secured.

Safadi however said King Abdullah had ordered the government to do everything necessary to bring them back "whatever that may cost".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the handover was agreed after talks between Israeli and Jordanian security chiefs. It said Jordan's ambassador would return to his post "in the coming days".

Israel's deputy foreign minister, Tzipi Hotovely, said last month both detainees were suspected of security offences, without being more specific.

Diplomats say the deal defused a crisis following Safadi's warning that Jordan would take further diplomatic measures if Israel did not release the two detainees, who he said were illegally held without charge.

Jordanians, many of whom are of Palestinian origin, oppose normalisation of relations with Israel, despite a 1994 peace treaty.

In announcing the decision to release Labadi and Miri, Israel said it viewed its relations with Jordan as "a cornerstone of stability in the Middle East".

Iran begins uranium enrichment at Fordow plant

BLOOMBERG/TEHRAN

Iran has begun the process of enriching uranium at its Fordow research plant, in the most dramatic rollback of its commitments under its unraveling nuclear deal with world powers.

About 2,000kg of uranium hexafluoride gas were brought to the facility yesterday, under the watch of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Iranian state news agencies reported.

By Saturday, the level of uranium enrichment will reach 4.5%, according to Behrouz Kamalvandi, the spokesperson for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran. The renewed activities at Fordow will add to a stockpile of enriched uranium that has already exceeded caps. "The decision to expand nuclear activities at Fordow is Iran's most serious violation of the nuclear deal to date," Eurasia Group said in a report. "Iran's latest violation represents a significant escalation, not a continuation of incremental steps away from its nuclear commitments."

Even so, the work at Fordow doesn't mark a qualitative leap because Iran has already been enriching to 4.5%. That's above the 3.67% purity level set down in the deal, but far from the 90% needed for weapons, or the 20% level required for research reactors.

Tehran began gradually retreating from the 2015 accord after US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the agreement last year and reimposed crippling sanctions, rendering the pact barely functional. European signatories say they remain committed, but have struggled to devise a mechanism that wouldn't expose European companies to U.S. penalties if they trade with the Islamic Republic.

While Iran acknowledges it's breached limits set under the pact, it rejects that it has violated the accord. That's because the document allows participants to cease meeting commitments "in whole or in part" in the event of an unresolved dispute. Tehran argues that Europe has an obligation to help it avoid the new U.S. penalties.

The standoff over the deal has provoked tit-for-tat attacks on Gulf oil facilities, drones and shipping traffic that has raised fears of a new military confrontation in the Middle East.

UN Palestinian refugee agency replaces its head

REUTERS
JERUSALEM/GAZA

The head of the UN agency that aids Palestinian refugees has stepped aside until the end of an investigation into misconduct allegations, the agency said yesterday.

Commissioner General Pierre Krahenbuhl has been replaced until a review of "management-related matters" at the agency is completed, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) said in a statement. It gave no details of the substance of the allegations.

UNRWA provides services to more than 5 million registered refugees in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, as well as in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

The UN Secretary General appointed Christian Saunders as Officer-In-Charge for the interim period. Saunders previously served as the agency's acting deputy commissioner general.

Protesters storm fourth bridge in Baghdad

The protesters complain of widespread corruption, a lack of job opportunities and poor basic services, including regular power cuts despite Iraq's vast oil reserves.

AP/BAGHDAD

Iraqi protesters stormed a fourth bridge yesterday in central Baghdad, where security forces pushed them back with batons and tear gas, wounding dozens, after two anti-government demonstrators were killed in overnight clashes in the city of Karbala.

The military called on the protesters to stop blocking roads and ports, saying they had cost Iraq $6bn, and it vowed to arrest those responsible. The US Embassy urged the government to "engage seriously and urgently" with the demonstrators and condemned attacks on them.

Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets in recent weeks in the capital and across the Shia dominated south to demand sweeping political change. The protesters complain of widespread corruption, a lack of job opportunities and poor basic services, including regular power cuts despite Iraq's vast oil reserves.

The protesters have focused their anger on Shia political parties and militias, many of which have close ties to Iran. Across the south, they have attacked party and militia headquarters, setting some of them ablaze.

In the holy city of Karbala, protesters attacked the Iranian Consulate earlier this week, hurling firebombs over its walls. Security forces killed at least three people as they dispersed the protest. Days earlier, masked men suspected of links to the security forces opened fire on a demonstration there, killing at least 18 people. Overnight, at least two protesters were killed in clashes with security forces near the provincial headquarters in the city, according to a protester and a medic who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of repercussions.

In Baghdad, protesters clashed with security forces on a fourth bridge over the Tigris River after previous clashes forced the closure of three other spans, paralysing much of the city. The protests have been centered in Tahrir Square, on the eastern bank of the Tigris, and the demonstrators have been trying to reach the Green Zone, which houses government offices and foreign embassies on the other side of the river.

As protesters moved towards the Martyrs' Bridge, north of the other three, they passed near the central bank. Iraqi security forces were deployed in large numbers around the bank and evacuated employees, but the protesters did not target the building.

Security and medical officials said at least 29 people were wounded after being hit with batons or exposed to tear gas on or near Martyrs' Bridge. They spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

In Tahrir Square, family and friends called for the release of Siba Al Mahdawi, a 37-year-old activist and volunteer medic who was abducted over the weekend. Her brother, Ahmed Al Mahdawi, said she was taken by masked men dressed in black as she returned home from a protest Saturday. He said the family has received no word of her whereabouts since she vanished four days ago.

"She assumed responsibility for the family after our father died," he said, adding that she had taken care of her mother and four younger siblings as they struggled to find steady work.

The US Embassy in Baghdad called on the government to "engage seriously and urgently with Iraqi citizens who are demanding reform."

"We deplore the killing and kidnapping of unarmed protesters, threats to freedom of expression, and the cycle of violence taking place," it said. "Iraqis must be free to make their own choices about the future of their nation."

Maj. Gen. Abdul-Karim Khalaf, a spokesman for the armed forces, said the roadblocks and the protesters' blockade of the key port of Umm Qasr on the Persian Gulf had cost the country $6 billion. He said security forces are not using live ammunition but would arrest anyone trying to block roads or bridges. Umm Qasr, which houses a vital oil terminal and also is an entry point for food and basic goods, has been blocked for five days. Clashes broke out when security forces tried to reopen it Tuesday, with one protester killed and eight wounded.

Security forces have killed at least 273 protesters in two major waves of demonstrations since early October, including four who died Wednesday of injuries suffered earlier. Iraq's leaders have promised reforms and early elections, but the process they laid out could take months, and the protests have only grown in recent days.

Iraq has held regular elections since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein following the US-led invasion of 2003, but they have been dominated by Shia parties that have failed to deliver on promises to improve daily life. The protests pose the biggest challenge to the government since it declared victory over militants from the Islamic State group nearly two years ago.

Internet access remained limited yesterday after the government shut it down earlier this week.

Sudan rebels: New parliament be formed only after peace deal

AFP/KHARTOUM

Sudanese rebel groups engaged in peace talks with Khartoum insisted yesterday that the country's new parliament be formed only after an agreement is reached to end long-running conflicts in three border regions.

A power-sharing deal signed on August 17 between protest leaders and the generals who ruled Sudan after the April overthrow of longtime president Omar Al Bashir stipulates that a 300-member parliament be formed within three months.

Since the signing of the so called "Constitutional Declaration", the transitional government, led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, has engaged in talks with three rebel groups to reach a peace deal to end the wars in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan.

Rebel groups said that during talks in the South Sudanese capital of Juba, the two sides had agreed to delay the formation of a new parliament until a peace deal has been reached. The groups said they would not give up their demand despite the protest movement's insistence on the original November 17 deadline stipulated by the so-called "Constitutional Declaration".

"The Sudanese Revolutionary Front rejects any unilateral attempt to violate the Juba declaration that aims to build confidence measures," the rebel alliance said in a statement. The SRF called on Khartoum to "stick to what has been agreed on" in Juba.

It urged Khartoum not to set off any "upheaval that might disturb the atmosphere and create a state of mistrust that will delay the reaching of peace, which our country is in desperate need of".

Hamdok's government has made reaching a peace deal to end conflict in the country's three war zones a priority.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed and millions displaced in the rebellions by ethnic minority groups in the three conflict zones that met with an iron fist from Bashir's ousted regime.

Bashir himself is wanted by the Hague-based International Criminal Court for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity for his alleged role in the war in Darfur. He denies the charges. Veteran Sudanese journalist Khalid Tijani said the forming of parliament by November 17 was now difficult.

"The time left is not enough as there is still no agreement on the mechanism of appointing the lawmakers within the protest movement itself," Tijani said.

"The military too is of the opinion that forming a parliament at this stage might lead to more complications as these lawmakers would be appointed and not elected." Tijani said the near-term developments in Sudan are expected to be influenced by what happens with the peace negotiations.

"If a peace deal is reached, it will lead to restructuring of the government and possibly even the sovereign council," he said, referring to the 11-member ruling body that is currently governing the northeast African country.

Two dead in strike on Libya police station

AFP/TRIPOLI

Two Libyan policemen were killed in an air strike on a police station in the suburbs of Tripoli late on Tuesday, the UN-recognised Government of National Accord said.

Its interior ministry blamed the strike on the forces of east Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar, who launched an offensive against the capital in April.

Hundreds of people — both combatants and civilians — have been killed in the fighting and tens of thousands have fled.

"The air force of war criminal Haftar targeted the headquarters of the rapid intervention force... in Ain Zara on Tuesday, killing two security agents," the ministry said in a statement.



A view of a police vehicle on flames on the outskirts of Tripoli, yesterday. Two Libyan policemen were killed in an air strike on a police station in the suburbs of Tripoli, the UN-recognised GNA said.

It added that four other people were wounded and posted pictures on its Facebook page of police cars in flames.

Nearly half of Kenyans report abuse of power by police

REUTERS/NAIROBI

Nearly half of Kenyans surveyed by the government's police watchdog IPOA said they had suffered police abuse of power, according to a survey it released yesterday, underscoring the scale of the task the body faces in holding officers to account.

Kenyans have long complained of police brutality but face an uphill battle in getting justice. The study by The Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), formed in 2011, found that the public is still afraid to report police abuse, fearing victimisation and believing no action will be taken.

The IPOA said the incidence of police abuse reported in their survey of nearly 6,000 households marked a "significant increase" compared with its last such survey, in 2013.

More than 46% of respondents said they had been victims of at least one form of police abuse of power, up from 30% in the survey six years ago.

Police abuse of power was defined in the survey as "inappropriate conduct...or illegal actions taken by police officers" in their official duties. Of those who said they had experienced police brutality, less than 10% had reported their case to the IPOA.

Another 70% reported the abuse at their local police station but more than half of them said their report did not yield any results. At that time, it had secured convictions of police officers for committing crimes in only two cases, despite having received more than 9,200 complaints.

In one case that drew media attention, the 28-year-old son of a British aristocrat was found dead in his cell in 2012 after he was detained during a night out. His family criticised the IPOA's investigation of the death. A years-long inquest found in 2018 that there had been attempts to cover up what had happened and a trial began in January 2019.

Algeria judges end strike over reshuffle

AFP/ALGIERS

Striking Algerian judges returned to work yesterday, a day after their main union announced an end to a mass 10-day walkout over alleged executive interference in the judiciary.

Hearings resumed in Sidi M'hamed court, the main jurisdiction in Algiers, an AFP journalist said, while in second city Oran, some 350km west of the capital, lawyer Wafa Boukadoum said judges were also back at work.

Algerian judges and prosecutors had begun an open-ended strike on October 27, demanding independence for the judiciary after a massive reshuffle affecting 3,000 judges and prosecutors.

At the time, the National Magistrates' Syndicate (SNM) decried the transfers by the justice ministry as "a stranglehold by the executive over the power of the judiciary".

But the SNM said an agreement had been reached with the ministry on Tuesday that would allow judges to challenge their transfers by filing appeals to the Supreme Judicial Council. It also said the deal involved setting up a workshop to "enrich" legislation on judicial independence.

But in Sidi M'hamed, lawyers said they were disappointed by the decision to end the strike. One alleged that judges had been swayed by a promise of "huge wage increases". "They have sacrificed the independence" of the judiciary, the lawyer added, on condition of anonymity.

Zimbabwe police stop protest march by civil servants



Anti-riot police stand over demonstrators as they block public sector workers from marching to government offices with a petition demanding better pay in Harare, Zimbabwe, yesterday.

AP/HARARE

Zimbabwe police yesterday blocked government workers from marching to protest for better salaries, a day after dozens of public hospital doctors were fired for striking for more pay.

Strikes have become frequent in the southern African country in recent weeks as the economy continues to deteriorate.

Armed with batons, police formed a human wall and prevented the workers from leaving their association's offices in the capital, Harare.

Scores had turned up for the protest, and had planned to march to government offices and hand in a petition.

A handful of protesters who tried to bulldoze their way through the police barricade were pushed back. One was manhandled. "Many people are not here because they are scared of this heavy police presence. All we want are meaningful salaries," said Cecilia Alexander, chairwoman of the Apex Council, which represents the more than 300,000 government workers. Police in trucks and on foot outnumbered the protesters.

The workers are calling for their salaries to be indexed to the U.S dollar, arguing that Zimbabwe's escalating inflation and the devaluation of the local currency is eroding their salaries so much that many can no longer afford bus fare to work. The average monthly salary of a civil servant is about US $60.

On Tuesday, the government said it had fired 77 public hospital doctors who have been on strike for more than 60 days and had refused to attend disciplinary hearings. The striking doctors are also demanding that their salaries to be indexed to U.S dollars. More striking doctors are likely to be fired for missing work in the coming days, said their representative Masimba Ndoro, citing the reluctance by the majority of the doctors to attend the disciplinary hearings.

India voices concern over objectionable elements in Kartarpur visual

IANS
NEW DELHI

Two days ahead of the highly-anticipated inauguration of the cross-border Kartarpur Corridor, India yesterday voiced concerns over the presence of three Sikh separatist leaders, including Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, in an official promotional video of the corridor released by Pakistan and has raised the matter with Islamabad.

The video shows posters by Sikhs for Justice group featuring photographs of Pro-Khalistan leader Bhindranwale and his military adviser Shabeg Singh, who were killed during Operation Blue Star in 1984. Sikhs for Justice is a banned outfit, which is pushing for Sikh Referendum 2020.

The video was released on Monday, ahead of the November 9 inauguration of the Kartarpur Corridor, which will connect the Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Punjab with the Kartarpur shrine in Pakistan, where Guru Nanak Dev spent his final days.

"India has raised with Pakistan the presence of anti-India, objectionable elements in the video, and asked for removal of the visual," Indian government sources said on Wednesday.

Reacting strongly to the use of pictures of Khalistani separatist leaders in the Pakistani video song on the Kartarpur Corridor, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh yesterday said this clearly endorsed his stand that there was a hidden ISI agenda behind the historic corridor.

In fact, India is worried that Sikh separatists should not misuse the corridor to leverage their 2020 separatist agenda, sources said.

India will be watching "very, very closely" the Kartarpur Corridor inauguration and the next few days' developments.

India has from time to time voiced its concerns to Pakistan over the activities of anti-India Sikh separatists, including that of Gopal Singh Chawla, and Islamabad has acted on those matters, including removing Chawla from Pakistan's gurdwara board a few months ago, the sources said.

"We have to see if Pakistan continues to keep our concerns in mind," the sources added.

Reacting strongly to the use of pictures of Khalistani separatist leaders in the Pakistani video song on the Kartarpur Corridor, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh yesterday said this clearly endorsed his stand that there was a hidden ISI agenda behind the historic corridor.

Talking informally with media persons on the sidelines of the special session of the Assembly here to mark the 550th Prakash Purb of Guru Nanak Dev, he said he had been warning against the ISI role in the Pakistan decision to open the corridor since the day their Prime Minister announced it.

Even though the corridor marked the realisation of the long-cherished dream of the entire Sikh community, including him, to pay their respects at the historic shrine, India could not afford to ignore the ISI threat that was attached to it, said the Chief Minister, stressing the need for extreme caution.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds opens showroom in Pune



Malabar Gold and Diamonds' 6th showroom in Maharashtra and the second showroom in Pune is inaugurated by their Brand Ambassador & Bollywood Actor, Anil Kapoor, in the presence of Malabar Group Chairman, M P Ahammed; Managing Director -India Operations, Asher O; Group Executive Director, K P Abdul Salam; Regional Head, M P Subair; management team members, media and other invited guests on November 3. The new outlet is located opposite Gokhale Hall at Sarsan Plaza, Laxmi Road, in Pune, with valet service and ample parking space available.

Delhi courts shut as lawyers continue protest

IANS/NEW DELHI

The lower courts in Delhi witnessed a complete lockdown yesterday, with lawyers preventing litigants from entering the premises even as the Bar Council of India announced withdrawal of strike from today.

Amid protests by lawyers shutdowns were reported from the Patiala House Court as well as the courts in Rohini and Saket as their standoff with the police entered for its fourth day. The Saket court remained shut for the third consecutive day, with lawyers denying entry to the litigants inside the premises.

Mahavir Singh Sharma, President, Co-ordination Committee of All District Court Bar Associations said lawyers practicing in all the district courts of Delhi would continue their strike and abstain from work. The Bar Council of India announced it will withdraw its strike but demanded action against cops involved in the scuffle at the Tis Hazari court on November 2, while promising action against lawyers found guilty. "We held a meeting yesterday in which we have issued notices to advocates. We are going to take action against the guilty lawyers. However, the manner in which thousands of cops gathered outside the Police Headquarters was illegal and unconstitutional," BCI Chairperson Manan Kumar Mishra told reporters here.

PM steps in to stop farm fires, wants equipment for farmers

IANS
NEW DELHI

To tackle stubble burning, Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday directed the Agriculture Ministry to distribute equipment on a priority basis to farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

This is PM Modi's first direct intervention on the issue of air pollution in Delhi NCR. The Prime Minister had taken a review meeting on Tuesday on air pollution in the northern states. Stubble burning by farmers in these three states, especially Punjab, has been identified as a major cause of air pollution in the Delhi NCR region.On the issue of stubble burning, the Prime Minister directed Agriculture Ministry to give priority to the farmers of the states of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana in distribution of equipment to prevent such occurrences, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

Modi yesterday chaired the 31st interaction through PRAGATI, the ICT based multi-modal platform for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation. During the meeting, the Prime Minister was informed about the progress in National Agriculture Market platform which has helped in better price discovery. E-payments are now being made directly into the account of farmers. Progress in development of two integrated e-Mandis in Jammu & Kashmir was also reviewed.

Prime Minister directed that based on e-models of demand aggregation, Ministry of Road, Transport & Highways and Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare should work together on a new start-up model of logistics support, particularly with regard to transfer of agricultural products from one state to another. He said that all the states must come together and use a common, integrated platform for smooth operation. The Prime Minister also reviewed the progress of infrastructure connectivity projects including Katra-Banihal railway line. He gave explicit instructions on speedy completion of the project by next year.

Several projects in the North-East such as widening of Aizawl-Tuipang highway project was also discussed. To provide faster and safer connectivity between Delhi and Meerut, the Prime Minister said that Delhi-Meerut Expressway should be completed by the revised timeline of May 2020.



Tourists visit the Taj Mahal in smoggy conditions in Agra, yesterday.

Despite itchy eyes, tourists flock to Taj Mahal

AFP
AGRA

Even with pollution cloaking northern India, visitors are still thronging the Taj Mahal, the shining marble mausoleum south of Delhi.

Every year around eight million people — mostly domestic tourists – visit the monument, built by a 17th-century Mughal emperor for his wife. On Tuesday, with smog levels many times maximum levels, only a few of the roughly 10,000 daily visitors wore pollution masks, and most of them were foreigners. Gildas Courtois, a French visitor, complained that he was coughing, his nose was running and that his eyes were sore. "We don't feel comfortable with it," he said. "It makes it bitter. Makes the visit bitter, because it's a wonder, one of the wonders of the world."

He had travelled to Agra from Delhi, the choking Indian megacity of 20 million people 250km to the north, where the air was "very, very bad", he said. A Japanese tourist wearing a mask at the Taj Mahal felt the same way. "Breathing dirty air affects our health directly and instantly," he said. "I am feeling chest congestion and my eyes are watery. We are using masks but I'm not sure how effective they are." Every winter, smoke from thousands of farm fires combine with industrial and vehicle emissions to create a toxic mix that doctors say is taking years off Indians' lives. For the Taj Mahal, a van with a large air purifier on Tuesday was parked up, but it was around 1.5km away in a busy car park filled with diesel buses. India's Supreme Court yesterday questioned the government over its response to the crises.

Schools reopen in New Delhi

AP
NEW DELHI

Schools reopened yesterday in the Indian capital with toxic air level coming down by more than half since authorities declared a health emergency last weekend. With strong winds blowing away pollutants, the air quality index at the US Embassy in New Delhi read 155 as compared to 500 over the weekend that was 10 times the recommended WHO level. Air pollution in New Delhi peaks around November 1 due to smog from festival fireworks and smoke from the burning of stubbles in agricultural fields.

Russian, Indian defence ministers meet in Moscow

ANATOLIA
MOSCOW

The defence sector is one-of-the leading areas of cooperation between Russia and India, Russian defence minister said yesterday.

"Russia and India are bound by reliable, solid, friendly relations. This is especially true when it comes to cooperation in the military and military-technical spheres," Sergey Shoygu said at a meeting with his Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh in the capital Moscow.

According to the minister, the two countries strengthen military cooperation by expanding communications between the general staffs and the armed forces, joint military exercises, educational exchanges. He also mentioned Russian-Indian interactions within the framework of the international organizations, including in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

For his part, Rajnath Singh said that India restructured its part of the joint commission aiming to expand the military cooperation with Russia, and added that he was going to work with his Russian counterpart "in a spirit of mutual confidence and particularly privileged partnership".

Centre earned Rs192 cr as NEET fee

IANS
BHOPAL

The Central government earned more than Rs 192 crore from the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) entrance fees in 2019, according to information received under the RTI.

The NEET is held for admission to MBBS, BDS and other such courses in medical colleges. Those who clear the written entrance exam are called for counselling, for which the Medical Counselling Committee (MCC) started a registration fee of Rs 1,000 in 2018-19.

Replying to a RTI query from Neemuch-based activist Chandrashekhar Gaud, the Union Health Ministry said it collected Rs 192,43,22,162 as registration amount from the 15,19,375 students, who enrolled themselves for counselling in 2019.

Though the MCC claims to be a not-for-profit organisation that makes arrangements for the counselling from the funds collected through registrations, it is yet to give details of how it spent the Rs 192,43,22,162 it collected this year. Last year, the Committee collected Rs 18,32,87,500 in registrations and spent Rs 2,76,78,614 on conducting the counselling. The MCC claimed to have deposited the remaining amount of Rs 15,56,08,886 in the Central government's account.

While the Health Ministry, in its RTI reply, said the MCC decided to impose the registration fee on the advice of the Health and Family Welfare Department, it hasn't given details of how the department arrived at that figure.

Gaud said the amount collected by the government as registration fee in 2018-19 and the interest earned on it was enough to conduct the counselling process for the next several years, and the government must therefore think about putting an end to the registration fee.

"It must also be transparent with the students, who pay for their counselling, and tell them what it did with the surplus money," he added.

Ahmed Patel and Gadkari meet raises eyebrows

IANS
NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel yesterday met BJP leader and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, triggering speculation in view of the stalemate in government formation in Maharashtra.

However, Patel, Congress Treasurer, insisted that politics was not discussed at all during his meeting with Gadkari, who hails from Maharashtra.

He said he went to meet Gadkari on the issue of farmers. He also released a letter written to Gadkari regarding MSME sector of Gujarat, raising concern about the increasing bad loans in it. He said bad loans in MSME sector in Gujarat had risen to 23 per cent in the first quarter. "I would also like to bring to your notice the urgent need to expand the Central government's MSME-Cluster Development program to Gujarat as tribal districts. It's important that we are able to develop industrial clusters in states' most backward regions," Patel wrote in the letter. "The MSME sector is backbone of the Indian economy. The employment crisis and the economic slowdown will not be solved unless we resolve the problems of small businesses," he said.

Protection of environment top priority: Imran

INTERNEWS
ISLAMABAD



PM says after success of the 'billion tree Tsunami' project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, his government has now embarked upon an ambitious plan of planting ten billion trees in the country.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has said the protection of Pakistan's environment is top priority of the government.

Addressing the 7th Asian Regional Conservative Forum of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Islamabad yesterday, the prime minister said Pakistan was a diverse country.

"Pakistan has twelve ecological zones from desert to Himalayan forests which are rare in the world," he said.

The prime minister added that the population growth and the lack of interest for protection of environment in the past has devastated our wildlife and forests.

"The PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the first government which took the first major step to deal with the climate change by launching the billion tree Tsunami project," the prime minister said.

He said the magic formula of the success of this initiative was that local people including women were involved besides action was taken action against the timber mafia.

The prime minister added the federal government of PTI has now embarked upon an ambitious plan of planting ten billion trees.

"This year we will launch massive tree plantation drives across the country as the necessary planning and infrastructure including nurseries have been developed in the first year," he said. The prime minister added the youth will drive this massive campaign, adding that environment protection will also be made part of syllabus.

The prime minister further said the government has also started another campaign under which vertical buildings will be constructed in the cities.

"Town planners need to be more conscious of environment protection," the prime minister said. He regretted that seventy percent of trees in Lahore were cut off in ten years which has made it one of the most polluted cities.

The prime minister added he regretted the US's decision to pull out of the Paris accord.

Debt inquiry commission yet to find foul play

INTERNEWS
ISLAMABAD

Commission of Inquiry constituted by Prime Minister Imran Khan four months back to investigate the use of loans taken from 2008-2018 has not yet found any case of loan-money going to the pocket of any key politician or bureaucrat. All receipts are instead found going to Account No 1.

Informed sources said that the Commission has also not found so far any case of fraud and corruption. So far, it is said the major case being focused by the Commission is that of Karachi's K-4 water project.

It is said that the 13 years old K-4 project was hardly 10 percent complete but the recent rains in Karachi washed away the work done so far. K-4 project cost has risen from Rs25bn to Rs150bn because of delays.

The K-4 water project is a municipal infrastructure project being jointly developed by the provincial and federal governments, to augment the city's daily water supply.

The estimated cost was approximately Rs25.5bn, while the project is designed to provide 650m gallons of water daily to Karachi in three phases.

The new water supply will be extracted from Keenjhar Lake through three water canals. The mega-project has seen consistent delays with the cost of construction rising manifold over the years.

The Commission sources said that so far the loan cases probed suggest that all the loan money was received in the Federal Consolidated Fund's account known as Account No 1. The provinces, it is said also maintain their own Account No 1 and they too have been receiving their receipts in the same account.

Thus the impression that the loan money whether local or foreign could be credited by any person in his personal account or could be received in cash does not carry any weight.

According to a former finance secretary only a naïve could argue this because those who have understanding of the government working know that all government receipts go to Account No 1.

The Commission sources said that there are cases where the money received in the same Account No 1 for any particular project was spent on some other project, for debt servicing or to bridge fiscal deficit.

Sharif discharged from hospital; Maryam out on bail

INTERNEWS
LAHORE



Supporters of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif gather around his car as he leaves after being discharged from a government hospital in Lahore, Pakistan, yesterday.

After sixteen days, former Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif was yesterday discharged from a government hospital and taken to his residence near Lahore.

The former prime minister was accompanied by his mother and other family members.

Sharif's daughter Maryam also arrived at the Services Hospital and accompanied her father to the residence of the Sharif family. She had arrived at the hospital after being released from jail on bail.

Nurses and doctors from the Sharif Medical City arrived at the Services Hospital, where head of the medical board, Professor Dr Mehmood Ayaz, gave the medical file and reports of the former premier to the doctors of the Sharif Medical City.

Pakistan Muslim League-N spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb said an intensive care unit has been set up at the former premier's residence and the doctors have put a ban on people from visiting him.

The spokesperson also said that due to low platelet counts there were chances that an infection might develop, and the doctors suggested the setting up of a special medical unit at the Jati Umra residence of the Sharif family.

Aurangzeb said that the unit was set up under the supervision of Sharif's personal physician Dr Adnan Khan. She added that the doctors will be present in the ICU round the clock.

Earlier yesterday , Maryam Nawaz — the former premier's daughter and a vice-president of his PML-N party — was released on bail after her lawyers fulfilled requirements set forth by the Lahore High Court (LHC).

According to details, Kot Lakhpat Jail officials issued the release orders that were later sent to Services Hospital for signatures. The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday granted bail to Maryam in the Chaudhry Sugar Mills case.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor had opposed the PML-N leader's plea, which Maryam had filed after her father Nawaz Sharif was hospitalised in a critical condition. Nawaz, who had been serving a jail term in Al-Azizia reference case, was also given bail by a bench of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on humanitarian grounds last month.

LHC had asked Maryam to submit her passport to satisfy "judicial conscience" as prosecution expressed apprehension she would flee the country.

The court also asked her to submit two surety bonds of Rs10 million each and deposit Rs70 million with the deputy registrar.

Pakistan Navy tests anti-ship missile

INRTERNEWS
KARACHI

Pakistan Navy test-fired land-based anti-ship missile 'Zarb' as part of a training exercise from the coastal region. The missile successfully followed its pre-planned trajectory and accurately engaged the target at sea.

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi witnessed the exercise as the chief guest. The admiral expressed his utmost satisfaction on the operational readiness of Pakistan Navy. He further said: "Pakistan's pursuit [of] peace and stability has to be taken in the context of our quest for maintaining a peaceful coexistence in the region and not to be construed as our weakness.

Pakistan Navy, being a professionally competent and potent force, is fully capable of thwarting any aggression with an iron fist." He lauded the efforts, dedication and professional conduct displayed by all participants, especially the crew of missile unit, scientists and engineers for making the event a success.

He further said that operationalisation of the Zarb Weapon System was depictive of Pakistan's strong resolve and high level of preparedness. He reaffirmed the resolve that Pakistan Navy's personnel remained vigilant and combat-ready to guard the sea frontiers and maritime interests of our motherland.

Meanwhile, at a change of command ceremony held at PNS Qasim, Rear Admiral Faisal Rasul Lodhi took over as Commander Coast.

Dengue cases soar to record high in Pakistan

AFP
ISLAMABAD

A record-breaking 44,000 people have been infected with mosquito-borne dengue in Pakistan this year, a senior health official said yesterday, as increased outbreaks linked to rising temperatures and erratic rainfall ravage other parts of Asia.

Dr Rana Safdar, a senior official at the National Institute of Health (NIH), told AFP the figure is a huge leap from the previous record of 27,000 infections in 2011.

Safdar said 66 people had been killed by the disease so far in 2019, compared to 370 in 2011.

He blamed climate change for the surge, but would not elaborate. The government was "employing all available resources at its disposal to contain the problem", he said.

Physician Dr Mahseema Siddique, who treats dengue patients, blamed the government for the rise in cases, saying local authorities in Punjab and Islamabad in particular had failed to take precautions such as covering up water reservoirs or spraying anti-dengue chemicals.

"They woke up only after hundreds of people got infected and that was too late. There are a large number of areas where spray teams could not make it," he said. The highest number of patients was recorded in the capital Islamabad and neighbouring garrison city of Rawalpindi, where 12,433 people were found infected with the virus.

Dengue is transmitted mainly by the Aedes Aegypti mosquito, which thrives in densely-populated tropical climates and breeds in stagnant pools of water.

Mosquitoes pick up the virus from infected humans — even asymptomatic ones — and pass it along to other people through bites.

Infections have steadily climbed across the globe since the 1970s due to rising temperatures and irregular monsoon rains linked to climate change, which allow for ideal mosquito breeding conditions.

But this year outbreaks have rampaged through Southeast Asia in particular, infecting hundreds of thousands, killing hundreds, and crippling health care systems as governments struggle to contain the untreatable virus.

Dengue is mostly found in crowded areas, and breakneck urbanisation across the globe has helped the virus thrive.

Dubbed "breakbone fever", it inflicts suffers with intense flu-like symptoms: severe headache, pain behind the eyes, full-body aches, high fever, nausea, vomiting, swollen glands or rash.



Kartarpur Corridor

Pakistani security officials stand near the Kartarpur border crossing with India, ahead of its opening on November 9, in the town of Kartarpur, yesterday. Thousands of Sikh pilgrims are expected around the world to visit to Pakistan to celebrate the 550th birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak, which falls on November 12.

Sri Lanka govt pledges to hold off signing US pact until after election

REUTERS
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's government said yesterday that a decision on agreeing a $480m infrastructure grant from the United States, which has been criticised by some lawyers, Buddhist monks and opposition politicians, would be put off until after a November 16 presidential election to allow for broader discussions.

The grant, from the US Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), aims to reduce poverty by upgrading provincial roads and improving land administration.

But the project has become a point of contention in campaigning for the election, which pitches opposition candidate and wartime defence chief Gotabaya Rajapaksa against Sajith Premadasa, who is housing minister in the current government. Some influential Buddhist monks, the Sri Lankan Bar Association, and allies of Rajapaksa, the brother of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, say the grant would be detrimental to the island nation.

The opposition has said agreeing the grant could allow US ownership of a swathe of land from the strategic natural port at Trincomalee, in the east, to the capital Colombo.

The government denies that, but says it will hold off from signing the agreement until after the poll. "The agreement will be signed only with parliament's approval and (after) discussions," Finance Minister Mangala Samaraweera told reporters in Colombo. "Not even a single inch of land will be given to the US The decision on how to spend the grant also is at our discretion according to our priorities. The main conditions in the agreement are protecting human rights and democracy." Premadasa said in a letter on Tuesday to a Buddhist monk who had begun a hunger strike against the grant that the agreement would be signed only after discussions with monks.

There are no official polls ahead of the election, but political analysts say there is a tight race between Premadasa and Rajapaksa.

The grant agreement was originally due to be signed in December 2018, but was delayed by a political crisis that erupted when President Maithripala Sirisena unexpectedly sacked Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and replaced him with Mahinda Rajapaksa. The Supreme Court later reversed that move.

15 dead in suspected rebel attacks in Thailand's south

AFP
YALA, THAILAND

Army said the militants struck two checkpoints in Yala province manned by civilian defence volunteers. Twelve people were killed on spot and three more died later on.

At least fifteen people were gunned down in an ambush by suspected militants in Thailand's violence-wracked south, an army spokesman said yesterday, one of the bloodiest days in the 15-year insurgency.

Thailand's three southernmost provinces have been in the grip of a conflict that has killed more than 7,000 people, as Malay-Muslim militants fight for more autonomy from the Thai state.

Despite the high death toll, the highly localised unrest garners few international headlines.

The region is heavily controlled by the police and the military, with residents and rights groups accusing them of heavy-handed tactics.

Villagers trained and armed by security forces are also enlisted to monitor remote villages, though they are rarely targeted by the rebels.

This changed late Tuesday when militants struck two checkpoints in Yala province manned by civilian defence volunteers, opening fire on them as a group of villagers stopped to talk, southern army spokesman Pramote Prom-in said.

In the largest death toll in years, "twelve were killed at the scene, two more (died) at the hospital, and one died this morning", said Pramote, adding that five others were injured.

The attackers took M-16 rifles and shotguns from the checkpoints, he said. "These acts were by militants." Nails were also scattered on the roads in an apparent effort to slow the security forces, the army said in a separate statement.

A bomb squad was dispatched yesterday morning to investigate and detonate an explosive device suspected to have been left by fleeing attackers about three kilometres from one checkpoint.

The southern army commander told reporters that the attackers were targeting "weak points".

"This is just to gain the headlines and scare Thai people nationwide," said Pornsak Poonsawasdi.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha said the perpetrators must "be brought to justice", according to Defence Ministry spokesman Kongcheep Tantravanich.

Rebels seeking autonomy for the culturally distinct region bordering Malaysia have been fighting the Buddhist-majority Thai state, which colonised the area over a century ago.

The conflict is characterised by tit-for-tat attacks that usually target symbols of the Thai state and its security forces but civilians from both Muslim and Buddhist communities often get caught in the crossfire.

The violence has bled into tourist destinations, like in 2012 when a series of car bombs in Songkhla province's Hat Yai killed 13 people.

The incidents have been fewer in recent years, but the hits have become "more intense", said Don Pathan, an expert on the so-called Deep South.

Tuesday's attack marked the largest coordinated effort "in a very long time", he added.

It comes days after Bangkok hosted the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit, which brought head of states from all over the world — along with hundreds of foreign journalists.

"It (the attack) is a reminder that they are still here," Pathan said. Civilian defence volunteers rarely draw the rebels' ire "unless if they cross the line and become part of the government security apparatus", he added.

The rebels accuse the state of railroading their distinct culture as well as carrying out routine abuses which go unpunished.

Suspects are routinely taken for interrogation and held under emergency laws in detention centres where rights groups have documented torture.



Security personnel inspect the site of a militant attack in Yala province, Thailand, yesterday.

Pro-Beijing politician wounded in Hong Kong knife attack

AFP
HONG KONG

A pro-Beijing politician in Hong Kong was stabbed by a man pretending to be a supporter yesterday, the latest tit-for-tat political violence in a city engulfed by seething pro-democracy protests.

The attack came as the Hong Kong's unpopular leader Carrie Lam said her resolve to crack down on the protesters had been bolstered by a recent meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

She condemned the stabbing at a press briefing in Beijing and said regardless of political stand, "any violent action... should not be tolerated by any civilised society".



Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, addresses a news conference in Beijing, yesterday.

The international finance hub has been convulsed by five months of huge and increasingly violent protests calling for greater democratic freedoms and police accountability.

With Beijing and Lam refusing to offer a political solution to the protesters' grievances, violence has spiralled on both sides of the ideological divide.

In the latest incident, a man holding a bouquet approached pro-Beijing lawmaker Junius Ho yesterday morning as the politician was campaigning in his constituency near the border with China.

Footage posted online showed the man handing Ho the flowers and asking for a picture. He then pulled a knife from his bag before striking Ho in the chest.

Police said three people were wounded in the incident, including the attacker, who was subdued by Ho and his aides. A police source, who declined to be named, said Ho received a stab wound to the left side of his chest and the attacker was arrested. Ho, 57, was conscious when he got into the ambulance. His bloodstained white shirt and wound dressings could be seen on the ground in the aftermath of the attack.

The stabbing came as Lam wrapped up talks in mainland China with top Communist Party officials, including Xi who threw his support behind the beleaguered leader when they met on Monday, according to state media. "President Xi's trust and support to me and the Hong Kong government has strengthened our resolve to stop the violence and curb the chaos," she said on Wednesday as she met in Beijing with Vice Premier Han Zheng.

Duterte critic accepts drug war post

AFP
MANILA

A fierce critic of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's deadly anti-drug war accepted a top post yesterday to help steer the campaign, pledging to halt killings of the innocent.

While critics said the appointment is an effort to tarnish an adversary, the move will put Leni Robredo in the cockpit of the internationally condemned crackdown.

Duterte offered the post to Robredo, who is vice-president but was elected separately, after her repeated criticism of a campaign that has killed thousands.

"I want to fix the campaign against illegal drugs, stop the killing of innocents and bring to account abusive officials," Robredo told a press conference.

She will be the co-chair of a committee responsible for overseeing the crackdown, which was until now led by the national anti-drugs agency.

Duterte critics were sceptical of the appointment, with Senator Lila de Lima calling it a "silly trap".

The president wants to "create the narrative of putting all the blame of his failures on someone else", added De Lima, who is imprisoned on drug charges she says are politically motivated.

Opinion polls say the drug war has the overwhelming backing of Filipinos, yet it has high-profile critics among opposition politicians, the powerful Catholic church and advocacy groups. Foreign institutions have also stepped in to question the killing, including International Criminal Court prosecutors who have launched a preliminary probe.

N Korea slams planned US military drills with South

AFP
SEOUL

North Korea yesterday slammed Washington for plans to conduct a joint military exercise with Seoul next month, as negotiations over Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal remain deadlocked.

The allies cancelled the combined air exercise known as Vigilant Ace along with several other joint drills last year amid a rapid diplomatic thaw with the North, which considers them a rehearsal for invasion. But Pentagon spokesman David Eastburn said this week that the US had "no plans to skip upcoming combined exercises" this year.

A senior North Korean official said yesterday that the announcement was equivalent to a "declaration for confrontation" that could jeopardise the diplomatic process.

"We have stressed on several occasions that the joint military drills will force us to reconsider the important steps that we have already taken," said Kwon Jong Gun at the North's foreign ministry.

"Our patience is reaching an uppermost limit," Kwon said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency.

Kwon was part of the North Korean delegation at the working-level nuclear talks with the US in Sweden last month.

Cambodian oppn leader vows to return, faces arrest

REUTERS
PHNOM PENH

Self-exiled Cambodian opposition party founder Sam Rainsy said yesterday that he will return on Saturday to face arrest amid a crackdown at home on members of his banned party and Malaysia's detention of two party activists trying to return.

The former finance minister has vowed to return to lead demonstrations against the one-party rule of longtime Prime Minister Hun Sen, whom he called "a brutal dictator".

His return could be thwarted by Thailand, whose prime minister said he would not be allowed entry en route to Cambodia.

"For those of you who know me, this may just be the last time you will see me alive as a free man," Sam Rainsy said in a video message posted on Twitter.

Hun Sen has accused the opposition of fomenting a coup, and his government has arrested at least 48 activists with Sam Rainsy's banned opposition party this year. The party's last leader remains under house arrest on treason charges.

Sam Rainsy fled to France four years ago following a conviction for criminal defamation. He also faces a five-year prison sentence in a separate case.

He denies wrongdoing and says the charges were politically motivated. Sam Rainsy yesterday tweeted a photo of his airline ticket from Paris to Bangkok, from where he would travel to Thailand's border crossing with Cambodia. Hun Sen has ordered airlines not to allow him to board flights into Phnom Penh.

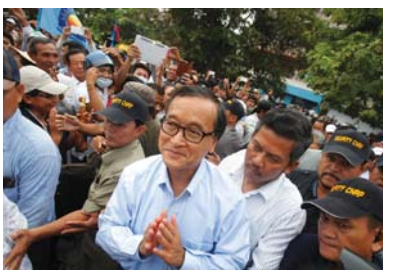
However, Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha yesterday said he could not allow interference into the internal affairs of Cambodia, a fellow member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). "According to our commitment to ASEAN, we will not allow an anti-government person to use Thailand for activism," Prayuth told reporters when asked about Sam Rainsy.

"I have ordered this, so he probably won't get in." Thailand last week turned away Mu Sochua, the CNRP's vice president, when she flew into Bangkok's main international airport.

Mu Sochua later flew to Indonesia, where the Cambodian embassy yesterday requested she be arrested after she attempted to hold a news conference.

Dozens of other opposition activists who fled Cambodia fearing arrest have vowed to return in support of Sam Rainsy.

Hun Sen's party went on to win every seat in parliament in elections held in 2018.



A file photo shows Sam Rainsy (centre) greeting supporters at the Freedom Park in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on October 6, 2013.

Militants attack Tajik-Uzbek border post, 17 dead

REUTERS
DUSHANBE

Masked Islamic State militants attacked a border post on the Tajik-Uzbek border overnight, triggering a gun battle that killed 15 of the militants, a guard and a policeman, Tajik authorities said yesterday.

There was no immediate announcement from the militant group, which has claimed responsibility for a series of assaults in Tajikistan in recent months.

Five of the gunmen were captured after the attack on the Tajik side of the border, 50km (30 miles) southwest of the capital Dushanbe, Tajikistan's National Security Committee said.

It released a photograph showing the badly burned bodies of three men in black military-style outfits, lying on the ground next to a wrecked car.

The committee said the gunmen had entered the former Soviet republic earlier this month via its border with Afghanistan and were "on a special mission".

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the killing of four Western cyclists in Tajikistan last year and for a prison riot in May which left dozens dead.

The militant group, whose main stronghold was in Iraq and Syria before its territorial defeat, has recruited thousands of fighters from Central Asia.

Tajikistan, the poorest country in the ex-Soviet region, is particularly vulnerable to militancy because of its porous border with Afghanistan, which has a long history of conflict between the government and militant groups.

In recent years, cells linked to or inspired by Islamic State have also been operating in Afghanistan.

The Dushanbe government has offered amnesty to those who quit Islamic State and return home, provided they have committed no other crimes.

Two other Central Asian nations — Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan — have this year brought home hundreds of people from Syria and Iraq, mostly women and children who were family members of Islamic State recruits.

Xi, Macron say Paris climate pact 'irreversible'

AFP
BEIJING

Chinese leader Xi Jinping and French President Emmanuel Macron declared yesterday that the Paris climate pact was "irreversible", showing a united front after Washington formally withdrew from the accord this week.

The joint declaration came at the end of Macron's second visit to China, which started on Monday in Shanghai and included talks on trade and the Iranian nuclear issue.

The French leader also said he told Xi there was a need for dialogue to resolve months of unrest in Hong Kong.

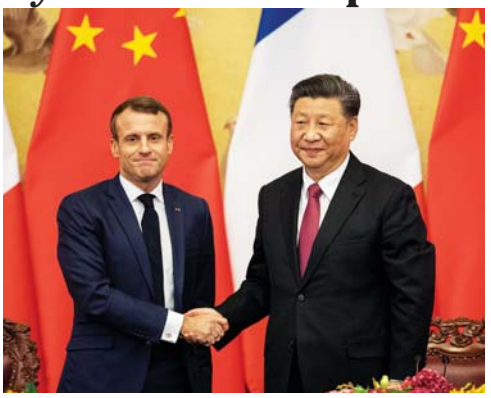
But Xi and Macron found common ground on climate change.

Major powers expressed regret and concern after President Donald Trump went ahead with the pullout from the Paris accord despite mounting evidence of the reality and impact of climate change.

Washington presented its withdrawal letter to the United Nations on Monday, the first possible date under the accord negotiated by Trump's predecessor Barack Obama, making the world's largest economy the sole major outlier from the agreement.

In a joint written statement, Xi and Macron reaffirmed "their firm support for the Paris accord which they consider as an irreversible process and a compass for strong action on climate".

Without directly naming the US, Macron said he "deplores the choices made by others" as he sat next to Xi following the talks at the imposing Great Hall of the People in the Chinese capital.



French President Emmanuel Macron shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping following a signing ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, yesterday.

"But I want to look at them as marginal choices," Macron said.

With the European Union, China and Russia backing the pact, he added, "the isolated choice of one or another is not enough to change the course of the world. It only leads to marginalisation."

In his remarks, Xi took a veiled swipe at the United States, which launched a trade war with China last year and has angered Beijing on various diplomatic issues. "We advocate for mutual respect and equal treatment, and are opposed to the law of the jungle and acts of intimidation," Xi said.

"We advocate for openness, inclusion and for mutually beneficial cooperation, and are opposed to protectionism and a zero-sum game." China's efforts against climate change are key as it is the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases.

In a joint written statement, Xi and Macron reaffirmed "their firm support for the Paris accord which they consider as an irreversible process and a compass for strong action on climate".

Xi also called on the international community to "jointly protect our homeland planet Earth", saying "we are against the attempt to place national interests above the common interests of humanity". In a document titled the "Beijing Call for Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Change", the two leaders voiced their determination to improve international cooperation to "ensure a complete and efficient implementation of the Paris accord".

The document includes a commitment to restoring almost a third of degraded land as well as eliminating fossil fuel subsidies in the medium term.

The two sides also committed to signing by January 31 a contract for the construction of a nuclear fuel recycling plant in China, which would involve French energy giant Orano.

On Iran, Macron said the two countries agreed to deepen joint efforts to convince Tehran to "fully respect its obligations" under the 2015 nuclear deal with major powers.

Lufthansa cancels 1,300 flights over German strike

AFP
FRANKFURT

Lufthansa airline said yesterday it was scrapping 1,300 flights as German cabin crew pressed ahead with a two-day strike, plunging passengers into travel chaos amid an escalating row over pay and conditions.

"As a result of the strike, around 180,000 passengers will be affected by 1,300 flight cancellations," the airline said in a statement after losing a last-minute court battle to halt the walkout.

The 48-hour stoppage called by the UFO flight attendants' union is due to start at 2300 GMT on Wednesday and last until 2300 GMT on Friday.

The union said the stoppage would affect all Lufthansa departures in Germany during that time.

Germany's largest airline said it "regrets the inconvenience for the passengers".

The carrier was putting together an alternative flight schedule where possible, it said, adding that affected passengers could rebook their journeys for free or swap their domestic flights for train tickets.

The announcement of 700 flight cancellations on Thursday and roughly 600 on Friday comes after a Frankfurt labour court denied Lufthansa's request for an injunction to block the strike.

The court ruled that the strike was legal.

Hoping to still avert the upheaval, Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr has invited UFO and two rival unions for last-ditch talks on Wednesday evening. The UFO union has said the strike was necessary because negotiations with Lufthansa bosses were deadlocked. The union already staged a day-long warning strike last month at four Lufthansa subsidiary airlines, causing several dozen flight cancellations at Eurowings, Germanwings, SunExpress and Lufthansa CityLine.

But the Lufthansa brand was spared after management offered a surprise two-percent pay rise to avoid flight disruptions at its flagship unit.

Johnson hit by Cabinet resignation as UK election campaign kicks off

AP
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson argued yesterday that voting for the Conservatives was the only way to end delays over Brexit, as he officially launched an election campaign already marred by gaffes and the resignation of a Cabinet minister.

Speaking outside his No. 10 Downing St. office on the first official day of Britain's five-week campaign, Johnson said the political impasse over Britain's departure from the European Union made him want to "chew my own tie in frustration." "I don't want an early election, and no one much wants to have an election in December, but we have got to the stage where we have no choice," he said.

Setting the stage for a people-versus-Parliament campaign, Johnson said lawmakers were "refusing time and again to deliver Brexit and honour the result of the referendum."

In fact, lawmakers approved Johnson's EU divorce deal in principle last month, but asked for more time to scrutinize it. Johnson then withdrew the bill and pushed for an early election instead.

Johnson also slammed his main rival, Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, comparing him to former Soviet dictator Josef Stalin and — erroneously — claiming he had sided with Russian President Vladimir Putin over a nerve-agent attack on British territory.

All 650 seats in the House of Commons are up for grabs in the December 12 election, which is coming more than two years early. Some 46 million British voters are eligible to take part in the country's first December vote in 96 years.

Johnson urged voters to deliver a Conservative majority so Britain could "put uncertainty behind us." With that support, Johnson vowed he would get Parliament to ratify his Brexit deal and the country would leave the EU as scheduled on Jan. 31.

Brexit was supposed to happen on October 31, but with Britain's politicians deadlocked, the bloc granted the U.K. a three-month delay.

While unofficial campaigning has been gearing up for weeks, the five-week election campaign formally began when Parliament was dissolved Wednesday. Johnson went to Buckingham Palace to notify Queen Elizabeth II of that and was to attend his first campaign rally later in central England.

The Conservative campaign has had with a rocky start. Just minutes before Johnson's introductory comments yesterday, Cabinet Minister Alun Cairns resigned over allegations concerning a former aide's role in a trial.



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson speaking outside No. 10 Downing Street in central London, yesterday.

Cairns said he was quitting as Welsh secretary because of "speculation" surrounding the "very sensitive matter," which is under investigation. He said he was confident he would be cleared of wrongdoing.

On Tuesday, another Conservative, outgoing House of Commons leader Jacob Rees-Mogg, was forced to apologise for suggesting that the victims of a 2017 London apartment block inferno that killed 72 people lacked common sense for following fire department advice to wait in their apartments for help.

Iraqi-Swede charged with spying for Iran

AP
STOCKHOLM

A 46-year-old Iraqi man was yesterday charged with spying for Iran by gathering information on Iranian refugees in Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Prosecutor Hans-Jorgen Hanstrom said the man, who was not identified, collected "personal information" about Iranian Arabs, known as Ahvazis, for Iran "under the cover of representing an Arabic online newspaper." The man is suspected of "having photographed and filmed Ahvazi conference delegates and demonstration participants in Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden," Hanstrom said in a statement.

The man was active during a four-year period ending February 2019, and also allegedly infiltrated online forums for opposition supporters, and gathered login information for routers, he said.

Hanstrom added the man allegedly communicated with Iranian intelligence agents via the Internet or at personal meetings, including in Tehran.

The man, who has dual Iraqi and Swedish citizenships, was arrested on February 27 .



Checkpoint Charlie

A view of Checkpoint Charlie, a former checkpoint connecting the former US sector with the Soviet sector in then divided Berlin is pictured in Berlin on November 05, 2019.

Thousands of Czech schools on strike over wages

AFP/PRAGUE

Thousands of schools across the Czech Republic joined a one-day strike yesterday for higher teacher salaries, a union official said.

School unions had demanded a 15-percent salary hike for this year, but the government has offered to earmark only a 10-percent increase in its 2020 budget.

"A total of 1,221 schools are closed, 2,743 have reduced their hours and almost 3,000 are sending us e-mails in support as they could not take an active part in the strike," Marketa Seidlova, deputy head of the Czech school employees union, told reporters.

That meant that more than half of the country's schools were taking part in the protest, added Seidlova. Education Minister Robert Plaga played down the numbers, saying they were far from "the illusion they were trying to create" as only 10-25 percent of schools had joined the strike depending on the region.

"After years or maybe decades when teachers were neglected, wages are now increasing. I admit they could grow faster though," Plaga said.

"We have been raising wages markedly for the past two years, but we are still far from a situation when we could say we are investing in the future of our children."

Judges overrule London police ban on Extinction Rebellion climate protests

REUTERS
LONDON

Police overstepped the law in issuing a blanket ban on protests by Extinction Rebellion climate activists in October, London High Court judges ruled yesterday, in a decision the group hailed as "an immense victory for the right to protest".

In their decision, the judges agreed with Extinction Rebellion's lawyers that police were wrong to use Section 14 of the Public Order Act 1986 to prohibit upcoming protests planned as part of the movement's two-week "Autumn Uprising".

The Metropolitan Police Service invoked Section 14 after the first week of protests blocked traffic across the city, including in its main financial district, and targeted firms demonstrators said profited from or funded activities driving climate change.

The police service said it was "disappointed" by Wednesday's ruling, reiterating that the protests had caused widespread disruption in London and pulled officers away from other duties.

Tobias Garnett, a human rights lawyer working with Extinction Rebellion, said the movement was "delighted" with the judgment on what he called "an unprecedented and unlawful infringement on the right to protest". "This was obviously an over-extension of police power," he told reporters outside the court. The Metropolitan Police was unlikely to appeal the ruling, he said, as the judges had made it "fairly clear they acted beyond their power".

The police service said it was still considering whether to appeal. The decision means the more than 400 Extinction Rebellion protesters arrested after the ban was imposed would now see charges against them dismissed, Garnett said.

The ruling also opens the way for some of them, as individuals, to seek compensation for false imprisonment if they choose, he added.

Ellie Chowns, a Green Party Member of the European Parliament who was among those arrested for gathering in London's Trafalgar Square following the ban, called the decision "an immense victory for the right to protest". The Extinction Rebellion protests "have played such a critical role in making the politicians pay attention" to climate change threats, she said.

French govt toughens stance on immigration

REUTERS
PARIS

France is to clear out some migrant tent camps, impose quotas for migrant workers and deny newly-arrived asylum seekers access to non-urgent healthcare, in a drive to show voters President Emmanuel Macron is heeding their concerns about immigration.

"We want to take back control of our immigration policy," Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, a Macron appointee, told reporters as he unveiled a package of measures on immigration.

"That means when we say yes it really means yes, and when we say no, it really means no."

Opinion polls show voters are worried about the issue, and that sentiment is driving support for far-right leader Marine Le Pen, who is likely to be Macron's main opponent in the next presidential election in 2022.

Polling shows her popularity is rising with voters while Macron — though still in the lead _ is slipping back.

Macron's centrist administration has so far resisted pressure from right-wing rivals

The French Prime Minister said the 20 new measures on immigration his government unveiled yesterday were the mark of a "France that is open but is not naive."

on immigration, in part because many of his own liberal supporters are uncomfortable with any measures they feel are pandering to xenophobia.

But in announcing the new measures, France joins other European states, among them Italy, Britain and Sweden, that have opted to take tougher approaches on migrants since the outbreak of the Syria conflict in 2011 triggered a migrant crisis across Europe and fueled populist right-wing parties.

French Prime Minister said the 20 new measures on immigration his government unveiled yesterday were the mark of a "France that is open but is not naive."

"I think we have found the right balance between reassuring our citizens and not giving ground to populism," he said, adding that migrant tent camps in eastern Paris would be razed by the end of this year, but he did not say what would happen to similar camps in other parts of the country.

At the same time, thousands of new homes would be made available for asylum seekers, he said, so that they could live in dignity.

Philippe also said that the test for acquiring French citizenship would be made more exacting, and that the government would aim to process asylum applications within six months.

Ministers said quotas would be set for people moving legally to France from outside the European Union to work, but without saying what the ceiling would be.

Addressing concerns that France's free health system was attracting illegal migrants, Health Minister Agnes Buzyn said asylum seekers would have to wait three months before being entitled to healthcare. She said the restriction would not apply to children, or emergency care.

In the second quarter of this year, France received 28,575 asylum applications, or 426 per million inhabitants, according to Eurostat data. That is above the EU average of 291 asylum applications per million inhabitants, and puts France in eighth place overall in Europe.

France has the largest Muslim minority in Western Europe, and a large proportion of its immigrant population are from Muslim countries.

Some French people say practices found among immigrant communities, such as Muslim women wearing full-face veils, are at odds with traditional French values, including the official secularism of the French state. Others say such concerns are used to justify racism and xenophobia.

When he was elected in 2017, Macron beat Le Pen nearly two-to-one in a runoff.

An opinion poll conducted late last month by pollster Ifop showed the gap narrowing: if a runoff were to be held now, Macron would get 55 percent while Le Pen would have 45 percent support, the poll showed.



French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe (second right) leads a meeting focused on immigration policies, next to French Minister of Territorial Cohesion and Relations with Territorial Communities Jacqueline Gourault, French Justice Minister Nicole Belloubet and Prime Minister's Cabinet director Benoit Ribadeau-Dumas, at the Hotel Matignon, in Paris, yesterday.

EU Parliament head urges for Balkan membership talks

AP/SKOPJE

The head of the European Parliament said there is still hope for Balkan countries to join the European Union, and urged for membership talks to open soon with North Macedonia and Albania.

David Sassoli made the comments during a speech in Skopje, noting that "we share your bitterness and disappointment" over the bloc's failure to start membership negotiations with the two countries after some EU members, led by France, blocked the process last month.

Sassoli said "there is still a hope" for both countries to start membership talks, describing the current situation as a "historic standstill."

Striking teachers rally in Croatia over pay hike

AP
ZAGREB

More than 2,000 teachers and other employees in Croatia's education system have rallied in the capital of Zagreb to press for higher wages after being on strike for nearly a month.

Carrying banners and blowing whistles, the protesters marched yesterday through the city before gathering outside government headquarters in Zagreb.

The unions are demanding wage hikes but talks with the government so far have yielded no results.

Sanja Sprem of the Croatian teacher's union says "it's important to show the government that teachers are ready to fight for their dignity."

Serbia set to buy Russian missiles amid US sanctions hint

AP
BELGRADE

Russia will deliver a sophisticated anti-aircraft missile system to Serbia even though the US has warned of possible sanctions against the Balkan country in the event of such purchases.

Russia's state TASS news agency said yesterday that the Pantsir-S system will be delivered to Serbia "in the next few months in accordance with the signed contract."

The US's special envoy for the Western Balkans, Matthew Palmer, warned Serbia last week that the purchase of Russian weapons "poses a risk" of US sanctions.

"We hope that our Serbian partners will be careful about any transactions of this kind," Palmer said in an interview with Macedonian television Alsat M.

Serbia remains a key ally of Russia even though it wants to join the European Union. Belgrade has pledged to stay out of Nato and refused to join Western sanctions against Russia over the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Russia has been helping Serbia beef up its military with fighter jets, attack helicopters and battle tanks, raising concerns in the war-scarred Balkan region.

During the bloody breakup of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, Serbia was at war with neighbors Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said in a state TV interview on Tuesday that Serbia is purchasing defensive weapons from the Russians and that he wants to avoid any US sanctions "or confrontation with America."

"Serbia is arming itself because it is a free country surrounded by Nato-member states with which we want to be friends," Vucic said, adding that he won't allow Serbia to "be as weak as it was in the 1990s."

Serbia was bombed by NATO in 1999 to stop a bloody crackdown against Kosovo Albanians, an experience that left Serbs with a deep mistrust of the Western military alliance. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, a move Belgrade and Moscow don't recognise.



Sweden's Crown Princess Victoria and her husband Prince Daniel meet children during a visit in an IT company in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, yesterday.

Swedish royal urges Bosnia to address pollution

AP
SARAJEVO

Swedish Crown Princess Victoria has urged Bosnian leaders to tackle their country's environmental problems, saying it's a key challenge they'll have to confront if the Balkan country wants to join the European Union.

Princess Victoria spoke at a climate conference in Sarajevo yesterday that included Bosnia's top political leaders, activists and business representatives.

She warned that the "threats of climate change and environmental pollution are real."

Bosnia applied for EU membership in 2016, but its continued ethnic divide threatens the process. The country has never fully recovered from its 1992 to 1995 war.

It's recently come under increased pressure to address environmental problem.

A UN report in June said that Bosnia's residents are exposed to some of the highest concentrations of air pollution in Europe.

Poles can travel visa-free to US starting November 11

AP
WARSAW

Polish President Andrzej Duda said yesterday that Poles will be able to travel to the US without a visa starting next week, a move by the Washington administration that has been long awaited by the Poles who saw it as a matter of national dignity.

Duda said that he was notified by the US side that an official announcement would also be made soon in Washington.

He added that it was "important and good news" for the 37 million people in Poland and some 10 million Poles in the US.

Standing alongside US Ambassador Georgette Mosbacher, Duda announced that starting Monday, November 11 — Poland's Independence Day — Poles will not require visas for tourist or business trips of up to 90 days.

Both expressed joy at the announcement and Mosbacher said Duda had told her it was a matter of "national pride."

"Mr. President, we've done it," Mosbacher said, calling it a holiday present to the Poles.

Duda thanked President Donald Trump for including Poland in the visa-waiver program.

The decision comes after increased efforts by the current right-wing government and Mosbacher and after the refusal rate dropped to the required level of under 3 percent of visa requests.

A staunch US ally and one of its closest partners in Europe, Poland has been waiting to be included in the visa waiver program since the 1990s, after it toppled the communist regime, and the long wait was frustrating.

"We felt treated a bit like second-class people even though we've had very good relations with the US" since the 18th century, said the ruling party Senator Jan Maria Jackowski.

"Our honour and national pride have been somehow violated because the visa system is onerous," he said.

Visa-free travel means Poles will still need to enter data in an online registry system, but will no longer need to stand in lines to see a consul, and the fee is down to $14 from the previous $160.

Dutch man shot at in German border town in targeted attack

AP
BERLIN

A Dutch lawyer living in a border town was shot and seriously wounded in what is believed to have been a targeted attack on him, German authorities and a Dutch attorneys' organisation said.

The 43-year-old victim was struck yesterday morning in Gronau when assailants opened fire from a white vehicle with Netherlands licence plates, Muenster prosecutor Martin Botzenhardt, whose office is handling the investigation, said.

He said the victim was being treated in a hospital. He had no information on his condition, but said he was able to talk to authorities after the attack.

A photo from the scene showed medics tending to the victim in a suburban street and a police car parked nearby.

Botzenhardt wouldn't comment on Dutch media reports that the victim was a lawyer, but said "there are indications the Gronau man was targeted."

The Dutch Order of Attorneys said in a tweet it was shocked by what it called an attempted hit and identified the victim as lawyer Philippe Schol.

He is the second Dutch lawyer to be targeted by gunmen in recent weeks. In September, Derk Wiersum, who represented a key witness in a major Dutch organised crime trial, was shot dead near his home in Amsterdam, a killing that sparked outrage and calls for a tougher crackdown on violent underworld gangs.

"The security of lawyers needs serious attention and appropriate measures," the attorneys' organisation tweeted.

Police on both sides of the border were searching for the vehicle used in the shooting.

Dutch police appealed for witnesses and said they were investigating possible links to the border city of Enschede.

"We see that the incident has a major impact on society but also on people in the judicial system. The police are aware and will take preventative measures if necessary."

House to begin Trump public impeachment hearings

BLOOMBERG
WASHINGTON

House Democrats are opening the public phase of their impeachment inquiry of Donald Trump next week with some of the central witnesses who have detailed the president's pressure on Ukraine to investigate a political rival.

The public hearings will begin November 13 with William Taylor, the current top U.S. diplomat in Ukraine, who described the conditions that Trump and his associates set for Ukraine's new president to receive military aid and a coveted White House meeting.

The Intelligence Committee, which will lead the public hearings, will call the State Department's George Kent on the same day. Former US ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch will testify November 15.

Testimony directly from career public servants raises the political risk for the Trump as he seeks to de-legitimize the impeachment process while preserving his re-election prospects in 2020. But there is also risk for Democrats who are trying to build public support for impeachment and protect moderate members who will be campaigning in Trump-friendly districts next year.

House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff said next week's testimonies will show how "the most important facts are largely not contested."

House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff said next week's testimonies will show how "the most important facts are largely not contested."

"We are getting increasing appreciation for just what took place during the course of the last year and the degree to which the president enlisted whole departments of the government in the illicit aim of trying to get Ukraine to dig up dirt on a political opponent," Schiff told reporters yesterday.

Schiff also said his panel plans to release the transcript of Taylor's private October 22 testimony on Wednesday.

That deposition was described as a "smoking gun" by Democrats on the committees, since it included details about the pressure put on Ukraine through a back-channel effort led by Rudy Giuliani and other Trump administration officials.

Crucially, Taylor described a conversation in which US Ambassador to the European Union Gordon Sondland told Andriy Yermak, an adviser to Ukraine's president, that military and security aid to Ukraine would be withheld until Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy committed to pursuing an investigation of Burisma, an energy company where Hunter Biden had previously served on the board.

Sondland on Monday revised his earlier testimony to the House committees in which he said he didn't remember many of the events. In the revision, Sondland said his memory had been "refreshed" and that he did recall telling Yermak about the link between the aid and the investigation sought by the White House.

Kent provided details on how Sondland, special envoy Kurt Volker and Energy Secretary Rick Perry were instructed to work with Giuliani on Ukraine issues outside normal diplomatic channels.

The statements provide the first direct testimony that a quid pro quo was communicated to Ukrainian officials, undermining Trump's main defense against the impeachment inquiry.



House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff (D-CA) (second right) and other US officials during a break in closed-door proceedings at the US Capitol, in Washington, DC, yesterday.

Yovanovitch, who was recalled from her Ukraine post in May, previously testified that she was warned by Ukrainian officials in February that Giuliani was mounting a campaign to oust her.

She also said she subsequently felt threatened by the way Trump spoke about her on a July 25 phone call with Zelenskiy. In that call, documented by a White House memo later made public, Trump called Yovanovitch "bad news" and said "she's going to go through some things."

US governors vow to uphold Paris climate pact

ANATOLIA
WASHINGTON

A group of over two-dozen mostly Democratic governors have vowed to maintain obligations under the landmark Paris climate accord, despite US President Donald Trump's effort to quit the pact.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo formally announced the US's departure on Monday, saying the paperwork required to start the one-year process has been filed with the United Nations.

The coalition of 25 governors, known as the US Climate Alliance, said in a statement that they "must stand up — once again — to reaffirm our commitment to supporting climate action and to strongly oppose the Administration's decision to formally withdraw from the Paris Agreement."

"Our growing coalition represents more than half of the US population and an $11.7 trillion economy, collectively equating to what would be the third largest national economy in the world," the alliance said in a statement.

"We have demonstrated that economic growth and climate action go hand-in-hand. Alliance states have reduced emissions faster than the rest of the country while growing per capita GDP three times as fast. Climate action is a driver of — not a deterrent to — innovation and economic strength."

Opponent to offer Bolivia leader 'resignation letter' to sign

AFP
LA PAZ

A lead opponent of Bolivian President Evo Morales vowed yesterday to hand him a resignation letter to sign, raising pressure on the leftist leader over claims he rigged his re-election.

More than two weeks since the vote result sparked angry protests, Santa Cruz region opposition leader Luis Fernando Camacho vowed to fly to the capital La Paz to press Morales to quit.

His arrival was scheduled at 3:30 pm (1930 GMT).

Protesters blocked streets in La Paz, including the central Avenida Camacho a few blocks from the government headquarters.

In the central city of Cochabamba, violent clashes broke out between supporters and opponents of Morales, local media reported.

Camacho, 40, a conservative opposition leader in the eastern Santa Cruz region, has threatened to drive Morales out and called for the military's backing.

Morales addressed a navy ceremony yesterday, insisting that the military must "serve the people" and support his government.

The armed forces have so far stayed neutral in the electoral dispute but calling on the military is a delicate move in Bolivia.

The country saw numerous military uprisings and dictatorships before civilian rule was established in 1982.

Morales, 60, is looking to remain in power until 2025 with a fourth term after taking legal action to get round term limits.

His win in the October 20 election was ratified by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal — but only after an abrupt shift in the vote count in his u.

His opponents have branded the result a fraud. Carlos Mesa, who ran against Morales in the polls, has called for a new vote to be held.

Deadly unrest has gripped the South American country since the election results.

The interior minister last week said two demonstrators were killed in clashes.

Opponents of Morales have occupied public buildings in Santa Cruz and blocked streets in various cities.

Interior Minister Carlos Romero said there would be a "security presence" to protect Camacho in La Paz.

Camacho tried to enter La Paz on Tuesday but was blocked from leaving the airport by Morales supporters, many of them wielding sticks.



First Lady Melania Trump with US Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar greets Pediatric Intensive Care Unit nurse manager Karan Barry during her visit to Boston Medical Center where she was informed about their Cuddling Assists in Lowering Maternal and Infant stress programme (CALM) as part of her 'Be Best' initiative in Massachusetts, yesterday.

Melania visits programme for babies born on drugs

AP
BOSTON

First Lady Melania Trump yesterday visited a Boston hospital that uses cuddling to help infants born dependent on drugs or alcohol.

The first lady met with caregivers and administrators at Boston Medical Center and told them she's "very focused" on their pioneering work with babies born with neonatal abstinence syndrome.

"I hope today's visit helps shine a light on programmes like yours," she said, joined by Alex Azar, secretary of health and human services.

Outside, as many as 200 workers at the hospital gathered to protest the visit, condemning the tough immigration policies of President Donald Trump's administration that they say discourage immigrants from getting health care.

Cecilia Girard, a 26-year employee who currently works as a nurse midwife, said Mrs. Trump represented the same administration that has taken a harsh approach to immigration, including caging some immigrants who have tried to cross into the US via the southern border.

Other workers who joined the protest wore white hospital jackets with the slogan, "We really do care, do you?" on the backs. Some carried signs that read, "BMC cares for all patients."

The hospital developed the cuddling programme to nurture babies born with neonatal abstinence syndrome. The hospital also works with expectant mothers who misuse drugs or alcohol.

Texas inmate set to be executed for strangling death

AP
HOUSTON

A white supremacist gang member on Texas' death row faces execution today for strangling a woman nearly 20 years ago over fears she would alert police about his drug operation.

Justen Hall, 38, was condemned for the October 2002 slaying of Melanie Billhartz. Prosecutors said Hall killed Billhartz, 29, with an extension cord from his drug house in El Paso and then buried her body in the New Mexico desert. Hall has been on death row since being sentenced in 2005.

His attorneys had asked to stop the execution, alleging he's not competent to be executed and has a history of mental illness. But a judge in El Paso last month denied the request. No other appeals have since been filed.

During a March 2017 court hearing on whether to have DNA testing in his case, Hall said he was "100% competent" and acknowledged killing Billhartz. Prosecutors said two court-appointed experts in 2017 also found Hall to be competent.

If the execution happens, Hall would be the 19th inmate put to death this year in the US and the eighth in Texas. Three more executions are scheduled in Texas this year.

Billhartz's sister, Lana Rivera, said her sibling had become involved with drugs and the wrong crowd after their mother died of cancer. But it wasn't who she was, Rivera said, describing her sister as a fun-loving person who adored her family and one day hoped to have children of her own.

Mexico probes narco group 'La Linea' in Mormon murders

AFP
MEXICO CITY

Mexican authorities said yesterday they believe a drug cartel called "La Linea" was responsible for the murder of nine Mormon women and children, saying the massacre was committed with American-made ammunition.

The three women and six children, who had dual US-Mexican citizenship, were killed in a hail of bullets on Monday as they drove on a rural road between the states of Sonora and Chihuahua, which border the United States.

Eight other children managed to escape, six of them wounded — a case that has caused shock on both sides of the border and prompted US President Donald Trump to call for a "war" on Mexican cartels.

The head of the Mexican military's joint chiefs of staff, Homero Mendoza, said authorities now believe the massacre was perpetrated by La Linea (The Line), a drug cartel based in Chihuahua.

He said investigations indicated the group had sent a squadron to the lawless mountain region where the attack occurred to fend off potential incursions by a rival gang, Los Salazar, which is based in Sonora.

"It's believed that in response to this threat... (La Linea) decided to send a cell to the area between (the villages of) Janos and Bavispe to detain any incursion or penetration by Los Salazar into Chihuahua, which is what we believe was responsible for this attack on the LeBaron family," he told a news conference.

But relatives have rejected a case of mistaken identity, saying they believe their family was deliberately targeted.

Speaking at the same news conference, Mexican Security Minister Alfonso Durazo said investigators found more than 200 pieces of .223 calibre bullet casings manufactured by American gunmaker Remington at the scene. That type of rounds is commonly used in military-style assault rifles.

He said Mexico and the United States would soon launch a bilateral programme "to control arms trafficking from the US to Mexico."



Members of the Lebaron family watch the burned car where part of the nine murdered members of the family were killed and burned during an gunmen ambush on Bavispe, Sonora mountains, Mexico.

Pinera resists call to resign over protests

AFP
SANTIAGO

These problems have been accumulating for the past 30 years. I am responsible (for) part of it and I assume my responsiblity, but I'm not the only one: Sebastian Pinera

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera said yesterday he will not resign in the face of deadly protests over inequality and poor social conditions that have entered their third week.

Asked by the BBC in an interview whether he will step down, the billionaire conservative leader said: "No."

"These problems have been accumulating for the past 30 years," Pinera said. "I am responsible (for) part of it and I assume my responsiblity, but I'm not the only one."

Fresh clashes broke out on Tuesday, adding to the violence gripping one of Latin America's most prosperous countries. It has forced the government to cancel two major international economic and climate summits and open talks with the leftist opposition.

Thousands of protesters took the streets in the capital, and in the southern cities of Concepcion and Vina del Mar, west of Santiago.

Police firing birdshot injured two students among a group trying to overrun a public high school in Santiago, police said. The students were treated at a hospital and released.

Citing public order fears, South American football chiefs announced they were switching the venue for a major continental soccer final from Santiago.

This month's showpiece Copa Libertadores final will now be held in the Peruvian capital Lima, soccer authority CONMEBOL said after meeting in Paraguay.

"The choice is based on the offer of the government of Peru, and on the security guarantees it has given," it said in a statement.

Prosecutors said 20 people have died in unrest since the protests began here on October 20.

A UN human rights mission is investigating allegations of police brutality.

Chile's football federation on Tuesday called off a November 15 international friendly in Santiago with Bolivia.

In his interview, Pinera defended his decision to declare a state of emergency but promised to look into allegations of police violence and abuse.

The interview came as the president announced a package of measures for small and medium-sized businesses hit by the unrest.

Some 6,800 companies affected by rioting, looting and fires will benefit from financial aid and tax deductions.

Demonstrators and riot police clashed again in the capital Santiago on Tuesday, when around 2,000 people gathered in the capital.

The protests and violence were on a smaller scale to Monday's huge rally marking the beginning of a third week of protests in Santiago.

On Monday, tens of thousands of people gathered in the Plaza de Italia, the epicenter of the unrest over economic inequality and a raft of other social woes, and tried to march on the presidential palace in downtown Santiago.

Fights broke out with police trying to contain them, with officers firing water cannon and tear gas. One officer was hit in the face with a Molotov cocktail.

Pinera held inconclusive talks with opposition parties last week but made no reference to them in segments of the interview aired by the BBC.

Protesters are calling for constitutional reform. Chile's current constitution dates back to the 1973-1990 dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet.


Chile's President Sebastian Pinera (centre) speaks at La Moneda Presidential Palace, in Santiago, yesterday.

Prosecutor seeks to probe 14 cops over 'torture' of protesters

REUTERS
SANTIAGO

A Chilean prosecutor said he would seek court approval to investigate 14 police officers for allegedly torturing protesters during almost three weeks of intense unrest and rioting in the country.

Manual Guerra, the prosecutor for Santiago East, said the investigation was related to two separate cases during a nine-day state of emergency in the capital Santiago from October 18.

One related to the actions of 12 police officers in Nunoa, a bohemian suburb of Santiago, where protestors defied a curfew to conduct successive nights of large but mainly peaceful demonstrations in a central square, a spokesman for Guerra said.

The second related to two officers in the lower-middle class area of La Florida who were accused of beating a young man who was handcuffed, the spokesman said.

Prosecutors are investigating more than 800 allegations of abuses, including torture and beatings by security forces during demonstrations over inequality and cost of living that have often degenerated into riots.

FBI arrests Puerto Rico senator, 7 others in graft probe

AP
SAN JUAN

FBI agents arrested Puerto Rico Senator Abel Nazario and seven other people yesterday as part of an investigation into corruption in the US territory.

The US Attorney's Office said the suspects include former municipal employees who were indicted on one count of alleged theft or bribery involving programs that receive federal funds.

Some suspects are accused of using more than $5,000 worth of municipal funds to in part pay other suspects to work on Nazario's senatorial campaign. Authorities said some suspects also helped the campaigns of other politicians whose support was sought by Nazario when he was mayor of the southwest town of Yauco.

Among the suspects is the town's former director of human resources and the mayor's special assistant.

Puerto Rico Senate President Thomas Rivera Schatz asked for Nazario's resignation shortly after his arrest.

"It is unfortunate for him and his family, but even more so for the people of Puerto Rico who watch with anguish events that lacerate the trust in government institutions," Rivera said in a statement.

The arrests come as Puerto Rico recovers from recent political turmoil that saw the resignation of the island's previous governor following massive protests spurred in part by anger over corruption.

Edgardo Rosado, a spokesman for Nazario, said that the senator is innocent.

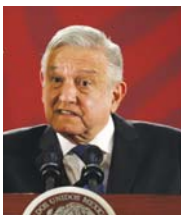
The US Attorney's Office said Puerto Rico's Comptroller's Office uncovered the alleged scheme during a routine audit of Yauco's financial records.

Federal authorities previously arrested Nazario in September 2018 and accused him of defrauding his employees while serving as mayor of the southwest town of Yauco. They said his employees were required to work two voluntary hours a day, which the Department of Labor identified as a violation.

Nazario is awaiting trial in that case.

Congress backs bill allowing to replace Mexico President

BLOOMBERG
MEXICO CITY



Mexico's Congress approved a bill that would allow voters to recall popular President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador **(pictured)**, also known as AMLO, after three years in office.

The law, which passed 356 to 84 in the lower house yesterday, allows citizens to call for a vote to replace presidents halfway through their terms. That means that AMLO, as the leftist president is known, could potentially face a recall vote in early 2022.

Critics of the move said it sets a dangerous precedent by tinkering with nation's century-old six-year single-term limit, designed to prevent abuse of power. Lopez Obrador and his Morena party themselves pushed for the law, arguing that Mexican people choose their presidents and should be able to remove them.

The constitutional change now goes to state legislatures, where it's expected to be ratified.

Gustavo de Hoyos President of business chamber Coparmex, has warned that altering the part of the constitution that governs the length of the presidential term sets a precedent for more such changes.

Re-election in Latin America is a sensitive issue given a history of leaders remaining beyond their original mandates, often undermining democratic institutions.

Lopez Obrador has repeatedly promised that he won't seek re-election, a move that would require another constitutional amendment to change the six-year limit.

By granting citizens the right to determine the permanence of the president, the law could potentially be interpreted to allow the head of state to remain in office provided he had popular support, said Arturo Pueblita, a constitutional-law expert at the Ibero-American University in Mexico City.

The bill was adjusted to postpone the potential recall vote date. Opposition parties had objected to the original proposal from Lopez Obrador's party to hold the vote at the same time as the mid-term election in June 2021, when all 500 seats in the lower house are up for grabs.



Green protest

An environmental activist attending a protest against Brazil's government auction for offshore oil fields, in Rio de Janeiro, yesterday.

Rapper accused of choking, biting woman in Atlanta

AP/ATLANTA

A rapper is accused of choking and biting his girlfriend while in Atlanta.

News outlets report Osiris Williams, also known as YK Osiris, was arrested on a felony charge of aggravated assault by strangulation. Fulton County police say the man is accused of attacking the woman at his 21st birthday party in September.

A police report said the woman confronted Williams about a photo on his phone and he threatened to slap her. She told police Williams chased her up a flight of stairs and cornered her in a bathroom, where he then choked and bit her.

Jail records sais the rapper was born in Jacksonville, Florida, but currently lives in Braselton, Georgia.

Brazil regulator says Vale 'negligence' may have cost lives

REUTERS
BRASILIA

Brazil's mining regulator blasted iron ore miner Vale SA for failing to disclose problems with a mining dam before a deadly collapse in January, saying this kept the agency from taking actions that could have saved lives.

The dam in Brumadinho collapsed and flooded a nearby company cafeteria and the surrounding countryside with mining waste, killing more than 250 people. It was Vale's second deadly dam collapse in less than four years.

The regulator's report on its probe into the disaster is the latest blow to the reputation of Vale, which is under criminal investigation over accusations that top executives ignored warning signs about the dam.

Based on the report's findings, ANM will now assess the iron ore miner with 24 new fines. Officials said that the amount of each fine is capped at around $1,500 under Brazilian law.

The report detailed several problems that it said Vale should have reported.

The first occurred in June 2018, seven months before the disaster, when the company installed horizontal drainage pipes and discovered sediment in the drainage water. This worrying sign should have been reported immediately, ANM officials told reporters in a briefing.

"The serious fact is that when there is sediment it must be reported. Period. It wasn't. If it had been communicated, the area would immediately have been submitted to daily inspections," said ANM head Victor Bicca.

"But we didn't know what was happening."

Vale said in a statement it would analyse the report but it was unable to comment on technical decisions taken by its "geotechnical team" at the time.

The miner said it is providing all information on the history of the dam's condition to authorities, adding that various investigations were pending into the cause of the dam burst.

Several ANM directors said if Vale had properly reported drainage, water pressure and other issues at the dam, it would have been classified as "emergency level 1", bringing a higher level of scrutiny including daily inspections.

They said those inspections could have uncovered further problems, ultimately leading to evacuation, which would have saved lives.

Because problems were not disclosed, the dam was not given high priority, since it was not actively receiving more mining waste, director Tasso Mendonca said.

He said the dam was "a bit forgotten."

"It's a kind of negligence, perhaps not intentional," he added.

Aspiring education leaders to meet in Doha

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

Selected from a diverse pool of applicants, who demonstrated their commitment to the field of education through their academic, professional and/or personal work, the cohort will convene for an in-person residential session in Doha from Nov 17 to 19, to participate in an action-based leadership and educational development module.

World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) has selected 25 outstanding learners from 19 countries as the 2019-2020 cohort of the WISE Learners' Voice program.

Selected from a diverse pool of applicants, who demonstrated their commitment to the field of education through their academic, professional and/or personal work, the cohort will convene for an in-person residential session in Doha from November 17 to 19, to participate in an action-based leadership and educational development module.

In addition to completing the residential training, fellows will participate in the WISE Summit 2019 to share their views and creative energies in addressing pressing global education issues and challenges.

Selected Canadian fellow, Moiz Lakhani, a current student at McMaster University in Canada, said, "I'm ecstatic to be part of the WISE Learners' Voice program as it will provide me with a platform to engage with policy makers and educators in the field of education. "I will also have the opportunity to voice my ideas and perspectives on the field of education at an international level. I hope to work closely with the WISE community to rethink and design the future of education, and to one day take on a leading role in this field."

Participants will engage in a series of collaborative and interactive modules on topics ranging from communication skills to social innovation, delivered by WISE and partner organizations, to increase the impact of their work and collaborate on pressing challenges.

Jasmin Higo, another selected fellow, who has been involved in educational and mentorship projects in Germany, Malaysia, the United States, and Ethiopia, said, "By offering the WISE Learners' Voice program, young leaders from all over the world are able to find solutions to the toughest educational challenges facing communities around the world. I hope to benefit from the knowledge and experience of this program and adapt them to my own community."

Through the program, WISE aims to support and elevate the work of promising young leaders in education by developing young talent within their communities.

The Learners' Voice program aims to bring the perspectives of young people to the challenge of rethinking education and equips them to take on leading roles in their fields and in the world of education. The program is based on the idea that when learners are co-creators of their learning environments, they become active participants invested as stakeholders in the progress of their communities. The program focuses on building knowledge of education, social entrepreneurship, leadership, and communication skills.

QRCS promotes disaster preparedness among school leaders

THE PENINSULA
DOHA



A disaster management training workshop organised by QRCS in progress.

Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has held a disaster management training workshop for 40 headmistresses of public schools in Qatar, in cooperation with Training and Educational Development Center of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

Under the umbrella of the QRCS School Program, the two-day event covers a wide range of topics relation to disaster management and risk reduction, including Introduction to disaster management, risk analysis, field assessment and coordination, nutrition and food security, health in emergency, water and sanitation, and shelter.

The sessions are instructed by a group of QRCS's disaster management specialists and internationally certified volunteers. Huda A. Hamdan, Projects Expert at QRCS and the program's coordinator, said: "The purpose of this workshop is to educate the principals of schools on the basic of dealing with disasters, the importance of preparedness for minimizing casualties and losses, and the organizations responsible for disaster response."

She said that today's lectures discussed the concept of disaster, types and duration of disasters, disaster management cycle, risk analysis, risk reporting matrix, vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) tools, community mapping, and data sorting and analysis. Hamdan said that this is one of five workshops to be held during November, with a total 200 attendees divided on five groups, three for men and two for ladies.

She emphasised the interest of principals to attend the workshops, in light of the remarkable success of QRCS School Program over the past few years. "In the second semester, similar training workshops will be held for the same principals on first aid and health education," said Hamdan.

CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Thin nails
6 Belted area
11 Wind tightly, as a hose
12 Hitching posts?
14 Infielder's gaffe
15 Roma's land
16 Recede
17 1945 conference site
19 — Dhabi
20 Castle
22 Game official
23 Yemen neighbor
24 Boom type
26 Original host of "This Old House"
28 Crew tool
30 MLB stat
31 Luge cousin
35 Salon sounds
39 Out of control
40 Scoundrel
42 First lady of scat
43 Stitch
44 Obama's veep
46 Chou En- —
47 "Understood"
49 Thread holder
51 Mal de mer
52 Natural gift
53 Play for time
54 Closes

DOWN
1 Yogi's little pal
2 County fair prize

Solution time: 26 mins.

C	A	F	E	S		S	O	P		A	M	A
A	R	O	M	A		O	D	E		S	E	C
R	E	R	U	N		F	I	R	E	A	R	M
		E	S	T	A	T	E		L	I	C	E
M	I	A		A	R	I		P	A	R	I	S
G	I	R	L		H	E	R	O	N			
M	I	M	O	S	A		H	I	D	D	E	N
			G	O	T	T	I		S	I	R	E
S	P	O	O	L		A	N	D		D	E	W
P	U	F	F		T	R	O	U	G	H		
A	N	T	F	A	R	M		S	L	A	P	S
S	T	E		P	E	A		T	E	R	R	A
M	S	N		P	E	G		Y	E	M	E	N

3 Priestly garment
4 As called for
5 Asparagus unit
6 Anticipate
7 Utah ski resort
8 "Give — rest!"
9 Deli meat
10 Clan-related
11 Drivers with handles
13 Place for sweaters?
18 Beirut's land (Abbr.)
21 Newsstand
23 Sheepish?
25 "East of Eden" brother
27 Small ammo
29 Carnegie Hall performance
31 Washroom tub
32 Alphas' opposites
33 Withdraw
34 June honoree
36 "Yeah, right!"
37 President Carter's hometown
38 Canonized figure
41 Unpaid bills
44 Actress Jessica
45 Ark builder
48 Airport screening org.
50 — -ray Disc

Yesterday's answer 10-26

MALL

Pranaya Meenukalude Kadal (2D/Malayalam) 2:00 & 11:30pm; **Tabaluga: The Last Dragon (2D/Animation)** 2:00pm; **Housefull 4 (2D/Hindi)** 2:15pm; **Playing With Fire (2D/Comedy)** 3:30, 5:15 & 7:00pm; **Maleficent: Mistress Of Evil (2D/Adventure)** 5:00pm; **Bala (2D/Hindi)** 4:30pm; **Abigail (2D/Adventure)** 7:00pm; **Official Secrets (2D/Drama)** 7:00pm; **Doctor Sleep (2D/Horror)** 8:45 & 11:30pm; **Joker (2D/Crime)** 9:00pm; **Midway (2D/Action)** 9:00pm; **Kaithi (2D/Tamil)** 11:15pm

LANDMARK

Tabaluga: The Last Dragon (2D/Animation) 2:00pm; **Pranaya Meenukalude Kadal (2D/Malayalam)** 2:00 & 11:30pm; **Housefull 4 (2D/Hindi)** 2:15pm; **The Addams Family (2D/Comedy)** 4:30pm; **Bala (2D/Hindi)** 6:00 & 9:00pm; **Doctor Sleep (2D/Horror)** 8:30 & 11:15pm; **Playing With Fire (2D/Comedy)** 3:45, 5:30 & 7:15pm **Kaithi (2D/Tamil)** 8:45 & 11:30pm; **Maleficent: Mistress Of Evil (2D/Adventure)** 5:00pm; **In Paradox (2D/Kuwaiti Arabic)** 7:00pm

AL KHOR

Bala (2D/Hindi) 10:30am, 1:00, 3:45, 6:30, 9:15pm & 12:00 midnight; **Playing With Fire (2D/Comedy)** 11:00am, 4:15 & 9:30pm; **Pranaya Meenukalude Kadal (2D/Malayalam)** 11:00am, 5:00 & 8:00pm; **Midway (2D/Action)** 1:15, 6:30 & 11:45pm; **Kaithi (2D/Tamil)** 2:00 & 11:00pm

ROXY

Adithya Varma (2D/Tamil) 1:00, 7:00, 7:15 & 10:30pm **Bala (2D/Hindi)** 11:00am, 1:00, 1:45, 3:45, 4:00, 4:30, 6:30, 7:15, 9:15 & 11:55pm; **Doctor Sleep (2D/Horror)** 11:00am, 1:00, 1:30, 2:00, 4:00, 4:30, 7:30, 10:30 & 10:45pm; **Maleficent: Mistress Of Evil (2D/Adventure)** 6:10, 6:30, 8:40 & 9:00pm **Midway (2D/Action)** 7:40 & 10:00pm **Tabaluga: The Last Dragon (2D/Animation)** 4:10 & 4:30pm; **Pranaya Meenukalude Kadal (2D/Malayalam)** 10:30am, 1:15, 4:30 & 10:45pm **Terminator: Dark Fate (2D/Horror)** 11:00am, 5:00, 7:00, 11:10 & 11:30pm **The Addams Family (2D/Comedy)** 10:30am, 12:20, 12:30, 2:10 & 2:30pm

ROYAL PLAZA

Bala (2D/Hindi) 2:00 & 6:30pm **Pranaya Meenukalude Kadal (2D/Malayalam)** 2:30pm; **Kaithi (2D/Tamil)** 2:30 & 11:30pm **Maleficent: Mistress Of Evil (2D/Adventure)** 4:30pm **Playing With Fire (2D/Comedy)** 5:00 & 7:00pm **Tabaluga: The Last Dragon (2D/Animation)** 5:15pm **Midway (2D/Action)** 7:00pm **Doctor Sleep (2D/Horror)** 8:45 & 11:30pm; **Official Secrets (2D/Drama)** 9:30pm **Terminator: Dark Fate (2D/Horror)** 9:00pm **Housefull 4 (2D/Hindi)** 11:15pm;

FLIK Mirqab Mall

Abigail (2D/Adventure) 12:20, 2:35 & 4:50pm **Bala (2D/Hindi)** 6:40 & 9:35pm **Doctor Sleep (2D/Horror)** 12:55, 3:45, 4:35, 8:40, 7:25, 10:15 & 11:30pm **Countdown** 0:05am **Joker (2D/Crime)** 7:00 & 11:45pm **Maleficent: Mistress Of Evil (2D/Adventure)** 10:20am, 11:20am, 12:40, 1:40, 3:00, 4:00, 6:20, 7:40, 10:00pm & 0:20am **Midway (2D/Action)** 8:10 & 10:50pm **Official Secrets (2D/Drama)** 6:00pm **Playing With Fire (2D/Comedy)** 10:25am, 11:00am, 12:30, 2:25, 4:20, 6:15, 8:15 & 10:10pm **Terminator: Dark Fate (2D/Horror)** 10:50am, 1:20, 3:50, 6:30, 9:05 & 11:40pm **The Addams Family (2D/Comedy)** 10:40am, 12:30 & 4:10pm

ASIAN TOWN

Pranaya Meenukalude Kadal (2D/Malayalam) 12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:15, 11:30pm & 1:30am **Bala (2D/Hindi)** 1:00, 6:15, 11:15pm & 1:30am **Jabardast Shankara (2D/Tulu)** 6:00pm **Edakkad Battalion 06 (2D/Malayalam)** 3:45 & 8:45pm **Kaithi (2D/Tamil)** 12:30, 3:15, 8:45, 11:30pm & 2:15am **Housefull 4 (2D/Hindi)** 3:30pm **Bigil (2D/Tamil)** 12:30 & 11:30pm **Thipparaa (2D/Telugu)** 6:00pm



PRANAYA MEENUKALUDE KADAL

Pranaya Meenukalude Kadal (transl. Sea of romantic fishes) is a 2019 Indian Malayalam-language romantic drama film co-written and directed by Kamal and produced by Johny Vattakuzhi.

10-26 CRYPTOQUIP

OPHUG P GHKZQG GCLQGTG YHCPGLN OESGSN EH OYLZQKYN YHK OZHKYN, P QGUAEH P'T Y RGGAGHK REQQPGQ.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN YOU CAN SAY "FAREWELL" IN A BUNCH OF DIFFERENT TONGUES, YOU'RE DEFINITELY BYE-LINGUAL.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals X



PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR	04. 27 AM		
SHOROOK	05. 45 AM		
ZUHR	11. 18 AM	MAGHRIB	04. 52 PM
ASR	02.27 PM	ISHA	06. 22 PM

WEATHER TODAY



26°C Minimum | **32°C** Maximum

Relatively hot daytime with scattered clouds and mild by night.

HIGH TIDE 04:33 - 12:58 LOW TIDE 05:32 - 21:21

Courtesy: Qatar Meteorology Department

KAWS' Holiday lands in Doha

THE PENINSULA
DOHA

The installation by the American artist is on display for the first time in the Middle East and joins Qatar's growing portfolio of permanent and temporary public art pieces.

Following the opening of KAWS: He Eats Alone at the Fire Station, Qatar Museums (QM) has unveiled Holiday, an installation by US born artist, Brian Donnelly – known as KAWS.

The work, currently situated at the Dhow Harbour, is on display for the first time in the Middle East and joins Qatar's growing portfolio of permanent and temporary public art pieces.

Holiday is an inflatable sculpture depicting KAWS' character, Companion, in a laid-back position. The colossal sculpture, measuring at a height of 40 meters, represents the artist's attempt to remind passersby to relax in an increasingly hectic world.

Much like the rest of KAWS' body of work, the installation uses wit and irreverence to provide a playful commentary on our humanity.

With gloved hands and Xs for eyes, the highly-popular Companion character was first created in the late 1990s and has become a symbol that both embraces and rejects the ideals of today's consumerist society. The installation in Doha is the most recent iteration of the touring KAWS: Holiday project after previous displays in some of the world's most important cultural hotspots that include the city of Seoul in South Korea and Mount Fuji in Japan.

Located at the heart of Qatar's cultural square, which is close to popular destinations such as the Museum of Islamic Art, the National Museum of Qatar and Souq Waqif, the Dhow Harbour is the ideal location to host such a show-stopping piece in Qatar.

Commenting on the announcement, Abdulrahman Al Ishaq, Head of Public Art at Qatar Museums, stated: "KAWS is one of the most important contemporary artists of our time, one who has managed to establish an iconic imagery that is uniquely his. After the successful unveiling of Small Lie in 2018, we are pleased to continue our collaboration with him and to bring his work to the region for the first time."

"Our public art strategy is guided by our mission to bring dialogue to the streets of Qatar by displaying various forms of striking creations. Every piece we have displayed to date was hand-picked to inspire local talent and to create an organic connection between art and the community," continued Abdulrahman.

Sheikha Reem Al Thani, Director of Exhibitions, commented: "We are excited to unveil Holiday as part of the KAWS: He Eats Alone exhibition, which has been highly-praised by Qatar's growing art community. The exhibition and this installation are an ode to KAWS' playful commentary on the very things that make us human. We look forward to seeing how the community will react to and interact with the piece as they go about their daily life."

The artist's exhibition, KAWS: He Eats Alone, is curated by acclaimed art historian Germano Celant and will be on display at the Fire Station until January 25.



Visitors take photos with Holiday, a colossal inflatable sculpture by renowned American artist KAWS at Dhow Harbour, Corniche, Doha. The artist's exhibition, KAWS: He Eats Alone, is curated by acclaimed art historian Germano Celant and is on display at the Fire Station until January 25 next year. PIC: BAHER AMIN/THE PENINSULA

Dying for a better life: South Koreans fake their funerals for life lessons

REUTERS/SEOUL

A South Korean service is offering free funerals — but only to the living.

More than 25,000 people have participated in mass "living funeral" services at Hyowon Healing Center since it opened in 2012, hoping to improve their lives by simulating their deaths.

"Once you become conscious of death, and experience it, you undertake a new approach to life," said 75-year-old Cho Jae-hee, who participated in a recent living funeral as part of a "dying well" programme offered by her senior welfare centre.

Dozens took part in the event, from teenagers to retirees, donning shrouds, taking funeral portraits, penning their last testaments, and lying in a closed coffin for around 10 minutes.

South Korea ranks 33 out of 40 countries surveyed in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Better Life Index. Many younger South Koreans have high hopes for education and employment, which have been dashed by a cooling economy and rising joblessness.

"It is important to learn and prepare for death even at a young age," said Professor Yu Eun-sil, a doctor at Asan Medical Center's pathology department, who has written a book about death.

In 2016, South Korea's suicide rate was 20.2 per 100,000 residents, almost double the global average of 10.53, according to the World Health Organization.

Funeral company Hyowon began offering the living funerals to help people appreciate their lives, and seek forgiveness and reconciliation with family and friends, said Jeong Yong-mun, who heads the healing centre.

Jeong said he is heartened when people reconcile at a relative's funeral, but is saddened they wait that long. "We don't have forever," he said.

